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10 Ways to Keep Busy Between Jobs

by [Allan Hoffman](#)

Monster Tech Jobs Expert

With resume gaps now the norm, workers should pay attention to how they spend their time between jobs.

The reason is simple: Employers want to know how job candidates spent their time when they were out of work. Learning? Traveling? Moping? Unless you project the image of a can-do job seeker, you're likely to have a tough time bouncing back from periods of unemployment.

"What they are looking for is that you were productive with your time," says Jenna Gausman, a career counselor with Kerwin and Associates
<http://www.kerwinandassociates.com>.

Career counselor Linsey Levine, of [CareerCounsel](#), concurs. She emphasizes the importance of demonstrating continued involvement with career-oriented activities.

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"It's not only critically important to the employer," she says, "but it's important to the candidate as well. It takes away feelings of depression, discouragement and hopelessness."

To project an active, engaged attitude during a job search, consider these tips for being productive when you're out of work:

Volunteer Your Services

[Volunteering](#) provides "a double benefit," says Levine. In addition to giving back to a cause or organization, you get to work with people who see you in action. "It becomes a great new networking environment," she says.

Be a Leader

Join a [professional organization](#), Gausman urges, but don't just attend meetings. Instead, take your involvement to the next level by serving on a board or organizing events. "Through that, people often end up finding jobs," she says.

Take a Class

Employers are often wary about job candidates with outdated skills, especially in technical fields. If you [take a class](#), or even begin pursuing an advanced degree, you have a ready-made way of countering that perception as you demonstrate your engagement in the field.

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Those early in their careers may want to consider an [internship](#), even if they have previously held a full-time job. The same goes for workers considering a career transition. Gausman says she worked with one client who got an internship in her mid-40s, helping her with a career transition.

Teach a Class

Universities, community colleges and continuing-education programs often seek professionals to teach classes. Aside from being a potential avenue for networking, teaching gigs look impressive to employers, positioning you as someone with expertise in your field and the ability to impart that expertise to others.

Be a Consultant

Don Sutaria, founder and president of [CareerQuest](#), a career coaching firm, advises those involved in a drawn-out job search to set themselves up as an independent consultant by getting business cards and a Web site. Your assignments may be small ones, but being a consultant allows you to market yourself as someone active and involved in your field.

Join a Job Seekers Group

Churches, libraries and other organizations often host groups for job seekers, Sutaria notes. These groups often serve to [help people make contacts](#) and provide support.

Build Social Networks

With jobs and other commitments, many people find they don't have time to develop the sort of social networks crucial to a productive life -- and career. "They get it done after they get everything else done," says [career coach Lynn Berger](#), who recommends people spend time expanding social networks. Those connections often mean as much as professional ones during a job search. "You start talking to your neighbor, and you learn they know X, Y and Z," Berger says.

Start a Business

If you've ever dreamed of owning your own business, a period of unemployment may actually be the time to try to pull it off. Levine knows one telecommunications executive who started a Web hosting company with a number of friends. The partners have other engagements now and then, but their cooperative arrangement allows them to spend more or less time on the business as their schedules permit. And, not surprisingly, networking for the business helps in other aspects of their careers.

Have Fun

Play golf. Go for a run. Or, like one of Levine's clients, build something -- in his case, a pond. "It gives you something good to talk about," says Levine. "It sets the tone for a conversation." And conversation, whether online or off, is often the lifeblood of a productive job search.

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