

**LADDERS**

*Fast on your feet*

CONFIDENCE

# 7 ways to boost your confidence when job searching in 2021

Mercedes Sanchez December 17, 2020



Being unemployed is never easy, but not having a job amidst a global pandemic during the holidays can be twice as grievous. And with a surge in unemployment claims totaling **853,000** the week ending December 5, Americans are **feeling more uncertain** about their future and their careers.

We spoke with an organizational psychologist from Georgia State University about how job loss impacts **mental health**. Human resources specialists and career coaches also offered tips on how candidates can boost their **self-esteem** before interviews.

## How unemployment affects mental health

Associate Professor Dr. Songqi Liu of Georgia State University said there are five aspects of employment that unemployed people often lack. And that's time structure, collective purpose, social contact, status, and activity.

"The deprivation of these important functions of employment usually results in distress," said Dr. Liu. "Research suggests that the heightened financial strain experienced by the unemployed could further lead to impaired mental health. Unemployment has been linked to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, marital dissatisfaction, and even an increased risk of death."

To help a person experiencing a lack of motivation or self-assurance, Dr. Liu recommends role-playing as the first step to gaining their mojo back. According to the professor, there are several ways to improve job search self-efficacy and verbal persuasion.

## 1. Prepare your elevator pitch

“Think about the skills and **personal characteristics** needed in the type of work you are looking for, and consider where you excel,” said Dr. Liu. “Then use succinct language to describe the type of position in which you are interested.”

Just how you would prep for a networking event, practice your 20 – 30 second **elevator pitch** on your downtime. That way you're always prepared. Hey, you never know who you'll run into at the supermarket or at your local **COVID-19 test site**.

## 2. Conduct a mock interview

Playing pretend can help job seekers anticipate and **prepare answers** for their virtual or in-person interviews.

“Sometimes getting advice on how to dress can lower interview anxiety,” said Dr. Liu.

## 3. Reconnect with former employees

Quarantine and **social distancing** have many unemployed Americans feeling alone and sometimes out of touch. Career coach Lisa R. Ealy said now is the time to hit up your former colleagues on LinkedIn.

“Begin to connect with potential employers,” said Ealy. “When you allow your network to create a welcome mat, this puts a halo over the candidate and often makes it easier to make connections that lead to interviews and a new position.”



## 4. Prepare for the call you've been waiting for

While you can't determine how soon you'll find a job, setting a hire date goal can help structure your day. You'll want to prioritize organizing your **resume**, putting time aside to make those LinkedIn connections and even start thinking about child **(or pet) care**.

## 5. Learn something new

Hiring managers are likely to ask how you've spent your time, so recruiters like talent acquisition specialist Christina Stokes encourage applicants to pick up a **new skill**.

"Even when you're out of work, you should focus on continuing to learn. That way, when you are on an interview, your conversation will remain relevant and will position you as knowledgeable and capable," said Stokes. "Keep your **skills sharp** by taking a **class** or obtaining a certification."

## 6. Reconsider changing careers

Americans are considering **shifting careers**, but be mindful about making a drastic switch.

**“Changing career paths** isn’t an easy thing to do in the best of times, and it can be more difficult during a time when so many people are out of work, and companies aren’t hiring as aggressively,” said Stokes. “Be capable of and experienced in a high percentage of the requirements of a job you’re applying to – or it will be harder to make a case for your eligibility. It might be smart to take a class in your desired new field, or even to seek mentorship or freelance experience.”

## 7. Recognize your accomplishments

**Self-appreciation** and recognition are vital when it comes to boosting your **confidence**.

Career strategist Melissa Llarena said that when her clients feel ignored and rejected by recruiters, she encourages them to stop undervaluing themselves. She tells job seekers to remember the success they brought to their former company.

“How much money have you brought to the table,” asks Llarena. “Every one of my clients has grossly underestimated this big number by at least 60%.

Regardless of your batting job search average, start there. Many candidates think a resume tweak is an answer, but rock-solid confidence is actually the bedrock of achieving anything worthwhile.”