

SOME COMMON JOB SEARCH CHALLENGES

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Center Logo
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Criminal records

- When incarcerated, you learned marketable trades and held jobs. Use this to the fullest benefit by creating a Combination style resume, focusing on skills and qualifications. This allows you to highlight the positive and focus on your strengths while reducing the emphasis on employment gaps. Don't forget to include "life skills" and abilities learned through volunteer work, hobbies, and involvement in teams or organizations. Make no mention of being an inmate employee. You can list your employer as New York State, the department worked in (Carpentry Dept.) or the company that holds the prison contract.
- Apply for Federal Bonding through the NYS Department of Labor. The Bonding Program issues a Fidelity bond – an insurance policy that protects the employer in case of any loss of money or property due to employee dishonesty. The bond is free to employers for six months. Bonds are typically issues for \$5,000 but may be authorized for as much as \$25,000. For more information, call 518.485.2151.

Returning to the Workforce / Gaps in Employment

- Caring for children or elderly parents
 - Divorce or death of spouse
 - Chemical dependency
 - Additional education
 - Personal illness
 - Retirement
 - Rehabilitation
- Both chronological and combination formats can be effective. The key is to highlight the positive (required skills) while minimizing the negative (gap in employment). Using volunteer or short-term positions can help fill in the dates while providing current and important skills.
 - Don't forget the importance of life skills (money management, multi-tasking, independence, flexible, organization). Do not indicate if the job was voluntary, full-time, or part-time and use years only for dates, omitting months. It is often beneficial to indicate when jobs are temporary as they are also typically short-term and helps reduce the appearance of job-hopping. Years of service can be substituted for date ranges.

Age - Too Young or Too Old

- If you are a young worker, include all experiences that helped you gain experience and knowledge including part-time and volunteer work. If you lack traditional employment, organize the resume by qualifying skills not employer.
- More experienced workers should **not** include their entire employment history. Include the most recent 15 +/- years of employment and remove older dates from the Education section. When related experiences go further than 15 years, include them in the Summary of Qualifications or Keyword Summary sections. This allows you to show your qualification without going back too far. AARP has excellent information for the older worker.

Military to Civilian Translation

- Cut and paste info from O*Net Crosswalk search, which describes military duties in detail. It is extremely helpful for converting military experience into civilian experience.

Lack of Technical Skills

- Change standard resume to electronic
- Post on a website
- Email; attachment or in the body
- create a web (site) resume

Changing Industries or Careers

- Develop a list of transferable skills (skills used in previous jobs that are necessary for your target occupation) then organize your resume around the list. You can either develop a combination style resume or a traditional chronological including a keyword summary. Either way, you need to show the reader what abilities you bring to the new occupation. As with every resume, answer the employers' question "what can you do for me"?

Lack of a Solid Career Focus

- If you don't know what you are looking for, how do you know when you find it? Job search can be overwhelming but not knowing what you are looking for makes it even more so. Learning about careers, taking Interest, Values or Abilities assessments may take time but it will also provide focus resulting in less frustration, increased success, and an eventual time savings. CareerZone or JobZone (www.labor.state.ny.us) provide online occupational information, or visit your local One Stop Career Center to ask about career decision making services. A focused marketing document will be much more effective than a generic resume.

Multiple Career Options

- A "one size fits all" resume is not the way to go. Minor adjustments to skills and qualifications will be needed as the desired position changes. Begin by ranking occupations according to your priorities (ex: opportunities, salary, interest, ease of entry). Craft a resume and conduct a job search for the most appealing opportunity by matching what you have to offer, to skills needed for success. Make sure to consider skills learned through hobbies, unrelated jobs and volunteer work.

Lack of Accomplishments

- We all have accomplishments; the challenge comes in recognizing them and presenting them in a positive way. Highlighting accomplishments, instead of responsibilities, helps your resume stand out amongst the competition. Think about employment, volunteer experience, hobbies, teams or organizations you have been involvement in.
- *Ask yourself questions* - what have you do that made you feel good; have you been selected, appreciated or recognized for something or by someone; what problems have you solved; what was your involvement in productivity, sales, or cost savings; was the job done in record time or within set time quotas; what did you contribute to; how were operations, workflow, quality or marketing improved or changed; were clients satisfied; have you taken initiative or helped others?