

Helping the Long-Term Unemployed Break through Negative Perceptions

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Date : August 7, 2012

The long-term unemployed are not a protected class in the United States. In September, 2011, the President proposed legislation that would make it unlawful to refuse to hire applicants solely because they are unemployed, but that legislation has not passed.

Long-term unemployment is a serious issues...no one is denying this. One of the characteristics of the *Great Recession* (December 2007 to June 2009) has been the unprecedented rise in long-term unemployment. In July 2012, there were 5.2 million long-term unemployed people in the United States*, accounting for 40.7% of all the unemployed. (Source: BLS, 8/3/2012)

**NOTE: Compared to 1.3 million in July 2007.*

Even though employers are hiring new workers, the fact remains that those who have been unemployed the longest may be some of the last to be hired. Currently, except for several high-skilled areas, employers have a large pool of labor from which to hire full-time workers.

It is possible to jump back into the workforce after a prolonged absence (for whatever reason...unemployment, furthering education, providing care for children and/or aging relatives, etc); it just might take a lot longer.

In many ways, you are fighting a battle of perceptions. In most cases, individual workers, who are

classified as long-term unemployed, have been productive and been highly-valued employees. The problem is that you are now part of a pool of workers that are **perceived** to be less skilled or less productive in some way. This perception is what is stigmatizing you as a worker, not your actual skills and abilities, because it is causing employers not to look more closely.

One of the best ways unemployed workers can fill a large gap on their resume (as well as network and gain additional experience) is to pursue a temporary, part-time or contract position. However, how can you help yourself stand out among the other 12.8 million unemployed job seekers? Here are some pointers:

1. **Refocus expectations.** Many of the long-term unemployed who have been interviewed by the media stated that (initially) their expectations were just too high. They expected to be offered jobs that would be comparable (or better) to the job that they lost. They turned down many offers at the beginning of their search that they considered less-than-worthy. Being offered a new job with a better title and more money would be wonderful, but (many times) it is not the case.
2. **Focus on your skills.** If you have been out of work for a long period of time, you have probably fallen behind in your skills. Technology moves too fast, so stay current. Attend seminars, read books, take online software tutorials and subscribe to newsletters and publications relevant to your industry.
3. **Focus on your interview skills.** The bottom line is that you may no longer interview well. [Snelling's website](#) has an entire section dedicated to [helping our job candidates interview well](#). Click over to learn about the [different types of interviews](#), [interview etiquette](#), etc.
4. **Once you begin your temporary assignment, understand the realities of the job market.** Employers can be very picky right now. The slightest slip-up, whether it is texting on the job or getting an order wrong, can be held against a worker in a way that may not have been true when the economy was booming.

Remember, Snelling is here to help. We understand the difficulties of the job market right now. Our offices, across the country, are working to help people re-enter the workforce. So visit [our website](#) to find your [local Snelling office](#), where one of our talented staffing managers or recruiters can help you find your best-fit job.

***NOTE:** A [full-color, downloadable PDF](#) is available.