

# The 5 Secrets to Staying Employed

By [MIRIAM SALPETER](#)

You are one of the lucky ones to land a job. But conventional wisdom suggests that a job today is no guarantee of employment tomorrow. Our economy is changing, so you can't consider yourself "finished" looking for work—even when employed. A CareerBuilder [survey](#) of more than 3,000 hiring managers and human resource professionals across industries and company sizes shows that in 2009 companies hired 28 percent more freelancers. In 2012, 36 percent of companies will hire contract or temporary workers. For years, people who study workplace trends have been predicting companies will outsource as much work as possible and hire fewer traditional employees. What does this mean for you? That you should maintain a "job search" mindset at all times.

Not surprisingly, one of the best ways to keep yourself in the game is to maintain a strong network, but not just any network; use your time while employed to create an *employer community network*. Teela Jackson, the director of talent delivery for the contract recruiting and executive search firm Talent Connections, has worked as an internal recruiting consultant for CIGNA HealthCare, Georgia-Pacific, and Turner Broadcasting. She defines an employer community as, "A group of key individuals with whom you have had personal interactions and who work in or provide services to your desired field and/or target companies; it's the group of people who could potentially hire you in the future."

She explains, "Creating an employer community can help you when you're unemployed and actively looking for a job, but it's great to focus on keeping in touch with people you've built relationships with, even after you land your job. We've all heard stories about people who built a great network during their job search, but once they land a job, they disappear ... until it's time to look for a job again. Then, they have to start almost from scratch to rekindle those relationships because they've been out of touch for years."

Don't let this happen to you. Read the writing on the wall: Maintaining a network is key to your career success.

Jackson suggests all careerists earn some "job-search insurance" by following these easy steps:

1. **Keep in touch.** This is deceptively simple; it's easy to touch base with your community via any number of social networks and email. However, everyone is busy, and unless you plan time in your schedule to keep in contact, it's easy to let months, or even years, go by without any communication. Jackson suggests, "Lay out your goals, communication frequency, and the types of information you plan to send. Start by emailing your community periodically. Touch base via networks such as LinkedIn or apps within Facebook, such as BranchOut and BeKnown. Just make sure you keep it simple, professional, and user friendly."

Think of excuses to keep in touch. Don't wait for major holidays or a new year; even minor holidays offer good excuses to send notes or cards. For example, St. Patrick's Day is just around the corner—if you have Irish friends (or fans), send a fun note to touch base. Birthdays are always good times to send warm wishes or greetings, too.

2. **Show, don't tell.** It's easy to say you have "great communication skills" or that you're a leader in your field; it's another thing to demonstrate it on a regular basis. Social media tools—including blogging, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, and Facebook—help you demonstrate your ability to gain support for an idea and to communicate well. In a competitive environment, being able to demonstrate these skills can make a difference between getting a coveted referral for a new opportunity and missing the boat.

3. **Stay on top of industry trends.** What are your field's best practices? Do you have the latest certifications? Jackson suggests you keep your knowledge fresh while adding new skills to your "toolbox," even if you are not using those skills in your current position. You may also want to consider getting involved in your professional organizations or associations—either at the local or national levels—to help keep yourself in the loop.

[See [4 Little-Known Tools for a 2012 Job Hunt.](#)]

**4. Enhance your personal brand by serving as a resource.** If you're up-to-date with what is going on in your field, but no one knows, it's not going to land you a great opportunity. Make it your business to demonstrate to your community that you have your finger on the pulse of your field. How? Share information (such as links to articles) and advice with your community. Keep an eye on industry publications, important organizations and companies, and key players. Send frequent news to contacts and potential employers to help keep you top-of-mind. Everyone appreciates a resource, and by being someone "in the know" you will maintain a strong presence. Recruiters, hiring managers, and industry leaders will be more likely to consider you when opportunities arise if you are consistently helpful.

**5. Create a community of advocates.** Often overlooked, this is one of the most important things you can do to ensure your professional success. We all know word-of-mouth is a key selling point—for job opportunities and everything else. Who will go to bat for you? How can you make sure you have fans? Jackson suggests going above and beyond what someone would normally do for a colleague. She notes, "If you genuinely offer to assist members of your employer community, for example, by helping them make valuable connections, referring sharp candidates to them, or by offering your time to help with a project, you will earn professional bonus points. These employers will be more likely to contact you about the best jobs first."

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