



Finding Work in Your Pajamas

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There are two fundamental approaches to looking for employment: one is a passive approach and the other is a more proactive approach. Most of us need to adopt a bit of both.

The passive approach is the one you can take on, quite literally, in your pajamas. With today's on-line job sites and Internet social networks, you can look for, and apply for, work anywhere, anytime with just the press of a button. It's a great place to begin. It forces you to update your résumé, define and select appropriate employment categories and research the current job market. If you have access to a computer, it costs virtually nothing to upload your information and then hang about waiting to be found.

As I have said, this is a great beginning. However at some point, you will likely have to shed your jammies and combine your on-line presence with a more active approach.

Here are a few suggestions to help you get started:

1. Rewrite your script.

First and foremost, you must tell yourself that you have a job. You do. Your job is to find paid work. Immediately, this acknowledgement requires you to change your inner dialogue and outward responses. Read the following examples:

Jack runs into Jill at the supermarket.

Jill: Hi Jack. What are you up to these days?

Jack: I got laid off. (Think Eeyore from *Winnie the Pooh*!)

Jill: Sorry to hear—good luck with that.

Jill goes back to squeezing melons.

Jane runs into Dick at the supermarket.

Dick: Hey Jane, what are you up to these days. I haven't seen you around.

Jane: Well, I'm very busy looking for work.

Dick: What are you interested in?

Jane: I'd like to get back into public relations or advertising.

Dick: A friend of my cousin's just opened a new agency on Trill Street, I could give her a call if you like.

Jane: That would be great! Thanks so much. Give my best to the family.

See the difference? Jack is all about what happened to him. Jane is all about what she is actively doing.

2. Go to work.

You are a professional job seeker and, therefore, you need to create a proper work schedule. That means deciding how many days per week and how many hours per day you will work at looking for work. During those times, you are unavailable for coffee mornings with your Bridge club, you

are not going to be distracted by unwashed dishes in the sink, and you promise to answer your phone in a professional-sounding manner (not, 'yep').

How you use those designated hours is up to you. It's not as though you can possibly run out of things to do until you actually land a position.

Here are a few suggestions to get your started:

- Apply for at least one on-line job per week.

This forces you to refine your application letter, tweak your résumé and put yourself out there. It doesn't have to be the dream job. It doesn't even have to be something you would necessarily undertake—until you are offered the position, that is the *least* of your worries! Use the process to get exposure. Maybe someone reading your application will think of some other position that might be more suitable for you. At the very least, they will know your name.

- Work at the work you would like to do.

You may have to do it for free, or volunteer with a local organization ... but just get out there and do it. (I'm a writer, but do you think I'm being paid to write these columns?)

- Find at least one personal skill you can market.

It doesn't have to be related to your ultimate career. If you are an under-employed accountant who loves golf, perhaps you can offer golf lessons to youngsters. Perhaps you could do yard work for the elderly, tutor a student, prepare meals for shut-ins ... and so on and so forth. The purpose of this marketing project is to get you out there, selling yourself and doing something productive. Drop off pamphlets, take advantage of free classified advertising, tell your friends, etc. Don't ever let the world forget about you!

3. Dress the part.

Here's Jill again. She's wearing sloppy sweat pants, an oversized sweater, old running shoes and no make up. She's in a line up at her local bank when she runs into a former colleague, Travis.

Travis: I didn't see you at the AGM this year, what are you up to these days?

Jill: Well, I'm hoping to get back to work.

Travis: Oh really? What sort of work?

Jill: Marketing, public relations, that kind of thing – hopefully in a well-established agency.

Much to Travis' relief he is immediately called to the next available cashier.

See ya!

Superficial as this may sound, costuming is important. Don't you think Travis would take Jill far more seriously if she at least looked the part she is aspiring to? It's important, no matter where you are, to look the part you want to play—you never know whom you might run into. If you look professional, tidy and well put together, people will notice, remember and take you far more seriously—they will also notice and remember if you look like a bag lady.

4. Tell everyone you know!

This is very important—**tell everyone you know and meet that you are actively seeking employment.** Don't look like a victim—look like someone who, if hired on the spot, would be ready for action immediately.

In summary, yes, you might find work in your pajamas. However, you owe it to yourself to use ALL the tools available to you. These include the Internet; your friends, colleagues and family; your skills; your hobbies; and, most importantly, your wits and your charms!

Yes, you have a job. You're just not getting paid for it ... yet!