

What have you been doing since your last job?

Losing your job is one of the most stressful events that people experience. Being made redundant can knock your confidence, put pressure on your personal relationships and just as you're learning to come to terms with it, you're expected to perform well in interviews and convince employers that you are their ideal candidate.

For anyone with a gap on their CV, you should expect to be asked in interview what you've been doing since your last job. This can potentially be an emotionally charged question if you've been job searching for a while. So to make sure you have a good answer ready I have given a few pointers that will help you answer in a positive, constructive manner.

Positive Attitude

Being laid off can lead to negative feelings and it's important to work through these feelings before starting your job search.

Employers will always look to hire somebody with a positive attitude – somebody who will add energy to a team and look for creative solutions to problems, a person who will develop good relationships with clients and customers.....in essence a person who is passionate about their role cares about the future of the company.

This is going to be an important issue particularly if you are feeling that you need to get a job, any job, to help make ends meet. If your approach is - "I am applying for this role because I need to pay the mortgage ..." employers will see this and may be put off. If you approach your application with a positive outlook you will have a much better chance of getting the role.

Job Search

Certainly, you may want to reply that since your last position you've been searching flat out for new positions, but you must be careful not to show frustration with your job search. Instead, you might want to say that you been focused in your job search and want to ensure that your skill set closely fits the employer's requirements. By doing this, you will reassure the interviewer that you have a specific interest in their role and would be committed to their company. You need to get the message across that you are interested in "this job", and not just in any old job!

Upskilling

When you're looking for a new position, use your time wisely. By structuring your days and keeping your skills updated, you're not only making yourself more attractive to a future employer, you'll probably feel better about yourself as you take control of your new situation. This positive attitude will give you a competitive edge in interview. Upskilling could include keeping up to date with trade magazines and industry trends, improving your IT skills or even enrolling on a post graduate course.

Volunteering

Doing some "voluntary" work is both a good way of "giving something back" whilst continuing to develop your skills. You could do some work in your area of expertise – for example, if you're an accountant you could sign up as the treasurer in a local charity. If you work in an unrelated field this could be the opportunity to develop other qualities such as leadership, project management skills, etc. Although looking for a job should be seen as a full time job in itself, it's important to look at the bigger picture. This may be one of the few times in your life that you'll have an extended period of free time; use it wisely. In addition to job hunting, try and do something fun or that you've always dreamed of – take up ball room dancing, yoga, martial arts....the choices are endless.

Doing Contract Work

Many people will only consider a full time, permanent role. In a slow market place, the traditional permanent, pensionable job may be more difficult to get. Taking a number of short term contracts is a good way of keeping your skills fresh. It can also be a way to learn new skills – for instance, learning a new IT system or getting more people management experience. Contracting also offers another valuable benefit - it builds up your contact base. By impressing a company, they may be happy to recommend you to clients. Also, there's always the possibility of a contract turning into a permanent position.

Conclusion

To shine in any interview, you must turn weakness into strengths. When asked what you've been doing since your last job; by showing concrete examples of how you've been developing your talents, learning new skills, and keeping yourself busy, you can turn the question around and show your future boss that you're energetic, have initiative and constantly looking to learn and develop.in essence that you are the ideal candidate!

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