

How to Find a Bridge Job Second Career

Start planning now for the bridge job that will take you into retirement.

By [Rodney Brooks](#), Contributor May 22, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.



THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic has already had a huge impact on the way Americans live and work, and many of those changes could be long-lasting. Millions of Americans have been [laid off](#) and furloughed, and with an uncertain job market, many older workers will be [forced into early retirement](#).

For some early retirees, that means an opportunity to switch to more rewarding jobs or careers. But it will take a bit of planning to find a [bridge job](#).

Here are some tips to launch a second career:

- Be proactive.
- Follow your passions.
- Determine if your skills can be redeployed for new job opportunities.
- Create a budget.
- Consider opportunities at your current employer.
- Use your network of contacts.
- Don't be afraid to go back to school.

1. Be Proactive

If you see a layoff coming, don't sit on your hands and wait. Do research and reach out to your network about where there might be openings. "Before, (older clients) were hoping they wouldn't be laid off," says Christopher McMahon, CEO of MFA Wealth in Pittsburgh. "Now I'm seeing people trying to be more proactive about it. It's a need for control, to stay relevant. Corporate America is getting younger and is quicker to lay off huge swaths of workers." It can be useful to start thinking about potential bridge jobs before the next round of layoffs or corporate restructuring.

2. Follow Your Passions

If you are no longer supporting children or paying a mortgage, you may not need to replace your former salary. Instead, you can look for a [second career](#) that matches your interests. "It's kind of like the career advice you got when you started out as a kid," says Kathy Kristof, editor of Sidehusl.com, which rates websites that offer freelance and part-time job opportunities. "Hopefully you can follow your passions, especially if you don't need to earn as much as you earned previously."

3. Determine if Your Skills Can Be Redeployed for New Job Opportunities

You might be able to use your existing skills in a new way. "Figure out the need in the marketplace for what you want to do or something akin to what you want to do," Kristoff says. "If there is enough of a need that people will pay for your services, you've got a second act."

McMahon says he has several clients who left finance jobs in their early 50s after a corporate buyout and then took income tax classes to become tax preparers. "They're probably making 30% of what they were making in corporate finance, but their kids are out of college and their housing costs are going down. They are able to live

comfortably," McMahon says. "They are just doing it to make it until 65, but my guess is neither guy will stop at 65."

4. Create a Budget

Figure out how much you need to earn to continue to pay your bills. Creating a [budget](#) can help you determine if part-time or seasonal work is enough to bridge the gap. "What kind of pay do you need? Do you need to pay a mortgage? Or is this money that will keep you from having to dip into your retirement savings?" asks Kerry Hannon, author of "Never Too Old to Get Rich: The Entrepreneur's Guide to Starting a Business Mid-Life." "If you don't have debt, you have more flexibility." You might want a part-time job that doesn't pay as much as you are used to making, but offers more flexibility and a more favorable schedule.

5. Don't Rule Out Your Current Employer

Some companies do layoffs and then offer some of those former employees temporary or project work. "It will not disturb your severance package, and it is a nice soft landing," McMahon says. While it could be emotionally difficult to work for a company that just laid you off, it could be useful to have some cash coming in until you can find another position.

6. Use Your Network of Contacts

Knowing someone who works at a company can help you initiate an interview and even get hired. "Go to your LinkedIn profile and find out who you know who works at those companies," Hannon says. "To get information or to land an interview, it's who you know. A very small percentage of people get a position by blindly sending out resumes."

7. Don't Be Afraid to Go Back to School

Taking classes can help you change careers and meet more people. McMahon says a number of his clients have gone [back to school](#) as a bridge to new jobs and careers. A person who sold industrial paints and resins took science classes and became a dentist and a former banker went back to school before becoming an adjunct professor. "Today, at 61, he has a full-time faculty position teaching business classes," McMahon says. Acquiring new skills and contacts in the classroom can lead to a second career in a new field.

