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Find a job in a tough economy

Three out-of-work professionals get makeovers from a team of four top career experts. Result: One master plan for each, full of smart strategies to find a job in a tough market. Their advice can boost your prospects too.



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By Paul Keegan, Money Magazine contributing writer
Last Updated: June 23, 2009: 12:28 PM ET

(Money Magazine) -- In today's challenging economy, odds are you belong to one of two camps: You have already lost your job or you're worried that you could. Either way, you're feeling the stress of the highest unemployment rate in more than a quarter of a century and wondering what you should be doing now to improve your career prospects.

Enter Team Money, a blue-chip panel of career and financial experts that we've assembled to provide insights and strategies to help you navigate today's trying job market.

Their mission: to give three accomplished professionals, each unemployed for several months, head-to-toe makeovers that will help them land great jobs. Our goal: to not only help our three subjects find work but to provide you with valuable job advice as well.

We chose our panel - career coach Roy Cohen, executive recruiter John Ferneborg, image consultant Sandy Dumont, and financial planner Donald Lord (see their bios at right) - because of their outstanding track records advising people during difficult times.

And each of our makeover subjects has indeed had real struggles of late.

Raul Camejo, 45, had always been in high demand as an internal auditor - until just before he was laid off earlier this year, when calls from recruiters suddenly dried up.

Marketing executive Jane Garcin, 51, put her job search on hold in August to care for her dying mother; by the time Garcin began looking in earnest at the beginning of this year, the economy had tanked.

Project-management specialist Robert Bertrand, 62, thought he had planned his retirement perfectly so that he could compete on the Senior Professional Golf Tour. He got to live his dream for three years. But when his wife lost her job and his stock options evaporated in the market crash, he was suddenly back hunting in a market that has little interest in older workers, no matter how experienced they are.

While this trio of professionals may be temporarily down, however, they're certainly not out - of the running for good jobs, that is. And the strategies our experts suggest in the pages that follow may be just the extra boost these job seekers need to land the right position.

Among the insights the pros will share with them - and you: how to organize the job hunt, broaden your network, dress for interviews (hint: don't wear black), keep from getting low-balled on salary, and manage your finances without a steady income.

The process may not be quick - studies show it takes at least four to six months for the average professional or middle manager to get the job he or she wants. But there is reason to be hopeful. Despite today's grim headlines, the fact remains that millions of people are hired each month - 4.2 million during March alone.

"There are good jobs out there," says Ferneborg. "You just have to know where to look and how to go after them."

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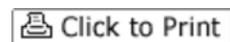
Got a question about your job search for our experts? Send your questions to realstories@cnnmoney.com and they could be answered in an upcoming story. ■

First Published: June 22, 2009: 5:51 AM ET

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