

3 Unconventional Roads to Finding Your Dream Job

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Are you looking for a career that will give you a sense of fulfillment, as well as a paycheck? You might get lucky and find your dream job through your current network or a job board.

However, you might have to put more thought into your search when you raise your expectations higher.

A recent Gallup poll found that only about 13% of full-time employees consider their jobs meaningful. With that in mind, it's worth considering what tradeoffs you're willing to make.

You might decide to make your family and leisure activities your main priorities or you might still want to pour your passions into your career. Experimenting with these unconventional job search methods can help you discover your dream job or expand your options.

The Volunteer Road:

- 1. Offer your services.** Find an interesting charity and approach them with a proposal for how you can get involved. Focus on a specific project or ask them about their needs. You can pick a group you already support or contact a local clearinghouse.
- 2. Develop your skills. Use volunteering to add to your portfolio or branch out in new directions.** Your service hours can also help you to develop soft skills, especially if you have little previous work experience.

3. **Assume responsibility.** Take your activities as seriously as any paid jobs. Follow through on your commitments and impress others with your professionalism.
4. **Think long term.** What if the nonprofit you choose has no immediate hiring plans? Be sure to stay in touch in case things change. You may also find valuable leads as you network with staff members and other volunteers.
5. **Be transparent.** It's okay to let others know that you're looking for paid work while you volunteer. That way they can keep you in mind if they hear of anything promising.

The Encore Career Road:

1. **Accept your age.** You may have more flexibility now if your mortgage is paid off and your kids are grown. While age discrimination is a serious issue, **there are plenty of places where your wisdom and experience will be an asset.**
2. **Do your research.** If you're moving into a new field, ensure that you understand the requirements. Browse online and talk with experts. Ask about the income potential and whether you'll need additional qualifications.
3. **Leverage your strengths.** Fortunately, many skills are transferable. Focus on how to build on your past achievements. Ask your current network contacts for feedback and referrals.
4. **Continue learning.** You can further your education without going back to school full time. Read books and industry publications. Sign up for courses online.

The Wide Net Road:

1. **Help others.** You can find job leads anywhere. However, you want to be sensitive to others when you're in a nonbusiness setting. If you focus on being of service, you're less likely to seem too pushy.
2. **Strategize carefully. Be open to unusual opportunities without wasting time on tasks that provide little return.** Track your activities so you can concentrate on your most effective options.
3. **Brand yourself.** Authenticity will help you to communicate more successfully. You'll increase your chances of finding a situation that aligns with your goals and dreams.
4. **Practice and persevere.** You may need to be patient when you're casting a wide net or using any unusual job search method. Your efforts will pay off if you're willing to take risks and overcome obstacles.

You'll probably spend about one-third of your life at work. Being innovative about your career path will help you to make those hours more rewarding. In addition to using job boards and recruiters, try less conventional search methods that may uncover rewarding opportunities.