

# SIX WAYS TO OVERCOME ANY EMPLOYMENT BARRIER

Everyone has barriers to employment. To overcome yours, think like the employers you want to work for, identify and prove you are an ideal candidate in terms of ability as well as presentation, dependability, motivation attitude, and network too (these are the six reasons you'll get hired ... or not), then discover anything that may be used by employers (or you) to screen you out, and create solutions using these six tools. For more on how to discover and overcome your employment barriers, get "The 6 Reasons You'll Get the Job" by Debra Angel MacDougall & Elisabeth Harney Sanders-Park.

## PRIOR TO YOUR SEARCH

**Change Your Job TARGET** – Rather than change something about yourself, target opportunities for which the issue is non-issue or even be a strength. Choose a different title (the skills you use), industry, company type, location, etc. This works well for barriers you can't or don't want to change, like age, gender, education, lack of transportation, criminal record, appearance, lifestyle, and speech patterns.

## PRIOR TO INTERACTING WITH EMPLOYERS

**Access a RESOURCE** – Resolve the issue by getting an item, information, or a service, like a child care, interview clothing, education or certification, counseling, a list of local companies in your industry, or a haircut. Make use of the resource and employers don't need to know it was an issue.

**Learn a SKILL** – Learn a new skill to remove little issues that make a big difference in the hiring decision like eye contact, being on time, reducing a dialect, accent or slang, or shaking hands. When interacting with employers, demonstrate these skills. If you must find a resource to learn some hard skills for the job (software platform, heavy lifting techniques), learn the skill and be ready to tell employers you've got it.

**Adjust Your OUTLOOK** – What you believe matters! If you think, "No one will hire me," "I'm too...," "There are no good jobs," etc. you may hold yourself back. Notice your stinkin' thinkin', explore new ways of thinking, change your self-talk, and choose new ways of moving forward. "I'm too old," becomes "People my age are landing jobs. I've got strong experience and current skills. I need to target the right companies and show my value."

## DURING EMPLOYER INTERACTIONS

**Adjust the Employer's PERSPECTIVE** – In the hiring process, you will be lumped in with 'people like you,' for better and worse – recent grads with valuable knowledge and/or no real world experience, older workers with strong work ethic and/or outdated skills. You can't change negative assumptions during your search, but you can be the 'exception to the rule.' Demonstrate and explain to employers how you are positively different.

**Craft A Good ANSWER** – Even with a new attitude, target, or skill, some barriers will be noticeable and distracting to employers, so craft good, honest answers to share when the employer asks a direct question (employment gaps, criminal conviction, changing industries) or when you need to acknowledge and address an unspoken question (age, gender, pregnancy). A good answer both reduces the employer's concerns, and allows you to prove you can do the job well.

# A SAMPLE: Overcoming Bad Credit History

THE ISSUE | THE TOOLS | THE SOLUTION

## Change Your Job Target

Target companies that do not do credit checks.

Many companies do not choose to use your personal credit history to measure whether you are right for the job. To identify these companies, do a survey, talk to a local staffing company, or approach small and mid-sized companies which are less likely to invest the time and money a credit check requires. Craft a good answer just in case it comes up.

## Access A Resource

Run your own credit report so you know what employers will see, then decide how to use the other solution tools to resolve the issue.

Get credit counseling or take a class to show your commitment and growing ability to fix the situation.

Find someone a credible person to vouch for your responsibility and commitment to repair your credit. This may be a mentor, a credit coach, or someone else the employer respects who can write a letter of explanation or recommendation you can present if needed.

## Learn A New Skill

Learn how to... fix your credit by getting credit counseling or personal finance education, find companies that don't do credit checks, present yourself in ways that reduce employers' negative assumptions about your maturity, stability, organization, math skills, money sense, etc., and/or share your story in a way that calms employer concerns and shows you can do the job.

Learn to discover whether and when a credit check will be done. Curiously ask, "If I am considered a top candidate, what would be the next steps? Second interviews, background checks, reference checks? I'm curious." Once you prove your value and the credit check is impending, mention that ... (see good answer)

## Adjust Your Outlook

Rather than get defeated, remind yourself that lots of mature responsible Americans are in the same position these days, and focus on the solution.

Hear positive stories about how others dealt with this issue in their job search by asking trusted friends, talking with an employment coach or staffing professional, and watching the media.

Rather than getting frustrated or defensive, empathize with employers who are trying to make an important decision and prepare to share your story.

## Adjust the Employer's Perception

Behave in ways to combat their negative assumptions about "people with bad credit," and in ways that maturity, responsibility, stability, money sense, basic math skills (especially if needed for the job), personal responsibility, pro-activity, problem-solving, and more.

Consider how you are the exception to the negative assumptions about 'people with bad credit' and prepare to briefly share your story so the employer sees you not as 'one of those people,' but as an individual about whom the negative assumptions are not true. You want them to think ... "People with bad credit are irresponsible and not hard-working, but s/he has simply fallen on hard times and is working hard to make it right. Plus, s/he's got talent we need."

## Craft A Good Answer

Acknowledge the concern or welcome the question, share what happened (briefly), share what you have learned and how you have changed, paint a positive picture of your life today, then transition to your job qualifications.

*"My personal credit has always been important to me, yet like so many people, right now mine is not what I want it to be. When you do a check, you may find distracting blemishes, but know that I am working to improve it. I'd hate to lose this opportunity over it, so please ask questions if you need to. I tend to be honest and pro-active about things, and you'll find that in my work too. Also, I am really excited about the chance to ..." (re-focus on your talent, passion, and qualifications for the job.*

**BAD  
CREDIT  
HISTORY**