

# How to overcome the hurdles of finding a job in a recession

If you're looking for work now, you might be facing extra obstacles or challenges as the job market becomes tougher for many job seekers. Market changes from COVID-19 have pushed New Zealand into its first recession since the global financial crisis.

There are three common concerns people find when they look for work right now: facing a crowded job market, a longer job search and finding it hard to get the right benefits or pay.

Leah Lambart, career coach at [Relaunch Me](#) gives some practical tips to overcome these hurdles, so you can get on track to finding the job for you.

## When the job market seems crowded

With many people losing jobs due to the impact of COVID-19, there's been a lot of change in the job market.

Three out of four people believe that the job market is now more crowded since the pandemic began, research conducted for SEEK reveals.

This kind of environment makes it even more important to look at how you can stand out when you're applying for a role so that you can yourself the best chance of getting employers' attention.

Here are three strategies to help you stand out:

- **Tailor every application to the role**

With a much higher volume of candidates, naturally the job market will be more competitive, Lambart says.

That's why it's important to tailor each application to the role you're applying for, rather than send out the same cover letter and resume for multiple jobs.

"With many highly qualified and experienced candidates in the pool, [a personalised and tailored cover letter](#) is one strategy that you can use to stand out from the masses."

- **Make sure your resume is at its best**

With the important role it plays, you want to make sure your resume is working as hard as possible to help you stand out. That means [highlighting your achievements, not just your responsibilities in previous roles](#), and [putting your resume to the test before you submit it](#).

The importance of a clear layout can't be underestimated. Make sure your cover letter

and resume are well-formatted and well-structured so they catch the eye of the employer straight away, Lambart says.

“Resumes should be well structured with lots of bold headings, bullet points and white space that make it easier to read.”

- **Use your network**

Using your network is important, too, and it's [still possible to create and connect with your network online](#). If you have any internal contacts within companies, they can help you with a recommendation, or even just provide information about the company to help you better understand what they're looking for.

“An internal referral will go a long way when organisations are facing a high level of uncertainty.”

**Read more:** [How to stand out in a crowded job market](#)

## When your job search takes time

In a crowded job market, it can take longer to find the right role. In fact, four out of five people think it will take them longer to find a job than before COVID-19.

- **Look after yourself**

If your job search is taking longer than you expect, try to maintain a positive frame of mind, Lambart says.

Keeping up a healthy lifestyle will help your mental health and confidence. That's important if you've been made redundant or your job search has hit dead ends, because your confidence can take a battering. The longer you're out of the job market for any reason, the harder it can feel to return to work.

That's why doing things that make you feel good is important. “Find activities outside the job search that keep your energy levels up – even a daily walk with the dog, a jog or keeping in touch with friends can help us to continue to feel better about ourselves.”

**Read more:** [5 ways to look after your mental health while job hunting](#)

- **Don't take silence personally**

With a higher volume of candidates in the market, recruiters may be dealing with more applications than usual. That means they're less likely to respond to your application, Lambart says.

“It is really important that candidates are prepared for this and don’t take it personally. This happens to many candidates, even highly qualified and experienced candidates in the prime of their career.”

Of course, it can be really disheartening not to hear back when you’ve put time into applying, but you can follow up: [here's what to do when you don't hear back on a job application](#)

- **Find a cheer squad**

Having [family and friends around you to act as your cheerleaders](#) can really help you stay positive and motivated, too. “Ask your support team to help keep you accountable when you are losing motivation and to remind you of what you do well when you start to lose confidence,” Lambart suggests.

## **When it’s harder to get the pay and benefits you want**

Three out of four people feel that it’s harder for them to negotiate their salary with prospective employers. If you’re in that situation, here’s what to consider:

- **Weigh up your values**

With growing financial pressures, employers may offer lower salaries or pay. Decide what’s important to you: Do you value job security or a higher income? Are you willing to take a pay cut if it means landing a job, or will you be able to hold off finding a job that meets all of your criteria?

“Many people may need to consider whether they are willing to accept a job with a lower rate of pay in order to get back into the job market,” Lambart says.

“People may need to compromise if they want to find work quickly, but I also recommend that they don’t aim too low.”

**Read more:** [What matters to you more than money.](#)

- **Consider what you want outside of money**

If the pay or salary you’re aiming for isn’t available, there are other options to think about. Of course, money is essential and it’s important to know your worth.

But other incentives or benefits such as increased flexibility, additional leave or support for training you’d like to undertake may make a job with lower pay than you’d hoped for more viable. [Here are some ways of negotiating non-financial rewards.](#)

## Take small steps

Rather than putting pressure on yourself to find a job by a certain date, look at what small, practical steps you can break your job search down into – that might be updating your resume today, then applying for two jobs next week. Allow yourself the time to do things that support your wellbeing along the way.

If you've become disheartened in your job search, remember you're not alone – many people are finding the job market tougher now. But by recognising the challenges you're facing, you can start using these tactics to help you overcome obstacles and get on track to finding your next role.

*Source: Independent research involving interviews with 4000 Kiwis, conducted by Nature of behalf of SEEK. Published October 2020.*

## Read more:

- [How to avoid standing out for the wrong reasons](#)
- [I've lost my job. How can I cope and move forward?](#)
- [Why your personal brand is so important now – and how to build it](#)