

"I'M TAKING CHARGE OF MY CAREER!"

ESSENCE HELPS THREE READERS UNCOVER THE TOOLS TO GET THEM OUT OF A CAREER RUT AND INTO THE JOB OF THEIR DREAMS (PART 1 OF A SERIES)

BY ERICKA SÓUTER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOSEA JOHNSON



These women are ready for a career change.

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The key to changing your career trajectory is to define what you really want, pair that with your skills and then get some expert advice. ESSENCE is ready to help you meet the challenge of landing your next dream job by sharing the stories of three readers—one unemployed, one underemployed and one desperate to switch careers—who are ready to do what it takes to land a great gig in 2012. Our team of success experts—career management guru Ginny Clarke, reinvention specialist Pamela Mitchell, career and life coach Marsha Haygood, financial media commentator Ryan Mack and mind-set specialist Valorie Burton—is on board to help readers just like you forge a new career path. Follow the progress of our three readers in the July and November issues and check in on ESSENCE.com over the next seven months to glean ideas from their transformations. Let's get started!

The Displaced Professional

MARTHA BUCKNER, 56
New York City

"I FELT SAD, empty and scared," Martha Buckner says of the day she was downsized three years ago from a New York City-based multimedia company. A self-professed news junkie, she had prepped for a career in journalism since she was a little girl playing roving reporter. "Whenever something happened, I'd say, 'Daddy, I'll find out what's going on and come back and tell you.'" As a general assignment reporter/anchor and producer for a cable company and a major market radio station for more than 20 years, she did just that. "My job was wonderful," says Buckner.

After being downsized, Buckner took a few days to gather her thoughts and craft a game plan. First, she reviewed her finances. "I had to figure out how long I could be in this

mess," she says. "I had enough in the bank for two years."

Up early every morning, she thumbed through her huge Rolodex of industry contacts, some of whom offered job leads, but none resulted in full-time work. "I've sent out close to 800 résumés in the last three years, and the first 150 yielded just one interview," she says. One possible hurdle: her age. During a phone interview, one hiring manager said, "You are exactly what we're looking for," she recalls. "But when I arrived, her face dropped as I walked toward her. I know that it was about my age because she hired four of my former colleagues—all younger."

Buckner, who has since burned through \$60,000 in retirement savings, says, "I used to think it's who you know, but there isn't anyone I haven't called." ▸



"To find a full-time position at my level."

THE DILEMMA

Despite her drive, Buckner lacks focus. "She may have sent out 800 résumés, but half of those were probably for roles she wasn't qualified for or interested in," says Buckner's career coach, Ginny Clarke, president and CEO of Talent Optimization Partners in Chicago. "She needs to ask herself what real skills she has and what she really loves to do." And she has to network strategically: "Instead of saying, 'Hey, you know me, help me out!' She needs to say, 'I want to talk to you because I'm interested in working at this company, in this function, and I would like you to make an introduction or a referral.'"

THE ASSESSMENT

Buckner talks to a lot of people, but is she listening? asks Valorie Burton, a certified personal and executive life coach. "She needs to actively seek feedback and use it to grow. Three years is a long time to go without finding a job. She must evaluate if there's anything else going on." Buckner, who has had nightmares about being homeless, also needs to keep a spending diary and a tight budget, warns Ryan Mack, author of *Living in the Village: Build Your Financial Future and Strengthen Your Community* (St. Martin's Griffin). "She has to stay in saving mode," he advises.

THE ACTION PLAN

Sharpen her focus. To make ends meet, Buckner works part-time as an ESL teacher and is involved in many projects, like pitching ideas to networks. "We are trying to fix a meal here; she needs to focus," says Clarke.

Jot down skills. Buckner is interested in either production or reporting, but she also has a passion for event planning and decorating. She should write down all the skills needed for different types of jobs in those industries. "That's how we are going to market her," says Clarke.

Be strategic. Applying for more jobs isn't always better. Buckner's next task is to make a list of job postings on career sites that she is qualified for to increase the chance of getting a callback.

Required Reading: *Career Mapping: Charting Your Course in the New World of Work* by Ginny Clarke and Echo Garrett (Morgan James).

DEAR DIARY...

"Yes, I spent my Saturday evening at Starbucks reading my coach's book. It's an assessment and a plan. I started the assignment. Job hunting has been difficult at best, but I'm not going to let that deter me. I'm letting my heart and mind guide me. Job Hunt 2012 is in full swing!"

—Martha Buckner

THE COACHES

WITH THE HELP OF THESE GURUS, OUR READERS ARE CHARTING A NEW COURSE



GINNY CLARKE
CEO, Talent Optimization Partners



VALORIE BURTON
Founder, The CaPP Institute, INSPIRE, Inc.



PAMELA MITCHELL
Founder, The Reinvention Institute



RYAN MACK
President, Optimum Capital Management



MARSHA HAYGOOD
President, StepWise Associates, LLC

COURTESY OF SUBJECTS



"To match my education and skill set to my job."

DEAR DIARY...

"My career coach said something that really resonated. She said it's important to know your worth. I really focused on that as I tried to identify the skills I have that I tend to disregard. Those skills could be potential career boosters. I might take them for granted, but those skills may be just what my next employer is looking for." —Kristie Wilder

The Recent Grad Student

KRISTIE WILDER, 26
Macon, Georgia

"I DID EVERYTHING RIGHT, so why am I barely making it?" says Kristie Wilder. Indeed, she's done what we've always been told is a surefire recipe for success: Get a college education. Armed with a degree in economics from Fort Valley State University, she landed a job in finance after graduation and pulled in \$30,000 a year. When the banking industry collapsed in 2008, she looked at it as an opportunity to move into a more stable career. Interested in demography, the study of how populations change, she went back to grad school at Florida State. However, when she completed her master's degree in 2010, job prospects were bleak. "I would get callbacks, but then the dreaded e-mail, 'I'm sorry but...'" she recalls. Feeling pressured from others to take a job, any job, Wilder eventually took a full-time position doing billing work for a document services company and a part-time job as a

sales associate at a clothing store. Now earning \$15,000 after taxes, she says, "My expenses still exceed my income." Her student loans alone, which will soon come out of deferment, will be \$700 a month. Rent is currently \$558, her car note is \$333, and her utilities cost \$100. "I'm miserable, but my friends say it's better than not working at all," she says. "I disagree. It sounds crazy, but I feel like maybe I could have volunteered my time in the area of demography and gained some more experience rather than waste away, like I am now. I am angry I put so much time and money into education and I can't even afford to pay for it."

She's not alone. According to the U.S. Labor Department, employment rates for college grads have taken a dive in the last few years, and only half of the jobs they land require a college degree. "What I'm doing isn't working," says Wilder. "I'm ready to try something else." ▸

▶ THE DILEMMA

Poor planning has been Wilder's biggest hurdle. Her career coach, Marsha Haygood, president of StepWise Associates, LLC, in New York, says Wilder should have researched the jobs she could get with a master's in demography. Did she know any demographers? What companies hired them? The situation has left her pessimistic. "And telling yourself that this is not fair fuels bitterness," adds Burton. "Thoughts are critical; it'll take some courage to change them."

▶ THE ASSESSMENT

"To land a job, you have to do more than browse job boards," says Haygood. "Before something is even posted, [the recruiters] are thinking about someone they have already met." To make an impression, Wilder needs to highlight her impressive—yet largely unused—skill set. A demographer must have top-notch research and quantitative skills, and that is what Wilder should be pitching. Unrealistic expectations may also have been holding her back. "I asked her where she wanted to be," says Haygood. "Kristie wants a job where she continues to move ahead, but first the company needs her to do a certain job and that is what she has to give them."

▶ THE ACTION PLAN

Leverage skills. Instead of saying that "demography" is her job of choice, she needs to display her skills and explain how they can be useful to an employer.

Determine the demand. Wilder must pinpoint companies and organizations that need her special set of skills. She should begin with listings of the best companies for women and minorities.

Study up. Once Wilder identifies companies of interest, she needs to find out who works there, research competitors and put the company on Google Alerts.

Required Reading: *The Little Black Book of Success: Laws of Leadership for Black Women* by Elaine Meryl Brown, Marsha Haygood and Rhonda Joy McLean (One World/Ballantine).



“To make a career switch.”

The Career Changer

JENNIFER EARLEY, 32
Silver Spring, Maryland

WHEN JENNIFER EARLEY hints at the fact that she is not fulfilled by her job with the six-figure salary, family members all have the same response: Who needs passion when you are getting paid! "But that's not who I am," says Earley, a brand manager at a nutritional supplement company. "What I like about it is that even though we're global, I get to use a lot of different skills."

But trying to transition

to her ideal gig—working for a luxury lifestyle brand like Louis Vuitton or Apple—has been far from easy. With the majority of her eight-year career focused in health care, "I have to follow my dreams," says Earley, who has an M.B.A. from Western Michigan University. Since deciding to make the switch last spring, Earley has applied to several job openings to no avail. "No one is giving me a chance

on a lifestyle brand," she says. "These companies want someone who already has classic brand experience."

While she continues to thrive in her current job, even earning a promotion in January 2011, Earley's inability to make the switch to a high-profile brand has taken an emotional toll. "Some mornings are rough, but the reality is I'm blessed because there are people out here without jobs," she says. "But I'm usually able to turn my thinking around. I try to look at this as a stepping stone."

For support along the road to career transformation, Earley turns to a group of girlfriends who call themselves the Dream Team. "These women are my support when I get frustrated," she says. "We all have dreams. Mine is that I just want to work on a product that people live and breathe for, a brand that is a part of the culture. But so far the doors have not opened."

DEAR DIARY...

"As I dive deeper

into the book

my career coach

authored, I am

truly inspired by

the stories of others

who dropped the

excuses, stepped out

on faith and pur-

sued their goals."

—Jennifer Earley

▶ THE DILEMMA

Earley is a marketing whiz, so now she needs to figure out how to sell her skill set. With an M.B.A. and years of success at her current company, leaping to a luxe brand is not an insurmountable goal. "This is more of a translation issue that she is having," says Earley's career coach, Pamela Mitchell, founder and CEO of The Reinvention Institute in Florida. "She can really use the same talents that have made her a success in her current job." She is hitting roadblocks because potential employers don't understand how that previous experience relates to what she is looking to do.

▶ THE ASSESSMENT

"The people in the glamour industries she's targeting want to know that she's got the chops to be a part of that," says Mitchell. That could be as simple as demonstrating how her work on a successful initiative or campaign relates to the goals of these luxury brands. Earley should also be aware that the grass isn't always greener at a new company, warns Mitchell. Adds Burton: "I would really love to see her get into a different mind-set. She's highly successful; she should be proud."

▶ THE ACTION PLAN

Don't go in blind. Before Earley starts looking for new positions, Mitchell advised her to speak to industry insiders to get a sense of what it's really like to work at one of the coveted luxury brands.

Narrow the niche. "There's a very big difference between Apple and Louis Vuitton," says Mitchell. "She really has to target herself toward her area of interest, then build her story for that particular industry."

Go glam. Since Earley wants to work for a high-end brand, she has to look the part. Stress caused her to gain 55 pounds over the past year. She needs to get fit, regain her body confidence, then connect with a personal shopper at a retailer like Bloomingdale's. "You have to shape yourself like you belong; that's part of the legitimacy that you bring to a new position," says Mitchell.

Required Reading: *The 10 Laws of Career Reinvention: Essential Survival Skills for Any Economy* by Pamela Mitchell (Prentice Hall Press). □

Ericka Souter, a staff writer for *Us Weekly*, is based in New York City.

ARE YOU THE HARDEST WORKING BLACK WOMAN IN AMERICA?

ESSENCE wants to celebrate Black women who are getting the job done. We're talking about that favorite teacher, dedicated social worker, diligent factory worker, faithful pastor, nurturing day care provider or energetic community organizer you know. Write and tell us why she's so special and her story may be featured in an upcoming issue. **SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION:** In 150 words or less, tell us why your nominee fits the bill. Submit in English to ESSENCE.com/hwbw no later than 11:50 P.M. ET April 8, 2012. Include the nominee's full name, address, daytime and evening phone numbers, an e-mail address and a photo. **Nominators must have permission of their nominee before any submission can be posted. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY:** Open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia who are 19 years or older at time of entry. **VOID WHERE PROHIBITED BY LAW.** For official rules, go to ESSENCE.com/hwbw.

Kristie Wilder is casting a wider net to increase job opportunities.

In part two of our three-part series, ESSENCE catches up with three readers who are getting the guidance they need to kick-start amazing new careers

By Ericka Souter
Photography by Hosea Johnson

YOU BETTER WORK!



BLACK WOMAN'S GUIDE TO CAREER SUCCESS

degree in demography, the study of how populations change, she couldn't find a position. Swimming in debt, she felt forced to take on two jobs—working as a biller for a document services company and as a part-time sales associate at a boutique. “I was angry,” admits Wilder. That changed after meeting career coach Marsha Haygood, president of Stepwise Associates, LLC.

WORKING HER PLAN

- 1. Highlight her expertise.** “A lot of people aren't familiar with the term ‘demographer,’ so I'm focusing on the skills that I have and packaging them in a way that's more meaningful to employers,” Wilder says.
- 2. Widen her net.** Before, Wilder had tunnel vision, pigeonholing herself into one type of job. After documenting her assets, including top-notch research, analytical and quantitative skills, she has landed interviews with finance, insurance and risk management firms.
- 3. Tackle one task at a time.** “I used to multitask to the point where I didn't get things done,” says Wilder. Before, she would come home late and try to send out as many applications as her energy would allow. Now she applies for only two jobs a week so she could tailor her résumé to fit each position. She's also begun to take time off from work. This has relieved her level of stress and allowed her more time for the job search.

TOP PRIORITY

Recalibrating her mind-set

“Kristie's demeanor was her biggest problem,” says Haygood. Wilder began to shift her view to cope with disappointment in a more positive way. When she fails to land a second interview, she doesn't retreat in defeat but rather calls to ask for feedback. “It's vital to understanding where you are going wrong and can save you valuable energy and time in the future,” says Wilder. “It's no longer, *There is something wrong with me*. Now I look at it more as, *I didn't present myself in a way that matched what the employer was looking for*. This has helped me.” ▸

The journey to that dream job isn't easy, but ESSENCE is here to help. For four months we've followed the efforts of three determined readers—one unemployed, one under-employed and one eager to make a job change—as they try to carve out new career paths. We paired them with talent and career management guru Ginny Clarke, reinvention specialist Pamela Mitchell and career and life coach Marsha Haygood. Each of these women is facing her fears, conquering her challenges and learning how to stand out among other job applicants. The ladies' tips, tricks and remarkable triumphs can help you make desirable changes, too.

“I'm not going to have a new job overnight, but I'm close. How close? I don't know, but I'm confident that I have the skills to make it.”

—KRISTIE WILDER

THE RECENT GRADUATE

KRISTIE WILDER, 26
Macon, Georgia

Not long ago Kristie Wilder had lost all hope of climbing out of her career rut. Though she holds a master's

HAIR: NOEL@NOEL NEW YORK/BIRDS EYE ENTERTAINMENT USING TIGI BED HEAD; MAKEUP: JOHNNY GONZALEZ/MENBARBOZA.COM; HAIR ASSISTANT: ADELIN CHARLES/NOEL NEW YORK SALON AND BOUTIQUE; MANICURIST: LEXI; PROP STYLIST: CAROLINE COLSTON/HAILEY RESOURCES.

“I’ve done my homework, now I’m ready to connect with hiring managers.”

—MARTHA BUCKNER

THE DOWNSIZED PROFESSIONAL

MARTHA BUCKNER, 56

New York City

Out of work since being downsized in 2008, Martha Buckner didn’t know how to turn her luck around. The veteran television reporter and producer had applied for nearly 800 jobs but had rarely scored an interview. Buckner, who has spent almost \$62,000 in retirement savings since being laid off, believes both ageism and not knowing the right people have played a part in her not getting hired. “That was only true to a point,” says her career coach, Ginny Clarke, president and CEO of Talent Optimization Partners in Chicago. “She has since understood that you also have to demonstrate your knowledge, superior qualifications and suitability for any position.”

WORKING HER PLAN

- 1. Focus on the quality of contacts, not the quantity.** Instead of applying to every job or reaching out to everyone in her Rolodex, Buckner now seeks out those who can advise, direct or inform her about positions for which she is highly qualified.
- 2. Direct the conversation with colleagues.** A naturally warm and open person, Buckner has learned to watch her tendency to be too conversational. She always has two or three “competency-based points” to work into any conversation to demonstrate her superior qualifications.
- 3. Identify jobs that match her skill set.** After finding positions that interested her, Buckner examined the requirements. “If there were 12 qualifications and I had 10, they were probably not going to hire me because I didn’t have the other two,” she says. “You need to have it all.” If you’re thinking that you’ve seen underqualified people get hired, Clarke explains that the candidate

READING ROOM

These titles keep our careerists powered up

Successful Women Think Differently: 9 Habits to Make You Happier, Healthier, and More Resilient by Valorie Burton (Harvest House Publishers)

What Color Is Your Parachute? 2012: A Practical Manual by Richard Bolles (Ten Speed Press)

The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (Free Press)

Self-Recruiter: Changing the Rules: How to Be Your Own Recruiter & Ride the Economic Crisis to Your Next Career Challenge by John Crant (Provident Resource)

Work It, Girl! The Black Woman’s Guide to Professional Success by Pamela M. McBride (Parker Publishing)

may have been able to demonstrate her competencies and she likely has the support of a sponsor.

TOP PRIORITY

Revamping her résumé

The best industry connections won’t help if your résumé isn’t up to snuff. “Martha’s résumé didn’t tell much of a story,” says Clarke, author of *Career Mapping: Charting Your Course in the New World of Work* (Morgan James Publishing). “It was more like a listing of jobs.” Buckner’s new draft includes an objectives section, referencing the types of positions she seeks and her relevant skills. “Martha assumed people reading the résumé knew the requirements of her previous jobs, so she didn’t list her responsibilities,” says Clarke. “But those key words get you through the first screen.” Buckner also listed hobbies, interests and volunteer experience to add more depth. Another tip: Don’t spend too much time on the cover letter. While it makes for a good first impression, it carries far less weight. ▷

Career coach Ginny Clarke (left) is teaching Martha Buckner how to sell her skill set.





Jennifer Earley is repackaging her marketing know-how.

“I am exercising my faith muscle, knowing that God put certain desires in my heart to allow them to manifest into reality.”

—JENNIFER EARLEY

THE CAREER CHANGER

JENNIFER EARLEY, 32
Silver Spring, Maryland

Unfulfilled by her job, Jennifer Earley was intent on leaving despite her six-figure salary. Some people thought she was crazy, but the brand manager for a nutritional supplement company craved a change. “It’s not my passion,” says Earley, who gets moral support from a group of high-achieving college girlfriends who have dubbed themselves the Dream Team. For Earley, the ideal career involved

working for a luxury brand like Louis Vuitton. There was just one problem: How would she translate her experience promoting health care products into something a big-ticket brand could leverage?

WORKING HER PLAN

1. Reflect on her career. Pamela Mitchell, founder and CEO of The Reinvention Institute in Florida, asked Earley to make three lists: The first identified the 30 qualities she wanted in a job, the second was an inventory of her skills, and the third recalled the times in her career when she was happiest. It brought the M.B.A. grad, who also holds a bachelor’s degree in marketing and Black American studies, to an unexpected conclusion: “As a brand manager, I want to bring luxe products to the African-American consumer market.”

2. Target Top 10 companies. With that new focus, Earley crafted a list of companies she wants to work for, which includes BET Networks and Liquid Soul Media. Now she is learning everything she can about them and exploring marketing courses to beef up her knowledge.

3. Set up informational interviews. Earley is now busy setting up informational interviews by reaching out to her contacts in marketing, branding and promotion. “It’s important for me to understand what type of talent a company is looking for,” she says. “Before I get the job, I need to gauge whether I’m a good fit, and I need to tailor my résumé to fill in any gaps.”

TOP PRIORITY

Having patience for the process “Jennifer is a type A personality who is used to taking charge,” says Mitchell, author of *The 10 Laws of Career Reinvention: Essential Survival Skills for Any Economy* (Dutton). “She always thought that if you push harder, things go faster. But you can only control 50 percent of this process.” In addition, rebranding yourself requires a slow and thoughtful approach. “When you have to convince someone your background is what they need, you need time to pull

your story together,” says Mitchell. “It can take a few months to come up with the right pitch.” To build on her research (she signed up for Google Alerts on her target companies and their competitors), Earley relied on feedback from informational meetings. “That’s not a pseudo term for a job interview,” warns Mitchell. “It’s important to go into it thinking you are there just to gather information. Once you stop looking for what this person can give you, it changes the dynamic and people can relax and just talk. It’s a chance to build a relationship.” Those chats with executives have given Earley invaluable insight into the corporate culture and clues as to the gaps she needs to fill in her résumé. But Earley says the biggest lesson has been a personal one: “What’s been so rewarding is that this transformation isn’t exclusive to my professional aspirations; it’s also helping me personally.” □

Ericka Souter, a staff writer for *Us Weekly*, is based in New York City.

8 CLEVER WAYS TO LAND A GIG

- 1.** Ask for a personal introduction to the hiring manager.
- 2.** Place all companies of interest on Google Alerts.
- 3.** Follow firms you really want to work for on Facebook and Twitter.
- 4.** Increase your LinkedIn contacts and the groups you follow, and update your profile.
- 5.** Use social media outlets like Twitter to show your expertise. Send tips, news, industry buzz and information.
- 6.** Contact your sorority, church, child’s school or alma mater, and inquire about openings that match your skills.
- 7.** Request a 15-minute informational interview with a human resources representative or a company insider.
- 8.** Follow the job application process, then hunt for a colleague, friend or associate who could walk your package into the boss’s office.

Work & Wealth

BLACK
WOMAN'S
GUIDE TO
CAREER
SUCCESS

KRISTIE WILDER

Underemployed to
Unshakably Determined

“I was rigid in my view of what I wanted, but now I am more open. I can use my skills for so many jobs and be happy doing it.”

Kristie Wilder was close to giving up on her dreams. After earning a graduate degree in demography, the study of how populations change, she couldn't find a job in the field. She ended up working as a biller for a document services company and a part-time sales associate. Life and career coach Marsha Haygood, president of Stepwise Associates, LLC, and coauthor of *The Little Black Book of Success* (One World/Ballantine), suggested she focus on her top-notch research and analytical abilities and figure out which companies needed what she had to offer.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

Wilder quit her dead-end gig and began reaching out to more hiring execs, making follow-up calls after submitting her résumé. Getting by with financial help from her parents, she also researched the qualifications to land a job as a statistician. She even redid her résumé to add buzzwords that would get attention. “It worked,” she says. “I got the job!” >

On the Way!

IN THE FINAL INSTALLMENT OF OUR THREE-PART SERIES, ESSENCE CHECKS IN ON THREE READERS WHO ARE ON TRACK TO ESTABLISHING COOL NEW CAREERS

BY ERICKA SÓUTER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOSEA JOHNSON

Over the past six months, we have watched three readers—a recent graduate, a career climber eager for a change and a downsized professional—as they diligently created opportunities and carved out new paths in their professional lives. The road wasn't always easy for these tenacious careerists, but their perseverance has paid off in major ways. Partnered with life and career coach Marsha Haygood, reinvention specialist Pamela Mitchell and career management expert Ginny Clarke, all three women gained a deeper understanding of what it really takes to get to the top of the applicant pool. Here they share that life-changing advice with you.



JENNIFER EARLEY

Ready for Change to Rising Star

“God has given me the tools I need to move ahead. With a new job and new confidence, this has been a complete renewal.”

For Jennifer Earley success was always more about passion than profit. A brand manager at a nutritional supplement company, she had earned promotions but discovered they weren't enough.

Her goal was to work for a luxury brand or a media corporation like BET Networks. She reached out to some execs but “it was like hearing crickets on the other end,” she says. “There were definitely some difficult days.” Her major problem was a lack of experience producing

television and print ads. Then the perfect opportunity came from the most unexpected place: her current company. She was tapped to run a bigger portion of the business, a position that would help her fill those gaps in her résumé. “It is just such an amazing blessing,” she says. “God really heard me and delivered.”

STEPS TO SUCCESS

Earley had to learn to let go. A classic type A personality, she habitually mapped out everything. “She had to realize we control what we put out there, but we don't control when and how opportunities will come,” says reinvention specialist Pamela Mitchell, author of *The 10 Laws of Career Reinvention: Essential Survival Skills for Any Economy* (Dutton). Patience didn't come easily for Earley. “It took a while, but I had to accept that things are going to happen when they happen,” she says. “I have to do the prep work and trust the process. When I try to control everything, it only drives me crazy. Right now I'm just trying to enjoy the moment.” ▷

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

Looking for a new career? Your résumé may not be the only thing that needs an overhaul. Stylist Dana Pritchett offers these tips for making a good impression with prospective employers

- 1. **Stick to the classics.** The best interview looks are simple—black, navy, gray or brown. Avoid bright colors, low cuts or tight outfits.
- 2. **Stay on trend and on budget.** Today's styles are available at almost every price point. Regardless of the cost, you can achieve a comparable look.
- 3. **Always appear poised.** Pay attention to details, and remember, accessories can make or break an outfit. Above all, remain confident.

MARTHA BUCKNER

**Downsized to
In Demand**

“What keeps me mentally strong is that I know I can do it. I have everything I need to achieve my goals and I am almost there.”

Four years after being downsized, Martha Buckner says her career dreams are finally within reach. Initially the veteran television reporter and producer tackled the job search by applying to every media position she came across—nearly 800! “That was a complete waste of time,” says her coach Ginny Clarke, president and CEO of Talent Optimization Partners in Chicago. “There was no way she was qualified for all those positions.” Buckner has been far more selective in recent months, concentrating on posts that are a good match for her background. That approach has helped her finally get a foot back in the door.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

Buckner has worked hard to overcome her biggest weakness: a lack of social media exposure. “I thought I had really done it all in terms of looking for a new job, but I wasn’t open to the new technol-

ogy,” she says. Clarke advised her to follow target companies on Twitter and Facebook and the tip paid off. A status update gave her a job lead, which eventually resulted in an interview. Her only regret is not using these tools sooner. “It’s all about connecting,” she says. “You can miss so much when you are not visible and communicating in the right places.” Another helpful step? She’s no longer limiting her search to full-time jobs. “At first getting her to think in terms of freelance positions as an option was hard,” admits Clarke, author of *Career Mapping: Charting Your Course in the New World of Work* (Morgan James Publishing). “But it’s what the industry is offering these days.”

Once she let prospective employers know she was open to freelancing, offers came rushing in. Now she is working as a segment producer for a major news network and reports weekly assignments for Kalaloo Radio. Her hope is that this fresh experience will lead to something more permanent. Buckner adds, “I’m definitely on my way.”



Ericka Souter is an editor at Cafemom's thestir.com.