# Demystifying the Fear around Job Searches

Attendee Questions & Presenter/Organizer Answers

# How to approach employers for jobs with a global employment crisis?

1. Could we have some discussion on how the job market under a crisis looks? Demystify how one goes about approaching employers for jobs when there are cutbacks everywhere and global slowdowns?
2. What are some lessons learned from previous crises such as the financial crisis/recessions? How did people go about looking for jobs then?
   1. The job market during and following the recession of 2008-09 was extremely daunting. I, like many people, lost my job. Personally, it was also challenging because we were fearful my spouse would also be laid off...and we still had kids at home. I started connecting virtually with some of my former colleagues. One of them, a psychologist, interacted with an MD who was eager to explore some partnership options with an anthropologist; my colleague recommended me. I met with the MD and ended up working with him and another partner part-time for a few years. Our start-up venture, for which we secured some initial capital, was designed to help doctors’ offices be more effective and customer-facing. I never would have expected that I would end up working in such an organization, in such a role -- ever! I learned at least two important lessons from this experience: 1) **Connect, connect, connect!** Expand your personal/professional network. You never know when you might bet that invitational email or phone call. 2) **Be open to a wide variety of potential work options.**  I had no experience with these kinds of small independent businesses staffed by primary care physicians and their staff. But, I did know something about the culture concept, about status, and about expert knowledge -- all of which could provide a foundation for helping these businesses develop stronger and better ties with their customer patients.

# How do I deal with ageism in the job market?

1. Ageism is real, how does one overcome the fear of being left on the shelf even when holding two master's and a Ph.D., and experience across a multiple of sectors and roles?
   1. We understand that some of the participants are experiencing a range of emotions at the moment: anger, disappointment, fear that their education hasn’t led to a job, and that the market is in crisis.

The information in the talk Jeanine and I (Alison) gave and the technique in the exercise I led will help the attendees to begin to manage themselves and their emotions as they tackle job searches. Emotional Intelligence will enable them to stay centered, not freak out and take care of themselves through the process, so it is a hugely valuable tool. It will enable them to show up from their best selves, enabling them to talk to people about themselves in the best way to build relationships, connect to their potential and actually get a job. It will help with creativity and resilience - key skills needed now. It will help them build resilience as they reinvent themselves and increase their skill sets, because they may need to do just that! They will probably need to evolve themselves to get to what is right for them.

Many of their questions relate to their frustration, anxiety, fear and even anger that there may not be jobs for them to apply for. So the fact that there may not be jobs is a very different conversation from the one Jeanine and I thought we were having.

As a career coach myself, I would recommend that at this point in history, with all the crises we are facing especially in the job market, they explore their gifts and talents and get clear on all of who they are on top of their qualifications in Anthropology, as well as their purpose and calling. These are things that can be explored in depth in coaching.

They will then need to think laterally and consider how they can go about creating their ideal job, which may not exist yet! The new world we need to be working towards will not look like the one we are in now, so the jobs will be different and will need to be created. The real conversation to be having is: In a world where traditional jobs are in short supply or don’t exist, what are the new ones that we can create? How can your topic be made relevant to the world we’re in now?

WW coaches would be happy to help and my daughter, Louise Le Gat, who specializes in new paradigm careers and next-generation leadership is open to having a conversation with you about this if you would like more inspiration.

* 1. Unfortunately, there are no simple answers to the above questions, no magic bullet. However, there are at least two job search strategies that have been used successfully by anthropologists during periods of recession, uncertainty, and crisis. 1) **Strengthen your personal/professional network**. This strategy translates into networking with *both* your “strong ties” and your “weak ties” (See the July 16, 2020 career webinar; just scroll down: <https://www.americananthro.org/AttendEvents/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2143&navItemNumber=637>. Let recent and longstanding members of your network know about the kind of work you would like to do. You can do that through informational interviewing, for example. Another networking approach is to use LinkedIn to advantage. Ensure that your LinkedIn profile is up to date, build up your contacts, and engage with the LinkedIn network in a variety of ways (e.g., posting content you create, posting others’ content). The idea is to attract interest, learn about opportunities, and create the necessary connections to position yourself for a discussion with a hiring manager. LinkedIn also has recruiters who might be able to assist you. The networking strategy is useful for both posted positions and for positions that don’t even exist yet. 2) **Start your own consulting practice.** This strategy works particularly well for those who already have some work experience. I know many anthropologists who have gone out on their own as self-employed, independent consultants. They often partner with others on projects. To be successful using this strategy requires an entrepreneurial spirit and the confidence and ability to apply your knowledge and skills creatively in the job market. Think about what kinds of organizations might benefit from an anthropological perspective during this period of upheaval. I’ll just suggest an example here. What about public health agencies, school districts, or pharmaceutical companies worried about those who will refuse to take a COVID-19 vaccine? What would be your “pitch” to any of these entities to reduce the risk of illness and death? How would you go about it? These are the kinds of big questions that anthropologists could tackle - particularly in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of researchers.

# Where can I find information from last week’s webinar?

1. Where are the question answers from last week's webinar? I'm looking on the site and only see the slides from it listed.
   1. There's a MS Word doc available for download from here: <https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/Landing.aspx?ItemNumber=25907>
   2. Here's [the direct link](https://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/FileDownloads/The%20Art%20of%20Persuasion%20Q&A_Accessibility%20Reviewed.docx), which will prompt you to download.

# What are concrete strategies we can practice for a job search?

* 1. Take a look at the five previous career webinars that the AAA offered on July 9, 16, 23, and 30, and September 10, 2020. You can find those webinars here; just scroll down: https://www.americananthro.org/AttendEvents/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2143&navItemNumber=637. Our upcoming career webinar “Deep Hanging Out...Digitally: Social Media Strategies for the Contemporary Job Market” should also be helpful.

# What pieces of leverage do I need to create my own position?

1. Do I have to have secured external funding to create my own position in industry or a post-doc somewhere??
   1. No, you do not need external funding. Postdoc positions are offered through universities. They tend to be one of the few positions on campuses in the COVID-19 era that have not been cut. You would need to apply through the particular university. If you were hired as a post-doc, your salary and benefits would be paid by the university (i.e., the particular department or college of the university). For a position that you might create in industry, you typically network your way into a particular organization (For networking strategies/tips, see the July 16, 2020 career webinar; just scroll down: <https://www.americananthro.org/AttendEvents/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2143&navItemNumber=637>.) You would need to build a relationship with key people in a given part of the organization (e.g., risk management, sales, quality) with the intent to understand their concerns and ultimately work with them to craft a position that benefits both them and you. Of course, it helps enormously if you already have contacts in that organization. Under those circumstances, they would know you and your capabilities to some degree. Presumably, you would have spent time in discussions, with an individual or group, talking about organizational issues and how to address them. However, even if you have to start from scratch, you can use your informational interviewing skills and gather insights from a variety of employees. In circling back to those employees with whom you built excellent rapport, you could try out some of your ideas on them in the hopes of getting them interested enough to bring you in to give a talk and/or speak to a senior leader. And even if nothing happens immediately, there is always a chance a little further down the road that members of this group would remember you either when an existing position were open, a new position was created, or a consulting opportunity opened up.

# How do I overcome the fear of applying to jobs outside my field?

1. What to do about the fear that there are not enough jobs out there and that few employers want to take risks on people switching out of their fields and trying to enter new fields?
   1. I am sorry you have been having such a touch experience looking for work. This time period is a very difficult one for many people. I have a few thoughts for you. 1) **Convey a sense of confidence, interest in their organization, and calm** in your interactions with hiring managers and other industry professionals. When you are smiling and self-assured, you project a positive spirit and belief in your own abilities -- which will be clearly evident. 2) **Conduct informational interviews** in the organizations in which you are most interested. How many informational interviews have you done in each of the organizations you have targeted? If the answer is one or even two, I recommend you go back to those individuals and ask for suggestions for others with whom you might speak. As a rule, people are willing to offer some help to those seeking work. Providing a name and contact information for a colleague is neither time-consuming or difficult. Demonstrating your appreciation through a handwritten thank you note will go a long way in helping people to remember you! 3) **Prepare to apply.** As you become aware of positions that interest you, apply for them. If the job is posted, pay attention to the words in the posting but try to reach out to the hiring manager to get a better understanding of the work and skillset. Check your resume against Applicant Tracking Systems (e.g., jobscan.co, zipjob.com) to see how well you attend to the job description. (For help with resumes and cover letters, strategies/tips, see the July 23, 2020 career webinar and for help preparing for the interview, see the July 30, 2020 career webinar; just scroll down: https://www.americananthro.org/AttendEvents/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2143&navItemNumber=637.)

# How do you network yourself into a new field?

I worked in travel for years & the industry has been devastated. I'm trying to pivot into marketing/insights (I have degrees in both anthropology & marketing) but I have no real network outside of travel.

* 1. You typically meet people in a new field through the contacts of people who are part of your own network. But I am struck by your travel industry work and see a connection with marketing. Have you ever considered working for a tourism board -- say in a particular region, state, or for a government agency (e.g., National Parks Service)? It would seem that the tourism industry needs marketing experts -- if they don’t already have them. And, assuming that you are an anthropologist, bringing a cultural perspective to tourism marketing would be incredibly powerful. I think you should go back and revisit your travel contacts and get them to give you more targeted suggestions.

# How long do slowdowns in jobs and cutbacks last?

1. We did not fully recover from the previous crisis before this one. So how does one support oneself during that time? Also, there are international graduate students who also lack the privilege of time or social support to do these job searches. Just to provide context.
   1. Unfortunately, we do not know how long the current economic crisis will last. If you are having trouble supporting yourself or finding employment, seek out local resources such as your university’s or alma mater’s career center, a local job placement service, mentorship programs, etc. The AAA maintains a robust section of the website with career resources: [https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer](https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/index.aspx?navItemNumber=504)
   2. NAPA, the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (a section of the AAA), also has a robust mentoring program which has been operating since 1990. It caters especially to those in the academy seeking employment in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The mentors work with students, recent graduates, and those in career transition from academia to practice. Here is the link: <https://www.practicinganthropology.org/mentoring-career/>. NAPA mentors tend to have extensive networks and ideas to assist individuals in finding and securing employment.
2. What might the AAA do for their communit?y in collating information on what little jobs might be available and bring us in touch with those opportunities?
   1. The AAA maintains a robust section of the website with career resources: [https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer](https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/index.aspx?navItemNumber=504)
   2. Organizations can post open positions on the AAA website, which the AAA encourages. However, the majority of the jobs posted are academically-based. Chances are you will have better luck finding open positions in the private, nonprofit, and public sectors elsewhere. For example, EPIC maintains a Job Board: <https://www.epicpeople.org/job-board/>. You will need to sign up as a member. The most recent offerings I saw (end of September 2020) were in UX (user experience) and design research.
3. With the limiting realities for anthropologists in an already plummeting job market, do you think it’s worth the time & financial investment of pursuing graduate degrees in anthropology/social sciences?
   1. Pursuing a graduate degree is a personal decision that should be considered carefully based on your own circumstances. A number of graduate programs offer assistantships, fellowships, or other scholarships and grants, minimizing the cost burden to students. Graduate students also often have access to student loans. Consider a program’s financial aid options and job placement rates carefully before pursuing any graduate degree.
   2. I have not regretted my career trajectory in anthropology, but I am not you. It is a personal decision and one that has been and will be shaped by your own circumstances, attitudes, and beliefs. If you do decide to pursue graduate studies, pick your program wisely. Interview selected faculty and students. How robust will the training be? Is the program focused on both theory and application, or is it primarily theory-driven? What kinds of projects are faculty and students working on now? Do faculty and students work in teams? Do students work on projects with other students? What marketable skills will you acquire? (If no one can rattle off these skills, that is important data for you.) Find out what the program offers with respect to career preparation. Do students have opportunities to work on class projects for a client? Are internships required? How do graduates find jobs? Talk to the graduate advisor about job placement rates upon graduation. (If the program does not keep such data, that information tells you something too!) Ask how well connected alums are with the program and whether they work with the instructors to provide internships, mentoring, and other forms of assistance. What is the *average* time to get a Master’s degree or a PhD degree? These are only a few of the questions that you might ask. Keep in mind: you are interviewing them! You want to find out if this program is one where you will be relatively happy and satisfied, and you want to be sure that you are both comfortable with and have options to study with particular professors.