

So you've quit. Here are the tech tools that can help you land a new job.

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FULL TEXT

For Patrick Moran, who put in his two weeks' notice at the end of October, job hunting has become a web of confusion given his unfamiliarity with professional networking online.

Moran, who is a production manager of a doughnut bakery in Rhode Island, said he has been struggling with constant turnover in staffing, long hours that start at 2 a.m., no benefits and stress that got worse during the pandemic. Now he's hoping to land a job that will meet a few basic requests: allow him to sit down in an office, work normal hour and have some benefits. But the job search has been tough, and cold applying to jobs on company websites and online professional networking site LinkedIn has been relatively fruitless for him.

"I have no interest [in the food service industry] anymore because of everything that has happened. My mental health has already suffered enough," said Moran, who received a four-year degree in baking and pastry and has spent his entire career in the same industry. "I feel like your grandma on Facebook," he said about using digital tools to job hunt.

Moran is not alone; millions of job seekers are switching industries, embarking on a new path but many of them are left to their own devices to navigate the journey. A record 4.3 million Americans quit their jobs in August, according to recent data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Workers across industries —including restaurants, manufacturers, retailers, health care and professional business services —have left their positions in search of better opportunities. Although online job-searching tools have existed for years, workers' reliance on them accelerated during the pandemic as networking opportunities and in-person job fairs have been limited. Online services, apps and websites can help people make their next career move, and many are increasingly turning to them as the shift in the U.S. workforce continues.

The latest data show that workers are taking advantage of the benefits these tools can provide. The 20 most-downloaded job search and career development apps collectively saw a rise in installations within the first nine months of the year, according to data from the mobile analytics company Sensor Tower.

Experts say job seekers across industries would be wise to use at least some tech tools as they consider their next steps. The apps and services often provide free access to valuable networks of contacts, advice and guidance, as well as direct access to employers and jobs.

"Online communities are a huge tool to connect with other people, and their importance escalated even more so during the pandemic," said Wendy Saccuzzo, a career coach and the head of hiring services for the online community Tech Ladies. "Getting information, understanding the trends in job searching, and supporting each other is really everything."

The tech tools and how they work

Professional networking and job search services like LinkedIn, Indeed and ZipRecruiter can help workers find job openings as well as connect with hiring companies and decision-makers. Meanwhile, communication tools and review services like Slack, Glassdoor and Blind can help potential applicants communicate with industry or company workers to get the scoop from the inside. And more tailored apps —like Seasoned for restaurant workers

and Snagajob or Instawork for hourly workers —can aid with finding jobs in specific industries. For workers who may want to develop a personal brand, website-building tools like Wix and Weebly, résumé builders and social media networks can help them gain some credibility.

LinkedIn and Indeed have seen major increases in activity. LinkedIn reports it is hosting a record number of job openings, although it would not provide specific numbers, with the rate of people transitioning jobs between June and August up more than 50 percent year over year. Indeed said as of Oct. 22, job postings were up 48 percent compared to February 2020 levels before the pandemic-related shutdowns in the United States.

"We are calling it the Great Reshuffle," said Rohan Rajiv, group product manager at LinkedIn. "People are rethinking their careers, taking the time to pause and think about how they work."

To aid the shuffling workforce, LinkedIn recently added filters that allow job seekers to target remote, hybrid or on-site roles. Indeed has added tools to help employers conduct video interviews and hosted a month-long hiring initiative for the restaurant industry last month with the online restaurant reservation service OpenTable.

But the large job sites aren't the only services seeing a massive rise in demand. Apps and services catering to specific industries like Seasoned —an app that connects workers and restaurants —and apps that are helping people learn about company culture —like Blind, a workplace chat app, and Glassdoor's Fishbowl —are also experiencing a bump in activity.

Tech tools for job seekers

LinkedIn: The professional networking service helps people search and find job listings and connect to employers and other workers online or via its app.

Indeed: The job-search tool helps people find listings and company reviews, and get a better understanding of salary expectations.

ZipRecruiter: The job marketplace aims to help businesses and job seekers find each other by matching them up, inviting recruiters to contact candidates that its artificial intelligence suggest might be a good fit.

Snagajob/Instawork: Snagajob helps connect workers to various hourly jobs from gig worker positions like Uber drivers to retail store associates. Instawork helps connect gig workers and temporary employees to jobs.

Seasoned: The app has built an online community for restaurant workers and businesses.

Slack: The communication tool, typically used by companies as an internal messaging system, offers communities, some of which include industry-related job discussions and job postings.

Twitter: The social network can help workers understand what people are saying about the company for which they want to work, learn about the culture and find job postings.

Glassdoor: The online service provides job listings, company reviews from workers about pay and culture, as well as information about the salaries of specific roles and at specific companies.

Fishbowl and Blind: The two services offer workers a way to communicate and share insights about their industries and companies anonymously if they prefer.

Ware Sykes, CEO of San Francisco-based Seasoned, says the app has garnered more than 300 restaurant brands that represent 100,000 locations across the United States since it debuted, in its current form, in July 2020. The app, which is free for workers, also has more than a quarter million workers in the cities it serves, which include Dallas, Austin, Orlando and soon, Miami. It also helps workers connect to each other to share industry knowledge. "The white-collar tools don't take into consideration what's needed for an hourly worker," Sykes said. "There's been no place for restaurant workers to go to get advice on what they need to do to build their skills."

Sarah Johnston, founder of executive career-branding business Briefcase Coach, said that a couple of months ago, she had about double the interest in her services as during pre-pandemic times.

Johnston said aside from LinkedIn, she finds Slack communities to be helpful with networking. Some communities are dedicated to specific industries and post jobs, offer advice as well as networking opportunities. She also said email search tool Hunter.io, which offers users 25 free email address searches a month, can be helpful for people trying to connect to a specific person —perhaps a potential boss.

To help job candidates get past those pesky automated applicant-tracking software systems, which often

eliminate applicants before a human even gets to consider them, Johnston suggested tools like Jobscan and SkillsSyncer. They offer a free sample scan but cost money thereafter and give job seekers a score based on how closely their résumé matches up with the keywords on the job description.

"I'm seeing a rise in people who want to test the waters," she said. "People have been inside their houses for the last two years, and they want a new challenge."

For workers looking for insights that they won't get from the job description, recruiters or hiring managers, a few tools might come in handy. Saccuzzo, the career coach, said Twitter can be helpful in tracking chatter about the company, its values and culture, as well as possible job openings.

Meanwhile, apps like Fishbowl and Blind, which help people connect with others in their industry, give job seekers the ability to stay anonymous so they can candidly converse about culture, the downsides of a job or a company's leadership.

Fishbowl, which has more than 1 million users, said the number of professionals who created an account on its service has increased threefold since the outbreak of the pandemic.

"The immense growth we've seen across Fishbowl's digital communities —or bowls —over the past 18 months highlights the critical need for jobseekers and employees to gain information from people beyond their immediate circle," Matt Sunbulli, Fishbowl CEO and co-founder and Glassdoor vice president of product management, said in a statement.

ZipRecruiter, meanwhile, is trying to make the online job search feel more human, ironically by using artificial intelligence. It charges companies but not jobseekers and said its A.I. persona named Phil will soon be able to converse with candidates to better get to know what they want, what their experience is and what might be their best job match. Then, Phil can help connect candidates to the right recruiters and job opportunities. But Phil will likely be tracking and storing users' job preferences to improve the service.

"What if we were able to assign every job seeker with a recruiter to find out everything that's special about them and use that to pitch to the best employers?" said Ryan Eberhard, ZipRecruiter's chief product officer. "That's the essence of this product."

Meanwhile, job app Handshake is hoping to help students land their first gigs and internships. More than 1,400 universities and 600,000 employers use the app. Christine Cruzvergara, Handshake's chief education strategy officer, said that the app has seen "massive growth" during 2020, with more than a million connections between students and employers. The app also gives students the ability to chat with recruiters, employers, schoolmates and alumni to help with their job search.

Cruzvergara said that the younger generation is particularly interested in connecting with employers' whose values match theirs.

"When you think about Gen Z . . . it's really important for employers to think about what the young generation looks for," she said. "They care about their values."

Diana Daoud fits the profile. The 24-year-old New Yorker recently quit her paralegal job without a backup plan. Her employer failed to fulfill its promises of professional development and instead assigned her menial tasks, she said. So after seven months, she sent her employer an email saying her "career goals and personal values" didn't align with the job.

She was left to the job hunt, with few leads or guidance on how to land her next gig. She started her search online, using LinkedIn and Instagram to find companies and contacts. She then found a free résumé template on resumego.com and used QR-Code-Generator.com to create a scannable quick-response code that linked to her LinkedIn profile —a feature she hoped would make her résumé stand out. She also used Google Meet to get one-on-one advice from a hiring manager about her résumé and interview skills. In about a week's time, she had lined up a couple of opportunities.

"We live in a completely digital world now," she said. "If your LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram accounts aren't up to par . . . it makes you less credible as an employee."

Daoud's approach is one of the best attacks, according to experts Saccuzzo and Johnston. Given that employers

are increasingly using automated software to whittle down their stacks of applicants, job seekers can find a "hidden job network" by investing in their personal and social networks, Saccuzzo said. And while tech can aid in the process of building relationships, the tools can't do all the work, experts agree. "The common mistake I see . . . is [candidates] focus so much on the new tools that they forget about relationships," Johnston said.

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