



Should You Take The First Job You're Offered?

There are often many good reasons not to, even now.

Tara Weiss, 01.20.09, 06:00 PM EST

When have you been out of work so long that you should take the first job you're offered, even if it's mediocre?

Probably never.

Still, it's something many [job seekers](#) consider as their bank accounts dwindle and the rejection letters pile up.

What should you do? To begin with, try not to get yourself into this fix. Resist the urge to apply for just any job that's even remotely related to your field. If you take one that doesn't fit in with your career plans, you may find it hard to rejoin your intended specialty once the downturn passes.

So before blindly sending your résumé to a mass of employers, research each prospective firm, its products and its services. Talk to the human resources contact early on to find out what exactly the position entails. If it's not something that meshes with your professional trajectory or it's way beneath your skill level, don't apply for it.

"I advise clients to strongly consider whether they want to compromise everything they've learned, take a lower compensation package and work their way back up in a company," says Sandy Gross, founder of Pinetum Partners LLC, an executive search firm that specializes in the financial [services industry](#). "I encourage them to think of their next opportunity as a long-term career move, not something they'll take for six months and then relaunch their job search."

You might learn, to your surprise, that you have time to enhance your skills by taking a class that will make you more marketable. You might even be able to do something you've always wanted to do but never had the opportunity for, like starting your own business. Or you might decide you have enough of a financial cushion to join one of the many start-ups being developed by laid-off Wall Streeters.

If your financial outlook isn't that rosy and you need to take a job that's not ideal for you, Gross offers a suggestion: Instead of signing on full-time, explain to the hiring manager that you respect the team and believe in the business but you're not sure it's the right move for you long term. Are they open to you signing on for six months or a year, to help with certain projects, and then re-evaluating your role?

This is risky, but it could appeal to employers who don't necessarily want to pay [health insurance](#) or young firms that are willing to take guidance from senior level professionals on a short-term basis.

Annie Levy Sandin, a founder of the financial recruiting firm Emerging Globe Group, in Westport, Conn., has several clients in exactly this situation. She's hesitant to tell them to hold out for something better, especially if they've been out of work for several months. But if they do take a job not really related to their field or at a lower than optimal level, they'd better have a good explanation for future hiring managers.

"Is there anything they can come up with that's good about the job that they can take to the next situation?" Levy Sandin asks. "If you explain things correctly, you can get away with a lot. You're never going to admit to a prospective boss, 'I was desperate and had to feed my family.'"

If you've been offered a job that doesn't excite you and also been interviewed for one that does, try to buy more time with the first firm. Contact your prospective manager at the more interesting opportunity and explain that you're not trying to start a bidding war, but you've been offered another job and they're putting pressure on you for an answer.

Make it clear that this opportunity seems much better to you. Ask if they can tell you what the time frame will be for making a hiring decision.

The ultimate goal is to find something that fulfills you professionally. The last thing you want is to start another job search in six months.