



With skill, determination and some lucky timing, it's never too late to find a new job

By [Karla L. Miller](#)

January 11

Starting 2019 off right with a happy job-hunter's update

Readers of this column from The Washington Post Magazine days may remember the [librarian-turned-accountant](#) who was over 50 and in despair after years of unemployment. When [she checked in](#) later that fall, she was still unemployed but working on presenting herself with more confidence. And now. . .

Reader: Yes, it's true! I landed a job at a small company that provides tax and bookkeeping services and also trains tax and other financial services professionals. It has a multicultural workforce, and all the managers are in their 60s and 70s, so quite happy to hire gray-haired folks like me.

I guess this happened because I just didn't give up and also a bit of serendipity.

They placed an ad on LinkedIn for an experienced tax preparer. I wasn't really qualified for that job, but I sent my résumé anyway. The owner contacted me and confirmed that I had less tax experience than they wanted — but my writing and editing experience was exactly what they needed for an opening in their training department that they hadn't yet advertised. I'd been doing some unpaid in-kind freelance editing and write a blog, so I had listed those activities on my résumé, and that's what caught the attention of the company owner and the vice president.

As I mentioned last fall, I had been working with a friend on developing a “10 feet tall and bulletproof” attitude for interviews. I think I was able to project that attitude because I was already interested in a different job when I was interviewing for this one. Also, it became clear minutes into the interview that I'd gained the confidence of the vice president, who made a point of drawing the owner's attention to my extensive education. I don't know what I did to get her in my corner other than be friendly, polite and smile a lot.



HELPING YOU DISCOVER THE NEXT LEG OF YOUR JOURNEY

They've already given me a lot to do. I'm busy every minute and really enjoying it.

Of course, lucky timing played a big role in this reader's success, and that's never guaranteed. But if you are spinning your wheels in a similar situation — unemployed, seeking promotion, considering a transfer to a shutdown-proof private-sector position — here are some grains of hope that may help give you traction:

- **It's never too late to get frank feedback — from recruiters, former colleagues or friends — and adjust how you present yourself.**
- **As long as you have a reasonable sense of what you are and aren't qualified for, there's no harm in stretching for targets outside your comfort zone.**
- **Most important: You are more than your latest degree or your last job title. You are an aggregate of everything you have learned, practiced, failed at and dabbled in throughout your life, paid or unpaid. All those seemingly random pieces form a unique mosaic, and there's no predicting which ones will catch the light — and an employer's eye — just right.**

Courtesy of The Washington Post Jan 13, 2019