

Staying relevant throughout your career

by **Caroline Francis**



Many mid to late career professionals have learned the hard way the importance of remaining relevant throughout their careers. It is crucial to be proactive about seeking out networking and professional development opportunities. Being relevant at work today means building and maintaining strong networks with diverse people of various ages, industries, positions and interests.

Participate in at least two or three monthly networking events. These might be industry meetings or conferences, community non-profits, social and hobby related activities. Volunteering continues to be an excellent way to network, build skills, fill a potential work gap and add to one's resume.

Build skills through online and short term certification programs, continuing education and skills enhancement resources. Discontinuing industry licenses and certifications is another lesson many learned the hard way during the recession of years past. Staying relevant means keeping up with technology and being a lifelong learner. A recruiter recently shared with the Central Kentucky Job Club (www.ukalumni.net/jobclub) his favorite interview question. "What is something that you have learned lately?"

According to Amanda Schagane '09 AS, '10 ED, associate director of UK Alumni Career Services, staying relevant means continuously reading about trends in one's target industry, and staying up-to-date on standards and best practices for your job function.

Staying relevant also means having tools in place to smoothly change jobs, careers or industries. What are your "plan B's" if your position ended tomorrow? What jobs and careers do you still have on your bucket list? How are you gaining skills and knowledge in those areas? Reinventing oneself multiple times is a new career reality.

"My advice is to always keep your resume current," says Lisa Donnelly '90 BE. "While I was employed full-time, I attended the UK Job Club because I was considering a transition. A speaker at the UK Job Club stressed to us that your resume should be current because you never know when you might get, 'The Pink Slip.' I followed the advice and updated my resume. Within a few months after attending the UK Job Club meetings, I was laid off from my full-time job of 8 years. I was able to walk out with confidence and excitement about my future just because my resume was current.

"LinkedIn has been a valuable resource for me as I continue to use it daily and have learned that people respond quicker through LinkedIn than regular email," she says. "I recommend setting up a LinkedIn account, explore, and take advantage of everything it has to offer."

By following these strategies and using UK Alumni Career Services resources, UK alumni and friends will be able to remain more resilient throughout their early careers and long into their encore careers.

UK Alumni Association members are eligible for two complimentary appointments per year with an alumni career counselor. Call 1-888-9UK-CATS (852287) to schedule an appointment. Visit www.ukalumni.net/career to learn more about resume critiques, virtual networking events and other Alumni Career Services. To post a job opening, employers may visit www.ukalumni.net/employers.