

CareerSource Tampa Bay TEN Program



Kevin Koons never expected to find himself without a job at 55 years old, and after 27 years in the call service industry. But on October 1, 2016, he found himself exactly that - unemployed. He struggled with figuring out his next steps. He had made almost no connections over those 27 years and didn't know where to begin. He was contacted by Jason Druding,

CareerSource Tampa Bay's Special Projects Coordinator, about the Transitioning Executive Network. The Transitioning Executive Network (TEN) is a service of CareerSource Pinellas and CareerSource Tampa Bay in support of transitioning executives and alumni. TEN offers a forum where employment seekers can network with other senior level executives and participate in interactive discussions focused on re-employment. TEN's mission is to provide executives with career transition assistance by marketing their professional skills and experience to the Tampa Bay business community.

Attending CareerSource Tampa Bay TEN sessions each week opened doors for Kevin that he never thought possible. He found like-minded professionals in the same situation as he was and formed both a network of connections and long-lasting friendships. He was able to attend trainings regarding employment tools that he had never considered before, such as social media and LinkedIn. After being unemployed for seven months while diligently attending TEN training and networking, Kevin landed a job on May 22, 2017, with a HealthCare Insurance Company in Texas and assumed the position of Director of Customer Service and Claims. While those seven months weren't always easy, Kevin persisted with the help of Career Source Tampa Bay.

For those who are currently facing a similar situation as Kevin, he has a few pieces of advice that helped him overcome the many obstacles he faced as an older transitioning executive. First don't lose heart. Unemployment is a temporary issue and nothing lasts forever. It is difficult to see the end while you are in the middle of a journey, but do not lose faith that things will get better. The most difficult times for Kevin were Monday mornings. Waking up and watching his neighbors emerge from their houses and leave for the start of a new work week brought a sense of uselessness and emptiness. Kevin longed for the days when he would follow suit to his neighbors. This flood of feelings led to Kevin's second tip of advice – set up a work schedule.

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Scheduling his day as he would normally do at work with allotted times for specific activities combatted the feelings of unrest Kevin was experiencing. Setting aside an hour or two to update his LinkedIn, apply for jobs, attend career fairs, or even socializing, normalized a schedule that he could adhere to. The third piece of advice Kevin would give to those who are struggling with unemployment is to stretch out of their comfort zone. Kevin was initially skeptical about Career Source Tampa Bay's TEN program but realized his preconceived ideas had been wrong after attending the first session. By participating in these sessions, he was able to meet Jason and Jenny Lee Christie, both who inspired him to think outside the box. Jason, in particular, encouraged Kevin to consider looking for employment opportunities out-of-state. Without this encouragement, Kevin would have never considered his future career opportunity in Texas.

Finally, Kevin's last piece of advice would be to trust your gut. At the start of his attendance into the Career Source Tampa Bay TEN program, Kevin was offered a job opportunity in New England. He took a weekend off to fly up there and check it out, and found himself uneasy with signing the dotted line. There wasn't anything particularly wrong with the job offer or the location, but it just didn't sit right with Kevin. He looks back on this and is thankful that he trusted his gut, because had he not turned down that previous opportunity, never would he have found his way to HealthMarkets.

Without the dedication of CareerSource employees such as Jason and Jenny Lee and programs such as The Transitioning Executive Network, Kevin's journey through the pitfalls of unemployment would have been a much rockier one. Instead, thanks to the resources and opportunities available through CareerSource of Tampa Bay, Kevin Koons is on sure-footing as he moves forward in his successful new career.

***** Upon successful completion of the PTT orientation, you will be sent an invitation to attend our Professional Job Club.*****

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