

DO'S AND DON'TS

NAVIGATING THE TRUMP EFFECT

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INTRODUCTION

NAVIGATING THE TRUMP EFFECT ON DEVELOPMENT JOBS

From job hunting to networking and everything in between — what globaldev professionals should aim for and avoid to survive and thrive.

Since U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration began freezing U.S. foreign aid and dismantling USAID, thousands of employees have either been laid off or fear that redundancy may be on the horizon.

To help global development professionals weather this uncertain period, Devex has put together this curated guide of advice on how to navigate job loss and a highly competitive job market. This draws from the collective wisdom of the career coaches, recruiters, seasoned professionals, and sector leaders we've been speaking to over the past several weeks.

From garnering the right mindset for a new job hunt to identifying and translating transferrable skills, this practical guide will give you an edge in weathering the storm of disruption so your development career stays on track.



DO: TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

Listening to your fears, rather than being driven by them, is a good first step for any job seeker striving for direction in their job search. This involves figuring out what you need from your job as opposed to what you want, which is a “deliberate process of sitting with them and making sure they make sense for you,” says leadership coach Dan Freehling.

How you approach your job search will depend on your situation, and those with immediate financial concerns may need to prioritize “a much faster [job] search, and it might be a much more expansive [and pragmatic] search, says social impact talent agent Spencer Campbell.

They suggest doing a careful assessment of your budget to calculate your runway and extending it where possible to allow for more time and intention. The more time you have, the more you can reflect on your wants and needs, assess your skills, and invest time in networking.



I meet so many people who bring this heightened fight [or] flight energy to their job hunt because of the stakes. The fear is there. It's very real. But it's because it has not been considered or reflected [upon].

Spencer Campbell
Social impact talent agent

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- **Watch:** [How development professionals can turn fear into career growth](#)
- **Watch:** [How to identify target employers when searching for development jobs](#)

#PROTIP



“You will have many transferable skills, but what do you actually want to do? This is a chance to step back and think about your purpose, what you want to achieve.

— Louise James, managing director, Accenture Development Partnerships

DON'T: PANIC-APPLY

Whatever your strategy — even if you've recently lost a job — attempting to land a new role as soon as possible with as many job applications as you can fit into a day is not advised. Simone Anzböck advises hitting the pause button to think about where your experience will fit best.

At the same time, try to resist the temptation of prioritizing the quantity of job applications over the quality of your network. If you do have an urgent need to find a job, your best bet for getting noticed is to prioritize the use of keywords in your application, Anzböck adds.



If you ... apply for jobs that are in 50 different fields between different organizations, it's going to be hard for you to develop a reasonable network.

Simone Anzböck
International coach

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DO: CLARIFY WHAT YOU DO BEST

Reminding yourself of your abilities can not only help focus your job search but also give you the confidence boost you'll need to come across well during the recruitment process. It will also be useful whether you are considering a career transition or want to double down on your current profession.

This can take different forms, from filling out a structured skills audit template or participating in a workshop to simply sitting down with a pad and paper and writing down what you might say in an elevator pitch, as Zaid A. Zaid, head of U.S. public policy at Cloudflare and a USAID alum, suggests.



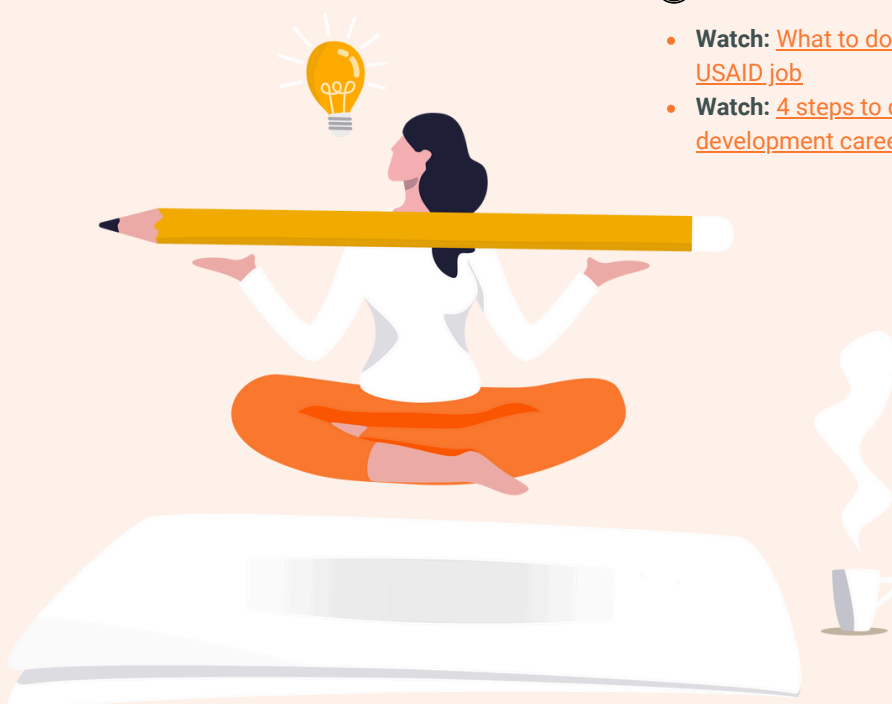
I would really encourage professionals to complete a skills audit ... to make sure they know what it is they bring to the table because being passionate and motivated for the next steps is going to be crucial in the current market.

Jack Jarrett

Veteran development HR adviser

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- **Watch:** [4 steps to designing the development career you want](#)



DON'T: LIMIT YOUR OPTIONS

“Expanding the definition of social impact and the social sector” can expand employment options for purpose-driven job seekers, says Freehling. Looking beyond traditional development organizations to hospitals, schools, social enterprises, and purpose-driven private businesses can be part of realigning your job search in this way.

“If you’re looking to shift into some of these socially driven private organizations, think differently with the job titles,” says Stephanie Mansueto, a social impact job hunting coach. Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT could be helpful when researching what terminology is used for roles and scopes of work that are impact-driven but may lay outside of the traditional development sector.



There are going to be spaces both in the traditional ways we think about development today [and] new spaces and entrepreneurial spaces that are going to be emerging quickly tomorrow that need your talents.

Fatema Sumar

Executive director, Harvard Center for International Development

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DO: TRANSLATE TO TRANSFER YOUR SKILLS

Knowing the types of roles and specialty skills that a broad set of social impact recruiters are looking for can help you round out any missing skills, as well as what you already have in your toolbox that may be worth highlighting in your CV.

Areas like project management, procurement, and budget management have long been in demand and will continue to be, experts tell Devex. Others that might not instantly come to mind that you may already have foundational skills for include event coordination and logistics. “A lot of companies, a lot of universities, a lot of spaces need people who know how to execute logistics,” says Sumar.



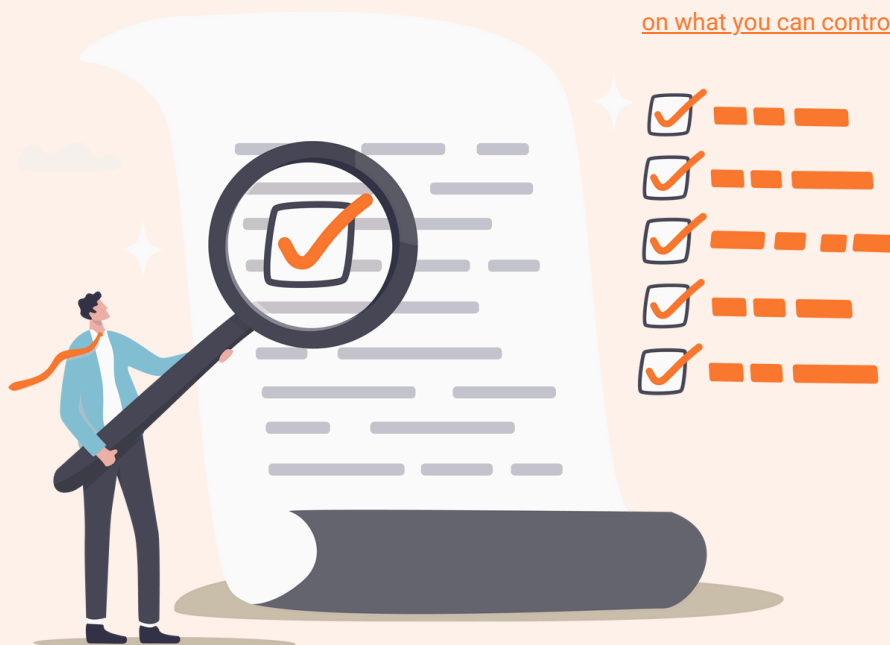
Don't talk about capacity building. That is not a word that translates across to the private sector. It's training, it's leadership development. What are the terms that you can use that speak to what a company is looking for?

Louise James

**Managing director, Accenture
Development Partnerships**

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- **Watch:** [In this time of career tumult, focus on what you can control](#)



DON'T: FORGET TO HELP OTHERS

If you're active on LinkedIn, you'll know that there are many in that community who are eager to help others struggling. If you've lost your job, you might have been receiving lots of messages ranging from kind words to more direct offers such as pro bono coaching or legal guidance.

Whether or not you're feeling supported, reaching out to others in need as well is not only kind but goes to the heart of what successful networking is all about.

"Please extend your olive branch to others in this time, even though you're going through it. Everyone else is too," says Jennifer Bangoura, a careers coach and consultant, speaking of her personal situation related to the USAID funding cuts. A short text or LinkedIn message can go a long way for people who are struggling, and could be the start of a more meaningful professional relationship when you're able to refocus on networking and job hunting.



I believe in good social karma. If you give people things [and] if you help other people, it will come back to you.

Simone Anzböck
International coach

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- **Read:** [Ideas for resetting after redundancy](#)
- **Watch:** [3 ways to bolster your networking efforts on LinkedIn](#)

#PROTIP



"There are many opportunities out there for you. They're not necessarily going to knock on your door, but if you knock on someone else's door, some of those doors will eventually open."

— Scott Beale, executive coach

DO: NAVIGATE LINKEDIN WISELY

Since the aid freeze, LinkedIn has become a hub offering free coaching calls, job postings, virtual happy hours, and advice. But this abundance of resources can be overwhelming and hard to sift through.

There are experts on LinkedIn who are highly recommended by sector insiders we've spoken to. These include co-founder of Kurante Consulting Wayan Vota, who runs the Career Pivot newsletter, and social impact coach and consultant Kelsi Kriitma, who is hosting free monthly career reset events.

Existing networks are another resource worth tapping into for connections, job recommendations, and company insights. Jeremy Schifeling, a career development speaker and author, recommends using LinkedIn's alumni tool to discover university alumni working at an organization you would also like to work for. "These are the people who could tell you about the job and potentially even refer you," he says.



Our sector has always had a familial feel, and when challenges present themselves ... individuals and organizations find a way to step up. In this particular case, we're seeing people from all over the world doing whatever they can to help.

Joanne Sonenshine
Funding advisor to corporate sustainability leaders

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- **Watch:** [3 tips for connecting with development professionals on LinkedIn](#)

#PROTIP



"[The] LinkedIn algorithm wants discourse and discussions. And if your comment is really good, other people will like it [and give] you more visibility. So there is a whole host of benefits for you doing mindful commenting."

— Simone Anzböck, international coach

DON'T: IGNORE THE MONEY TRAIL

Many expect foundations and philanthropic organizations to help fill the funding void being left by deep government agency cuts. This means certain roles may be in demand moving forward, which can help you decide on skills worth upskilling.

“I think people that have skills related to business development fundraising, strategic partnerships, private sector engagement — those people are going to become really critical and necessary at this point to help move some of that money around and see how it can be allocated and leveraged,” says Mansueto.

There is a lot of money being invested into “the good, the bad, and the unknown of AI,” says Craig Zelizer, founder and CEO of PCDN Global. While AI is not going to be “a magic solution” for development organizations, “if you have not become upskilled in AI, at least learn how to use it yourself.”



There is a lot of money going into climate tech, climate resources [and] climate innovation ... some [jobs] are going to be engineering, some will be marketing, but there's a lot where the skills could be transferable.

Craig Zelizer

Founder and CEO, PCDN Global

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- **Read:** [Development roles to upskill in](#)

#PROTIP



“A lot of partnerships and engagement positions are becoming really valuable, especially as we see more private sector trying to generate funding to work in social impact for their initiatives.”

— Stephanie Mansueto, social impact job hunting coach



Are you a development job candidate looking to stand out to recruiters?

Our in-house recruitment specialists are currently compiling talent pools based on specific global development skill sets, including communications and food systems experts, and many more.

Candidates can [update their Devex profiles](#) to be considered, and employers can [learn more here](#).



We hope you found this guide to development's top sectors helpful. For more insights aimed toward global development professionals, [visit our Career Center](#).

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This report was compiled, edited, and designed by:
Justin Sablich

Original writing, reporting, and analysis by: Katrina J. Lane, Rebecca L. Root, and Justin Sablich.

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