

# I Was a Top Radio Personality, and Author, So Why Wouldn't Anyone Hire Me?

by Lisa G. @LisaG30D MARCH 17, 2016, 9:25 AM



Lisa G. on the humbling job hunt that changed her.

*Get out of bed. You'll feel better.*

Every morning for five months, when my alarm went off and I felt like pushing snooze for the rest of the day, I read those words I had written to myself on a yellow Post-it note. It was a reminder not to give up.

By mutual agreement, I left my job at SiriusXM in February 2015. I was in my 50s, single and out of work, and **haunted by the countless news stories** I had read about how hard it was for older women to find employment. I was Lisa G., I'd remind myself. I had spent ten years of my career working as a reporter for Howard Stern, the greatest radio broadcaster in the world, in my unbiased opinion. I had paid my dues, earned my cred. I had even won a **Billboard Air Personality of the Year award**.



Covering the Tony Awards in 2009

Surely, I would be able to land another great job. I had to. I didn't have a spouse to cover my rent, and I worried how long my savings would last.

I signed onto **Wunderlist**, a great app for keeping track of phone calls, emails and appointments. I contacted everyone I knew, wanted to know or thought I knew. I made phone calls and set up meetings and interviews.

Nearly five months and more than 80 interviews later, there I was, still jobless—and beginning to lose heart.

### **Can you think virally?**

During one of my first job interviews, with a company targeting the 18-to-24 crowd, they asked me if I had any ideas for viral videos, as if there were some formula guaranteeing a million hits.

I summoned my morning radio flying-without-a-net experience and quickly pitched: “What if we got a bunch of cool kids to sip soda and then burp along to their favorite song?” I was so proud of myself. How hysterical would that be? I could see the tweets flying.

They looked at me, horrified, and politely told me they were a conservative company and that I just wasn’t the right fit. I had thought my edge and

fearlessness would be an asset. Now I wasn't so sure.

## **Too much experience**

Then there were jobs for which I was absurdly overqualified. I was hopeful about an opening I had heard about in June, but when the top consulting executive producer told me the producer shift started at 1:00 a.m., I laughed out loud. I didn't have to work those hours even at age 17 as a radio news intern at WLIR-FM on Long Island. I was not going to start now.

Still, months into a search, I had to admit I wasn't any closer to finding a job. Executives were nice to me. Some even took me out to lunch, but nothing ever seemed to come of it. I also had uploaded resumes to job-search sites and heard nothing. They were like faulty vending machines that stole your money and refused to give you the bag of chips you so desperately craved. I sent dozens of resumes into the ether and wondered if they somehow ended up in Russia with some guy laughing at me for thinking my interviews with Tupac, Bradley Cooper, and Tiger Woods's mistresses made me a big deal.



The author, on The Today Show, promoting her 2013 book.

As a journalist, I had covered 9/11, city blizzards, and a presidential inauguration. I wasn't someone to be ignored, and yet that's exactly what was happening. Despite knowing how to break through the clutter on the radio airwaves, my words and experience were falling on deaf ears. The human resources officers who were reviewing my resume didn't care who I was or that I had a history of winning ratings.

**What do you do when your industry is disappearing?**

Radio was my first love. But it was a shrinking industry with fewer opportunities, especially for women older than 50. I realized I had to expand my scope, parlay my skills into another media platform, like Internet. I was a great storyteller. I could generate ideas on the spot and under pressure. I could edit like a chef at Benihana. It didn't hurt that I could keep up with the boys and joke with the best of them. I couldn't pass for a millennial, even if I were to use Botox. But I still looked good, and my experience should count for something. I just needed to figure out how to let potential employers know what they would be gaining if they brought me aboard.

I had an upcoming job interview with an Internet radio network, but was feeling lost and pessimistic. Would this be another waste of time? I needed to find my inner strength, but felt like a shriveled balloon with no air.

On interview day, I told myself that I had to stay strong—be in it to win it, as they say—when all I really wanted to do was crawl back into bed. Then I envisioned my Post-It note. *Keep going.* So I took a deep breath, reached way down inside. *I can do this!* I wasn't going to quit now, no matter what.

Suddenly I remembered an actress friend who had told me long ago, “You can be anyone you want to be. Just believe it.” So, while I was wearing a conservative muted-pink A-line long-sleeved dress and black patent-leather pumps, inside my head I was JLo decked out in a head-to-toe sheer bodysuit with sequins and feathers.

### **Putting aside ego**

The front desk called my name. I stood up, back straight, chin up, and walked into the conference room. A woman around my age smiled at me and asked me to sit down. In my entire job search, I hadn't met with a woman ever. A surge of energy ran through me.

I had a shot here. I could feel it.

In this moment I realized I should not let my ego get in the way. My sense of entitlement wasn't serving me. I had to have humility while still holding on to my sense of self.

The woman asked me questions about my career and what I had learned along the way. Instead of leading with my previous job, I started with *me*, how I got into radio, why I loved it, where I saw myself going, what I had done, what I could do. Then I went

on to talk about what I admired about her company and the news division.

She smiled and nodded and asked me when I could start. They needed a fill-in person as soon as possible. It would be the overnight shift, paying a fraction of my former salary, and it might just be six on-air slots for the entire year.

The old me might have scoffed. But I wasn't that person anymore. My job search had changed me. I thought back to being on staff at other stations, and how the people who filled in often found their way to full time. It was easier to grab them than to search for someone on the outside.

“I'll take it!”

She gave me all the necessary paperwork and then ushered me downstairs for my ID tag, and the next day I started work.

One day quickly turned into two days. By late October, I was anchoring and reporting the news—full-time, on-air—covering everything from the city to celebrities.



I had good health insurance again. I could pay my rent and treat myself to a mani-pedi. But more than anything, I was so thrilled to be back in the loop, proud of myself that I had gotten out of bed and endured so many closed doors to eventually find the right one open.

Now, when my 50ish friends are between jobs and feeling scared, I tell them, not to worry about their age, or their looks, don't feel insulted by disinterest or silence. Just keep showing up and saying yes to yourself and all the possibilities, even if you have to get over yourself and pretend you're JLo.

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