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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Job Search Times Longest Since 2016**

## **Spikes In Job Search Length In Q2 & Q4 Correspond To Spikes In Covid Cases**

**CHICAGO, February 24, 2021** – The time it took for job seekers to find new positions spiked in the second quarter of last year and jumped nearly that high again in the final quarter of 2020, according to a quarterly survey of over 3,000 job seekers conducted by global outplacement and business and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

In the fourth quarter, job seekers took 3.31 months to find new positions, up from 2.97 months in the third quarter and 2.57 months in the same quarter of 2019. In the second quarter, respondents reported it took 3.39 months to land a new position, the highest quarterly total since the third quarter of 2016, when it took 3.48 months.

Last year, the average time it took for job seekers to land their next role was 3.05 months, up from 2.7 in 2019 and 2.9 in 2018. It is the highest since 2016, when job seekers took 3.13 months to find a new position. During the Great Recession in 2008, the average job search took 3.5 months. The longest average job search time occurred in Q3 2008, when job seekers found new positions in an average of 4.4 months, according to Challenger's survey.

“Myriad reasons impact how long it takes to land a position. Generally, job search lengths vary depending on the hiring processes of companies, how long the interview process takes, whether the job seeker is looking outside their current location or industry, or whether the job seeker is earning certifications or learning new skills during this time,” said Andrew Challenger, Senior Vice President of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

“Certainly, economic conditions impact job availability. Job search times tend to be longer during a downturn,” added Challenger.

Indeed, according to seasonally adjusted data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average duration of unemployment was 26 weeks in January 2021, up from 22.2 weeks in January 2020, prior to the onset of the pandemic. That’s the longest monthly average since September 2017, when the average duration of unemployment was 26.1 weeks. Nearly 40% of unemployed persons were unemployed for 27 weeks or longer in January 2021, up from 19.8% in the same month last year.

While job seekers are finding themselves out of work longer during this time, Challenger offered the following advice to make the most of the job search.

### **Build and connect to your network**

- **Make a list of all your contacts.** Don’t leave anyone out. List neighbors, friends, family, family friends, former colleagues and managers, customers, members of your church or other community organization, teammates, club members, or clients. You never know from where the next job offer will come.
- **Get involved with a community service group.** This is a great way to build your network as well as hone your professional skills.
- **Join a professional/trade association.** These organizations can provide training and education opportunities and most hold several networking functions every year. The dues are worth their weight in gold if you meet a person at an event who can help you find a new job.
- **Have (Zoom) lunch with at least one new contact each week.** Obviously, networking is an essential part of finding a job. But blindly adding new people to your LinkedIn contacts list, where they will likely just collect dust, is entirely ineffective. It is vital to meet with people on a regular basis. Over lunch or even coffee is an ideal setting

because it is more relaxed. Building these relationships may help you in your current position, and they will definitely help you when you enter the job market.

- **Rev up your skills.** Employers want to know that you are up on the latest skills, trends, advances, etc. While some employers will foot the bill for continuing education, the number who do so is shrinking. And, if you are between jobs, no one but yourself can ensure that your skills are up to date. Explore online courses and local certificate programs to broaden your industry knowledge, increasing your marketability to a variety of employers. Not only will your skill set improve, but you may meet industry professionals who are also continuing their education.
- **Look beyond your industry.** Just because you have been working in the same industry for a certain number of years does not mean that you must stay in that industry. Your fundamental job function is the primary skill set you are selling to employers, not your knowledge of a specific industry. Your skills as an IT professional in the financial industry are certainly transferable to the health care industry, for example. Job seekers can greatly improve their chances of success by expanding the number of industries in which they seek opportunities.
- **Build out your social media profiles.** A recent Challenger survey found 80% of recruiters check social media to vet candidates, and another survey from ResumeGo found candidates are 71% more likely to land an interview if their LinkedIn profile is complete. Job seekers should utilize every tool available to them to not only attract recruiters and hiring managers, but also impress them. Keep it professional when building your online brand.

Once you connect with your network, Challenger offered these tips to help make the most of those meetings.

- **Practice your elevator pitch.** Prior to your meetings, have a succinct paragraph ready that summarizes what you can do for a company and the type of position you would like to land.
- **Ask questions.** Most professionals enjoy talking about their job and accomplishments at work. While the goal of the meeting is to let your contact know you're looking for a job, ask questions to learn about their company and role. They could lead to a few other people who your contact knows who would be better equipped to help you land a job.

- **Follow up.** Send a note or email thanking your contacts for their time. Not only is this the right thing to do, it helps maintain that relationship and keeps you at the top of their mind when a potential position opens up.