

*Guest Column*

## **Poor Hearing May Be Costing You Income**

By Laurie DeWine, Doctor of Audiology

As the economy picks up and jobs become available, you may be updating your wardrobe and your resume for a renewed search. Don't forget a review of an often-overlooked tool in your job skills arsenal – your hearing.

If you think interviewers have soft voices and you can't pick up what they're saying, you may be suffering from impaired hearing. This can make you appear a less-than-favorable applicant.

Similarly, if you already have a job but feel lost or as if you're not going anywhere, consider your hearing. At meetings, do you fully hear what's being discussed? Do you leave the meeting unclear what to do? Are you the person who points out that an agenda item still needs to be covered, and everyone else laughs and tells you it already was? At the lunch table, do you launch a story about the races at River Downs when really your colleagues are talking about the Irish show Riverdance?

Hearing is critical to effective communication in the workplace. The ability to hear and listen well enables employees to understand assignments and be more productive. Effective hearing may be critical to job safety. Poor communication can result in mistakes, unhappy customers and missed deadlines.

Mis-hearing isn't a bit funny when it keeps you from landing a job or doing well in one you already hold. What's more, poor hearing can cost you real money. An article appearing in *Hearing Journal*, based on data collected by the Better Hearing Institute, says that people with untreated hearing loss can make as much as \$30,000 less each year than people who hear well. The unemployment rate for people with severe hearing loss stood at 15.6 percent at the time of the study last fall. Conversely, using hearing aids was shown to reduce the risk of income loss by 90 to 100 percent for those with milder hearing loss and from 65 to 77 percent for those with moderate to severe hearing loss.

About 10 percent of people suffer from hearing loss. The survey found that 60 percent of people with hearing loss are in the work force or still in school. Almost all of them can be helped with hearing aids.

I hope anyone having trouble finding or keeping a job will consider their hearing. There are questions at [www.hearingcheck.org](http://www.hearingcheck.org) that can help you figure out whether you are hearing properly.

The good news is that hearing aids have become much more sophisticated in recent years and are less visible. If you are embarrassed about wearing hearing aids, consider whether you're already embarrassing yourself by not following instructions and conversations correctly. And further, whether you are costing yourself significant income.

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