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Putting the jobless to work...on reality TV
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April 12, 2011 2:21 pm

A new reality show is looking for people on the down-and-out to participate. Finally, reality television that reflects reality, in all its harsh light.

FORTUNE -- When it comes to reality TV, the table-flipping and picture-perfect marriage proposals are anything but the reality most people know.

But now comes a show that's a reflection of one of today's harsher realities: Career Makeover, a new series that promises to tap into the frustrating low points of millions of today's out-of-work and underemployed Americans. The show will give viewers something that's perhaps more telling than the government's eagerly-awaited monthly employment report.

Lights! Camera! Job?

Casting is underway in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The pilot is expected to air this fall on A&E, a source tells Fortune, although a spokesperson from the cable television network says that a reality series focused on helping people make over their careers is still in the developing stages and does not yet have a title or an air date.

Needless to say, with unemployment improving but still high at 8.8%, casting directors should have little trouble finding good candidates. The show has a few requirements: Participants must be 30 to 45 years old; must be unemployed for more than a year or currently underemployed (meaning you have a job and were recently forced to take a pay cut or additional duties with no additional pay); must be a high school or college graduate; must have a previous annual salary ranging between \$45,000 to \$100,000 (W-2 proof of income required); must be from "traditional families with relatives children, close friends, parents and in-laws ..."

Indeed, the series is striving for the appearance of authenticity, for it also asks that no actors or members of any actors union apply. And Snooki, you're out of luck on this one. Applicants cannot have appeared on any other reality show (besides the fact that you're still quite gainfully employed).

"We're trying to tell the story of America," says Vinnie Potestivo, whose New York City-based agency bearing his name is about three weeks into casting sessions for the show.

Though Career Makeover, as the agency calls the pilot, is intended to be somewhat upbeat and give viewers career advice amid a gruelingly challenging job market, the reality of it all just might be too harsh for some viewers to bear. After all, watching your own reality unravel is – well, anything but entertaining. Each week, guests of the show will be matched with headhunter Stephen Viscusi's team, who will offer advice on everything from resumes to networking to wardrobe. Sound familiar?

But don't expect a happy ending, or even closure in this so-called "docu-reality." Unlike the ABC reality series *The Bachelor*, there's no rose at the end of each episode. And unlike Bravo's *Millionaire Matchmaker* (for which Potestivo's agency also casts), don't expect anyone to be smitten over a filthy rich guy or gal.

As with the brutal realities of today's job market, Career Makeover won't promise guests employment by the end of the show (although Viscusi will surely try).

So if not for entertainment, the series will certainly add a colorful narrative to the often dry U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics jobs report. And if not slightly more empowered, viewers might go to bed feeling a little less alone.