

The Survivors

Whoever thought that organizations like Microsoft would be laying off thousands of workers? And who ever dreamed you would be among them – or worried that you might be next? Here a few tips for surviving a layoff and landing on your feet!

Deal with the emotion

Shock. Sadness. Denial. Anger. While you may not have been in love with your job, losing it in a layoff may still bring on the same feelings you might experience when a loved one dies. And while it may be tempting to ignore the feelings and launch a job search immediately, take time to grieve the loss of the one you had. Get mad, have a pity party, yell and scream if you must...whatever it takes. “Grief will sabotage your interviews if you don’t work through it first. If you’re feeling at half-mast, you will approach each interview as another potential rejection, and recruiters will tear you apart,” says Ruth Luban, author of *Are you a Corporate Refugee? A Survivor’s Guide for Downsized, Disillusioned and Displaced Workers* (Penguin 2001).

Also make a special effort to take care of yourself. Eat right, avoid excess alcohol and get plenty of exercise and sleep. You’ll be better able to withstand the emotional ups and downs you’ll experience and you’ll have the energy you need to approach your job search with a positive attitude.

Take stock

Although it doesn’t feel like it now, this could be the best opportunity of your life – don’t squander it! Many people who have survived lay offs have gone on to do work they have always dreamed about doing. This is a great opportunity to consider not only your skills and experience, but also your interests, and to design the job you’d **really** love! Don’t succumb to a “scarcity mentality” – that there are only a few jobs out there and you have to settle for what may come along. Do you really wish you could teach? Start a business? Run a non-profit? Help save our planet? With the right attitude and support, you really can. Build the list of your skills, talents and accomplishments and refer to it often. Just because your job has been downsized doesn’t mean you have to downsize your ambitions.

Network, Network, Network

Once you create the job you really want, use the internet to its fullest, but don’t over rely on it. Getting a job will always be a people business – most jobs are found through networking. Take advantage of internet professional networking sites (LinkedIn, for example.) You’ll be surprised at how many old friends and professional acquaintances you’ll be able to connect with. Then set up meetings for breakfast, coffee or lunch – describe your skills and experiences and find out who they can introduce you to. Join organizations. Get involved in the community. You never know where the contacts you make will lead you.

Set up structure

It’s hard enough to lose your job, but even harder to lose the structure that a job provides. So treat your job search like your new job. Get up, get showered and get to work in your new office – schedule your day with appointments to network and introduce yourself to as many people as you can. Take advantage of any outplacement service you may be offered and take advantage of support groups,

too. You may find that someone introduces you to an opportunity they've uncovered that just isn't right for them.

Being laid off is no picnic. But remember that there **will** be job openings and that **someone** will get those jobs – why not you? As Abraham Lincoln once said, “The best way to predict your future is to create it!”

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