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Bad Economy - Rumors About Being Laid Off

These are troubling times. Companies are hunkering down and making deep cuts in their budgets. Unfortunately departments that do not make a difference in the bottom line - and even some that do - are fair game for staff reductions. 2009 may not be a great year for sales. So, are you spending time being worried about being laid off?

- The better prepared you are for the reality of being laid off, the less emotional you will be should your company tell you that your job has been eliminated.
- Instead of worrying about the possibility of job cuts at the workplace, you need to formulate an action plan. Here are some ideas for your Confidential Layoff Preparation To Do list:
- Make sure that your resume is current and reflects your latest work including key dates Contact My Writing Resources and ask for help refreshing your current resume.
- If you don't already have it, collect your supervisor's contact information. While you are at it, quietly gather contact information for other managers who have told you that they appreciate the work you do.
- Begin building a list of business contact references. These are various people who know your work and can speak to your experience and abilities. Visit the My Writing Resources Website to learn about creating a list of references.
- Take home all the business cards you have collected at work
- Clean up and remove any personal information and files you have on your work PC or laptop (This is a good idea regardless of the situation at work)
- Delete all unneeded and not work-related correspondence on your work e-mail including those messages that you have on your "sent" file.
- At the end of your normal day, collect and begin quietly removing small quantities of personal items, photos and files from work and take them home. (If anyone asks what you are doing, tell them it was time to exchange old stuff for some new items or that you felt like doing some Spring Cleaning.)
- On the Rolodex file, gather the names and contact info of people you normally work with (including happy customers as well as business partners)
- Like business cards, forward home all the contact e-mail addresses you have



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- Begin building your reference database at home. This could be a paper file, a Word document or an Excel spreadsheet. Try to maintain one consolidated file.

Things to Avoid Pre-layoff

- Do not walk around with a glum expression on your face. Avoid if at all possible any office talk about how bad things are and how soon the axe will fall. Don't give in to the gloom and doom mentality as it does you no good and keeps you from being productive. Instead, try your best to be productive while at work and, to the extent possible, continue to do your job. This is good for your morale and sense of self worth.
- Do not succumb to the temptation of removing company property. For example, do not remove company customer lists or copy financial information from a corporate database. This not only unethical, it is illegal and could cut off any severance pay if you are caught.

If You Are Actually Laid Off

- While it feels very personal, it is more likely the company doing the unpleasant task of reducing expenses to survive. Don't waste your time being angry or despondent. Discard any ideas of getting revenge. For your health, turn the corner as quickly as possible and move on.
- Keep nothing. Promptly turn in any company property you have in your possession, such as cell phones, beepers, laptops, printers, modems, tools, etc. Insist on a signed receipt when each equipment item is turned over that indicates you no longer have the item
- Focus on asking the HR manager if your benefits (health benefits in particular) can be extended. Remember, until the layoff occurred you were an employee in good standing. You did nothing wrong.
- Don't let your health coverage expire. The federal COBRA law gives you access to your ex-employer's group insurance plan after you leave the company, may be the best insurance bridge until your next job with health coverage. However....you must pay the premiums on time, and the insurance will evaporate if your ex-employer goes out of business or drops its group health coverage.
- Claim your unemployment benefit payments. When you file for unemployment payments, you're making an insurance claim, not asking for a handout. If you do collect, the payments may only replace a small portion of your salary, but they're still worth the trouble of doing the paperwork.



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- If your employer disappears from the face of the earth, who will produce your W-2 report of wage income? Maybe no one. If you haven't received the form by mid-February, contact the IRS to request a substitute W-2. Keep your pay stub as you will be asked to produce your final paycheck of the tax year.

Begin The Search For Your New Career

- After a layoff, never give up looking for work. Even though there is a bad economy, there will always be someone quitting somewhere.
- Network, network network. Talk to friends, talk to their friends. Make sure as many people as possible are looking out on your behalf. Most new jobs come from referrals.
- Get familiar with a powerful Job Search engine such as www.indeed.com
- Create a job hunt strategy. Plan out actions each day, take them and then check them off your list.
- Make it a rule not to sit around the house feeling sorry for yourself. You need to get mobilized on your job search as quickly as possible. Make an appointment with yourself to go online each morning and check job sites/company sites every working day.
- If you submit at least four job applications or resumes each day while you are out of work, you will have a better chance statistically of being phoned for a job interview.
- In person or verbal contact sometimes yields better chances of landing a job interview. If possible, use the phone to try to speak to a hiring manager or supervisor. This can be very effective within the retail industry.
- Don't panic. Reading about or watching the TV news on the economy can hurt your confidence during your job hunt. Instead, focus on the things you need to do each day and feel good about what you are accomplishing.
- Review your expenses and see where you need to trim. Cut back on expensive restaurants and excessive auto trips. Take a "staycation" this year and visit a local attraction. Feel good about making changes that will improve your spending habits.
- As you speak to people on your contact database, enter a date and a note documenting what was said. Was your resume forwarded on to another possible contact? Make sure you know who might be acting on your behalf.



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- A layoff is also stressful to your spouse and children. Don't isolate yourself from your primary support team. Be sure to make time for them. Reassure them that both you and they will get through this and your lives will be better. Make sure they know what is going on and encourage their suggestions for creative cost cutting. Plan together for the future! Celebrate together when you get the offer of a new job.

Lessons Learned

- Throughout your career, always work on improving your job skills and education.
- High school or GED is a must. Better is a college degree or an advanced degree
- If college is not for you, learn a trade or pick up a second or third trade
- Continue to look at the current want ads for industries that are hiring
- Learn a lesson from the banking industry and auto manufacturing; it is important to keep in mind that retraining could take weeks, months or years. If a layoff happens, you have better chance of landing a new job outside the ailing industry that has laid you off.
- Keep your resume at the ready. It should list all the new training you completed or are in the process of completing. Retraining for alternate career(s) also opens doors for additional networking contacts.