



Randy's Work *and You*

March Edition

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1. How to Recession-Proof Your Career

Planning Ahead Can Boost Your Chances of Keeping, Finding a Job

By SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN

January 29, 2008;

Recession fears are causing more than just stock-market jitters this winter. They're also shaking some workers' confidence in their ability to continue earning a paycheck.

In December, overall worker confidence reached the lowest level recorded in 2007, according to a monthly report from Spherion Corp a recruiting and staffing company. Roughly 2,800 workers were surveyed on their confidence in their personal employment situation and the broader employment environment.

Past economic downturns have led to layoffs throughout corporate America and, at least temporarily, a tighter labor market. But some industries tend to be more vulnerable than others when the economy is in a slump.

Even if there isn't an official recession, a number of areas are already seeing layoffs and hiring freezes. Industries affected by the recent mortgage crisis and home-building

downturn, such as real estate, construction, banking and law, are among the hardest hit so far, say recruiters.

PROTECTING YOUR CAREER

Some employers in struggling industries manage to do better than their peers during downturns, says Dale Winston, chairwoman and chief executive of Battalia Winston International, an executive-search firm in New York. She cites Goldman Sachs as a current example. "There are certain companies that are counter to their cycles and making a fortune because they're shorting the market," she says. "Even in the midst of the [1920s] there were people making money." But those were the exceptions.

While jobs in housing-related industries may be at most risk, a recession could reverberate to other parts of the labor market. Consumer-products manufacturers and retailers are usually the hardest hit in a downturn, along with travel and hospitality businesses, says Ms. Winston. Shoppers tend to cut back on their discretionary spending when finances are tight, she explains, and homeowners are currently grappling with high-energy prices and mortgage payments. "People only have so many dollars to spread around," she says.

In contrast, hiring generally remains robust during a recession in industries that serve consumers' critical needs such as health care and energy, notes Ms. Winston. "We have an aging population in the U.S." she says. Plus, she adds, "nobody's going to stop driving their cars or lighting their homes."

Employers in what recruiter Chris Morgan calls "sin and comfort" industries, such as alcohol makers and distributors, gambling institutions and cigarette manufacturers, also tend to fare well during economic slumps. In addition, wealth-management firms stay in favor as people often become more protective of their finances, says Mr. Morgan, managing partner and founder of Lantern Partners, an executive-search firm in Chicago.

The hiring outlook varies for industries that aren't characteristically durable or weak in a recession. Eighty-two percent of 1,400 chief information officers and 86% of 1,400 chief financial officers polled last month in separate surveys by Robert Half International said they foresaw no change in their staffing activity for the first quarter of 2008.

For people working in the industries that are most likely to be hit with economic woes, some strategic planning can boost the odds that they will stay employed or find new work, say career experts.

Here are some strategies for recession-proofing your career.

Stick around. If you work for a company in distress, your first instinct may be to jump ship. But if your new employer later decides to lay off workers, you'll likely be most at risk of getting a pink slip, warns Ms. Winston. In many cases, "it's last in, first out," she notes.

Be a good sport. Following layoffs, you may be asked to take on additional work that was part of a former employee's responsibilities. This may involve handling tasks that you dislike or are overqualified for. But expressing dismay could put your employment at risk should there be more layoffs, cautions Gary Rich, president of Rich Leadership, an executive-advisory firm in Pound Ridge, N.Y. Displaying a positive attitude is more likely to pay off in the long run. "Companies remember those who helped them out through a tough time," he says.

Haven't been asked to take on extra projects? Volunteer to help, advises Mr. Rich. You'll demonstrate that you're a team player committed to the company's success.

Work harder. Act the way you did when you were gunning for a promotion, says Lantern's Mr. Morgan. "Companies are less likely to get rid of star performers."

Work smarter. Look for ways to help your employer overcome the specific challenges it faces most in a recession, advises Mr. Morgan. "Think about your company's situation in the same fashion that your boss is thinking about it," he says. "You can be more useful by identifying ways to reduce costs, increase revenue or reposition a product or service."

Dust off your résumé. Prepare for the worst ahead of time by making sure your résumé is up to date, urges Shawn Graham, author of "Courting Your Career: Match Yourself With the Perfect Job" (Jist Publishing, 2007). If you rush to get it done following a sudden dismissal, the odds of making a typographical error or omitting important details will increase.

Network now. Don't wait until you need help finding a job, says Debra Feldman, a job-search consultant in Greenwich, Conn. Make a special effort to reconnect in a meaningful way with past bosses, former colleagues, academic advisers and other potential advocates. Reaching out to them only in times of distress can be a turnoff, she says. Also, make sure to offer yourself as a resource to your contacts as well. The gesture will provide an incentive for them to reciprocate.

Take a pay cut. If layoffs are rampant at your company, consider offering to accept a temporary salary reduction, suggests Mr. Morgan, who speaks from experience. During the dot-com bust in 2001, he voluntarily agreed to an 18% decrease in his base pay at a search firm specializing in technology recruiting. "I was the last one left," he recalls. The ploy helped him prolong his time at the beleaguered company while he began hunting for a new position, which he landed about six months later, he says.

Search internally. If you see a layoff coming in your division or department, it may be easier to search for another position at your firm because you've already proved yourself, says Mr. Graham. For example, if you work in media relations, you may qualify for a sales role because of your experience selling story ideas to news outlets, he says. Be sure to network with colleagues who work in those areas to learn about job openings before they're advertised publicly and to see if you can secure a referral, he adds.

2. Fast Track Your Job Search Through a Professional Association

By Joe Turner

If you're looking to expand your job search, you'll eventually face this question:
"Where can I find people who'll talk with me?"

This is a question most job seekers have to grapple with when the well runs dry and they're at a loss for new jobs to apply for.

How about Professional Associations?

It's been said, "there is a professional association for almost everything you do". Every industry, profession, specialty, or trade most likely has at least one professional association. These organizations perform various roles such as public relations liaison to the media, maintaining professional standards and establishing a vision for the future of their profession or industry.

These organizations can be a great conduit for inside information, overall trends and new developments. This also includes the latest scoop on job opportunities, but you must be a member. If you're not already a member of an association that represents your job title or professional position, join one as you may be missing out on a great deal of insider info.

The perfect resource to research organizations is a reference called *Associations Unlimited*. This is a database containing profiles of approximately 460,000 international and U.S. national, regional, state, and local nonprofit membership organizations in all fields, including IRS data on U.S. 501(c) nonprofit organizations.

According to their publisher, *Associations Unlimited* contains descriptive info on over 22,000 U.S. national associations, 25,000 international associations, 110,000 U. S. regional, state and local associations, plus over 300,000 U.S. 501(c) nonprofit organizations, agencies and service programs. You'll find contact information, e-mail, web sites and links to each association's descriptive materials plus info on meetings, conventions and conferences.

Don't waste time Googling this resource, because it's available only on a subscription basis. The good news is that you can access it free from your local library, as many library reference sections include this reference work. In fact, if you have a valid library card, you can access *Associations Unlimited* online through your library website once you've entered your card number.

The bottom line is this: professional associations are a great resource for networking with members of your own profession, trade, or job title. Their members are employees, managers and executives who are working in the very same corporations, small companies and organizations to which you're applying.

In fact, your dream job could be within one of these very companies because many hiring managers will also be members of their professional associations. What better time to meet them than when they're "off-duty" and you're on a more equal footing?

If appropriate for you, join the organization. It most likely has a local chapter in your city or close by. Get on their mailing list and into the loop. Professional associations can be one of the best avenues to get on the inside and to reap referrals and leads for opportunities that will never make it to the outside world.

As they say, "membership has its privileges".

As a recruiter, Joe Turner has spent the past 15 years finding and placing top candidates in some of the best jobs of their careers. Author of ***Job Search Secrets Unlocked***, Joe has interviewed on radio talk shows and offers free insider job search secrets at: <http://www.jobchangesecrets.com>

3. Boomer Corner - The New World of Work after "Retirement"

Posted by Tammy Erickson

It's time to formalize a "deceleration" career phase -- one that lets us ease up and step down, without the angst that comes from doing something outside the norm. I know the concerns: What about the loss of prestige? Can we really reduce people's salaries? How will it affect pensions? All-important issues -- and ones we need to work through as we retire retirement.

People are stepping down. They're just leaving your organization, walking across the street, and taking a less demanding position at another firm -- perhaps even a competitor.

Over the last 50 years, employees' relationships with corporate work have tended to follow a very predictable path: workers paid their dues with hard work and, often, long hours as they moved up the career hierarchy. Most employees reached their personal pinnacle (or perhaps one step beyond if you believe in the Peter Principle!) some time in their mid-40s to mid-50s -- their peak of power, prestige, and earning potential. Then, in their early 60s, most had a Friday-afternoon retirement party, and -- suddenly -- found themselves by Monday morning lying in a hammock. Retired!

Today, this makes little sense. This curve doesn't track with our physical or intellectual energy levels; for many it doesn't work financially; and increasingly, it's a huge problem for corporations, which just can't afford to lose major contributors through an abrupt exodus.

If we want to keep talented people in the workforce longer, we need to confront three issues head on:

1. Most people (not all, let me hasten to add) do not want to work as hard in their 70s as they are in their 50s -- they do want to do less.
2. Most people (not all, let me hasten to add) have “equilibrated” by their 50s -- reached the highest role they are able to handle -- continuing “up” would be a mistake of Peter Principle proportions
3. Keeping people in the same position for 30 years -- from 50 to 80, say -- would be ridiculous -- frustrating to the people below, stagnating for most individuals

As individuals, we can address this reality in several ways. One of course is to move on -- leave the firm where we established our “first career” success -- and take a less demanding or more flexible role in another firm, or even reinvent ourselves in another field. My latest book, *Retire Retirement: Career Strategies for the Boomer Generation*, discusses these options.

But both of these options rob our current company of our skills and knowledge. How about if we move down instead of moving out?

Let’s create bell-shaped-curves, with a career deceleration phase in workers’ 50s through 80s that mirrors the career development phase of their 20s through 40s. After achieving peak levels of responsibility in midcareer, individuals would be able to continue to contribute to businesses in legitimate and respected, although less rigorous ways. Think about academia, where a person is able to step out of the highly demanding dean role, and move back to teaching part-time or doing research -- roles that are highly respected but more flexible.

Most individuals today, although they want to continue working in some way in their 60s and 70s, do not want to work as long or as intensely as they have up to now. They want to cut back. Creating bell-shaped curve career paths is one good way to keep the talent in-house.

What is your company doing to accommodate this growing need?

4. Success Story

From Po Bronson’s book “*What Should I Do With My Life?*” (Highly recommended)

Mike Jenzeh

He was a hustling real-estate broker in Silicon Valley in the early nineties when the market paused. He was your stereotypical pushy salesman. He couldn’t close a deal to save his life. He always made it about him.

He simply stopped working and read book including religious one. He was particularly struck by a passage in Isaiah 58. In essence, it impressed him about not pointing fingers or blaming others.

He had a vague idea that a trip to might be good for him and he went to Costa Rica. He wondered what they manufactured. He met a craftsman of bags who wanted to sell his products in the United States. . He got a loan, bought some bags and started cold calling in the Bay Area. He met a woman who was doing a similar import business. She loaned him the money to buy a warehouse in Oakland and his business grew.

5. Humor Department - Trying to impress the boss

EAGER TO IMPRESS THE BOSS

A young executive was leaving the office late one evening when he found the CEO standing in front of a shredder with a piece of paper in his hand.

"Listen," said the CEO, "this is a very sensitive and important document here, and my secretary has gone for the night. Can you make this thing work?"

"Certainly," said the young executive. He turned the machine on, inserted the paper, and pressed the start button.

"Excellent, excellent!" said the CEO as his paper disappeared inside the machine. "I just need one copy."

6. Words that Inspire

“True life is lived when tiny changes occur.”
--*Leo Tolstoy*

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