

MASTER PLAN

Bounce back

Getting laid off is bad; not dealing with it properly is worse

As jobless rates rise and economists forecast more tough times, it's important to know how to bounce back from sudden unemployment.

Whether picking up new skills, updating your resume or expanding your network, there are many critical steps that can boost your chances of a quick recovery.

If you fear your job could be on the chopping block, consider these strategies to help you maximize your ability to rebound:

Sharpen interviewing skills

If you've been off the job hunt for several years, your interviewing skills might be a bit rusty. It never hurts to practice your ability to verbally communicate the work experience, tenacity and value you'd bring to an organization, says Joe Takash, a LaGrange Park-based business consultant and president of Victory Consulting, a performance management firm.

"Even Ivy Leaguers and 30-plus year professionals are often never coached on their enthusiasm — or lack thereof — during an interview," Takash says. "It's important to practice making a great first impression and engaging the interviewer in stimulating dialogue that will posture you ahead of the competition."

Network like crazy

Looking for work is a job in itself, so have a daily to-do list of contacting at least 20 people, and follow up with appreciation and personal notes. A one-way street leads to nowhere, so always express gratitude, Takash

says. "We can't control the economy and competitive factors, but we can control our ability to influence people and build trust," he says. "Be tactfully persistent and express to your contacts that you've fallen victim to troubled times and are looking for work. Tell the simple truth."

Make sure your resume is ready

Whether or not you're employed, your resume should include your most current job title, as well as outstanding accomplishments achieved in that role. You don't want to be scrambling to remember things you worked on years ago.

Financial exit strategy

Make sure you save up as much money as you can in the event you're laid off. Filing for unemployment can help lessen some of the financial strain of losing your job, but it might not be enough to cover all of your bills.

"Even if you get reassurance from management that your position is safe today, that doesn't mean your situation might not change in a few weeks or a few months from now," says Shawn Graham, author of "Courting Your Career: Match Yourself with the Perfect Job" (\$12.95, Jist Works). "There are no guarantees."

Learn and develop new skills

Pick up new skills that will help you stand out from other job seekers; take courses to enhance marketability. In a shrinking job market, employers are looking for candidates who fit the exact skill set they are seeking.

Don't get bogged down in denial

Some people refuse to admit they could lose their job and don't take the necessary steps to avoid it or cushion it. Even after a layoff, some go on refusing to accept it, believing the employer will have to come crawling back.