

defiant!

by Rajesh Setty

(With contributions from more than 50 smart people)

defiant!

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to everyone who is

defiant!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Just looking at the wonderful contributions I have received from thoughtful people from around the world shows that it is simply NOT worth embarking on a significant project alone.

These contributions have helped significantly to enhance the value of this book.

I want to thank everyone who contributed an insight or two for the book. I requested a few people to contribute (via email) and a few more people responded to my request on the blog, LinkedIn or on Twitter.

1. Abi Kariguddaiah at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/abikariguddaiah>
2. Aloke Gaur at <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/0/34b/752>
3. Ari Samy at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/ariangusamy>
4. Arun Nithyanandam at <http://www.squidoo.com/arunsays>
5. Badri Narayanan at <http://www.compassites.net>
6. Bill Sherman at <http://www.aha-moments.com>
7. Boris Glants at <http://www.sibylvision.com>
8. Charles Schultz at <http://vconomics.blogspot.com/>
9. Christine (Chris) Brown at <http://www.resources-results.com/>
10. Chris Garrett at <http://www.chrisg.com>
11. Darrell Z. DiZoglio at <http://www.righteousresumes.com>
12. David Bookout at <http://www.effettigrowth.com>
13. David Zinger at <http://www.davidzinger.com>
14. Deepak Kamlani at <http://www.inventures.com>
15. Dilip Saraf at <http://www.career-transitions-unl.com>
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17. Gautam Godhwani at <http://www.simplyhired.com>
18. Ginny Kisling at <http://www.resumesbygabby.com>
19. Jamie Gold at <http://www.moneyallocator.com>

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22. Joseph Blank at <http://www.virsalent.com>
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32. Phil Gerbyshak at <http://www.philgerbyshak.com>
33. Promise Phelon at <http://www.upmo.com>
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39. Sameer Vyas at <http://www.pentominium.com/>
40. Seth Godin at <http://sethgodin.typepad.com>
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- 51. Yakov Soloveychik, at <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/1/13/366>

There are several other people who have made bringing this book out quickly a reality. You can read the story behind the book in the final Appendix. I want to specifically thank the following people:

Bill Sherman for his help with shaping this book to where it is today. If you like the flow of the book, all the credit goes to Bill.

James Wondrack for his help designing this book. www.wondrackdesign.com

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This e-book published by Rajesh Setty, Silicon Valley 2009

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INTRODUCTION

defiant!

Practical Tips to Thrive in Tough Times

I'm writing this book in the spring of 2009. Right now, it's a tough economy all across the world. Many people have already gone through a layoff. According to the United States federal government—at least 4.4 million people found themselves laid off between December 2007 and March 2009. That's a huge number, and it's just the United States. Many people lost their jobs before the downturn became a “official” recession in December 2007, and many more will lose their jobs before this recession ends. Around the world, millions of workers lost their jobs. The number probably reaches into the tens of millions worldwide. It's a truly staggering number—where many people find reliable jobs vanish sometimes seemingly overnight.

If you've gone through a layoff (or a layoff scare), you may find yourself changing how you approach your day. It's much easier to talk about a layoff than to face it. You meet with your friends; together, you share a cup of coffee or tea; everyone expresses their worries; and then everyone goes their separate ways. No one takes action. It's a group therapy session without any commitments or next steps. Everyone feels relieved to know they're “not the only ones.”

Overall, it's an act of denial. But then, if you don't want to face the layoff (or layoff scare), what choice do you have?

If you look hard enough, there are positive aspects to getting laid off. Some might say that you can find a positive side to any event in life. That's probably true, but I mean something much more significant.

Usually, during a layoff scare, everyone engages in a game of “musical chairs.” There are fewer chairs [jobs]. When the music stops, everyone scrambles to find the next “secure” job.

However, in a layoff environment, that new job only offers a temporary sense of security . . . until the music starts again.

Few people are truly experts in coping and thriving in a layoff environment. I'm not suggesting that you become an expert. You'd have to devote precious time to master that skill. Instead, I'm offering a different solution.

I want you to become someone who has made themselves invaluable—someone who will never have to worry about facing a layoff.

Let's reexamine the "musical chairs" metaphor. If you view jobs as scarce, then you'll scramble for any job. You just want to be sitting when the music stops. However, the business world doesn't work blindly. Managers don't just remove jobs at random. They consciously do their best to retain the best employees. In a competitive world, you can be "just another person searching for a seat." You will take any job available. Or, you can make yourself so valuable that employers (either your current employer or others) will scramble to offer you a reserved seat.

This little book provides a dose of inspiration to help you change your mindset and thrive—even in an economic downturn. When everyone else scrambles helter-skelter and proclaims the sky is falling, you must become defiant.

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WHY IS DEALING WITH LAYOFF HARD?

Not all layoffs are hard. If you end up in a better job in a reasonable amount of time, then you've actually made progress.

That strategy works when the economy is hot. However, layoffs occur much more rarely in growing economies. The whole employment world is different now in a tough economy. We often forget that we need to recalibrate our perceptions to the new economic environment.

Let's take three cases:

1. Your Ideal Situation

Once people get the news that they've been laid-off, they want to get back into the work world as soon as possible. Here's what most people envision.

Step 1: Get Laid Off

Step 2: Land a Great New Job Quickly.

That was easy! However, no situation is ideal, especially not in this economy.

2. What you may think as Realistic:

Step 1: Get Laid Off

Step 2: Find a New Job in a While

Step 3: Start Your New Job

While you may be prepared for a job search, it's unlikely that you're ready to face a difficult or lengthy job search. We hold ourselves in high esteem, and sometimes it's hard to hear employers say "no." However, when there are many great applicants competing for fewer jobs, the odds say that most applicants will hear "no" more often.

3. What may be Realistic:

We know that finding a new job in a tight labor market will be a challenge, but few of us feel ready to face it with the same determination we use to win a client or earn a promotion.

If you're really going to pursue your next job aggressively, be prepared to put in long days (and some long nights). Don't rely on your past brilliance and accomplishments. Treat the search for your next job as a chance to get noticed by your boss and flagged for promotion. In fact, that's exactly what will happen. You'll be promoted from the role of "unemployed" to "gainfully employed."

Here's what a zealous job search might look like:

Step 1: Get Laid Off

Step 2: Start Looking for a New Job

Step 2.1 Update your Resume

- Decide on your new elevator pitch
- Refocus your resume and cut where necessary
- Update the resume, write, rewrite, rewrite again
- Ask others for help polishing the story
- Create a resume that tells a story

Step 2.2 Attend Networking Events

- Register for networking events
- Prepare for the event
- Think about what you will say, what business card to give, with whom to spend time etc.
- Conduct post-mortem of the event
- Write follow-ups within 24 hours of the networking events

Step 2.3 Apply for jobs

- Research what companies to apply for
- Create cover letters for each company
- Find the right channel to submit the resume
- Follow-up on each application

Step 2.4 Thrive in the Interview Process

- Schedule (even reschedule) and confirm
- Prepare for the interview (Multiply by number of interviews)
- Travel to/from interview (Multiply by number of interviews)
- Ace the actual interview (Multiply by number of interviews)
- Send thank-you letters and follow-ups (Multiply by number of interviews)

Step 2.5 Navigate the Post-Interview Process

- Negotiate the salary
- Agree on job responsibilities, role, title, location, and travel
- Pass reference checks
- Think about your new boss, workplace, job, technology etc.

Step 3: Start Your New Job

That's a really long list. Yet, I haven't even included steps for dealing with rejection, handling the emotional grief from losing your previous job, or tuning out the many other distractions around you—such as planning how to pay bills and meet obligations to friends and family.

Now, maybe I don't have to say why dealing with a layoff is hard. The pain is amplified mainly because you may have been laid off for no fault of yours (unlike getting fired.)

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

If you are facing a layoff, you may ask yourself: “How can I find the next opportunity?”

This is a valid question, but unfortunately not a powerful question. This question alone will not help you locate a new job.

You can tweak the question a little bit to make it more powerful.

And that version is:

“How can I become an OPPORTUNITY for someone else?”

Think about it. A new job, no doubt, will be an opportunity for you. But that’s a one-sided perspective. If you want to create a REAL opportunity, you need to create a compelling offer for your prospective employer.

- Do they see you as another person scrambling for a seat? If so, then you’ve been defined as someone who wants to take something scarce (employment) from them.
- Do they see you as someone who offers them opportunities? Will your presence in the job create new opportunities, expand possibilities, or solve a current headache that keeps them up at night? If so, you’re giving more value than you’re asking for.

How can I
become an
OPPORTUNITY
for someone
else?

In other words, there are enough opportunities for out there if you can be an opportunity for others.

A BETTER APPROACH

Some people find themselves wishing that their unemployment (or layoff scare) will just go away. They hope and pray that things will auto-magically get better. One morning, they will wake up and the economy will be fine. On that magical day, they'll be able to find the job of their dreams with little effort. These people wait for others to solve the problem.

That's definitely a bad approach, but there's also a worse one. A few people make a dangerous conclusion. They assume that if there is an unemployment problem, then there are lots of other people will also have the same problem. If everyone's going through the same situation, then it's not really a problem, right? In this twisted logic, up becomes down. Just because some people share the situation doesn't mean it's good, common, or even healthy.

There's a scientific term that describes this behavior—learned helplessness. If you're not familiar with the work of psychologist Martin Seligman, you need to learn about his work. When humans (or animals) believe that they have no control over their environment, they tend to “hunker down.” They give up, and they stop trying to avoid pain and unpleasant events.

Talking won't help
you find a job.

That's why I'm so concerned when I see people gather in coffee shops and talk with each other about the economy and layoffs. I've seen it happen all across Silicon Valley the past few months. There's so much talk, and little action. Talking won't help you find a job. It might create a moment of “shared pain,” but it's not going to help you.

The opposite of learned helplessness is defiance.

Here is a framework to get out of the learned helplessness and move towards defiance.

The Mindset

PRACTICE PATIENCE

BE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH UNCERTAINTY

SHIFT THE CRITERIA

PRACTICE PATIENCE

“Patience and Fortitude conquer all things” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Whatever said and done—things take time. They do! When the economy sucks, things really take a long time. More importantly, you’re going to feel that time has been moving doubly slow. However, your impatience won’t make the job-search move any faster than they normally would.

Solution: **To practice patience.**

I know that it’s tough. The moment you are out of a job, you want to get another job right away. However, as you and I both know, reality is different.

Think about it. If there was a really good position that was waiting for you before the layoff, why were you waiting for the layoff to happen? You should have gone after it regardless of the economy.

If you’re newly unemployed, you probably won’t have an ideal job waiting for you. If that happens, then you’re either very lucky or you’ve spent years cultivating the relationships and network that you need to thrive in any economy.

So, be patient. If you don’t have patience to deal with the job-search, you will make mistakes. As a result, your job-hunt will take longer than if you took time to do everything right.

Here is a reason why patience is required:

You can’t get a job by yourself. You need help from other people, and you need to co-ordinate time and actions with those other people. Currently they do have a job and you don’t. They have

other responsibilities in their current jobs whereas your sole purpose is to find that job. So while you may be ready to co-ordinate actions easily with others, you are not a major concern for others. You may be one concern, but you may not be their major concern.

Rather than be impatient about the lack of urgency by others, you can use your time creatively to think about how you can make a case for why they should increase the urgency and importance to your case.

Without patience, there might also be a tendency of taking whatever you get offered—leading to other problems that may be worse than temporary unemployment.

There is a hidden benefit to patience: You can reset your expectations to make them more realistic. Optimism, without solid grounding, can be very dangerous.

OK, how does this translate in real-life? Here's one example: practice meaningful follow-ups.

When you send your resume for a potential position, your urgency might translate into a flurry of phone calls and emails annoying the person on the other end. Your personal situation warrants urgency, but it is no way that urgency is getting transferred to the person who is on the other end. Ensure that you have the patience to deal with it in a meaningful way. Follow-ups are important but they don't have to be annoying.

If you're
unemployed, then
every job offers
a possibility of
hope.

Related Reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #67 - Understand the 3T Rule
- Life Beyond Code: Why is patience hard?
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #14 – Think Long Term

GET PREPARED TO DEAL WITH UNCERTAINTY

“Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating.” - Karl Von Clausewitz

While the above quote feels good, when you are facing a layoff, uncertainty can seem like a punishment. The first temptation is to resolve that uncertainty by getting a job. Quickly. On a lighter note, you want to move from “uncertainty” to “certainty,” but as soon as you have a job, you get bored with certainty. You say, “It’s the same old job . . .”

Learn to deal with uncertainty. Remember that not having something to hold on to will open a new space. You can fill that space with many different possibilities. These possibilities existed even before the fear of a layoff, but you had no incentive to look at them seriously. In other words, the job security (or the myth of security) prevented you from looking at other options that were out there. Now that there is uncertainty, all new possibilities are on an equal footing. In other words, all options carry risk and are (probably) equally uncertain.

If you’re unemployed, then every job offers a possibility of hope.

If you’re facing a possible layoff, then your current job offers diminishing hope, while new jobs offer substantial hope.

Unfortunately, there is no course on how to deal with uncertainty. Like anything you learn in life, experience is the best teacher. If you have never taken risks in life, then taking a risk seems, well . . . risky. That’s the problem. You won’t know how to quantify risk.

If you have brushed against risk every now and then, a new risk is still risky – but you are not ruffled by it as much as someone who rarely takes risks.

Uncertainty is the same way. The more you deal with it, the less daunting it feels. Use this situation as an opportunity to get comfortable with uncertainty. After all, uncertainty is the only thing that's certain, really.

This may be a bitter truth for you to swallow, but the world is indifferent. When everybody has his or her own concerns to take care of, your concerns become extra baggage. Much like airlines refuse to accept extra baggage without charging a fee, few people will carry your extra emotional baggage for free.

Unless you demonstrate to someone that “including” you in some way will help them take care of their concern, you will continue to have that uncertainty.

The more you
deal with it, the
less daunting it
feels.

Related Reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #15 – Embrace uncertainty with ease
- Life Beyond Code: In search of certainty...
- Life Beyond Code: New skills for the new world

SHIFT THE CRITERIA

“If there is nothing very special about your work, no matter how hard you apply yourself, you won’t get noticed and that increasingly means you won’t get paid much, either”
- Michael Goldhaber, Wired

If there is only one thing that you remember from the first part of this book, let that be the need to continually shift the criteria with which the marketplace puts a value for your offer.

Let me take a couple of examples that all of us very familiar with:

First, iPod: When Apple created iPod, they did not create something that is marginally better than other CD players. In fact, you could not compare iPod to a CD player. It was a different offering compared to what existed in the marketplace. Result: 375,000 units of iPod were sold in the first year. iPod set the standard for how music was consumed by the world.

Second, Amazon Kindle: Amazon did not create another eBook reader. They created a platform with which readers could interact with digital content. Amazon worked with partners that include major publishers to enable one-click access to digital content. Result: 500,000 units of Amazon Kindle were sold in the first year. Kindle set the standard for how to distribute digital content.

If you observe both the examples above, you see that both offerings shifted the criteria for how they should be compared with existing offerings in the marketplace. They were not “also ran”s that were marginally better than existing offerings. They were different offerings.

On one level, we are all unique and on another level we are all common. If your offer to the world is common, you are competing with a boatload of people. Why? Simply because

everything that's common responds with a similar answer for the criteria set to measure it. If you are part of the common, the only answer you have is to work hard and provide a better answer. When others respond with a similar strategy, there is a dog-fight and everyone in the game is in trouble.

A better way to solve this dilemma is to be that someone who gets measured by criteria that are different from the current market standards. That is precisely where you will bring out your uniqueness and more. You can fall into the common trap and try to match the current offerings. In that case, you will need to offer everything that fits the standard criteria set by the marketplace and a lot more. There's another option. Offer something that will make the existing offers in the marketplace seem irrelevant. In simple terms, you need to sufficiently distinguish yourself in the marketplace to make your mark and demand a premium.

Offer something that will make the existing offers in the marketplace seem irrelevant.

Related Reading:

- Book: Beyond Code – Learn to distinguish yourself in 9 simple steps! (PDF, 115 pages)
- eBook: Personal Branding for Technology Professionals (PDF, 40 pages)

The Preparation

GET THE “RIGHT” HELP RIGHT AWAY

LEARN TO TELL GOOD STORIES

COMMIT TO ACT

GET THE “RIGHT” HELP RIGHT AWAY

You can try to do everything alone and get tired or you can create the right configuration (your personal team) and create the opportunity of your dreams.

If you want to climb the hill behind your home, you can do that on your own. If your goal is to climb Mount Everest, you need a team. If you want to go around the block on a cycle, you can do that on your own. If you want to complete in Tour De France, you need a team.

Think about it – your life is a big enough project and serious enough that you need to assemble a team. It goes the other way too. Lives of people who are around you are big enough projects for them and you need to be part of their team as they dream and go after building their dreams.

Trying to do everything on your own is a futile exercise –especially trying to do things that are not in your areas of strengths.

Trying to do
everything on
your own is a
futile exercise

Let's get to the basics:

- Do you know what is your ideal career path? Do you know what questions to ask yourself before making your first job search move? Getting in a wrong job is a lose-lose proportion for you and the new employer. If you are not clear about what you want, that may be an area to get help.
- Is your resume up to date? Does it tell your story that is powerful enough? Can you make your resume sing? If not, that may be an area where you can look for help?
- Do you know how to present well? You will have to face a series of interviews where you present your case to potential employers. If you are not confident of this, that may be another area to get help.

The above are a few examples of tactical nature to demonstrate the need for help.

Any significant project you undertake will need help from talented people. There are a number of ways you can structure the arrangement for getting help. You can pay and get that help or you can enroll people by providing them a stake in the outcome. Whatever be the arrangement, it has to answer the fundamental question—“how is your project a big opportunity for them?”

Once this is satisfactorily answered, getting people to help you will never be a problem.

When you make a request, you are taking time, energy, money or creating an opportunity cost for the other person. When you create an opportunity, you are inviting them to a journey to go to a place better than where they would have gone on their own.

So, let me end with a golden rule :

“Stop making requests and start creating opportunities for people around you. Once you follow this, there will never be a dearth of opportunities for you.”

Related Reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #39 – Make it easy for people to help you
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #79 – Gather the right puzzle pieces
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #85 – Bring the right puzzle pieces into game

Stop making
requests and
start creating
opportunities for
people around you.

LEARN TO TELL GOOD STORIES

"I will tell you something about stories - They aren't just entertainment. Don't be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death."
-Leslie Marmon Silko

All else being equal, the person who tells better stories will always win.

Who does not remember a story from their childhood? Everyone does. What they forget is that we live in our stories. Everybody is telling stories to everyone else. Why? Everyone is telling stories to themselves about the stories they are telling others. If that is the case, why not get really good at telling stories to others?

- Do you have story about something cool that you achieved in the past?
- Do you have a story that will show some characteristics that people respect – such as integrity, tenacity, persistence, etc. ?
- Do you have story about how you saved a million dollars for your employer?
- Do you have a story about how you made a million dollars for your employer?
- Do you have a story about how you unlocked a new market for your employer?
- Do you have a story about how you helped your employer get noticed by mainstream media?

Really, what is the story about you that is worth getting published in New York Times or Washington Post?

If you have an answer to the last question, then you should have already been telling the story to the world. If not, you should go and engage yourself in projects that will let you have such a

story in the near future. You need an above-the-fold story that showcases you at your best and shows how you create opportunities for others.

Once you have identified one or more stories that you can tell, then the next step is to practice it. Just like you can't learn swimming by reading a book on swimming, you can't tell great stories by just learning to tell great stories. How do you do it? By practicing it live and telling your stories to as many people as you can—always remembering to make it relevant to their story. Nobody has the time to listen to your story if it is not relevant to them. The job gets challenging but if you will be on it for long enough, it's also very rewarding.

How can you start learning to tell good stories?

First, observe others who are telling good stories. You learn from great teachers. Even if you don't want to pay others to teach them to tell stories, you can watch the TV, read books and blogs, and attend theater. You will notice that there are a lot of people out there who are telling great stories. You can be entertained or you can start noticing and learning from them.

You have to
master your
personal
elevator pitch

Second, watch the results of your own storytelling. It's all in the results. For example, if you tell a great product story that repeatedly makes sales, then you know that you are telling a good story. If you tell good stories, but they are not resulting in sale –well, you can blame the product or you can question your storytelling. You have to fix the problem one way or the other.

You have to master your personal elevator pitch. People talk about ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) as if it's a disease. I think in the new world, that is almost a permanent feature for most people. Nobody has time to listen to everything you have to say—they want to “box” you as soon as people. They want to know where you fit in. Your elevator pitch will play an

important role in determining what “box” they put you in. You might ask, why should we place so much of importance on the box. The answer is simple—what box they put you in determines what opportunities they open up for you. If they think that you are a software developer, the opportunities they think for you will be very different as compared to if they think you are an entrepreneur.

Since the story you tell makes a huge difference, you have to place a huge importance on the art and craft of storytelling.

In their classic book *Made to Stick*, authors Chip and Dan Heath talk about ideas that stick and one of the key components for making ideas stick is the stories behind them. Here’s what they say:

“We tell stories. Firefighters naturally swap stories after every fire, and by doing so they multiply their experience. After years of hearing stories, they have a richer, more complete mental catalogue of critical situations they might confront during a fire and the appropriate responses to those situations. Research shows that mentally rehearsing a situation helps us perform better when we encounter that situation in the physical environment. Similarly, hearing stories acts as a kind of mental flight simulator, preparing us to respond more quickly and effectively.”

Firefighters
naturally swap
stories after every
fire, and by doing
so they multiply
their experience.

Related Reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #66 – Keep “Your Story So Far...” Ready
- Life beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #200 – Understand the story behind the story
- ChangeThis Manifesto: Mini Sagas – Bite-sized lessons for life and business

COMMIT TO ACT

“Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!” - Goethe

If there is an ultra-simple approach to success, here it is in four simple steps:

1. Know where you want to go.
2. Know where you are.
3. Craft a workable plan to get from where you are to where you want to go. Also be willing to re-arrange the plan when you hit a roadblock.
4. Execute on the plan

Usually, people have no problem with the first three steps. It is the last step that causes a lot of heartburn. Execution is hard work, and we would rather get the results without that hard work. 99% of the people “want the prize but don’t want to pay the price to get that prize.”

One rule that is always in the background for me is “knowing is not doing, but doing is doing.”

First, remember that doing is hard work. That is where the rubber meets the road. All plans are solid and even successful, until you start executing on them. Think about it. You rarely fail in your planning. If someone asks you for your plan, you can rattle off the steps with ease. Even you know that execution won’t be smooth. The road to the goal is paved with roadblocks, potholes, bad weather and detours. It is the face of all these things that you need to commit to act. Rarely does anything arrive at your doorstep on a silver platter. That only happens in the movies and sitcoms.

In the real world, results come from your actions and not your plans about taking those

actions. You can change the space of your possibilities right today, if you start acting on the promises you are making to yourself and to the marketplace.

If you are one of those people who want to do a lot but can't seem to take action, you are not alone. It is hard to keep the promises that you make to yourself. Why? You can easily explain yourself for lack of taking action. The solution: Find an accountability structure to support you with keeping those promises. Imagine you made the same promise to your Boss instead of yourself. You would approach that piece of work differently. The same kind of commitment has to be transferred for your personal projects. If you don't have the discipline and commitment, then invest in an accountability structure (that may include engaging with a mentor or coach) to get into this winning habit.

Find an
accountability
structure to
support you with
keeping those
promises.

Related reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #33 – Keep promises that you make to yourself
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #176 – Stop believing in your own (weak) excuses
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #113 – Fine-tune your accountability structures

The Action

LEARN TO LEVERAGE YOUR ASSETS AND TIME
MAKE A COMPELLING CASE
LEVERAGE THE STRENGTH OF YOUR WEAK TIES
BE FOUND WHERE IT MATTERS

LEARN TO LEVERAGE YOUR ASSETS AND TIME

“You really have to look inside yourself and find your own inner strength, and say, “I’m proud of what I am and who I am, and I’m just going to be myself.” - Mariah Carey

Yes, whether you know it or not, you have assets and you can leverage them. Here are a few assets to kickstart your thinking:

Your history: Everyone has a unique history, and nobody can repeat that one thing. You now have to see how you can leverage that history to make that asset relevant to the company where you are wanting to find a job.

Your personal brand: Right now, you have a personal brand. It is your promise to the marketplace and the world.

Your Relationships: Your connections, past and present (dating back to your college days or before) serve as assets. You need a strategy to leverage these relationships.

Your Footprints: If you have traveled the world physically or through cyberspace, you have left your footprints. You can leverage these footprints and see where there is relevance.

Your Story: Everyone has a story. I have one, and you have one too. How can you make your story interesting and relevant to the marketplace? That’s the question you must address. (We’ll explore this topic further in the next section.)

The temptation (in the face of a layoff or otherwise) is to first go and see how to fix the “holes” (your weaknesses) to make yourself better. While fixing weaknesses is a good thing if they are hurting you, the bigger ROI will always come from leveraging your assets.

Think about everything you have, including the various combinations of your assets and see who will benefit most from what you can offer.

If you can bring a lot of value to someone, they sure would be willing to share a big piece of it. On the other hand, if you bring only marginal value, even if they give everything, it will still be marginal.

Next, the other asset that you and everyone else have in their disposal is their time. As we all know, time is a great equalizer, and you have the same amount of time as everyone else is in the world. However, you can make a difference by looking at time differently.

Here are a few tips:

- Since you can't extend time, you can only focus on what gets done within that time. While the temptation would be to look at efficiency, remember that efficiency is table-stakes. That is a given. You will win big if you can find a second or third reason to do something significant. For example, if you are writing an article, see if that article can be syndicated. If you are giving a speech, see if you can record it in audio and video and post it on your blog, website and/or video and audio sharing sites.
- Think about what you can do to repurpose your work regularly.
- Think about your relationship to time and also money. Sometimes paying money to get things done will save you time (and hence also save you money in the long run)
- To get the maximum leverage from time, engage in activities that are in the area of your

...the bigger ROI
will always come
from leveraging
your assets

strengths. Of course, you will have activities that are not in your areas of strengths and for those, find creative ways that may include joint ventures, creative partnerships or just plain outsourcing.

Related Reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #182 – Structure yourself to get high-quality help requests
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #123 – Find a second reason to do anything significant
- ChangeThis Manifesto: Making the Most of Your Time – Going Beyond To-Do Lists

MAKE A COMPELLING CASE

You need to make a business case for two things: first for the job and then for yourself in that job.

Remember that every company and every department is always engaged in two things - 1) they make a promise and 2) they fulfill that promise. If you are looking for a job, then chances are that you have an offer to help a company/department fulfill a promise that they are already making.

If you want to be a renegade, go ahead and make a business case to a company and show them how to make a “new” promise and how you will help them fulfill that promise. For example, a company may not have explored selling their products in South East Asia. Do you have contacts there and can you take a plunge and go and help them sell into this region? That’s a new promise right there.

When you want
the job, you can
ask for it...

After you make the business case, you now have to prove that why you are the right person to help them fulfill the promise.

So, once again, you have to make a business case for a job and then you have to prove that you can fulfill that job or help them fulfill that job.

If you are not a renegade or you don’t want to take that risk, you can just go and study the current promises the company is making and see where you fit in - when it comes to fulfilling the promises and make a case for the same.

When you want the job, you can ask for it (that’s a rough road) or you can trigger an assessment with the decision maker that they want you to take this job. In the former case, you are selling

to them that you are the best candidate for the job and in the latter case, they are selling to you that this is the best opportunity for you.

Which approach will win?

You make the call.

Related Reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #202 – Tell the right story to the right people.
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #187 – Raise Awareness on your offers
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #175 – Create the ultimate lasting impression

LEVERAGE THE STRENGTH OF YOUR “WEAK” TIES:

You might have already heard that – “It is not what you know, but who you know.” Of course, the statement has to be extended further and a better one would be –

You can modify that statement a little bit to make it even more powerful:

“It is just not who knows you, but how they know you...”

The last one talks about the “box” with which people that matter see you in. If you are not in the right box, it does not matter much who knows you.

Once you work this out, you can leverage your network to see what opportunities open up there.

However, what gets easily overlooked is the strength of your weak ties. This is the network that is far and wide and where members within the network don’t know other members in the network. Think of this in the form of a “hub and spoke” model where you are the hub and the members of this “weak” network are the spokes.

Unlike your strong network (where every member possibly knows every other member) the weak network has access to diverse opportunities. Being far and wide has its benefits.

It seems like an oxymoron, but you really need to sufficiently strengthen your “weak” ties to leverage them.

Please note that I am not talking about your social media “friends” who are “connected” to you via Facebook and Myspace or any other network. You don’t know them, and they don’t know you but both of you are connected because you both thought that it will increase your “network

“It is just not
who knows you,
but how they
know you...”

count” and makes you look more powerful than you both really are. You can’t ask these contacts for help as there is no context between you and them. There is no real relationship except for that single “friend connection.”

The more diverse
and far-reaching
your network, the
more powerful
you are.

My reference to “weak” connection is one where you had a strong relationship before but you have not been in “touch” with each other recently. This is a connection where you have had a history that can be revived with some effort.

This is also a place where social networks can be used the right way. You can virtually keep in touch with a lot of people without much effort. All you have to do is to scan your social network every now and then and from the status updates you will know if there is anyway you can help them with their current projects. It can be providing some relevant information for them or offering to connect them

to someone that can help.

The more diverse and far-reaching your network, the more powerful you are.

- eBook: Lasting Relationships (PDF, 20 pages)

BE FOUND WHERE IT MATTERS

It is becoming more common for companies to find you rather than you finding the jobs offered by these companies.

At the risk of over-simplification, here is a quick five-step process to land that project or job:

First, remember that more people need help in this economy. They actually need good help. They are looking for it. So there is a bigger opportunity find clients in this economy.

Second, you have to be present where they are looking for good help. Visibility is key. If there is no awareness in the marketplace about who you are, it gets tough. This is where Personal Branding comes into play.

Third, you have to create an assessment in these clients that you can provide that good help. There are so many people looking for the same clients, so this is where the relationships you have built will come into play.

Fourth, you should have accumulated lots of proof to back up your claim that you can provide that good help. Your past accomplishments will provide a shortcut to establish the proof.

Fifth, if you do get a project, you should provide a service that will blow them away so that they go out and tell others to come and find you.

As you can see, it is in your best interest to be found where it matters most. You cannot simply “wish” to be where it matters most. You need to design your career in such a fashion that you are invited to be in the right place at the right time.

They say a lot of deals happen on the golf courses. Look closer and you will see that these

You need to
design your
career in such a
fashion that you
are invited to be
in the right place
at the right time.

are not golf courses where anybody and everybody can get in by paying a small fee. These are courses in some prestigious country clubs where there is a filter applied at the entry. The filter can be as simple as an extremely high investment to be a member and/or a referral from an existing member. So, every member in the club knows that every other member meets the criteria that they have met. This drops the cost of quality check and there is an implicit trust level established. No wonder, a lot of business deals happen in these golf courses.

Ask yourself – “Are you already in places where you should be?” If yes, are you really leveraging those opportunities? If the answer was no, what are you doing to get invited to those places?

A Note of Caution: There is an easy way to get into those places and there is a hard way. One easy way would be to get in there to help someone with a project. This can be in the form of a volunteer for a particular event. Yes, you can be IN the place as a volunteer and you can be around a lot of people in the same event. But they may not be giving you the attention that you want. Reason: they are very busy giving attention to those people that they consider as peers. Now, I am all for volunteering and helping. Please do that for a charitable cause. Trying to mix-up volunteering thinking that as power networking won't yield the results you are looking for.

Ask yourself –
“Are you already
in places where
you should be?”

Related Reading:

- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #185 – Pay Attention to Your Zeroth impression
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #156 – Manage Perceptions Of You
- Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #42 – Maintain visibility

**What can you do
right now?**

WHAT CAN YOU DO RIGHT NOW?

OK, good question but wrong timing. You have not completely read the book, yet!

First, make a commitment to quickly read the rest of the book. The Appendix contains tips and insights from several thoughtful people. The tips and insights offer specific help.

Second, please think about a few people in your network who might be facing a layoff and point them to this eBook or simply send this eBook to them.

I wish you the very best!!

Rajesh Setty
Sunnyvale, California
June 2009

Appendix I: 10 Good Reasons for Having a Mentor

[ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AS A COLUMN IN CIOUPDATE]

APPENDIX I: 10 GOOD REASONS FOR HAVING A MENTOR

[Originally published as a column in CIOUpdate]

There is a good chance that you don't have a mentor right now and are not even considering entering into such a relationship in the near future.

Sports athletes have mentors, actors have mentors, and business leaders have mentors. Why not knowledge workers?

Here are a few reasons why you might want to consider engaging a mentor:

1. The structure provides automatic accountability

I have three mentors, and I am fortunate for having each one of them. This always happens:

A few days before my meeting with each of my mentors, I start attending to several of my pending matters. My mentors don't even have to ask me about things I promised to act on. I will take care of these things because I want to be ready with a "good" answer if they do ask me. The mentoring relationship in a way has built-in accountability.

2. They may ask you questions that you may never ask yourself

Sometimes you may put off answering some questions just because you can. You will do this even typically for questions where you know the answers are not pretty. By postponing asking the hard questions you are not solving any problem, you are just avoiding the short-term pain. Your mentor may not be so nice to you. He or she has no problem asking those hard questions and actually prompting you to start doing something about those questions.

3. You can learn to reflect

A mentor does not have an alternate agenda except to help get the most out of you. So you

The mentoring relationship in a way has built-in accountability.

never have to worry about any other side-effects as you discuss your life and work issues. That in itself will let you open up and reflect on things at a level that you have never seen before.

4. Discover the “real” problem and get help to solve it

Sometimes we keep messing with symptoms rather than attacking the real problems. I have found time and again that I discuss a particular problem with my mentor and actually we end up solving the “real” problem. Solving the “real” problem will in turn solve the symptomatic problems that you first set out to solve.

5. You may escape from “short-term thinking”

Being in the technology world, you have no option but to be “current buzz-word compliant” to ensure you are in the race. This means that you have to be running (hard) just to stay where you are. While this is great for short-term success, you can’t ignore your long-term goals. Your mentor may help you balance the time you spend between short-term and long-term goals.

6. Get a “responsible” alternate perspective

You may have other avenues where you can get alternate perspectives on a particular topic or issue. However, when a mentor provides an alternate perspective, there is a dose of responsibility that comes packaged with it. In other words, your mentor has a higher stake in the outcome than your peers and friends do.

...we end up
solving the “real”
problem.

7. Get into the “thinking” habit

Every hour I spend with my mentors, my thinking will go to an overdrive mode. Most often, you get carried away and practice “thinking on the go” – meaning you will think while you are engaged in doing something. Mentoring will put a stop to that and start you on a “thinking” path. I am sure none of us will argue on the importance of the need to think.

8. Get ready to welcome new possibilities

While everyone around you may be trying to “fix” things with you, your mentor will look at how

you can capitalize on your strengths. Rarely can you claim to be aware of all your strengths. Even if you do, you may not be making the most of them. A mentor can work with you to ensure that you are spending most of your time in the areas of your strengths and also take care of other things (where you are not that good) by putting a suitable structure in place.

9. Learn to be in balance

Mahatma Gandhi said, “One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.” While you may know this, being in the technology world, chances are that you may be neglecting several other parts of your life. With your mentor’s help, you can be assured of living a more balanced life.

10. Get help to distinguish yourself in the marketplace

Unless you distinguish yourself, you will be part of the commodity crowd. Not doing anything about it will only erode your value in the marketplace. Distinguishing yourself is a journey and not a destination. What is special today will no longer be special tomorrow. Your mentor can act as a catalyst here to help you rise above the commodity crowd quickly. If you are smart and disciplined, with or without a mentor you may succeed. Why not increase your odds by engaging with a mentor?

Appendix II: Giving and Getting Help

[ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AS A COLUMN IN CIOUPDATE]

APPENDIX II: GIVING AND GETTING HELP

[First appeared as a column in CIOUpdate]

Giving and getting help is an art that is VERY important whatever be the times. However, during tough times, it becomes CRITICAL that you are very good at giving and getting help.

If you try to give help in areas that are not your strengths, you and the person who is receiving that help will suffer. Similarly, if you ask for help from someone in the area of their weakness, the help you might get is useless and you also would have wasted the person's time.

When I talk about this topic, most people raise their eyebrows. Some openly say "I didn't know that there is an art and science for help. It seems like common sense to me."

What they are trying to say is I am complicating a very simple thing in life—giving and getting help. I respectfully disagree. This article will establish the relevant background for the topic and provide a few ideas on how to get better at this fundamental skill that each one of us should develop.

If I say, "We all need help every now and then," I don't think any of you will flinch. However, when it comes to technology professionals, the behavior in this area does not always follow logic. Typical technology professionals try to solve their problems alone. The concept of getting help is generally treated as "Googling."

Let's cover the first aspect of giving help. Someone calls you up for help and if you have the time available, you usually end up helping them. If you don't have the time available, you respectfully decline to help. I just wish that the life was this simple.

Being in the IT world, you can be rest assured that you are in some sort of a crunch all the time. So, here is what (in some combination) may happen when you receive a request for help:

We all need help
every now and
then.

- You are already maxed out with your commitments so you don't have time.
- The request was made in an area that you don't have a lot of expertise or authority.
- You feel that the requester is unduly taking advantage of you.
- You feel that the requester is using you as a crutch.
- You are not confident that you can satisfy the requester with the way you fulfill the request.
- You think that fulfilling the request will be a thankless job.

Simply put, you may be the only person the requester has approached for help but you may have many such requests from many individuals. Do you now see the complexity of the problem?

There is no simple solution for this complex situation. Here are a few things to consider before you jump to provide that help:

Committing to diagnose: If you are in a hurry, you may think that you can save time by just offering the help that has been requested. Most often, you will be wrong. Typically, the person requesting the help will have thought of a solution and is coming to you for help to put the solution in place.

If the person's diagnosis of the underlying problem is not right, the solution won't be right and you helping him or her won't solve the underlying problem.

Look at the forest: Every small commitment when looked at in isolation will seem easy to fulfill. It is the sum total of all the commitments that will cause you to slip.

So take extra care before you say "Yes" to those seemingly small commitments. It is better to say "No" than to sign up and fail to deliver.

Leverage your network: It may take you a few hours to fulfill a request but the same request

If the person's diagnosis of the underlying problem is not right, the solution won't be right and you helping him or her won't solve the underlying problem

may be fulfilled by someone in your network within minutes.

The million-dollar question is do you know how to find that “right” someone and is your relationship with them strong enough to request help? What compelling reasons can you provide someone in your network to set aside time to fulfill this request?

A powerful network used right can increase your capacity to offer help and in-turn can make your network more powerful.

Teach people to get the most out of you: Your behavior is always sending a message to other people. You are constantly teaching others how to treat you. You can also make a conscious effort to teach others how to get the most out of you by letting people know where your strengths are.

You are, in effect, teaching them when to come to you for help. When you are operating in the areas of your strengths, fulfilling requests is relatively easy.

Teach them to fish: Even when you can solve the problem, it is best to spend some extra time to help the requester help himself or herself. Remember the old saying “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”

Now, let me focus on getting help.

Life would be simple (and too easy, in my opinion) if we could get to the “right” people when we need help and, they, immediately drop whatever they are doing and come to our rescue. Unfortunately, that can only happen in fairy tales or movies. It is far from reality.

So, what can we do to get the help when we need it most? Here is a simple approach to consider:

A powerful network used right can increase your capacity to offer help and in-turn can make your network more powerful.

Contribute early and frequently: There is one rule that has always helped me and that is “If you want to be successful, please help others to become successful.” Early in your careers (and always) your goal has to be to contribute and be an opportunity to other people. In simple terms, do as many favors as possible as early as possible in your career.

Build your emotional bank account: Everyone knows about the power of reciprocation but rarely do people use it wisely. You give and you get. The order is important and the intention is important too.

You have to give first before you can get: You will “get” for sure but it may not be from the same person to whom you gave. You are building your emotional bank account by giving. You may be able to withdraw from this bank account at a later date. Obviously, you can only withdraw if there are sufficient deposits in the account.

Extend your network – far and wide: With the attitude and approach outlined in the first two items, it should not be hard for you extend your network far and wide. However, building your network and long-term relationships do not happen by accident.

You need to put a conscious effort. Think about the last conference or a networking event that you attended. How many cards did you collect? More importantly, of the cards that you collected, with how many have you followed up and established a relationship?

Your power is directly proportional to your network. It is also not how many people you know but how do you know these people.

How is building a strong network relevant to getting help? The stronger your network, the easier it is to make a request for help.

Build your personal brand: In the last section, we talked about the importance of “how” you

“If you want to be successful, please help others to become successful.”

know the people. Personal branding looks at a different metric – how many people know you?

Your personal brand, simply put, is your promise to the world and the marketplace. Whether you want it or not, you have a personal brand. Whether it is powerful enough is something that you have to determine for yourself.

You can't build a powerful personal brand overnight but once you build it, you have shortcuts for many things in life. In this context, more importantly, you will see that your requests will get priority treatment if you have a powerful personal brand.

Craft your request for help: This, I think is the most important part of getting help. The quality and the speed with which you will receive help will depend on how you craft your request for help.

This is more of a strategy than a tactic. In fact, if you employ a tactical approach to this, your request will probably fail. The basic premise on which your request has to be based is not on what you want to get done but on what the other person will get by fulfilling the request.

So, think about this: Can you craft your request in such a way that the other person feels you are doing him a favor by asking him to fulfill this request?

If you can do that, you can be rest assured that you will get help whenever you want for the simple reason that you are focusing on the other person rather than yourself.

In summary, for what you want to get done, your goal is now to find out that person who will benefit most by doing that work for you.

Is that easy? No.

Can it be done? You bet!

The quality and the speed with which you will receive help will depend on how you craft your request for help.

Appendix III:

80 Tips and Ideas

There is a reason why these tips and insights are not in any order. This is a simple self-test for you to see if you can thrive in chaos. Think of this like a collection of tactics that you can employ on variety of topics that include productivity, relationship building, personal branding, job search etc.

#1 If you have not started using an RSS reader, please make it a point to do so right away.

It's free. I use Google reader and you can get an account at <http://www.google.com/reader>

Using an RSS reader saves you a TON of time and while you are on a job search you DO need that time.

#2 Consider investing in a personal CRM. You can not only store your contacts you can also set reminders for important dates, maintain a task list, notes about your contacts etc. There are many options for CRM systems and here are a few of them (again in no particular order)

- Zoho CRM
- Highrise from 37 Signals
- Batch Book

Your personal CRM is for “your” contacts and they stay with you across the jobs that you take.

#3 Sign up with a Social Bookmarking site like del.icio.us and start storing links that are relevant to you and your industry. Since it is “social” bookmarking, you will provide an invaluable service if you manage these links with care.

#4 Update your LinkedIn profile. Lot of employers use LinkedIn as a recruiting tool and your profile there is like your calling card.
(While you are at it, read Guy's article on “Ten Ways to use LinkedIn”)

#5 Do a Google search on all variations of your names. At the bottom of the search results, you will find a way to subscribe to the search results via RSS. Add that subscription to your RSS

reader. What? You don't have an RSS reader? Can't do that. I know I said this was not in any order but C'mon – you can't skip Step #1.

Jokes apart, are you happy with what came up when you searched for your name on Google. Remember that this is what a potential employer is looking at when do some basic research on you. If you are not happy, you can do something about it – before it's too late.

#6 Do a search on variations of your names on Technorati and Google Blog Search. Again, subscribe to the RSS feeds of the search results. What? Still you have not got an RSS reader? Unforgivable

Again, are you happy with what you see in the blog search results? If not, you can start taking some action to make something happen there.

#7 It's probably the best time to think of going out on your own. Instead of worrying about *when* you would lose your job and wondering where the next job is, its best to pull the plug from a 9 to 5, and start working on being independent.
[Tip contributed by Kiruba Shankar at <http://www.kiruba.com>]

#8 Understand that a layoff is not about you, it's about a faceless economy and a company at the wrong scale. If you take it as a personal failure, it will take you longer to bounce back.
[Tip contributed by Seth Godin – <http://sethgodin.typepad.com>]

#9 Create a Squidoo lens on a topic of your interest and expertise. While you are at it, think about working on making it the very best lens on that topic. On Squidoo, there is no restriction on how many lenses you can create. Why not think of creating more than one lens?

#10 Avoid the layoff next time by starting today down a path where you add so much value to whatever you do that they could never afford to be without you! The world needs your creativity, spark and insight. Amplify that.
[Tip contributed by Seth Godin – <http://sethgodin.typepad.com>]

#11 Think about starting a tribe or joining one to go and make a change in the world.

When you had a job, you didn't have time and now that won't be a problem. There is a now a possibility to find out if you can do both – make money and change the world!

[Tip Inspired by Seth's book – Tribes]

#12 Volunteer for a cause – more seriously than you engage with a hobby. Think about taking on an influential role there by contributing something of value. The network that you build within the charity organization might extend outside of the charity organization – opening more possibilities.

#13 Did you know that eZineArticles provides a simple way for syndicating your articles via email newsletters. Please take a look at <http://www.ezinearticles.com> and submit articles that will CLEARLY demonstrate your expertise. Your cost of making a statement about your expertise is lower when it is pull from the audience than when you are just trying to push it.

#14 In your current job: Make meaningful regular status updates about what you are doing. In the report, highlight things which will make the organization/boss look good if they choose to forward it to others. [Hint: For you to make the status updates meaningful, you need to be doing meaningful work. You can't make that up]

[Tip Contributed by: Arun Nithyanandam at Arun Says]

#15 In your current job: Keep a close watch on how the focus of the company is morphing. You have to stay relevant and be an opportunity to make a continued case for your employment.

[Tip Contributed by: Arun Nithyanandam at Arun Says]

#16 Be Twitter-comfortable. Twitter says, answer the question – “What are you doing?” in 140 characters. However, please remember that people who are following you will be asking - “What are you teaching me?” in every single tweet. Twitter gives you a quick way to engage in conversations with people that might later result in building solid relationships.

[Link: <http://www.twitter.com>]

OK, some more tech tips on this. To make the most out of Twitter, you can use the following tools:

- 16.1 BrightKit – Elegant tool to organize your tweets and also track the effectiveness of the links within your tweets
- 16.2 TweetDeck – Flash based Twitter client to see everything that's happening (tweets from all the people you are following, replies to your tweets and direct messages to you)
- 16.3 TweetLater – Some basic automation such as an auto reply with a welcome message to your new followers, delayed tweets etc.
- 16.4 Twitterholic – A basic Twitter scorecard for you to keep track of how you are growing in the Twittersphere
- 16.5 TwitPic – If you want to attach pictures along with your posts.

#17 Better know who's in your network. Use a service like Plaxo, LinkedIn, or BatchBlue to collect your contacts' work AND personal information. Create your own personal email address and start sharing it with your network, so the folks who want to contact you (and that you WANT to contact you) can do so long after the layoff.

[Tip Contributed by: Phil Gerbyshak at <http://www.philgerbyshak.com>]

#18 Do you know of a startup that needs help and no cash to pay? Are they doing work that is going to be remarkable? Go ahead and bite the bullet – work for free and be part of something remarkable.

#19 Find one strength of yours that you couldn't put to use at work. Nurture it into a venture/project :)

[Tip contributed by Vinayak Kamat at <http://stackpanel.com/blog/>]

#20 Do you know that it is easy to plug into a community via Meetup? Research and find groups that are of interest and think about how you can CONTRIBUTE to them. Note that I

didn't say think about how to PARTICIPATE in them. Contribution is the key
<http://www.meetup.com>

While you are at it, if you don't find a meetup that suits your interest (and you thin it is relevant to the current marketplace, try to start a meetup on that topic of interest.

#21 Stay unique. Stay you. When we are faced will a career or fear a layoff, many of us go buy books about career transitions, interviewing, and winning resumes. These are good resources but should never replace your personal style. Human Resources professionals get dozens of calls and emails a day from people parroting the advice shared in these books. This “homogenization by fear” approach can make even the most interesting people not so interesting.

[Tip contributed by Lisa Haneberg at <http://www.managementcraft.com>]

#22 The antidote to fear of being laid off, is to be supremely positioned to get another job.

That means that the most productive outlet for the fear is to work still harder to make sure your marketable skills are honed and up to date, that you have and maintain a great reputation as a contributor in the workplace, and that you are keeping in touch with your network (and keeping the connections alive) so that should you be laid off, you can commence the search for a new position at a healthier company without delay. Your skills, abilities and connections are something no-one can ever take away from you – keep those assets healthy and ready.

[Tip contributed by Robert Sher at <http://www.ceotoceo.biz>]

#23 Professional pride goes a long way: One of the worst things about losing your job isn't just the money, it's the sense of purpose and being able to make a contribution. So while you have a job, make the most of it and do the best you can. In the great scheme of things, it may not make any difference to the final outcome -- but it can make the world of difference to you as a person. Not only will you experience more satisfaction while doing your work, in the worst case scenario you'll be able to leave with your head held high, knowing you did the best job you could. And who knows, everyone in the company takes the same attitude, it could make a big

difference to the outcome.

[Tip contributed by: Mark McGuinness at <http://www.wishfulthinking.co.uk>]

#24 Have an inspiring plan B: For me, the blow of redundancy was cushioned by the chance to live my dream -- and the fact that I was already preparing for this by studying and working on it part-time. So if you have a secret passion or an idea for a business that you always dreamed of trying -- start now. The Internet offers incredible opportunities for starting micro-businesses and earning a living from home. It won't happen overnight, but the quicker you start researching, prototyping and experimenting, the faster you will learn. It's not about putting all your eggs in one digital basket -- you can still work at your current job and if necessary look for other jobs, while developing your plan B in the evenings and weekends. Yes, it can take a lot of time and energy, but from my own experience it's well worth it.

[Tip contributed by: Mark McGuinness at <http://www.wishfulthinking.co.uk>]

Related reading on this topic:

Life Beyond Code: Ways to distinguish yourself #125 – Periodically re-visit your Plan B

#25 Right from day one - create a well-thought out regimen for the suddenly empty days.

A joblist with numbers works wonders. Apply to 8 companies. Meet 5 people. Do 30 push-ups. Connect/help 10 friends. Spend 2 hours on new ideas and dreams. Then treat each number on the list as a milestone.

[Tip contributed by Valli Bindana at <http://www.kreativevistas.com>]

#26 Take a close look at your finances to see where they can save \$\$\$\$ in case their search is a long one (in this economy that's a likely scenario).

[Tip contributed by Jim Pawlak, nationally syndicated career columnist]

#27 Re-assess: Use this as an opportunity to re-asses what you want to do next. This is also an opportunity to understand yourself better.

[Tip contributed by: Usman Sheikh at <http://www.usmansheikh.com/>]

#28 Start a blog or resurrect your blog. The focus of the blog has to be an area where you want to build your personal brand. Also, please don't start a blog if you won't be committed to writing a 1000 high-quality blog posts in the next four years. It takes a while to get traction on the blog and a serious commitment is a MUST.

For new Bloggers, I have created a checklist on Squidoo that might be helpful. Here is the link:

Squidoo: Blogging Starter Checklist

#29 Learn the art of appreciative inquiry: Asking yourself positive-outlook questions is important when things don't seem to be going well. Example: If your job search isn't going well, ask: "What else can I do to market myself?" to move you to think about new paths and evaluate old ones. The process of turning a negative situation into positive questions that move you to action is called "Appreciative Inquiry" developed by David Cooperrider. Appreciative Inquiry helps you to find the upside when you're upside down.

[Tip contributed by Jim Pawlak, nationally syndicated career columnist]

#30 Write one or more whitepapers on your area of expertise. While there are many outlets where you can publish them, you can simply send it out to every company that will benefit from this FREELY and raise awareness about your expertise.

#31 Look for passes for exhibition days: While you may not be able to pay and attend some high-priced events, there are always some options to attend the exhibits. If you have written that whitepaper in #30, you can hand it off to company representatives that you meet there. Remember that people are trying to sell their products and services there so there is no point in trying to find a job. Without taking a lot of their time, you can make a mark by talking about how you can be relevant to them.

#32 Improve marketability within your organization: Make concentric circles around your role by building bridges throughout your organization. Your goal here is to make sure your value and impact have meaning across functions—and across pay grades. You can also

develop a career plan that will work within your company—and let the right people in your organization know about it. In times of changes, you're probably oblivious to 99 percent of the opportunities available to you. If others know you're looking, they're more likely to think of you. [Tip contributed by Promise Phelon at <http://www.upmo.com>]

#33 Arm yourself with at least three essentials before meeting someone new: the person's last three career moves, their latest project, client or article or blog post by or about them, and ways you might be able to help them.

[Tip contributed by Promise Phelon at <http://www.upmo.com>]

#34 Get your insurance information in order and ensure that you have adequate coverage. [Satheesh Babu from India]

#35 David Zinger's short letter to the laid off.

Hello there:

Be kind to yourself for life is not a problem to be solved but an experience to be lived. You may not like the layoff (who would?) but can you live the layoff?

I think we get so busy trying to fix things that we don't stop and take time to realize where we are.

Acceptance is not passivity and it is certainly not panic. Acceptance is so much stronger than simplistic positive thinking.

When life throws me a lemon, I don't make lemonade, I duck. After that I get back up and figure out what comes next.

Alan Watts once wrote: "If we make where we are going more important than where we are, there may be no point in going."

I encourage you to be fully where you are while creating your next moves out of acceptance not anger, hatred, fear, anxiety, shame, guilt or one of the other glitchy emotions that can accompany a layoff.

Please take care and carry on caring.

We need you — even if it does not feel like that to you at times.

Love,

David

[Tip contributed by David Zinger at <http://www.davidzinger.com>]

#36 Explore Creative work arrangements: Propose a 3 or 4-day work week, to help your company with their cost cutting initiative.

Use the spare day(s) to:

- * Develop and work on your plan b
- * Volunteer with a not for profit to expand your skills and network
- * Consult or share your expertise provided it does not pose a conflict of interest (Websites to checkout startupagents, elance or sologig).

[Tip contributed by Michelle Awuku at <http://www.myfactorcoach.com>]

#37 Look Inwards: When you see layoffs around you, that's a good sign to start preparing. Beyond looking to other opportunities for employment, search inwards. See what inherent skills you possess that could be useful/saleable. This could be the time to go on your own; offer your many services hidden in yourself; or, how about a second career that interests you. A simple example, may be you were a trained expert pianist earlier and can sharpen those rough edges and teach them to others interested; extra curricular capabilities come in handy during tough times. Being self-employed allows you to take control of your career and make course-corrections as needed, instead of working for a big corporation and dancing to the tunes of your

bosses.

No one wins in such situations, but each and every one could make the best use of it and open new doors that never existed within you. Thinking and being creative is the only option.

[Tip contributed by Badri Naraynan at <http://www.compassites.net>]

#38 Rank and Reflect: I have one very specific recommendation to those who are worried about getting laid off: Rank yourself and your colleagues in a your team (10 people to 25 people) from the point of view of your supervisor and see where you fall. Remember, everyone in the team gets a rank from 1 to N, and there can be no ties.

Starting right after 9/11/01, as a manager I have participated in 4 separate exercises to lay off employees. Based on that, I can share some insights into how these decisions are typically made in big corporations. (People should realize that it quite difficult to be on either side on these exercises and every manager tries to be as objective as they could possibly be.)

Typically, every company that is facing large-scale layoffs will do something called a Total review of the team members. The criteria will usually include:

1. The previous two or three years' annual performance rating (This plays a big role)
2. The employee's qualification (formal educational as well as special skills). If someone has extra training that is very relevant to the company's needs, they get a better rank.
3. Contribution or Value brought to the corporation. Different companies have different names for this, but the bottom line is: how much value is this employee adding to the team or group or the whole company. (BTW, I have found that employees always know the candid answer to this question themselves.)
4. Soft skills and overall attitude also matter, but to a smaller degree.

So what can the employee do? Use these factors (annual performance ratings, education, relevant skills and training, and value-added) and rank each person in their own group

including themselves as if they were making the layoff decisions. Preferably, do this in Excel and not in our own mind, where you might not be as rigorous.

If you end up in the bottom 25% within your small team, you should consider looking for other job opportunities. Don't wait and try to dodge this wave. There will be others. Also, if you are at risk, the general belief is that it is easier to get another job while you already have one.

While doing this exercise, don't be too harsh or too easy on yourself. Be objective. Ending up in the bottom quartile only means that there are other jobs out there that might be more suitable to your skills.

[Tip contributed by: Ram Narasimhan at <http://retirementexperiment.blogspot.com>]

#39 Wake Up Call: It's time to wake the hell up. You surely know one source of income is not enough and plus you probably hate that job.

Do something you like instead, forget the money. And no point in cribbing about the bills. You have a house and car you can't afford, downgrade.

[Tip contributed by Tom at <http://tomaszgorecki.com/blog>]

#40 Keep your alternative skills sharp: I was laid off in 2001 downturn and I learnt an important lesson. When I was laid off as a programmer, I critically evaluated my alternative skills to find that I was good at and inclined towards writing. I understood technology. I knew how to write. That is where my next opportunity was – to work as a technical writer. I ended up with a job in less than 6 weeks after the layoff. I then did some deliberate career switches to other areas of business. Specialization in one area with a strong understanding of business is a good strategy to remain “alternatively-skilled”.

We all have something else that we love doing apart from our core area of work. We all work in alternate non-core areas even when we are employed. Our knowledge in alternate areas/skills can be smartly leveraged to do a mapping with current skills that businesses need and one stands a much better chance of getting a job back.

[Tip contributed by Tanmay Vora at <http://www.qaspire.com>]

#41 Invest in Yourself: Here is a story that shows the power of investing in yourself. The story is apocryphal but the message is still valid:

There was a kingdom where a king was allowed to rule for 7 years ... after which he was stripped of everything and ostracized to a land beyond the Great river that flowed through it.

All the kings would enjoy their reign in a typical manner with all the jolly-good privileges only a king could enjoy..wine,women et. al.. but towards the end of the reign they would get paranoid ...become mad and some even committed suicide.

But that was not the case of the 108th person who became the King...He ruled the 7 years in a just manner...and on the last day he left with a royal composure. Everyone in the kingdom were spell-bound at his dignity.

Just as he was to board the canoe...the minister asked him the secret of his calm.

To which the king replied, “I ruled you people in the best manner I could...but on a personal front ...I didn’t waste resources on frivolous activities..instead I invested them in the land beyond this river...during the course of 7 years I have built a new Kingdom there. I was your King till now but my NEW Kingdom awaits me there.”

So, the question for you Kings/Queens...what happens for you at the end of your “7 years?”
[Tip contributed by Shankar at <http://positive-ruminations.blogspot.com>]

#42 Watch your hobbies, they might help: Watch out your hobbies!. If you are not so successful in your current profession, your hobbies can turn into a new profession. It’s your passion. The work we do with passion always pays.
[Tip contributed by Anand]

#43 Take care of your health: Maintain good health. For example stress will increase the cholesterol level, and even make people fat. Sleepless nights, more intake of alcohol or food will affect the health. Worries create lot of stomach related problems like heartburn, gas, etc.

[Tip contributed by Ari Samy at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/ariangusamy>]

#44 Trump worry with Action: Action is the only thing I ever found to beat the worry that comes with it. Action changes my mind from negative thoughts of doom to “We’re still going to eat tomorrow.” One action that makes me do something for someone else makes me realize that universe doesn’t revolve around me. And that change in perspective opens doors that worrying kept closed.

[Tip contributed by Liz Strauss at <http://www.successful-blog.com>]

#45 Stop Blaming: It is very easy to get into the mode of blaming your company, your boss, the circumstances or the Government for your situation. While you might get some satisfaction for identifying the culprit, it will not help your cause and probably take away your precious resource – TIME and creates a huge opportunity cost.

#46 Ask the soul-searching question: “Are you helping the company ? or Is the company helping you ?”

If the company is helping you more than you are helping the company, then you have to start moving fast.

You have to be true to yourself when you ask this question and I am sure everyone knows what the answer is. One error a few people make is that doing the work for the pay is equal to helping the company. That argument does not hold good as the company can think that paying you for your work is equal to helping you.

[Tip contributed by Rajesh Kannan at <http://www.compassites.net>]

#47 Identify an play to your strengths: Look at this time to switch to a job that you might excel at, capitalizing on your strengths.

Here is a quick exercise to identity your strengths:

- Email atleast 5 of your close colleagues/friends/relatives that you trust and that can

provide you with feedback on your strength, based on an example where they have seen you excelling. What this does is boosts your morale and at times, makes you realize certain traits that you think are second nature to you; but are perceived as strengths.

- Try combining those email responses, and figure out the best strategy to capitalize on your strengths. When you've got your best foot forward, there are fewer chances of you getting laid off in the future.

[Tip contributed by Alope Gaur at <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/0/34b/752>]

#48 Face the Reality: Try and understand the fact that maybe you were laid off as you were the weakest link (someone who is not so important as compared to others.) There can be several other reasons but I find this to be most important. Do some introspection as to what are your skills which need to be sharpened which will make you more irreplaceable for an organization. Find out where your shortcomings are hurting you and try overcoming them.

[Tip contributed by Soubhagya Senapati at <http://manishxing.wordpress.com/>]

#49 Increase your awareness to what's happening around: Just continue what you are doing while being aware of what's happening around you and keep time for your other interests. So when you are actually laid off you could pursue your other interests till you are back at what you are passionate at. No recession is permanent and take it as an opportunity for self realization. No one ever finds time to pursue other interests when in a professional career.

[Tip contributed by One Nanometer at <http://digitalelectronics.blogspot.com/>]

#50 Forget About Blame

Everyone wants a paycheck and benefits from the company, but they don't see the connection between their work and the company's cashflow (and profitability). So, it's easy to say "I'm not responsible" for generating money—that's the role of someone in sales, or R&D, or whatever.

Currently, there's a blame mindset that spans from Wall Street to Main Street. Here's what I've heard various people say:

- “It’s not my fault, because the bankers made bad investment decisions.”
- “It’s not my fault, because no one has money to buy our products/services.”
- “It’s not my fault, because I bought more home than I could afford.”
- “It’s not my fault, because China undervalued the yuan.”

Some of these claims have a grain of truth, but they all ignore personal responsibility.

It seems that for many people, the pink-slip comes as painful experience, because they don’t know how to dust themselves off, reinvent themselves, and keep moving forward. We don’t teach that skill in schools.

You may have been known as the “goto” person for X, Y, or Z within your company. But what happens if your company (or the marketplace) no longer values X, Y, or Z services? What if the company downsizes or your industry pulls back?

Forget about the blame. In this economy, many of us have stumbled at the same time. So if you want to stand out from your peers—don’t stay on the ground and blame others. Embrace responsibility and stand up.

[Tip contributed by Bill Sherman at <http://www.aha-moments.com>]

#51 Get good sleep: Make an appointment today with your doctor and see if you can get into a sleep study. Stress takes a lot out of you and you won’t perform your best if you’re not sleeping enough.

[Tip contributed by Durjoy (Ace) Bhattacharjya at <http://www.athletesperformance.com>]

#52 Don’t forget to appreciate others: Costco has \$100 of Starbucks giftcards for \$80. Use these cards as tokens of appreciation for people who help you during your job search as well as a slightly more cost effective way of meeting people for coffee. No matter what happens, don’t meet people at McDonald’s for coffee.

[Tip contributed by Durjoy (Ace) Bhattacharjya at <http://www.athletesperformance.com>]

#53 Eat at home: Learn to cook at home and make it a pleasure, not a chore. I know from watching my expenses that we eat out much too often. Eating at home doesn't have to be second best.

[Tip contributed by Durjoy (Ace) Bhattacharjya at <http://www.athletesperformance.com>]

#54 Understand the employer perspective: A member in one of my Vistage CEO groups recently layed-off about 20% of his workforce to save the jobs of the remaining 80%. Other members of the group asked him, "How did you decide who to lay-off?" The member responded, "We ranked all employees. The ones who could do more than 1 job well stayed, the ones who couldn't left."

For those who have been layed-off or suspect that they will be soon:

- Take some time to write down at least 3 things you are thankful for.
- Decide whether you are going to become a victim who is angry, resentful, and self pitying or someone who will say, "Thank you former employer for giving me the chance of a lifetime."
- Then write down what you will do differently to make you indispensable to your next employer.

[Tip contributed by: Sterling Lanier at <http://www.vistage.com>]

#55 Create a Morning Power Hour

Become proactive. Start by creating a morning Power Hour for yourself. Carve out one hour before your regular routine to Read something powerful and uplifting, pray or meditate, exercise, and/or journal. Perhaps you won't do all four of these things, but you need to do at least two of the four before doing other things (including reading the paper, watching the news or reading the headlines online). Put your focus on your own mental, emotional and physical development. After all, these things are and always will be in your total control. Worried about finding an extra hour in your day? That is no problem, just turn off the television and go to bed

earlier.

[Tip contributed by: Kevin Eikenberry at <http://www.kevineikenberry.com>]

#56 Get your Career Insurance: Be Versatile: Think of it as career insurance. Versatility is highly desired in any market. Especially by the mid to smaller sized companies which are the engines of the economy. If you wish to always be instantly employable it is even more valuable than ever to have two in demand skills. Say you made the final 5 to be hired for two spots, odds are 40% you will be hired at this employer. If 15% of their clients are Spanish or Portuguese speaking wouldn't it pay off big time to be fluent in Spanish? Certainly your chances of being hired would jump to at least 90% in the former scenario. Since people forget what they learned in school if they don't practice, only about 10-20% of all Americans are really fluent in two or more languages

[Tip contributed by: Darrell Z. DiZoglio at <http://www.righteousresumes.com>]

#57 Get on the same page with your spouse

If you are married, communicate -- it's imperative that both of you are working towards the same common goals.

[Tip contributed by Jim Parker at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jimparker>]

#58 Unlock your creativity

Take the negative energy that often accompanies a layoff, or fear of a layoff, and turn it into positive energy/motivation to wake up the innovator inside of you. Everyone has a creative side which is often stifled by being caught up in day-to-day work activities. Think outside of the box. What new and innovative contributions can I make to my current employer to show my real value? If I am looking for a job, how can I do the same to impress a potential employer? If I have always wanted to be entrepreneurial, maybe this is the opportunity to focus on that dream!

[Tip contributed by Joseph Blank at <http://www.virsalent.com>]

#59 Specialize and demonstrate value

My answer can be summarized as “extend your network” and “demonstrate value”. Of course my solution for those, being an introvert and a geek, are blogging and social media, but they could easily be achieved using offline means and getting to know people in the flesh.

When people are fearing layoff or loss of income they often focus on what they want, and their fears when in fact this is just the time to be focusing on increasing the perceived and actual value to others.

Another counter-intuitive step is to specialize. I don’t mean turn down offers that are not exactly what you are looking for, but I do mean “get known for something” and make that something recognizable and compelling. When you are a generalist then you can be seen as a commodity, instead you want to stand out and be a must-have, someone who is easy to talk about so you get full benefit from your network word of mouth.

Writing an ebook could be a good solution to all these - think of it as a white paper, but rather than for a product or business, it would be for you ;)

[Tip contributed by Chris Garrett at <http://www.chrisg.com>]

#60 Forget fear and execute on a strategy

Everyone must be prepared for a layoff at any time. Going into fear because of what might happen puts you at a disadvantage and, inevitably, because of that fear, you’ll be laid off. It is often said that you become what you fear. So, if go around your place of work wearing that fear others will sense it and you’ll sign your own layoff warrant!

But, here are some strategies that you can adopt regardless of how secure you feel at your current job:

1. Become more visible, not less, to upper management, customers, and others whose opinion counts in how they see your creating value for the company.

2. Find out what initiatives will alleviate the pain your company is in. Suggest some ideas after trying what works and lead the charge to make the change. During difficult times everyone hunkers down, even your managers! Change the mindset and charge ahead.
3. Identify what bullets on your current résumé will strengthen your value proposition. Seek those assignments and get those accomplishments to claim them on your résumé. Even if you do not get to finish them (you get laid-off) it shows you think differently than the rest.
4. Burnish your LinkedIn Profile and get Recommendations from customers and others who pay the bills.
5. Target a company (preferably your competitor) and discover what their pain is. Write a one page prospect letter to the CEO and communicate how you can help them get rid of that pain.
6. Do not waste time looking busy, instead, invest meaningful time in getting your campaign ready with a great message, strong network, and a highly targeted company list.
7. Don't look glum, instead smile and look confident! A positive attitude may not get you what you want, but it will annoy enough people around you to make it worth the effort!
8. Start a blog in your area of expertise and become visible to outsiders in your space. Sign-up to participate in your company's marketing shows.
9. Explore where the hiring is and transform your message to align with the opportunities using your transferable skills (your genius!)
10. Do not wait for the layoff, exit before it happens if you do what is said above (#1-9)

[Tip contributed by Dilip Saraf at <http://www.career-transitions-unl.com>]

#61 Make a “Power Map.”

Make a “power map”. From a fifty thousand foot view, look at your role and offer and see where there might be uncommon opportunities in your existing, AND other industry sectors. Briefly study the new sectors. Chart your contacts against those sectors, and get in dialog with your contacts to build on your assessments, and see who they might know.

[Tip contributed by David Bookout at <http://www.effettigrowth.com>]

#62 Take a “Professional Inventory” from a Global Perspective

Take a “professional inventory” of yourself from a global perspective. Where are you passionate? Are you where you wanted to be from a career and financial perspective for your age? Are you in a growing industry? Are you in a sustainable role? Are there skills you’re missing? Is there education that you’re missing?

[Tip contributed by David Bookout at <http://www.effettigrowth.com>]

#63 Position Yourself Right

How do you want to position yourself? Who would be your target market? Think about your work and career as part of a product or service line. Who would be looking for someone with your skill set?

[Tip contributed by Christine (Chris) Brown at <http://www.resources-results.com/>]

#64 Explore Crowdcruiting

Here is something that worked very well during last year’s Motorola layoffs in South Florida where there are fewer local opportunities than in Silicon Valley. This is a social approach I call “Crowdcruiting”

Principles of Crowdcruiting:

1. Get Connected
 - affected and potentially affected people form groups and networks using local and public means: maillists, LinkedIn groups, adding each other as friends on social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.
2. Job Sharing, not Job Hoarding
 - notifications about hiring events and opportunities are published to the group. If you receive something and notice that some individual or subgroup is left out, include them. Continue to update the group with weekly schedules, event dates, times, locations, etc.
3. Forward Individual Opportunities

- if you come across something in your own searching that's not for you but you know someone else who's the right guy - pass that along. Even go so far to give names of other people to interviewers if you are not going to accept a position but know someone who's better suited and more willing to take that job.
- 4. Improve Each Others' "Presence"
 - make honest recommendations about each other on LinkedIn, read each others' resumes and give feedback, suggest better profile photos.
- 5. Report on Your Experiences
 - when companies have events in your area or people interview individually out of town, report back to the group with do's and don'ts, e.g. "make sure you take at least six resumes" or "if your a Java programmer ask to see Bob." One of my colleagues gave me a tip to ask to speak to a specific person at a hiring event and even though he wasn't there, they put me with someone from his team and I ended up with an offer the next day.
- 6. Share Who You Know
 - every job may not be attractive to you and sometimes that depends on who's going to be in charge. Finding out from colleagues that person X has already been hired to be in charge of the new department that you are interviewing for may attract you to that group or may repel you. Pass along what you know and benefit from the same information from others.

[Tip contributed by Charles Schultz at <http://vconomics.blogspot.com/>]

#65 Get Connected with Your Network's Network

Get Connected with Your Network's Network. Not just in the LinkedIn sort of way, but finding ways to build genuine relationships with colleagues and friends of people you know. It's never too late to start building your network, but the longer you wait the greater disadvantage you'll have in the current job market.

[Tip contributed by Terry Jansen at <http://www.psvillage.com>]

#66 Find ways to help people that you are networking with

Offer help or something of value to the person you are networking with before asking them for their help. What are their pain points? Listen carefully to what they are saying and think about what you can do for them. Perhaps you've learned that they're trying to develop a business relationship with IBM. Think about who you know at IBM that could help pave the way. Or perhaps they mentioned their child has autism. Clip an article you recently read in the newspaper on the latest discoveries and send it to them. Be genuine in your interactions, and demonstrate to the other person that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

[Tip contributed by Terry Jansen at <http://www.psvillage.com>]

#67 Volunteer at Alumni Groups

Join all the groups and alumni groups you can. Volunteer to assist. Those who are in charge of sites or events often hear about jobs sooner and their network is enriched beyond measure. Contributing in some way helps prevent the laid off blues.

[Tip contributed by Rita Ashley at <http://www.jobsearchdebugged.com>]

#68 Get a Layoff Letter

The first thing you need to do is to make sure that you are given a letter by the employer that you were laid off rather than fired. Layoff is a dismissal of the employee due to lack of work or reorganization. People get fired for performance related issues. There is a huge difference. During the job search, you'll have to make sure that you stress the fact that you were laid off.

[Tip contributed by Jamie Gold at <http://www.moneyallocator.com>]

#69 Look at the full search cycle to get yourself ready

1. The Big Three - Your head (getting past being laid off), Your Support (spouse, family, etc.), Your Finances
2. Your Story - Get your documents in order
3. Your Network - Who is in your network, especially those with a vested interest

4. Get your search organized - If you don't have a plan and method to track your progress, there is a good deal of wasted energy
5. Determine who are the people with whom to network - Who are the most likely people to get me in front of decision maker. Networking is all about moving up the food chain toward a job.
6. Identify a number of items that keep your spirits up. Search can be a tough road. So you'll need something to keep your psyche up!

[Tip contributed by Mark Richards at <http://www.candidateschair.com>]

#70 Reflect on the fear of the unknown

Well, you may say the layoff threat is not an unknown, but it is. It's like a terminal type of disease that you were diagnosed with. You know it's there, you know it's threatening you ... what you do not know is if it is going to kill you and if so when. So, the first natural reaction to the fear of unknown is to get immersed into thinking about it, devoting most of your time and brain power and your energy to the process of divulging on "what if" scenarios and spending most of your thinking time on that. This leads to a state of depression, inactivity, inability to look forward with optimism and become a fighter. You will be waiting for the ball to drop just to end this misery, thus becoming one of the many who will be waiting for the relief of that moment and say: "I knew they would lay me off – I was right"

- **Facing the Unknown**

In the process of waiting for the ball to drop, normal reaction of most people is to go through repeated cycles of "Why Me" – Denial-Anger-Rejection. The only way to break this vicious circle is to jump to acceptance and understanding of the new reality you may have to face. Understanding and accepting the possibility of you being laid off leads to a more proactive thinking about the odds of the feared event actually taking place and its effect on your life. This also shortens the time from the preliminary diagnosis – company is facing a possibility of lay-off to a more defined situation – how does it affect me. The moment you reach the stage of "knowing" and understanding – the fear will diminish and the action list will start emerging.

- **Define your odds**

The first most important step on your action list should be defining the odds of the event you are fearing. Understanding the probability of you losing this job may have a significant impact on your future steps. Consider assessing your project value to the company. Are you in the main stream, area of service or development which are important for the company survival or future, or are you working in the areas that may be put on the back burner for some time in order to save costs. Are you a key player in your team (from your manager perception-not yours) or are you the one in supplemental contribution area.

If you find (or feel) that the probability of you losing this job is close to 90% - there may be little sense of trying to improve it to become 75% - you are better off writing off this job and going full speed looking for another.

- **Improve your odds**

After you assess your odds, look for the opportunities to improve your odds. See if you may get involved in projects of survival importance to the company, may be even offer some extra effort in order to help other teams. Most of the time after layoffs the amount of work does not go down proportionally to the number of people who left the company. That means many people who survive the layoff are going to work more time or more intensive. Look around and define the areas this effect will be stronger and offer help to those people or managers in charge. You may consider talking to your manager and ask them straight forward – what can you do to improve your odds for staying employed. How can I be more useful to you and to the company is your question. Keep in mind, if you are asking these questions and looking for ways to improve your odds early – you are in the better position than those who do not and are just waiting for the ball to drop.

- **Calling the Fire**

Last, but very important, like in the war if you are surrounded by the enemy and there is no escape ... it is better to call for the fire on your position in hope that more enemies are going to be killed before you and an escape opportunity may present itself. If the odds are still very high – consider approaching the company management and offer your resignation in order to help the company to deal with costs – you may negotiate a nice deal, better separation package, priority on rehire, etc. You may even negotiate a nice deal on consulting for the company on reduced hours and rates etc. The difference is that you are the first doing it early and there is a better chance to get a better deal. You may even impress your managers so much with your consideration of the company situation and offering a solution that is easier for them to accept, that they may change their plans to put you on layoff list as a valuable and considered employee.

In either way, this is better than to become a part of the crowd standing in line to a chopping block.

[Tip contributed by Yakov Soloveychik, one of my mentors]

#71 Offense may be the best defense

I think sometimes the best defensive position is to go on the offensive: rather than worry about being laid off, identify a position you want to get promoted to and start doing that job with all your energy. As people get laid off, there will be more work to go around. This is the opportunity to show some leadership by focusing on how you can help your company weather the storm. I think what this comes down to is that you should focus on differentiating yourself – a lot of the times it is doing the opposite of what everyone else does.

[Tip contributed by Boris Glants at <http://www.sibylvision.com>]

#72 Take a holiday!

Take a holiday!

Not only does it send a very strong message about your confidence, it also keeps you out of the picture when the axe is being swung.

Use that holiday to “Network Like Crazy!”

[Tip contributed by Sameer Vyas at <http://www.pentominium.com/>]

#73 Close out unfinished business

Close out unfinished business with colleagues, managers, etc. Take the initiative to reconcile and repair broken business relationships and learn from them. Carrying around old baggage will only impede your professional progress.

[Tip contributed by Ginny Kisling at <http://www.resumesbyginny.com>]

#74 Make yourself irreplaceable

Make yourself “irreplaceable”. What does this mean? Simple. Work a solid 8 hours and get “your work responsibility” done in 4 of those hours and spend the other 4 hours helping “the boss” get all his/her things done that they are struggling with.

If you don’t know what those are, that means you’re not “really into” understanding your organizations responsibilities, which means you’re a “prime candidate” for the “chopping block”. Want to change that? Here’s a suggestion.

Start by getting a notebook and make a calendar breaking your day into 5 minute increments (8:00, 8:05, 8:10, etcetera). Set your watch or a timer on your computer to “ding” every 5 minutes. In 1 to 3 words, write down “exactly” what you were doing when the timer “dinged”. If you were “lost in thought”, write down “Lost”. If you were “on the phone” write down “work call”. Make a personal call, write down “Personal Call (or text or IM or Email)”. Reading or writing a work related email, write down “Email”. Be honest. Include bathroom breaks, lunch breaks (an hour lunch is 12 events on your calendar). Each bathroom break is at least one event. You get the picture.

At the end of the day, review everything you wrote down. Lets say there were 8 different things you wrote down, most of which you wrote down “multiple times”. Write down the eight items and write a “count” next to each one representing. Divide each “count” by 96 (12 events/hour x 8 hours). Multiply each resulting number by 100. This is the approximate percentage of time each “event” took out of your day. If you were “honest”, most of you will be “shocked” at how much “non primary job” time you’ve “wasted”.

Trust me. The “boss” notices. Remember, he or she likely only gets a “snap shot” of what you do during the day. “Surfing the web”, being overheard chatting on the phone or texting a friend (there’s very little business related texting) will leave a “lasting impression”. Likewise, helping the boss “cover” some things that they need done, often “grunt work” that they really should have delegated but didn’t, will also go “a long way”. The old sage “Treat others as you would have them treat you” is still very true. The real “bottom line” in life I sum up as:

“Those who do only what is expected are following the future made for them by others. Those who stretch themselves to excel need never fear the future that they are making for themselves
- Kenneth E. Young”

[Tip contributed by Kenneth Young at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/kennetheyoung>]

#75 Make it easy for your Boss

It’s hard for the bosses to let you know you are facing a layoff as well. So, if you can foresee the outcome, and make it easy for them to handle this, they will respect you for it, and try to help you out in any way they can.

It ensures you receive honest feedback, so you can make your plans appropriately.

This also ensure you have a better relationship with your boss, so that when the opportunity to work together arises again, you will always get the nod.

This is the way the valley works - You always work for someone you respect, wish to emulate

their success, respect the connections they have, etc., so that their success can rub off on you. You see people leaving / moving together into new companies due to the strong relationships.

In closure, I know its tough to see things in a positive light when facing layoffs, but i sincerely believe being pragmatic and optimistic always earns respect and pays off in the long run, as opposed to having a pessimistic and blameful approach.

[Tip contributed by Abi Kariguddaiah at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/abikariguddaiah>]

#76 Understand the motivation behind the layoff and see the opportunity

My tip is to see the layoff as an opportunity, not a commentary on you personally. A layoff translates to a company calibrating its cost curve, and just that. The odds are that the work won't go away, so the people left will just have to do much more.

So that's the opportunity. What value proposition can you provide to help modulate the work flow pain in the company that just laid you off? Where else can you shop this value proposition? And, rather than just look for another job, is this the time to act on that business plan you put together that's gathering dust and start your own thing? Remember that some of the best new things get started in adverse times. All you need is an email address, a mobile phone, and a basic website. And if you do start something keep your burn low, and stay below that number. It's all about runway not a fancy office and all that nonsense.

[Tip contributed by Deepak Kamlani at <http://www.invetures.com>]

#77 Find the right match – your passion, your skillset and the Industry

Before you fear layoff, you should think seriously on why you have that fear in the first place. It is primarily due to three reasons

1. You are not passionate about your job. Contributing above and beyond what's needed requires a deep interest in what you're doing. Without that, it's a matter of time your performance deteriorates and you become a candidate for layoff. Assess honestly on if

you're passionate about what you're doing. If not, how can you find something you can be interested that pays well (see #2 and #3).

2. The job does not match your skillset. People get hired for specific jobs with their existing skillsets, but as they progress through career, there can be a divergence between what's your required of you and what you are skilled at. Ensure you match up to the skills required or find a match at a different place.
3. You are in the wrong industry. Any industry goes through booming, maturing and declining times. IT for example was a booming industry in 1990s but has matured in 2000s. That means growth opportunities are limited. Perhaps you should apply your IT skills to an industry that is poised for boom times. Energy and infrastructure come to mind. Can you learn the vertical specific applications or tools used by these industries?

In the end, the fear of layoff is a fear of some mismatch between you and your job that you can do something about. Layoffs are excellent times to reflect and make dramatic changes in your career that would otherwise won't happen. As Andy Grove describes in "Only the Paranoid Survive" these are the Strategic Inflection Points in your career. Use them to your advantage than getting down by them. As Franklin Roosevelt said to people coming out of the Great Depression, "the only thing to fear is fear itself".

[Tip contributed by Sree Nagarajan at <http://www.colligent.com>]

#78 Reclaim your identity, and state your claim on your brand:

If you've just lost your job, you have a golden opportunity to step back, reclaim your identity via your fresh perspective, and create your personal brand. Exactly who are you without that job? How do you want to be known from now on, regardless of the next job you decide to take, or better yet, in complete alignment with it (the Hawaiian value of Ho'ohana, intentional work), similar to the approach a freelancer will take?

If you have worked with a company for a very long time —or for a short time, yet completely immersed in their brand, especially in what is largely their communications network —chances are you might have been a victim of identity theft, and largely unaware that you were. If that job is no more, I urge you to think about getting your complete identity back before you leap into another job you'll get swallowed up in yet again. Doing so will ground you in greater confidence, and give you more leverage.

[Tip contributed by Rosa Say at <http://www.sayleadershipcoaching.com/talkingstory>]

#79 Job-hunting? Don't apply and fill, create and pitch:

If you are a manager and leader, that sage advice of fulfill the biggest need remains the best advice I can give you. Put yourself in the shoes of someone with the ability to hire you and keep paying you: What are they looking for, and why should they hire you, unless they are sure you'll deliver what they need?

There are two things business owners are focused on right now, and they go together: a) Boosting cash flow quickly b) Making customers deliriously happy. Said another way, cash is King and a paying customer's loyalty is Queen. These two things were not the priority for most managers before our current economic recession; managers were focused on making everyone else happy (employees, peers, the boss, vendors, suppliers and other partnerships). They were preoccupied with organizational systems and processes, most of which need to be reinvented right now, not maintained. Why should any business owner maintain something that isn't working? Be the person to help them reinvent: Every savvy business owner knows that there is one thing better than buying a patent, and that's hiring the inventor.

[Tip contributed by Rosa Say at <http://www.sayleadershipcoaching.com/talkingstory>]

#80 Keep your information up-to-date

Online social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are not just places to connect with friends. Leverage your networks and maintain an active presence professionally. This

includes keeping updated information on your current and past employers, responsibilities, acquired skills, and any noteworthy achievements or awards you may receive. Also, proactively collect professional contacts and grow your connections. Doing so helps you identify contacts at companies you are interested in working. Perhaps you may not have that connection to the hiring manager at the company of interest, but your best friend might. But don't wait until it's too late! So, in the case that you are laid off, you can utilize your network to discover new job opportunities.

[Tip contributed by Gautam Godhwani at <http://www.simplyhired.com>]

Appendix IV: The Story Behind This Book

APPENDIX IV: THE STORY BEHIND THIS BOOK

This is for those who are curious about how and why this book was created. You will notice some of the lessons outlined in the earlier chapter used right in the creation of the book – showing that I follow my own advice.

Day 1: Over the last few weeks, I met a number of people who were laid off and number of people who were in the fear of facing a layoff. While the people who were laid off were disappointed, I found that people who were facing a layoff were more disturbed because of the uncertainty. I decided to look back in the last four years and see whether I can create an eBook that will offer some specific help to people who are facing a layoff

Day 2 – Day 5: I wrote about 10,000 words based on my last four years of writing on my blog “Life Beyond Code”

Day 2: I sent an email request to about twenty people that I respect to ask them to share ONE tip that will help people who are facing a layoff. This is the text of that letter:

Dear <<Name>>,

Hope you are doing well.

Being in Silicon Valley, I see people getting laid off almost everyday. Actually, I see more people who are in the “fear of a layoff” everyday. Talking to them in the last couple of months, I think the “living in the fear of facing a layoff” is worse than being laid off. Why? Because both the employee and the employer lose in that game.

So, I have embarked on a journey to write an eBook titled:

Facing A Layoff AND Doing It Anyway

I am almost complete with the first draft and want to include a few tips from people that I respect.

Would you be willing to share just ONE tip for people who are facing a layoff.

You can, of course send me more than ONE tip but being respectful of your time, I am requesting one tip.

Thanks in advance.

Best,

Raj

Over the next few days I received responses from a number of people who offered wonderful tips that are included in Appendix II

Day 3: I tweeted a request and requested a retweet to spread the message and ask for help from people on Twitter. Here are the two tweets:

1. Help me with my eBook: "Facing a Layoff AND Doing it Anyway" Share 1 tip to help people who are facing a layoff. Please Retweet
2. Have a tip to help people facing a layoff? Please share and please retweet

The message was retweeted by a few friends and I got a few good responses that have been included in Appendix II.

Day 3: I have connected by Twitter account to my Facebook account and my tweets are updated as status messages. I have a few thoughtful friends on Twitter who responded with a few tips over the next two days. I have included those tips in Appendix II.

Day 4: Changed the name of the book to

defiant!

Practical Tips to Thrive in Tough Times

Inspired by the movie “Defiance”

Day 5: Posted a request on my blog Life Beyond Code

After the Twitter experiment, I wanted to get help from my readers at Life Beyond Code. I posted this request as a blog post on Day 5

Have a tip for someone facing a layoff?

Being in Silicon Valley, I see people getting laid off almost everyday. Actually, I see more people who are in the “fear of a layoff” everyday. Talking to them in the last couple of months, I think the “living in the fear of facing a layoff” is worse than being laid off.

Why?

Because both the employee and the employer lose in that game. The employee loses because he is NOT giving his or her best. The employer loses actually for the same reason,

So, I embarked on a journey to write an eBook titled:

defiant!

Practical Tips to Thrive in Tough Times

(Yes, the title is inspired by the movie “Defiance”)

The book is now complete. This time around, I have added an Appendix where I will include specific tips contributed by thoughtful people. I have got thirty of them so far and am looking for twenty more tips. Please make it original and something that others might have not thought

about. Tips like “Update your LinkedIn profile,” “Update your resume” are important but common. I am looking for something more innovative and your help is appreciated.

Do you have one SPECIFIC tip for people who are facing a layoff?

You can write a comment here or send me an email directly. My contact details are at <http://www.rajeshsetty.com/about/contact/>

If I select the tip to include in the eBook, I will include a link to your website along with your tip. If someone else has already submitted the tip, I will let you know as well.

Thanks again in advance.

My hope was that I will get some gems in the comments or in my email.

Day 6 -9 : Nothing significant to report except continuing to write the book. I also used this time to respond to all the people who contributed with a tip and/or insight.

Day 10: Posted a question on LinkedIn Q&A requesting a tip or insight for people who are facing a layoff.

Day 11 - 16: Responses from several people from LinkedIn poured in. I was amazed by the quality of responses. I spent the next few days in email exchanges with clarifications on the responses. Finally I included most of the contributions from LinkedIn into this eBook

Day 17 and Beyond: The next few weeks was spent writing, editing (with the help of Bill Sherman) and designing (with the help of James Wondrack)

Today: The book is in your hands.



Rajesh Setty

Rajesh's mission in life is to bring good ideas to life. With love!

Rajesh is involved in a **few companies** in some combination as a founder, operating executive, board member and/or an investor. Apart from that, he has written a **few books** and is working on a number of them. His first book was published at the age of thirteen. While

he is not building companies or writing, he enjoys **speaking** at conferences and company events.

You can read his latest thoughts on his blog **Life Beyond Code** or on Twitter at **UpbeatNow**. If you are really curious to know the events that shaped his thinking, you can read **his story so far here**.

Rajesh lives in the Silicon Valley with his wife Kavitha and son Sumukh.

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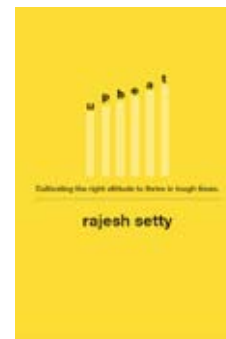
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