

How to Stay Viable in Any Economic Cycle

Recession Edition

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Introduction

Over the course of my career, in information technology, I have experienced good times, bad times and ever improving times.

- The good times came from being hired, promoted and receiving performance bonus's.
- The Bad times came as a result of changing the CEO and opening the Southern office, which started with the threat of job relocation and ended in layoff.
- Then back again once more as a consultant only to be back on the search after the contract ended.

As a result of the experiences gained from this cycle of work to pursuit and back again, I am here to present to you the lessons learned from these experiences and to help you to develop your own plan for surviving in these tough economic times.

Under Siege

The Threat of Job Loss

Under Siege

When the company changes and there is a perceived or emanate, threat of job loss there are many avenues that might be taken.

➤ **Rumors**

Avoid being left in the dark, Listen to the rumors but don't add to them.

➤ **Job Preservation**

- Put in extra time.
- Volunteer to take on more work.
- Don't rock the boat.

➤ **Contingency Plan for both Work and Home**

Contingency Planning: Work

➤ **References**

Gather the personal contact information of boss's, colleagues and vendors as soon as possible and add them to your list of contacts.

➤ **Documentation**

- Get copies of your performance reviews, corporate recognition, documents showing when you were promoted, a title changed or you changed departments.
- Gather training certificates.

➤ **Start breaking down what you do into individual components.**

Constructing your resume or recognizing all of the positions that we may be qualified for, requires being able to see our jobs in it's component parts.

➤ **Start Migrating From Company issued equipment.**

You will have to turn in all items that are the property of the company or you may not get your severance.

Contingency Planning: Home Front

- **Create a home office** to mirror your work environment
 1. Get an up to date Computer
 2. Get comparable Printing equipment
 3. Software that is the same as the work environment..
 4. Getting a good office chair is important because of all the hours you'll be sitting in it.
 5. Resupply paper, ink and office supplies.

- **Transportation Changes**
 1. Do you need to replace your car?
 2. Will you exceed your lease's mileage before the next position?
 3. Will you start riding the train instead of driving?

- **Preparing Your House for Sale**

Before the search is over you may have to sell your home, is it ready to sell?

- **Re-examine** your phone, TV and utility bills for ways to cut costs.
- **Personal Appearance:**

Make sure your business attire is up to date, In good condition and fits properly.

Layoff

When the day finally does come and if you are chosen, try to stay on top of things so that you will be able to hear and retain everything that they tell you about:

- The Severance package. If applicable.
- Cobra.
- Outplacement Services.

if you have a definite date for when your job is ending or your instincts are telling you that it is eminent.

- Avoid having to pack on the day of the layoff by taking things home over several days.

For when the layoff does happen, they will want you out fast.

The War Against Adversity

A quest to find work

Take A Vacation

That's right, take a vacation.

Why? Because you need the time

- To absorb what has happened.
- To try to put it in perspective.
- To settle any outstanding issues related to your severance package like setting up COBRA or getting started with the outplacement service that may have been setup for you by your, now, former employer.
- To setup your unemployment and to start collecting.

Did you know that having a severance package does not mean that you have to wait to collect unemployment. That's right you can start collecting without delay.

If you stop to think about it, you have been under a significant strain leading up to the layoff and you do need to take a break, even if it is a short one.

Avalanche



Very much the same as being buried alive after an avalanche, chances are that you will feel very overwhelmed by the endless stream of information that is available on how to construct your resume or how to network.

- With every turn, there is another source of information and yet another approach that is promoted as being successful.

So what do you wind up doing?

- You try to fit into one of those models that are supposed to work.

Only to find out, sometime later, that you cannot fit into somebody else's success model.

The bottom line:

- *ONE SIZE does not fit all.*

A way to tackle your Campaign



Visualize a pie for a moment.

The pie is as all of the information that is available on resumes and/or networking.

- Create a new pie by cutting some slices from the pie that you believe will work for you resisting the temptation to take the remaining slices from the pie.
- Add as many new and unique slices to your pie as needed, to complete your own tailor made pie.

Building Your Campaign Tool Box

Jargon

- a. You are NOT unemployed. You are in TRANSITION.
- b. Being laid off is not being FIRED. Do not mix the two.
- c. The overall battle to get another position is a CAMPAIGN.
- d. When you find a position and you are rehired, you have LANDED.

1. Resume

- a. An up to date resume will avert missing an opportunity because you weren't ready.
- b. Update the resume whenever changes occur.
- c. You will be looking for some authoritative reference on how to format the resume, plan your campaign and to interview.

WATCH out for the publications that you find. Many are no longer valid for the current market place but they are still on sale or viewable on the internet.

Building Your Campaign Tool Box

continued

2. Business Cards (aka *Networking Cards*)

- a. Is an essential tool for reminding your new friend who you are, how to contact you and it provides the contact with a place to jot down a few quick notes to remind them of how you met and when.
- b. What should you put on your card?
 - Your name
 - Title
 - Email address
 - Phone number(s)
 - Address or at least the town.

Nothing fancy is required about the design just take the time to consider whether or not it will be obnoxious to the viewer.

3. Tell Me About Yourself (aka *The Two Minute Pitch*)

- Be prepared to present who you are, what you do or did, why you are looking and what you are looking for in 2 minutes or less.
- Avoid negative language and misrepresentation in your presentation.

Building Your Campaign Tool Box

continued

4. Attitude, Body Language and Appearance

- Are the key pieces of a package that is you.
- It is essential that
 1. You are positive on every level.
 2. You dress in a manner that is appropriate to the situation.

5. Maintaining a Calendar of your schedule is critical.

- *Believe it or not, you will become very busy as the campaign unfolds.*

6. Tools of Solace

- During the period of displacement there will be a need to separate and recharge, don't dismiss your hobbies or the ways that you normally get a sense of peace.

7. Affiliations and Publications

- Keeping up with industry trends, maintaining skills or seeing opportunities, indirectly, can be achieved by
 1. Reading the newspaper daily.
 2. Subscribing to industry specific publications both on-line and in hard copy.

Building Your Campaign Tool Box

continued

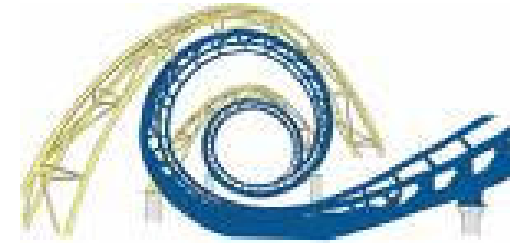
8. Skills Monitoring and Assessment

Periodic testing of your skills during the campaign

- Re-enforces confidence.
- Offers proof of your abilities.

Campaign Tool Box: Completed.

The Roller Coaster



As time marches on, you will experience many highs and many lows much like riding a roller coaster.

The Highs

- Hearing about an opportunity.
- Finding a position that you are qualified for.
- Taking a telephone interview
- Going to an interview and feeling that you did well.
- Attending a job fair where you were able to get a positive response from a recruiter or company.
- Networking with former colleagues or meeting new people.

The Lows

- Following up on a lead and hearing that it has been filled, pulled or it is on hold.
- Not getting a promised call back from a Recruiter about your interview.
- Attempting to network, although you are not ready, and knowing that you have blown an opportunity.
- The ever increasing financial pressure that is coming from having to get a job as soon as possible and it is not happening.

To give it your all you will need to have every part of you on the same page or you should not attempt to network, make or take calls.

Attitude and Appearance

The keys to Selling You

The Package

➤ Your Body Language

Body language is the subliminal communication link between you and the person who is about to meet you.

➤ Your Attitude

Your attitude is conveyed through your voice. And your voice conveys what you want, how you are feeling.

➤ Your Appearance

Your appearance is the cover of the book named you. It is the first impression and it is the snapshot of who we are perceived to be.

- Don't attempt to make new contacts or re-connect with others when you are feeling down.
It will be detected.
- Wait until you are about to muster a positive attitude and watch what happens.

Networking

The key tool to finding companies who are still hiring.

- Networking is the key tool to uncovering the hidden job market. Those jobs that will never get posted anywhere.
- Networking requires a lot of maintenance to bear fruit but it does eventually.
- In all of the portrayals about Networking, those who are promoting it or teaching other about it, never “tool down” to the fact that all humans are not extroverts.
- We are not all coming from the same comfort level when it comes to dealing with or speaking to others, especially strangers.

Mount Everest



For the mountain climber

- Trying to climb to the top of Mount Everest is a daunting task.

For the Introvert

- Entering into new situations can be just as daunting.

Unlike the extrovert, there is a need to build up confidence before stepping in strange situations.

San Francisco

Just like choosing the wrong streets in San Francisco can mean climbing very steep hills.

For the person who is not an introvert but not quite an extrovert

- Going to an event can be easy or difficult depending on the level of pressure placed upon one's self.

If you approach an event expecting to make a certain amount of contacts

➤ You will fail.

If you go to an event with the attitude “at least I am out of the house”

➤ You can find new contacts and maybe new opportunities.

It all comes down to the amount of self inflected pressure you place on your self.

No guarantees but this approach has worked for me.

Speed Bump

For the extrovert, each new situation isn't any more difficult than having to drive over a speed bump to go through a parking lot.

- Yes, they do have their days when doing something is more difficult than others but for the most part it is not a problem to “work” a room full of strangers.

This comfort level is what every type of human is striving for but for the extrovert they have already arrived.

Building a Comfort Level

Talking to strangers, in new and unknown situations, always involves a certain level of nervousness that sometime gets in the way of what we want say.

We can reduce this nervousness, no matter what type of person you are, through practicing our pitch and/or impromptu speaking

1. Tell Me About Your Self (aka *The Two Minute Drill*)

- Is not so much about being able to repeat a practiced introduction as it is a tool to make the individual comfortable and confident with themselves.
- Regular practice results in an ever increasing comfort level speaking with or before strangers and to mitigate the trepidation associated with stepping into new unfamiliar situations.

2. Toast Masters

- More geared towards public speaking.
- Progress into ever increasing responsibility while perfecting both impromptu and prepared speeches.
- Great supplement to the 2 minute drill.

The Campaign Begins

Starting to Network

Networking can be started by talking with everyone you know about what you are looking for or by attending certain functions as a guest.

Just remember not to specifically ask for a job during your initial conversation. You will get that chance during future meetings.

1. Guest Attendance

- Many organizations allow you to attend their meetings and events as a guest.
- Must register for the meeting or event ahead of time to save money.
- Most events or meetings are not free.

2. Organizations

- Many organizations and user groups in the New York area and you should search the internet for organizations/ groups matching your interests or profession.
- Organizations that may be useful in your campaign include:
 1. Long Island Software & Technology Network (LISTNET)
 2. Long Island Forum for Technology (LIFT)
 3. Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP)
 4. Project Management Institute (PMI)

Starting to Network

continued

3. College Alumni

- Joining your college Alumni association can be of benefit to network, possibly hear about industry changes or upcoming seminars.

4. Finding Events or meetings

- Finding out about these groups or networking events can be obtained in several different ways:
 1. like joining LinkedIn, Meet-Up.
 2. Searching on-line.
 3. Checking the calendar of your local library.

Surviving the Search

Before beginning on your journey there is a need to “level set” your expectations. What you have come to expect must be curtailed or even shelved in order to shield you from becoming very frustrated.

Level Setting Your Expectations

1. Job Boards

- You have no way of knowing if the posting is old or a real opportunity.
- Remember that you are one of thousands applying for the same position.
- Don't expect to a response to your submission.
 - Don't stop the campaign anchoring your hope onto a job applied for.
- Dice is a good job board for IT and Engineers.

2. Posting Your Resume on Job Boards

- Search Bots filter whose resume makes it off the board and onto the Recruiter or hiring companies desk.
- Refresh the resume once a week to bring it back to the top of the search queue.

Surviving the Search

continued

3. Recruiters

- Are overwhelmed. Don't expect to receive a follow-up call.
- Work for the hiring company and not you.
- The longer that you are out, the less willing they are to pitch you.
- Use them anyway, especially early on, you never know they could have something.

4. Job Fairs

- Always try to get the list of companies attending.
 - If you can't get a list, proceed with caution.
- Research the attending companies ahead of time.
- Get to the fair 2 – 3 hours early.
- Don't be surprised to be told to submit your resume on-line.
- Some fairs collect resumes at the door. This could place you on mailing lists you don't want to be on.
- Take a two stage approach to the fair: if the companies don't pan out then network.
- Early on in the search go for the experience then you can be selective.

Interviewing

5. Interviews

I have found out that by treating the interview as the Requirements Gathering Phase of a project, a great deal of pressure is elevated.

- Telephone

1. In General:

- Always have water nearby to stop your voice from getting dry while talking.
- Maintain a certain level of dress for the psychological benefit.
- Having key information ready at all times helps you when you are questioned about:
 1. What are your hourly rate versus their budget
 2. Where you are willing to work
 3. To quickly find out if you have been submitted for this position before.

2. Spontaneous

You will have to adapt to the changing conditions of the Recruiter's questions:

- About your background
- What have you been doing since you began your search
- The job opportunity that they called you about in the first place.

Interviewing

continued

Interview: Telephone

3.Scheduled

- Research the company, people you will be interviewing with before the call.
- If possible do some exercises to bring your skills to the forefront of your mind.
- Write a loose framework for how you think the interview will go and what to ask certain questions.

•The Face to Face Interview

1. Research about the company, the people who you will be interviewing with.
2. Verify how to get to the office .
3. Check the weather report.
4. Prepare your clothes as soon as the interview is scheduled.
5. Allow time for problems traveling on the day of the interview.
6. Try to get there up to ½ hour early. This will allow you to fill out the job application and start the interview on time.
7. Don't; don't take the risk of spilling something on you by stopping for coffee just before the interview

Interviewing

The Process

- Can be done quickly by having a one day interview that spans several hours and it includes interviewing with many people from different backgrounds
- It can drag on for weeks with several different return visits for another round of interviews with different people.
- Take Notes about the interview during or as soon as possible and before calling anyone.

Unfortunately, the fact that you have interviewed with the same company, no matter how many times or no matter how long the one interview may have taken

- The position can disappear at anytime and for reasons that can't be verified.

The offer stage:

- Don't forget that it is a negotiation between all parties and you don't have to accept the first offer.

Age Discrimination

Age Discrimination begins after 39.

- You have to choose not to let it consume you or it could destroy the search.
- 99% of the time it is something that can't be proven.
- It comes in two flavors:
 - Overt: Being asked age specific questions
 - Discrete: the job that disappears.

Metamorphosis: The Art of Change

Reinvention takes many forms from

- Converting to a consultant from a permanent employee.
- Separating your identity from your company and back to you.
- To scraping most of the past to go off in totally new direction.

Reinvention comes in many flavors.

The flavor that you select is up to you!!!

THE MARKET DRIVEN CONSULTANT

For many of us, we have worked most of our careers as a full time permanent employee for a company that was not a consulting house.

However, with the advent of cost cutting, the economic down turn and outsourcing many of us have been forced to consider consulting.

1. C2C (Corp to Corp)

- You are a Corporation with all of its benefits and drawbacks.
- Requires creating a Corporation before entering into a contract.

2. 1099 (Self Employment)

- You are out on your own.
- You pay the full cost of Social Security and Disability Insurance.

3. W2

- Taxes and Social Security deducted.

4. Contract to Hire

- There is the intent to convert you into a permanent employee but it is not guaranteed.

Two Types of Reinvention

The Media is constantly talking about having to “Reinvent” yourself but they fail to “tool down” to the fact that most White Collar Office workers are not/ can’t convert to a blue collar construction worker or a job type that is more physical.

The Real reinvention that we can all go through involves two types:

1.Total Reinvention

Which pretty much scraps the past for another direction.

2.Identity Redefinition

Which involves moving one’s identity from company and job title to themselves.

Most of us are going through an Identity Redefinition automatically and once accomplished, we will be liberated.

- Free from losing who we are just because a position has ended.
- Forever having an identity that moves with us.

Victory

Returning to Work

Victory

You have Landed.

Finally, the opportunity was found.

Congratulations on Winning the War but it is no time to rest.

Now

- You have to build your reputation.
- Gain the trust of your supervisor, bosses and co-workers.

You know how, you have done it before.

- ✓ You meet with all of the key stakeholders and get to know them while their getting to know you.
- ✓ You hold back not taking the lead; yet. Not until you know the environment better.
- ✓ You come in early and stay just a little later, if possible.
- ✓ You stay clear of the rumor mill and concentrate on doing your job at a level to impress.
- ✓ Your confidence is back on-line and nothing can stop you.

Questions and Discussion

In Conclusion

With the current economic conditions and an ever changing work environment our lives in general will continue to be in a constant state of flux. So never tune out and never burn your bridges.

In today's ever changing work and economic environment each of us must:

- Provide for that “rainy day”.
- Perform our jobs to the best of our abilities.
- Be agile in order to change with every economic turn.
- Keep Current.
- Rediscover who we really are.

With all of these key items in place, we can sail through the vast sea of change from the shore of our youth to the shore of our freedom.