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Taking time to be prepared for job loss is best job security



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It seems every day we read about the difficulties individuals have as they seek new positions after losing a job. The media are continually running stories about this issue.

At the same time, the U.S. Department of Labor reported an August unemployment rate of 4.9 percent - the lowest level in four years. There is a large disparity between "not being able to find a new position" and the many opportunities that exist in the job market. Individuals who lose their positions have frequently seen the indicators that their position may be eliminated, but fail to prepare themselves for the possibility that their position may be next.

For some, it is denial - a natural inclination to rearrange our experience to fit a positive image. Denial makes us feel secure by providing an unrealistic hope that a problem really isn't happening. Or perhaps we are just not reading the story line of what is happening in our industry, our organization or our work group. We need to continually assess our position and where it fits in our organization because, as structure changes, so might our jobs. Of greater concern is that individuals just don't know how to prepare, so they choose to do nothing and hope they never have to look for a new position.

Prepare for the worst and expect the best. There are steps that can be taken to be ready for a job search, although that search may not take place for months, years or ever.

Take inventory. Consider your skills, abilities, accomplishments and most importantly, your interests. If you could pick your next position, what would it be?

What are the possibilities? Consider your skills and how they might be marketed to a variety of employers. Could a hobby, activity or interest become a vocation?

Do you have a resume? Is your resume updated? Make sure it captures the information that highlights your accomplishments.

Get involved. Do you have memberships in trade associations, clubs, civic groups, alumni groups, etc.? Are you attending? If you are, are you using your friends and professional colleagues to evaluate potential opportunities or explore career options? Remember that 70 percent of individuals find positions through networking.

Education/Certification. Does the position you seek require certification or are you willing to obtain additional education if necessary? Perhaps a training class or refresher course is required. If so, now is the best time to get started.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself to get creative and get motivated:

Does the work I'm doing express what I truly want to be doing? If not, how can I discover work that would be more personally fulfilling? (Assume, for the purpose of the question, that time, energy, money, current job and family responsibilities are not barriers.)

What do I value most and what motivates me in my work? Some examples include career achievement, material success, creative expression, serving others, good health, spiritual awareness or work-life balance.

Do I possess special talents or skills that I haven't fully developed? What changes do I need to make - or what risks do I need to take - to develop those talents or skills?

Do I love my work, but not my boss? Perhaps it's time to consider a new opportunity at another organization.

The point is that there's no such thing as job security. So you need to be secure in yourself. Take the time to invest in yourself and you will create more control over your career.

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