



Next Chapter NEW LIFE

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Forced Job Loss – Look out for the signs by Dorothy Tannahill Moran



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In these days of uncertainty, the idea of forced job loss (better known as getting laid off) is a bit more terrorizing thought than in days gone by. Right now, job loss means facing the possibility that there are fewer jobs out there to get and employers being unclear if hiring is the right business decision. It's a flaky situation for sure, but there are things you can do to prepare yourself before the pink slip comes your way.

My first big advice is to make sure you aren't being in denial about your personal standing at work and the business you are working for. In my 21+ years managing in big business, I can't tell you how many times I spoke to people saying "I didn't see it coming". Some of those people worked for me. Prior to the moment of informing them that they no longer had a job, I spent countless hours communicating about what was to come, informing them of layoff criteria, just about everything short of saying the words "You're fired". Yet, they sat there totally astonished and ticked off. It never failed to stun me, just how many people simply wouldn't pay attention. When I compared notes with other managers, they had the same thing to report. Denial about the reality of your situation, especially right now, will only make your situation worse. Your denial will cause you to lack preparedness emotionally, financially and professionally.

Certainly, there are businesses that aren't as proactive or sensitive to their employees. In fact, I admit there are businesses that operate by the seat of the pants so much, that they don't even know they're in trouble until they notice the heat from their hair fire. Despite that, there are often warning signs.

Warning signs in large businesses usually have some kind of public communication. If your company is publicly traded, they have to inform their shareholders of business downturns and profit issues. You can count on the communication to sound positive and upbeat. Often times, this upbeat sound kind of

“dulls” the impact of the issues. To be fair, if a company is having problems, they do want to ensure they understand the issues and are taking action. They want to instill confidence to everyone, that they are aware of the issues and are being the good leaders they should be. Your best tactic is to listen to both the bad and good news, ensuring you aren’t missing the bad news messages because of the positive. Try to personalize the bad news—how is this going to impact you or the area you work in? If you can’t translate it down to your level, ask your management what it might mean. Do your homework. Ask people inside the company and outside until you have multiple points of view. THEN, decide if this is your early warning sign.

Warning signs in small businesses are harder to detect. If your company is small but well run, it may be easier. Obviously, if they are good at communicating, listen to it carefully. If they aren’t, look for things like not rehiring when someone leaves, look for depleting inventory, if you and other workers aren’t busy and even things like not meeting payroll on time. If they have an expansion plan that suddenly stops or slows down that might be a sign. Any activity that requires money to make it happen will usually be the first thing that gets stopped or cut back. Warning signs in small companies are harder to detect but with a bit of observation, can be done.

Obviously, there are always those businesses that have and give no warning signs. If you have been the recipient of a layoff in this situation, you have my deepest sympathy. I have known people to get raises and promotions one week and laid off the next. I’m not saying that all situations generate warning signs. I am saying, most of them do have warning signs and I am saying that too many people prefer to ignore or deny the reality of their situation.

My second piece of advice is to prepare as if you will lose your job. Get your personal financial situation in order. Eliminate debt and create an emergency fund. If you lose your job, the thing that will cause the biggest stress will be a mountain of debt that you have no means to pay for. With that debt gone and an emergency fund, if you lose your job, you can proceed with greater confidence in knowing you and your family will be okay for a while. As you know, your personal confidence plays a huge role in getting a job in the first place. If you are panic stricken, you dull your intelligence and problem solving abilities, both things critical to job search.

Get yourself ready for a job search. Update your resume’. Ensure you have letters of reference, job reviews, any documents that support your performance that you might need. Do your homework. Identify where you would start your job search. If appropriate, start sending out “feelers” to see what situation other companies are in for hiring. If you are really sure the pink slip is coming, go ahead and start the process. It’s much easier to find a job when you have a job.

Let me give you some perspective for a minute. Don’t get paranoid, that’s not helpful either. It means you have over corrected. My message is simple. You can’t afford to be in denial, not now, not ever. Being realistic about your work environment will serve you well as long as you choose to be employed.

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Dorothy Tannahill-Moran is a Career Coach and expert on helping her clients. Want to discover specific career change strategies that gets results? Discover how to by claiming your FREE gift, Career Makeover Toolkit at: <http://CareerMakeoverToolKitShouldIStayorShouldIGo.com/>