



TenStep Supplemental Paper

13 February 2004

A Layoff May Not be Within Your Control. Your Reaction to the Layoff Is.

It seems that layoffs are all around. Some are job eliminations, consolidations, and just plain old downsizing to reduce costs.

Most people who are laid off have very little input or impact into the decision-making process - specifically if the layoff is due to economic factors that have nothing to do with job performance or even a team's performance.

The key to professional survival, and avoiding a long unemployment period, is accepting the sharp bend your career has taken and not letting it stall your career aspirations.

The best response is a positive response

Most times, the initial response to a layoff is related to how much advance notice a person receives to prepare for the layoff. With advance warning, you can update your resume, start looking at the job market, and start to cut back on your personal expenses.

Of equal importance is the opportunity to prepare mentally. People who are prepared mentally are generally more calm and gracious when the notice is given. They don't express anger or burn bridges during those last days on the job.

On the other hand, if you are taken by surprise, you have to first work through the shock and disappointment of being laid off. Then you have to get yourself mentally ready for a job search - a much harder endeavor to initiate because you likely have greater financial pressures to deal with.

That said, the key component of a layoff reaction is not what you do in the short term, but how you deal with a layoff over the long term. Many people respond well to adversity and use adversity as a learning experience. Others allow adversity to get the better of them. They may begin looking for another job, but only half-heartedly. Once they find a new position, they begin to live in fear of a second layoff. This fear can then easily affect performance, pushing them toward another layoff scenario based on performance issues.

Learn from it and let it go

People who are successful learn from the past. They also learn about themselves. Many people who are laid off start new careers and new businesses. They know that a career disruption provides an opportunity to evaluate what they want to do with the rest of their lives. You have probably heard successful business people say that a past adversity was the best thing that ever happened to them.

Some people come in to interviews with an attitude of "let me tell you all the reasons you are not going to hire me" and "my prior company was terrible, and they were really unfair, and nobody liked it there anyway." These people will not have an easy time finding further employment. On the other hand, enthusiasm and a positive attitude are infectious. Even if a person has been out of work for a long time, if he/she comes in with



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a good, positive attitude, he/she is going to get a real good look from the interviewer. It is often preferable to hire a person with a good attitude that can be trained, rather than a person with a perfect skill set but a bad attitude.

Most people who are laid off from the IT world will end up finding new jobs in the IT world. The jobs may be similar to the ones they left. They may be for more or less money. Successful people learn what they can and move forward. They may become more prepared by doing a better job of keeping their skills up to date. They may decide that they need to become certified in their skill sets. They may decide to move into consulting positions.

On the other hand, people who can't find another job quickly - probably because of missing skills or lack of experience - tend to become frustrated, withdrawn, and burnt out. They start to blame others for their poor fortune. Their attitude changes toward work - they may decide not to give 100 percent for a new employer, as "there's no loyalty to employees anymore." As was mentioned previously, this is the kind of behavior that ends up getting you on the next layoff list, further perpetuating the cycle.

Summary

This is not meant to be a rah-rah for people who have been laid off, nor is it meant to make you believe that a layoff is the best thing that has ever happened to you. Its purpose is simply to help you see that you do have some level of control when a layoff happens - you have control over how you respond and react to a layoff. Once you understand this basic point, you may end up with a more positive outlook, which may lead to more options and a better chance for success in the long term.

So, when you are caught up in a layoff, make sure you do the following:

- Leave your current company on as positive a note as you can. Who knows, they may want you back some day.
- Get over the emotional side of the layoff as quickly as possible.
- Stay positive.
- Think about what you learned at your job and what you would do differently in your next job.
- Start focusing on getting a new job. Take advantage of any placement help your old company is offering.
- Stay positive.
- Look at as many opportunities as possible, as soon as possible. Hit the pavement, the want ads, the Internet, etc.
- Stay positive.

Yes, "stay positive" is intentionally repeated because it's the most critical aspect in surviving a layoff. You probably didn't have any control over your layoff, but you do



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have control over your job search. You also have control over your emotions. Learn from the past, but let it go. Be positive and focus on your next opportunity.