



The Pink Slip Has Come In--Now What? Tips for Handling a Layoff

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Pop Quiz:

If you got laid off today, what would you do? Would you:

- a) Feel like burying your head in the sand for the next century?
- b) Be so furious that your blood boils?
- c) Consider the layoff as blessing in disguise?
- d) Know your rights and the steps needed to utilize resources available to you?

Many of you would like to answer a, b, and c, but could you truthfully answer d? This *survival guide* is intended for your use during a time when we are typically overwhelmed with emotion and unable to establish a game plan. You should be aware of your rights as an employee and be an advocate for yourself.

What to do Immediately:

- ✓ Take advantage of job-search services in the agency.
- ✓ Ask about bumping privileges and your options.
- ✓ Ask about possible transfers within the agency.
- ✓ File for unemployment insurance.
- ✓ Change your spouse's tax withholding to reduce amount withheld.
- ✓ You may want to consider temporarily having your spouse reduce or discontinue retirement account contributions which will increase take-home pay.
- ✓ Make sure you have health insurance. Ask about COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985) coverage. COBRA is expensive. Ask how much it will be.
- ✓ Ask if you be paid for vacation time accumulated?

Portions Adapted from Fortune, April 2001

Dealing with Emotions:

The stress of being laid off can make you sick, literally. Utilize these tips for good mental and physical well-being. Effective coping skills will be essential during this time of difficulty.

- 1) Identify all sources of anger so that you may begin to heal and refocus towards life *after* the layoff.
- 2) Do not dwell on the past. Focus on the "*here and now*" and create a clear plan for change.
- 3) Make old connects new again. Create a network of contacts for *future* job referencing.
- 4) Accept the situation as an *opportunity* not a setback.
- 5) Do not feel personally offended. Try to remember that it is not what happened to you, rather what you do with it. Create personal despair or joy...*the choice is up to you.*
- 6) Seek a social support system outside of your close friends. They may only tell you what you want to hear. A new insight can help you *reorganize* your goals and energies.
- 7) A poor attitude during this difficult time will find a way of resonating into the future. Do your best to stay upbeat. It will only make things easier as you *reposition yourself.*

Adapted from Business Leader, July 2001