

# **SEVEN DAY CAREER CHANGE PLAN**

## **MANAGING AN UNEXPECTED CAREER CHANGE**

# INTRODUCTION

If you are one of the millions of people who get an unexpected pink slip, the fact that you are getting laid off can be terrifying. It doesn't have to be that way, but many people don't prepare themselves for the eventuality of a career change and prefer instead to coast through life. When market forces or a major illness interrupt their career, they may have no idea how to start a new career. Let's be clear, you can switch into another career quickly, but not if you don't plan your strategies way ahead of time. Once the emergency hits, you won't have the calm head required to look at all your options objectively. So, don't wait until something happens to force you out of your career, be proactive and start looking at ways to manage a potential career change *even* if your job seems as secure as the rock of Gibraltar.

In this career planner, several different strategies will be discussed that can help you make a successful career change in a week, should the unexpected arise. They are the foundation for making a smooth transition. Each of these strategies may take time to settle in and that is why you need to do them before you actually attempt to switch careers. You want to lay the foundation and be prepared, just like you would if a hurricane were getting ready to strike your town. Don't expect the government forces to be able to reach your door to help you, in that event. Similarly, in a situation where the economy is shaken, you may have fewer federal resources available. Do check them out, but also prepare to take control of your own life.

Some of the items to be discussed will seem like common sense to you. They are. There is no magic bullet that makes one suddenly qualified for a new position at just the right time. It takes a common sense approach and the ability to plan and strategize for all contingencies. It starts with a willingness to be realistically appraise your own skills and the determination to do the hard work to make your own future secure, without relying on chance or fate. So, the advice given here can help you whether you are laid off or whether you are making a leap into self-employment.

If you have the strategies in place when the time comes to quit your job or leave, then you can utilize the seven day plan to keep you on the right road to future income. It can give you a feeling of security in rough times and it can help to motivate you. The worst thing that can happen when you are suddenly without work is that you decide to take it easy for a while. That is not the time to take it easy, that's the time to take out your plan and focus on some strategies to either get you gainfully employed or make a dream come true. It all depends on how much you've prepared in advance as to how easily you can move from having no job to being in total control of your life.

# PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME

You don't want to get to the point where you have been given notice and have absolutely no idea where to start looking for a job or even what jobs you qualify for. Always know what your skills are and how those skills apply to the present marketplace. This can take a review of your skills, yearly. This should be easy enough as that is normally done in your yearly review, with your supervisor. Keep a copy of all of your achievements and skills at home at all times. If you are asked to leave a company, you may have little time to take anything with you. So, act as a faithful employee, but keep records at home – always. Don't leave them in your desk at work. You won't be able to retrieve them if you leave suddenly.

Many companies ask you to specify your career goals and then evaluate how you did at year end. This is a great strategy to help you plan on how to increase your on-the-job skills. You should take advantage to express any areas that you think will also make you more marketable outside the company and that can also benefit your own company. Always show how your further training can increase the company's bottom line. If it happens to increase your marketability, that's not something you need to draw attention to, but it can be invaluable during a layoff.

# RESOURCES FOR CAREER CHANGES

Within the career e-book, you are given specific resources that will help you assess your skills and find out which of them apply to the marketplace. You want to know what the trends are in salary and in employment for your current field. You also want to be able to find the same information for other fields, even when you haven't a clue what they might be.

You will want to create the career survival kit, which is talked about in the career e-book. This is a standard portfolio of basic tools that can help you be ready in a pinch to go out and seek employment, if that is your aim. Within the career survival kit, you will be asked to keep your plan handy. This plan goes over all the research that you have done to help you stay in touch with the market and know how your skills can benefit you in a career switch.

# MAKING YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

Besides a layoff, there are signals within us that tell us we've either been at a job too long or the winds of change aren't in our favor. Learn how to start reading the elements of change to decide when you have to take notice and be proactive. You can look on this as an adventure to rediscovering the passion and ambition in your life. If you know how to successfully switch from one job to another, you can have the freedom to create a life of happiness instead of a life of drudgery. It will help to build your confidence and give you more life satisfaction.

You will come face-to-face with the statistics that prove some avenues are surefire ways to increase your income and help you remold your career. You won't be one of the ones who are floundering, unable to decide which way to go for fear of losing a job you don't like anyways. You will have a plan, something the majority of people don't have when they are switching careers or trying to make a dream come true.

Learn how to overcome your own mindset and reach for a future that excites you. This means learning what motivates you and what you enjoy. There is ample evidence that most people have more than three careers in one lifetime. They can be as varied as turning from a medical doctor to an artist and anything in between. You can re-invent yourself as long as you have the commitment to follow your dreams while placing your feet squarely on the ground, one foot in front of the other.

## LIFE'S PRACTICALITIES

Some of the problems that people face when changing a career are practical issues:

- How will you finance an extended period of time without a job?
- How will you get an education? Who will pay for it?
- How will you manage your time and your family responsibilities?
- Where can you make business contacts?

These are all crucial life issues that have to be recognized and dealt with in order to succeed. Very few people succeed in a complete vacuum. There are other people who can become allies and those who can create obstacles in your drive to change your career. You can even sabotage yourself and not

realize it until many years of what could have been fruitful work have gone by.

The career e-book gives you practical answers to life's practical questions. While having a dream is a noble endeavor the actual execution of it requires a very firm grasp on day-to-day issues. You will find advice on how to manage your time, how to get your employer to pay for your career advancement, and how to network.

## **NETWORKING**

So many people have heard the importance of networking, but few actually practice it to make an impact on their careers. When you are faced with a job loss or a desired career change, networking is one of the most important strategies to understand and implement. The career e-book goes over the many different areas in your life that you can network to help you achieve your goals. With the use of your career survival kit, you can start to make targeted visits to locations where professionals meet and network. You can, in some cases, even do it on company time, if you are still employed.

If you are not employed, networking can become very difficult. You may feel isolated from your colleagues and the industry. You may feel embarrassed to show up without a title. You can get a lot of networking done at networking groups for the unemployed, but let's face it; everyone there is typically not working. You want to be able to go to places where you can meet other people who are able to get your foot in the door to a company or position that you have targeted in your plan.

## **CAREER COACHES**

Some people would prefer to hire someone who can help motivate and guide them in a career change. This is especially useful if you've been an employee all your life and never taken control of your life before. A career coach can help you adjust your mindset and project an aura of confidence. They can help you resolve obstacles that may seem daunting when faced alone. This e-book tells you what to expect from a career coach and how to maximize your results with them.

If you don't know if you can benefit from a career coach, the career e-book gives you some examples of people who can benefit from this arrangement. A career coach can be for someone who is happily employed and seeking career advancement within their company or for someone who is trying to make a career switch or start their own business.

# **EDUCATION**

You may find out that in order to fulfill your dreams, you will have to get continuing education. There are so many different teaching institutions that the choices available make it difficult to decide on where to attend. You can choose by price, but that might not give you the credentials that you need to make the career change. You don't want to graduate only to find that you owe lots of money in student debt and have made no inroads in your efforts to fulfill your dreams. The career e-book will give you an idea of how to distinguish a good school from one that is not adequate for you. It talks about the application process and how to best get ready to apply for financial aide.

# **RECRUITERS**

If you are employed and looking to change companies, you know the dangers of posting your resume online where a supervisor might find it. You also know how that can negatively impact your career and make you a prime candidate for a layoff. So, there are instances when you don't want to do the job search through public means. Hiring a recruiter can be a very thoughtful way of bringing confidentiality to your search and giving you more time to make sure you are meeting the other goals in your plan.

Recruitment agencies are a dime a dozen and you want some idea of what agencies are not only reputable, but aren't outright scams. There are some dead giveaways on who to avoid as well as which might be a good match. Keep in mind that even a good recruiter can't place someone who has let his or her skill set disintegrate. So, you will want to take any feedback on your marketability from the recruiters and use it to manage and modify your action plan.

# **STRIKING OUT ON YOUR OWN**

If your career goal is to strike out on your own and become an independent consultant or home business owner, then you can also benefit from this career e-book. Many of the same strategies apply to both a successful employment search as well as establishing a business. When there is a difference in strategies the career e-book clearly spells out how to modify the work plan to include the dream of business ownership.

# WHERE TO GET TRAINING

Maybe you have a very specific goal in mind, but you need additional training. The career e-book offers eight different ways to get additional career training. By locating the local training opportunities in your area ahead of time, when you are laid off you won't waste more time searching them out. You will have already developed a plan that includes who to contact and when in the event of a job loss.

Volunteer opportunities are discussed as a means to get employment training, however, there are specific qualities that volunteer position must have for it to benefit you. Make sure you don't take a volunteer position that only offers you menial tasks since these won't help to advance your search in any way. The career e-book is clear on how to get a training position that can be put on a resume and eventually serve as a stepping-stone to your future career.

If you have followed your plan closely, when the emergency arises and you lose a job, you may even already know faces or have names and phone numbers you can call to help jumpstart your networking strategy. You won't be faced with the prospect of sitting home, unable to formulate a plan or know whom to turn to. You will have a good idea who might be able to help you in your job search or career switch.

# ONLINE RESOURCES

The career e-book discusses the pros and cons of online resources. They can be an easy way to get your name into the public arena very quickly. Online sites can also be a place where many scam artists and time wasters reside too. You want to be technically savvy and make good use of online resources while minimizing their potential to side-track you completely.

In addition, online resources are for a particular category of jobs. You can have great success with entry or mid-level range job postings on online bulletin boards, but you will have no luck if you are an executive. That's because the more confidential a job is, the higher it pays, the more likelihood it won't be posted publicly online. Find out where to go to see executive postings and also what online resources can be better than others.

# YOUR SEVEN-DAY CAREER PLAN

If you've read the career e-book, you will have the tools and strategies necessary to make your career dreams come true. It will take a lot of work on your part and research too. However, it can offer you a way to plan your switch in a smooth manner, even if that switch comes suddenly in the form of a pink slip. So, do you know what you would do if you suddenly became a layoff casualty? Would you be able to implement the seven-day career plan effectively? Obviously, it takes more than seven days to prepare, but once you are forced to go up to bat, that's when you can be glad you had some idea of how to hit a homerun, instead of striking out.

## DAY ONE

Let's assume that day one is the day that you are actually walking out of your previous employer's company into your new life. It doesn't matter if that change came about because you planned it that way or because you got a pink slip. The moment you realize that you are about to head out the door of your old company is the day the clock starts ticking on your seven-day plan.

You get home and now you know what to do. You take out your career survival kit and make sure that is as up-to-date as it possibly can be. You take out your career plan with the two choices for careers you had entertained in the past, and you make a decision to either go for one of these or stick with the work you currently do. You update your research and make sure it is still valid. You will have a clear idea of which of your skills are marketable, if you kept your career plan in shape, and which need to be upgraded.

## DAY TWO

Since you were aware that many people face the prospects of having two or three career paths in their lifetime, you are not caught completely off-guard. You might have a side business that can be expanded already in place. You might have a part-time job that has been offering you some needed training skills. Now, you can ask for more hours. You might even be in school. Seek out internships or employment opportunities there, even if they are temporary. The only things that can derail your plans now are finances, so you start to see if you're in good shape.

You have a set period of time before your lack of employment might affect your credit. Use that time to refinance high interest loans, take out credit lines for future use, and re-organize your finances. Seek to reduce your expenses and find ways to increase your income – any income for now. Make sure to apply for unemployment compensation as soon as possible.

### **DAY THREE**

Having gotten your finances and plan in place, now you want to start to network immediately. Continue to attend the professional organizations you joined. Be sure to carry cards with a contact number that they can reach you. You need to come clean to anyone that you are in the market for a job or looking to switch into a new career. Now is the time to get returns on any favors you may have made during the time leading up to your layoff.

You will be calling to make appointments with all of the local agencies and recruiters that you investigated earlier. You should have a clear idea of who to call and how to network at this point. If not, the chances of you making a successful career change in seven days is practically zero.

You should be sending out resumes and cover letters to employers that are looking for your skills. One of the first places that might be hiring is a your previous company's competitor. If you want to stay in the same type of position, it doesn't hurt to know who they are and contact them when you are laid off. Just make sure you did not sign any non-compete agreements or you won't be able to be hired.

### **DAY FOUR**

After you have made your phone calls and set up appointments to meet with people you know face-to-face, then you should investigate the online resources. If you haven't posted your hiring information online, now is the time to do so. As long as you are not currently employed, the Internet can be a wonderful marketing tool for someone looking for a job.

If you are not looking for a job, but seeking to expand a business concept, then you will be working towards expanding your customer base and seeking out new business. You will want to use all the resources at your disposal, both online and offline. Look at what has made you money in the past and just do more of the same to increase your income, for now. You can get more creative after the financial crisis is over.

## **DAY FIVE**

As you continue to network and establish a bigger circle of contacts, you will start receiving feedback on your chances at employment. The feedback can be very subtle, so you have to be on your toes to not miss it. If after calling various people, no one wants to return your calls, then you know you have a problem. It could be you've suffered a loss of reputation, your skills aren't marketable, or everyone is in the market for a job and you are one of many contacting that person. Don't take it personally. If you have established some good contacts throughout your years of association with other professionals, you will eventually get a response from someone who can help. Remember that it is often a matter of timing as to whether an opportunity comes your way or not. Use the feedback to modify your goals, your presentation, and your public image.

## **DAY SIX**

As you network and seek openings, remember to keep your skills up-to-date and your professional image as polished as possible. If that means that you take work on a volunteer basis to get you more skills, then that is something that can keep you busy and your spirits up too. Just always seek to make sure that any free work you do is done with the intention of helping your career goals in the future. Don't succumb to using your free time for work that isn't going to contribute to your goals in the end. You have to be somewhat single-minded on placing your feet firmly on a path that is not only satisfying to you personally, but that also can be lucrative.

Take advantage of any free seminars or job placement services offered to people who are unemployed. Spend your time seeking out professionals in the area you are targeting so that you can network with them. Don't just focus on making them your stepping-stone to employment, also show your interest in the career path they are in. This is far more attractive than a person who appears desperate to get a job.

## **DAY SEVEN**

If you've followed all the steps outlined, you will be getting closer to your target day-by-day. It may take seven days, it may take 30 days. It can even take years, if continuing education is involved. The key is to be able to weather a downturn in finances by having several options available to you. This makes you less desperate to take the first offer that comes along and gives you time to make a career change that is meaningful and lasting.

The process can be reviewed every week and re-established, using the same formula. As they say, rinse and repeat.

# HOW TO KEEP YOUR SPIRITS UP

Having a sudden shift in your job environment can be very traumatic, even when planned or foreseen. No one likes to be the person picked to get booted out of a company. You can't let the experience embitter you because it will make you clearly unemployable in the future. Instead, focus on the positive time spent building your skills and always try to exit gracefully. Ask if you can get references and tell them that you enjoyed your time with the company and you are sad to see it end.

There will be feelings of loss at some point. You might miss your colleagues, or at the very least, your paycheck. If you are older, you might start to think that people are discriminating against you because of your age. You might even feel betrayed, if the layoff was done in such a manner as to make you feel discarded instead of let go. These feelings can be overwhelming when you have no plan in place and see no future in sight. That is why it is very important to be as proactive as you can in today's market for your own well-being and peace of mind.

If, however, you see yourself succumbing to feelings of ill-will or helplessness, seek out resources that can help you cope. Avoid using alcohol or drugs to ease your temporary feelings of discomfort and loss. Recognize that this is all they are – temporary. If you can't seem to shake the blues, seek out a family member, a spouse, or even a health care professional who can help you get over your feelings of helplessness. Even a pastor can help, if you are a person of faith.

One thing you don't want to do is wallow in self-pity forever. You can't make a successful career change when you don't even believe in yourself to start with. While you have to pay some attention to the things that have gone wrong, don't forget to focus on what is going right for you. This can also help you to keep your confidence and your optimism when things go wrong. Always look for something in each day that you can say you've achieved and feel good about, even if it is calling one person who is happy to hear from you.

With every new path there can be fear and trepidation. Those same emotions can be turned into a sense of exploration and excitement. Try to look on this change in your life as a new lease on life. You can do that, if you learn how to plan for the future and how to stay grounded in the present. You can remain positive knowing that your plan will eventually bear fruit, even if the going gets rougher or it takes a bit more time than you had planned. The fact is that just putting one foot in front of the other in a directed effort will eventually lead you straight to your goal.