



What to do when you have just lost your job

17 August 2020

Unfortunately, this will be the experience of many people, especially this year. No matter how often it happens, and no matter how frequent layoffs are, it is not something anyone gets used to. It is a horrible experience for every person, every time it happens. The shock of it all, also makes it difficult to know what to do next. Just when you need to be rational and clear-headed, you don't feel at all rational and clear-headed. You feel frightened and angry and confused.

Below are 14 tips for getting back on track after a layoff/retrenchment.

1. Beware of being forced to sign documents immediately after hearing about your retrenchment. Some companies will, at the same time as they tell you that you are to be retrenched, try and make you sign a whole bunch of documents there and then. That is extremely unfair. You are in a state of shock. You need time to take the documents home and read them and give them to other people to read as well to comment on, before you sign anything.
2. Try and get the best possible severance package you can. If you go easily and quietly away, you will get as little as possible. Having worked in the corporate world for nearly three decades, it pays to make a fuss. When you challenge you usually do end up with a better package. And make sure the company is sticking to the legal requirements as a minimum.
3. Give yourself a few days to gather yourself from the shock. Express your emotions if you need to. Cry and scream and rage. You want to get the emotions out so you can get on with the rest of your life.
4. File for unemployment benefits and any other benefits you are entitled to as soon as possible.
5. Get into a routine for the day. At work you were used to being in a routine. It can feel very strange no longer having to go to work or having any structure to your day. You may be tempted to lay in bed all day, but don't do that. Get up at your usual time and plan tasks to do every day. If you need another job, then some of your tasks need to be around finding another job.
6. Have a look at your finances and relook your budget. Can you cut down on some spending for now? How long can your savings last? Get an idea of what you have to work with. If you need to cut spending, it is often possible to find ways of cutting at least some expenses until you find another job.
7. Think about what you want to do next. If you have to look for another job, then consider what you would really like to do. If you didn't really like the job you were in before, this becomes an opportunity to find a better job for you.

8. Tell people that you need a job. Sometimes it can be a bit embarrassing to tell people you have been retrenched, and your self-esteem may have taken a knock, however, others cannot help you find another job if they don't know you need one.
9. Take the time to put together an excellent CV and also have some examples of cover letters ready for when you apply for jobs. There are typically a lot of applicants for each job at the moment, so you need to stand out. Get some help and advice on putting together a really great CV and cover letter. You need to customise your CV and cover letter for each job you apply for.
10. Check your social media accounts and make sure that Google searches don't reveal any information that might hamper your job search. Also update your LinkedIn profile as that is one way in which many people find jobs. Quite often your LinkedIn URL is also on your CV.
11. Connect with your network and get them to connect with their networks on your behalf. See if they can circulate your CV around companies they work for and people they know.
12. Get your CV uploaded onto career website portals. Sign up for job alerts on the internet. Contact recruitment agents. Spend some time each day searching for suitable jobs.
13. Prepare for and practise your interviewing skills for when you are called to an interview.
14. Try and not get discouraged. It can be a long and demoralising experience searching for a job. You will have times when you feel like giving up. But don't. To some extent, it is a numbers game, and you have to keep on applying until you get a job.

As long as you continue with your search and don't give up, and you learn from feedback and look at ways you can improve your CV and get better at the job search, you are likely to find a job. And you may just find one that is far more suited to you and even pays better than your old one.

All the best.