

## **Managing Your Career Through a Recession**

Whether or not we are in a recession is an argument for the political pundits. But where I live it feels like a recession. What can you do if you are worried about losing your job? There are a number of things you can do where you are right now.

Make sure you are adding something of value to your current position. Don't let management view you as someone who just does his job and goes home. Go above and beyond your regular responsibilities, perhaps by volunteering on a committee, sharing information with your coworkers, coming up with ideas on how to solve problems or market effectively to new niche markets. Then make sure your office leadership knows about your contributions without being too obnoxious. "That's not part of my job description" kind of attitude has not worked for some time now.

Update your skills. "Companies get rid of people whose skills are obsolete and replace them with people who are already trained," says Richard Bayer, chief operating officer of the Five O'Clock Club. Many local educational institutions have short classes that will help you update your skills. Don't forget the Carnegie Library on Central Street that hosts computer tutorials in what they call The Edge. Also check out the various schools' continuing education classes where you can learn from actual business practitioners who teach a class or two in the evenings after work. There are also lots of practical sites and newsletters on the Internet that can help you stay in the loop of emerging technology and business trends.

Your attitude could be setting you up for downsizing. Now is not the time to be whining a lot about your lot in life, or your status on the job. Employers are looking for people who stay positive and can boost the morale of those around them during tough times. Too much complaining and they just might decide you don't really want to work there.

Start networking while you still have a job, just in case. No one really wants a friend who only comes to them when times are tough for a favor. So get into the practice of constantly meeting new people, getting back in touch with old friends, and have something helpful to give—share your learning experiences, contacts you have made, etc. that might be helpful to your friends so that when you need a favor it will just logically be their turn to help you.

If there is a recession, some industries will do better than others. Anything remotely touching the housing industry is vulnerable. And this is not a good time to completely change careers. But it might be a good time to take your transferable skills to a safer industry. Most industries still need administrative assistants, accountants and office cleaners.

Rachel Zupek at CNN said it this way. "A good rule of thumb is that jobs that are based on consumers "have-to's" are fairly likely to survive a recession. As a consumer, I have to eat, I have to have electricity and water, I have to pay taxes, I have to have a car with gas that works etc. On the other hand, jobs that are NOT based on consumers "have-to's" could feel a pinch. For example, I do NOT have to go out to eat. I do NOT have to go to the movies. I do NOT have to buy a new TV or iPod."

In construction, learn as much as you can about green construction practices. There is a large and growing industry springing up around global warming and environmental issues. It is the same in the energy sector. The push for jobs related to oil and gas exploration and finding alternatives is just beginning. There are jobs in security. In spite of, and in some instances because of, a downturn crime continues to happen. For example we are just beginning to hear about all the thefts surrounding metals and copper wiring.

Business is always looking for people who specialize in international relations. If you have lived abroad or speak another language and have knowledge of other cultures and what strategies would make them customers, you are in demand. Education is also strong in general. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics has repeatedly shown teaching to be a relatively safe profession. But individual schools may be less safe due to the housing crunch and less property tax and sales tax coming in.

But if you are in the information technology sector and worried about your job going offshore, consider industries where the work has to be done locally. Universities with distance learning programs will need IT professionals as will their libraries need systems librarians. Local media outlets with growing reliance on technology will need professionals there to get the next program or issue out the door. With a little brainstorming I am sure you and your network can come up with similar ideas.

And in this area there is still a strong healthcare presence. Everyone gets sick at one point or another. But in this industry in particular, and basically every new industry, if you want to become something totally different from what you are now, you would be smart to ask if you could job shadow for a day. In the healthcare industry it is a requirement for some training programs.

Most job seekers get wide eyed at the site of big money and don't consider if they are a good candidate or not for that career. If you are weak in Science or Math, many industries are now closed to you. And for many local training programs in health, if you get one C there are other people with natural talent or that know better than you how to study that will get those limited training spots over you. So be realistic.

To recap, to better protect yourself through our precarious economic times, keep a good attitude. Look for ways of going above and beyond what is required of you. Begin networking now with friends and new acquaintances. Be an information sponge and share what you learn with others. Update your skills wherever possible. If you are in an endangered industry, look at ways of moving to a safer place with your existing skills. And if you feel you must learn a new career, research it thoroughly with your strengths and weaknesses in mind, and don't forget to see for yourself what that job is like by job shadowing someone. Missouri Career Center is here for your job search and career research needs.

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