



Boosting Your Career During a Recession

By Liz Wolgemuth, *Entrepreneur.com*, reprinted with permission from www.JobSeekerWeekly.com

Even tough times provide many opportunities for savvy job seekers and workers.

With the economy weakening and layoffs edging higher, many Americans have begun to fret about job security. Yet even the nastiest recessions have way more survivors than victims. And if you play it smart, you can even thrive.

Here are four ways to actually move your career forward in a recession:

Introduce you: version 2.0. Every change presents opportunity, says Lois Frankel, an executive coach and author of *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: 101 Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers*. Frankel says layoff survivors need to get over their guilt pretty quickly. It's not uncommon for employees who witness a round of job cuts to become immobilized or feel shell-shocked, but they're missing a great opportunity to "rebrand" themselves.

When companies are flush, they're able to create specialists among their workforce. But when profits and payrolls thin, employees who can serve as "utility players," handling a variety of roles, are highly attractive, Frankel says. Lean times present an opportunity for niche employees to put other skills to work and rebuild their reputations as go-to multitaskers.

Seize what's left behind. Employees should actively try to pick up the work of their departed peers. "The people who get laid off often make the most money, so you should just go take all their projects when they leave," says Penelope Trunk, a syndicated career columnist, blogger, and author of *Brazen Careerist: The New Rules for Success*.



Duncan Fuller of Framingham, Mass., is something of an expert on layoffs. He made it through about four rounds of job cuts at Genuity, an early Internet service provider, before getting the ax himself in 2001. Fuller says it was fairly common to see his fellow survivors swarm toward staplers, telephone headsets, and corporate knickknacks left in abandoned cubicles. But the real claim was abandoned sales accounts of good customers. Fuller incorporated the accounts into his own deck and worked to soothe the frustrations of clients who begrudged losing the sales rep they knew best.

Boost your market value. Frankel cautions that this isn't the time to ask management for perks like the abandoned corner office or a better title. But volunteering to take on new responsibilities can pave the way for a negotiation in six to eight months, when an employee can prove that the job has evolved and is now worth more on the market.

Remember, too, that a volunteer spirit can also make you look like a team player--like someone who supports the organizational change. The resilient employees--those who really step up to the plate without seeming to dance on the graves of their laid off coworkers--find many opportunities during a downturn.

Embrace a new age. Suppose you're already out of work. Take advantage of it. The old thinking was that workers could only gain and expand skills at a regular job. The new thinking is that there's plenty of growth to be found elsewhere, and a traditional job can even prove stifling. Generation Y-ers are driving this new concept of success, Trunk says. They'll live in their parents' basements, reject job offers that don't meet their criteria, work freelance gigs and flip websites.

These tips work great for all generations. Instead of holding on to rigid ideas of what work should be, open up to new ways of thinking. A new outlook and approach like this will help you hold on to your current job, or pave the way to your new career.