

Redundancy – making the best of it

What was your first reaction?

When you first heard the news, maybe you froze in your tracks, unable to even calculate what this would mean. With a bit of time to process the news, you may have moved bravely into denial. After all, you told yourself, you were thinking of moving anyway. You may even have experienced a moment of euphoria - no need to put up with Mr X or use that awful canteen ever again!

When reality takes over ...

You may begin to feel angry, or wake in the early hours of the morning feeling depressed. Those nearest and dearest to you, who had initially been so sympathetic and supportive, are becoming impatient and critical. This in turn makes you feel guilty. And when you fail to land an alternative job, you catch yourself feeling irritable, anxious, useless and afraid of what others think. You begin to realise just what you've lost: the structure of the week, the social circle of colleagues, your status and purpose and your sense of identity. You might well say you feel bereaved.

Hitting rock bottom is the first step to climbing out of the pit

This is the moment for a reality check. You haven't been sacked. It was just they had a problem too: they couldn't pay you! No one had promised you a job for life. Deep down you know you can be resourceful, resilient and adaptable. You've been given an opportunity to redefine what you want to achieve, a chance perhaps to learn new skills or gain wider experience.

Think positively

Don't put yourself down. Identify the things you did well, the tasks you enjoyed, the expertise you gained. Allow yourself to dream about the future. Be kind to yourself - if your first job interview (or even your twenty-first) doesn't bring you the job, learn from the process but don't give up and don't give yourself a hard time. Imagine the whole of the Wembley Stadium cheering YOU!

Check you've got what you need in your tool box

- A good reference from your last employer (or permission to give their name).
- An accurate effective CV, or several CVs to cover a range of situations.
- Sign up with relevant recruitment agencies, check they handle your kind of work.
- Make sure you have the most suitable vacancy websites, papers, magazines or journals.
- Have evidence of your ability ready: depending on your line of work this could be a portfolio, a record of achievement, letters from satisfied customers, a good appraisal.
- Keep up your leisure interests and exercise...they'll keep you both fit and sane!

Put together a new road map

Where would you like to go? Somewhere familiar? Or somewhere new?

- Take a long, calm look at where you are, who you are and where you want to be, and then work out what you'll need to get from A to B. It might be information you need, or training, or access to a good professional network, possibly a change in location.
- Don't turn down an opportunity to volunteer or be an intern. In a competitive field this is a good way to show commitment and to gather inside knowledge.
- Consider new ways of working such as running your own business, turning your leisure activity into employment, becoming a trainer.
- For a while job hunting becomes a job in itself, so make a good plan, keep a record of who you have spoken to, which companies you've applied to and which agencies have your CV.

Your voyage of discovery has started. May the wind be in your sails!

Understand the Redundancy Process

Once an organisation has decided to make redundancies, it must inform you and the agreed notice period must be upheld. The law encourages employers to offer alternative work where possible. Any selection must be made on objective criteria such as length of service and experience, skills and qualifications, and performance records. The post should provide similar earnings and status, be within the employee's capability and not involve unreasonable additional inconvenience. A four week trial is recommended, longer if re-skilling or training is involved and of course equal opportunity must be respected.

If you are not satisfied with redundancy procedures, you can speak to your employer, manager or human resource manager and to your union representative, if you have one. If these measures fail you could consult The Citizen's Advice Bureau:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

For online advice and details of your nearest CAB go to:

www.adviceguide.org.uk

You could also consult the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)
08457 474747

During your notice period you should be allowed time to job search or attend training courses, but your employer need only pay two fifths of your salary for those days.

Get your facts and figures right

If you've worked for this employer for at least 2 years you have the right to receive redundancy pay. Up to £30,000 will be tax free. Exactly how much redundancy pay you are due can be calculated on one of these 'ready reckoner' websites:

www.berr.gov.uk The Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform provides a ready reckoner for calculating pay due to you.

www.binaryincome.com/redundancy

www.businesslink.gov.uk

Other financial considerations might include:

- finding out what benefits you are entitled to
- checking your pension, and making any necessary arrangements

- reducing or changing the terms of any regular financial commitments you have - mortgages, direct debits, credit cards, loans, hire purchase, life and/or health insurance, subscriptions and memberships for example

Do you qualify for benefits? This might either be 'The Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance' for those who have been credited with Class 1 National Insurance (NI) contributions, or the 'Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. The current rate for someone aged 16-24: £47.95, aged 25 and over: £60.50 for couples or those with children. You can claim online at:

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/jcp/Customers/WorkingAgeBenefits or ring 0800 055 6688 (8.00am-6.00pm Monday-Friday)

You may also qualify for Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) or Child Tax Credit

Find out what's going on

It may be some time since you last looked for work so take time to find out about your 'travel-to-work area':

- What businesses have moved in or expanded?
- What new opportunities exist?
- Make sure you know about your own job or career: where is the growth and what are the changes?
- Which new skills should you learn to keep up?
- Read the local paper, or a professional journal or magazine. Make sure you know where the relevant vacancies are advertised.
- Feeling stuck? if you need more education advice send us an email: info@learning-opportunities.org.uk

Getting going with your job search

- you can use the Directgov website to do an online search: www.jobseekersdirect.gov.uk/homepage
- you can phone a JobcentrePlus adviser to discuss your job search: 0845 6060 234
- use all your contacts to identify work possibilities
find appropriate recruitment agencies, this website also gives you help with writing your CV and interview skills. Your CV can then be uploaded to multiple CV banks: www.agencycentral.co.uk

Take time to upgrade your skills

Find your nearest further education college and identify training courses that will give you up to date training in your line of work, or perhaps a new work idea:

www.aosec.org.uk

Other useful Websites:

www.directgov.uk/en/Employment/Redundancy

www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer

Have a look at the helpful advice and Information Sheets on the Learning Opportunities website

www.learning-opportunities.org.uk such as:

Choosing a course, college or university in the South east
Careers Guidance in the South East
Vocational Education in the South East
Work based learning in the South East
Financial help for study - either full or part time

Web pages from Learning Opportunities that you may find helpful are:
Career Matters (including the Open University's "Outsmart the Recession")
Union learning and Careers Advice Line