

Surviving redundancy

A Badenoch & Clark guide

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Redundancy is a fact of working life. Economic downturns, changing markets and corporate reorganisations are all factors that may lead firms to implement redundancy programmes.

For those affected, redundancy can be a rollercoaster of emotions. If you're faced with redundancy, it's important to remember that you are not alone - it's estimated that there will be around 1,600 redundancies per day across the UK in 2009. It is not a slight on your character or a reflection of your relative personal worth; redundancies are now a part of the cycle that today's modern economies go through.

It's important to remember that people survive redundancy and most go on to have rewarding careers, sometimes in entirely different professions. In this guide we look at what you can do to be one of them.

1 Try to remain positive

This might sound difficult if you have just been made redundant but try to remain positive. You're experiencing some major, perhaps unexpected, change so accept that you need to mourn the loss of your job and allow yourself an opportunity to be sad. But don't bury your head in the sand and pretend it hasn't happened either.

One way of remaining positive is to develop an attitude of acceptance. The more you accept all that is going on rather than getting angry or frustrated about it, the more clearly you'll be able to see what you need to do to improve your situation.

Think back to previous major life changing challenging events you've gone through – you survived them one way or another because you are still here today. Imagine yourself 10-20 years from now looking back at the 'redundant you' today. You would undoubtedly tell yourself to stop worrying and that you'll soon be able to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and get back to your career.

2 Consider all of your options

Though it may not seem it at first, redundancy can be a liberating experience if you're adaptable. For many it provides the catalyst,

excuse or space to reassess what they want or where they want to be. According to Badenoch & Clark's Happiness at Work Index, nearly a quarter of UK office workers are unhappy at work at any given time. Do you want to do the same type of job or could this be the push you need to do something different?

Consider what motivates you. When do you get excited about your work, what do you engage with most, what gets you out of bed in the morning? Do you prefer working autonomously or in a team? How much strategic input do you like having? Do you enjoy travelling in your job? A little bit of self-discovery is likely to reveal the recipe for a happy work life moving forward.

It may be that the type of role you've come from ticks all the boxes, in which case you'll want to target comparable roles. It may be that the key to satisfying your core motivations lies elsewhere. Explore every avenue that might give you the work life you'll genuinely thrive in – be it alternative job avenues, different practice areas or even retraining for an entirely new profession. Though it can be a difficult exercise to do without the luxury of a regular pay cheque, it could be well worth the anguish longer term.

3 Take advice

Tap into resources around you to help you shape your future choices. Do you know someone who has recently been made redundant, how did they get through it, what were their key learns? Develop a relationship with reputable recruitment consultants in your market to find out about market conditions, skills that are in demand and details of who's recruiting, to help you plan your job search. Use your networks of friends, family and contacts to further extend the links you have to help you find your next role. Review your finances so you know how long you can afford to be out of work and speak to your financial advisor for ways to reduce your outgoings where necessary.

4 Keep a routine

The new-found freedom of not having to go to work each day can be both exciting and frightening. Tempting as it may be to stay up late at night and bury yourself in the duvet by day, there's a lot to be said for keeping a sense of routine in your life. Keep active, invest in your friendships and not the bottle. Have something to achieve each day, whether it's to do with your future career or not. It's all too easy to become absorbed in the minutiae of daily home life, so whilst it's a good time to factor in some leisure time and some relaxation, setting yourself some goals as soon as possible so that your days have some structure will help you remain positive and keep energy levels high. With glorious hindsight, redundancy will prove to be just the springboard you need to find yourself the best possible job.

5 Enhance your skills

Why not think of your redundancy period as a positive opportunity rather than a negative set back.

Spend the time you have free to developing new skills and experiences. Take that course you never had the time to do while at work and which will make you a more attractive proposition to future employers. Not only will it provide you with that little bit more in the market, it will enable you to keep your mind active and allow you to focus your attentions on positives.

It doesn't even need to be a course or experience linked to the law; why not learn a new language, volunteer at your local animal sanctuary or even learn to surf. All new experiences will add that little more to your CV and make you stand out, and what's more you can have fun while you do it.

6 Sort and maintain your netrep

The chances are that even if you're not a regular blogger or social networker, it'll still be possible to find something about you on the web. And if you're looking for a new job, what's found could make the difference between an offer and a rejection: it's estimated that over a quarter of HR professionals have rejected an applicant on the basis of what appears on the web. Google yourself and see what comes up. With an estimated 60% of employers doing just that, you'll get a feel for what they may learn about you.

Internet reputations ('netreps') are all about perception, which is never more important than when you're trying to create the right one. To build a netrep that works to your advantage, consider what you'd like your name to be connected to, what impression of yourself you want to project. Then spend as much time managing your online reputation as you would on crafting your CV.

Write helpful articles, post insightful reviews or answer someone's burning question. By actively contributing to online forums, social and professional media networks, you can position yourself as an industry authority – and an attractive individual to employ.

7 Be honest with prospective employers

Don't be tempted to try and hide your redundancy from prospective employers. Remember that it was your role that was made redundant and that many prospective employers will have been through some form of redundancy programme themselves. They will understand exactly what that entails.

Remember also that prospective employers will be assessing your suitability for their practice. They will be looking at your skill base, experience and attitude. They are likely to be much less concerned about the financial and business strategy of your former employer.

And don't forget that prospective employers will want to form a judgment about your integrity. Disguising a redundancy may lead some to question your honesty and reliability.

Be open and honest about the fact that your role was made redundant and be prepared to discuss the background to your redundancy. How many roles were involved? What were the criteria for selection?

Above all, do not over personalise things. Don't be tempted to share any views you might have that the redundancy was unfair, biased or some form of personal slight. If you genuinely believe this to be the case, then the time to raise it is with your employer once your role has been selected for redundancy, not at a job interview.

Related guides

Developing your career plan
A Badenoch & Clark guide

Your personal brand: making yourself attractive to employers
A Badenoch & Clark guide

Netreps: managing your online reputation
A Badenoch & Clark guide

Other Badenoch & Clark resources

Workplace studies
Detailed analysis of current trends in employment. See www.badenochandclark.com/for-employers for further details.

www.market-talk.co.uk
A quarterly electronic newsletter for customers of Badenoch & Clark, reporting news and discussing recruitment trends in each of our core sectors.

Connections
Our unique magazine for customers and contacts of Badenoch & Clark, published three times of year. Packed with comment, opinion, news and analysis on recruitment, talent management and broader business issues. See past issues at www.badenochandclark.com

www.happinessatworkindex.co.uk
A quarterly index tracking employee happiness across the UK office workforce. Results by profession and region.

Future guides

Throughout 2010 we will be producing a series of guides focusing on the key areas of attraction, retention and recruitment.

If you would like to get involved in any of these we'd be delighted to hear from you. Contact us at connections@badenochandclark.com

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