



Bringing Life to the Practice of Law

Five Keys to Coping with a Layoff:

1. Your Emotions:

- Let yourself vent, grieve, get angry, depressed etc. (i.e. talk about the experience and purge the negative emotions) for a certain amount of time but limit that amount of time and then move on from "What happened?" to "What's next?"
- Journaling - a journal is a great place to vent and say all those things you would never say out loud
- Remember that we are in unprecedented times, and **you are not alone**
- Be realistic - finding a new position will not likely happen overnight - it could be 6-12 months, especially if you are a transactional attorney
 - Don't panic
 - Practice patience
 - Don't be too picky
- Connect with others for emotional support:
 - Tap into your family and friends for emotional support
 - Join a job transition support group or create one
- If still employed - keep a positive attitude, keep complaints to a minimum and make yourself indispensable at work
- Finding a job is your job now, but it is not your whole life, so be sure it does not become a 24/7 pursuit
- Take care of yourself - exercise, eat right, sleep, etc.
- Do things you enjoy - hobbies, spending time w/ friends/family, getting outside, reconnect with your faith, volunteer, etc.
- Focus on other activities/roles that can help give you a sense of purpose outside of work - (i.e. father, volunteer, soccer coach, friend)
- Learn something new - whether job related or not, learning something new will stimulate your creativity, improve your confidence and bring you pleasure

- Keep a gratitude or joy journal - this will help you become consciously aware of what is going well in your life
- Acknowledge yourself daily for what you have accomplished
- Get counseling if you need it

2. Your Finances:

- If you are still employed - save as much money as possible and pay down debt - develop an emergency fund
- If you are currently unemployed - cut back as quickly as possible and look for creative ways to cut costs
- Either way, analyze expenses and get really clear how much you *need* to live
- File for unemployment - it takes several weeks to receive your first payments
- Get contract work if available - perhaps there is a small company or small law firm that could use your help
- If necessary, get a part-time non-law job to make ends meet - be creative

3. Self-Assessment:

- As one of my former clients said: "A layoff forces your hand. It was too hard for me to quit because quitting carried a \$10,000/month price tag. Now that I have been laid off and have no income, I feel freer to look for jobs in a lower income range."
- Ask yourself some tough questions:
 - Were you happy doing what you did?
 - If you could do anything professionally, what would that be?
 - What are your strengths?
 - What do you like/dislike about work?
 - What are your skills
 - What is most important to you in your life - what are your values?
- Get clear about what you want? Do you want another job just like the one you had? Think outside the box
- Develop a positive internal dialogue - being without a job can easily breed a lot of negative self talk but changing the channel to something positive is important for your emotional well-being and for you to present your best self at an interview

4. Networking:

- Keep up with your current network
- Reconnect with people from the past
- Ask for advice, do informational interviews, ask "Is there someone else whose perspective you think I may benefit from and could you connect us?"
- Attend networking events where potential employers might be (through the bar, corporate counsel groups, etc.)
- Let people know you are looking and ask for connections - be clear about what type of job you seek
- Create and use profiles on social networking sites like LinkedIn and Facebook to increase visibility and connections

5. Your Job Hunt:

- Develop a job hunting routine - be organized and establish a daily schedule with built-in accountability
- Get references from your former firm as soon as possible
- Have a clear story of what happened and why; Be sure that story is consistent with the story your former firm will tell and be prepared to brag on yourself
- Create or update your resume and get it reviewed by an expert - you might need several versions if you are looking for different kinds of jobs
- Order transcripts so you have them handy
- Use online resources to check for job postings
- Talk to recruiters - there are not many jobs out there posted with legal recruiters right now, but recruiters often have some good insights and ideas about job hunting approaches you can take given your background and experience
- Be flexible - in today's tough market, you may not get your dream job, so be as flexible as you can regarding compensation and role
- Follow up - it is important not to just send out resumes and sit back and wait - a telephone call following up is key
- Get creative:

- Change your focus
 - if you have business development experience, focus on it - firms care about this now more than ever
 - if you are a less experienced associate, recast your more limited background so it better suits today's market - emphasize skills that have potential to meet demands of growing practice areas (like bankruptcy or employment); similarly you can add your summer associate experience to your resume if it is on point
- Get additional training/stay sharp - this can help you stand out and feel more confident as you move toward your next job; keep up w/ technology and trends and keep working if at all possible, even if you are only doing pro bono work
- Stay informed - know the market and latest trends (but don't become obsessive about it)

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