

Survived a lay-off? Don't get too comfortable

Written by Julie Desmond
Friday, 20 February 2009 16:29

Rod relocated with his family for a position he thought was a sure thing. Six months later, the only thing he knows for sure is that his job is safe for the next few months, but fifty of his co-workers have been let go, into a town where he has no connections, in an industry that's going, in his words, "the way of the dinosaur." Rod knows he's lucky to have a job. But when the fickle finger of fate turns toward him, he wants to be ready. Brainstorming with Rod provided a wealth of ideas which might benefit others in his situation.

Having just moved, Rod can't see asking his wife and teenage son to relocate again very soon. She found a good job, and their son has adapted well to a new school and sports teams. So Rod's opportunities are limited to the area where they live now. Essentially, he has no connections here outside his current employer, which will make it tough to find something new. Rod has to start connecting with people now, both within and outside of his current industry.

The first, easiest tools to fire up are going to be LinkedIn and any professional associations that cater to his niche industry. Because he sees major changes in this line of business, he should also look at professional groups that are peripheral to it: vendors, for example, who service both his industry and others.

Next, he should take advantage of connections his wife and son are making as they adapt to the new community. Schools offer social events and volunteer opportunities that present the dual benefits of encouraging networking and letting Rod stay involved with his son. Nothing to lose; much to gain.

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Rod doesn't have an advanced degree. He is looking at classes offered by the community colleges and universities in his area. Taking a few classes or achieving a degree or certificate will benefit his current employer, and make looking for that next job somewhat easier. He should consider classes in areas that parallel his industry, in order to help him transition smoothly into a different type of position. And he should ask his employer to reimburse him for educational expenses, even though times are tough.

Having a job means Rod can start positioning himself for his next search right now. Importantly, he needs to become visible. He should work with his employer to start a blog or podcast which would, again, bring value to his employer and visibility to himself as an individual. Some people contribute comments or articles to trade magazines, and some make a point to attend conferences and classes sponsored by industry professional groups. Offering to speak at a conference or chairing a committee brings far more recognition and better connections than simply attending the event. This may be outside Rod's comfort zone, but this is no time to get comfortable.

National networking groups, including BNI International, have chapters in most large cities. Attending a meeting like this once a week when you are employed might seem like a hassle. However, consider, again, the value your networking can bring to your current employer. The benefit to you personally, of course, goes far beyond that.

Keeping an ear to the ground may sound uncomfortable, but it is the best way to find out about something new while you're still working. Rod is not actively looking for work right now, but if the past is any indicator of the future, he might want to keep his options open.

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