

Redundancy – Disaster or Opportunity?

by Anne Henderson

It's Monday morning. You have been asked to cancel your meetings and make sure you are available to meet your Head of Department to discuss a "special project". You get called to the meeting and before you know it a Compromise Agreement has been thrust into your hands, you are stripped of your staff ID, blackberry and mobile and you have been unceremoniously escorted off the premises. You have just been made redundant.

So, what happens now? Is this a *disaster* or an *opportunity*?

Be an early bird

If rumours of redundancy are flying around start preparing yourself.

- Take time to *reflect* on your current job and *evaluate* what you like and dislike. Do you love your work or have you wandered into your career because it is what you feel you *should* be doing?
- Are you feeling ready to *change direction*? One of the biggest obstacles to changing career is the perceived risk of giving up a secure job, salary and pension. Redundancy takes this decision out of your hands and presents you with a massive opportunity to get out there and do something different. We spend so much time at work, *why not find work that really interests and excites you*?
- Take control of your *finances*. Work out what your monthly spend is and how much of your spending goes on non-essential items. Try cutting back on your spending and put some cash aside so that if you are made redundant, you have a cash cushion to cover essential bills. Taking control of your finances will give you some breathing space and help reduce stress.

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- Make sure you *know your rights*. Review your employment contract and get a copy of your company's redundancy policy. Swot up on your statutory rights by visiting websites such as www.acas.org.uk.
- *Revisit your CV*. If you are planning to stay on the same career path make sure that your CV is bang up-to-date. Get copies of your performance reviews. This will help you to identify your key achievements.
If you are planning to change career, identify your transferable skills and adapt your CV to fit your new direction.

Don't be shy!

If you find yourself in the position of being made redundant don't be afraid to challenge the process and make sure that it has been followed correctly.

If you are offered a Compromise Agreement, assess whether you are being offered sufficient compensation for heading off into the sunset quietly. Don't be shy in negotiating the best possible settlement and get legal advice - this is required for the Agreement to be valid.

Ride the rollercoaster

- Shock, denial, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety, confusion, depression, lethargy, acceptance, euphoria - these are some of the emotions that you are likely to experience if you are made redundant. Make sure that you are prepared to ride the emotional rollercoaster by *surrounding yourself with supportive friends and family*.
- *Set yourself goals*. Keep busy and try to get something in your diary each day whether that is grabbing a coffee with friends, going out for a run or heading to the cinema.

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- Try not to take it personally. Remember that it was *your role* that was made redundant, not you.

Move forward with an open mind

You can either fight and resist change or work with it. To move forward you need to accept the situation and *take responsibility* for the future direction of your career. Redundancy can then be turned into an *opportunity*.

So, what are you going to do next?

If you have decided that you are happy with your current choice of career, assess the market. Who is recruiting? Where are the opportunities? Are you prepared to change location? *Be flexible, open minded and persistent*. Get in touch with recruitment contacts, review online job boards and be speculative - 80% of jobs are never advertised.

For many people redundancy presents an opportunity to *take stock and change direction*. Grab this opportunity with both hands. Redundancy payments can be used to retrain for a new career or start your own business. Be aware of your unique strengths, skills, interests and passions together with what is happening in the environment around you. What are the growth areas that offer you exciting opportunities?

If you *take control and responsibility* for your career, redundancy might be *the best thing that has ever happened to you!*

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