



Jobs Homes Cars Classifieds Shopping

! Help

for employers

Home Career Center Education Featured Employers Contest & Events My ajcjobs

Sign up | Login | Post Jobs | Search Resumes

Salary Center | Career Fair Calendar | Career Tools | Events | Blogbreak | Women@Work | Diversity | Pulse

Find the job you *really* want - with the best in job search technology - [Learn more.](#)

Better safe than sorry

Comfortable in your job? It's still smart to be prepared for anything.

Published on: 04/20/07

By Laura Raines

For ajcjobs

If you're sitting in your dream job, working for your target company, you have every right to feel proud of yourself. Just don't relax!

"When things are going well and people are feeling comfortable in their jobs, they tend to get complacent," said Chris Thomas, president of HRforMe, an Atlanta consulting, training and transition-assistance firm for individuals and small to midsize businesses.



LEITA COWART/Special

Len Rothman is an Atlanta-based business, leadership and diversity coach. He says that it's a good idea to take stock of your transferable skills while you have a job, in case you face an unexpected job search.

You only have to read the front page of the business section to be reminded that "stable" is a term rarely applied to today's job market.

"The landscape can change in the blink of an eye. Mergers, bankruptcies and layoffs happen all the time. It could even be something as simple as your boss gets promoted and the chemistry isn't right with the new boss," Thomas said. "You should always be prepared for a sudden job change or loss."

Here's how:

Keep your résumé updated

"Not having a résumé ready to go at a moment's notice is the biggest stumbling block for most people who need to get into the job market unexpectedly," Thomas said. "After a job loss — when you have plenty of other things on your mind — is not the time to think creatively about what you've done in the past. The writing will go much easier if you keep a list of your accomplishments as you go along."

People change jobs and duties frequently, even if they stay with the same company.

"You may leave a job on Friday and start the next on Monday. Just before you make that transition, take time to write down what you did in the last job or project. Write a brief summary of the job as it might appear on a résumé," said Jackie Sherman, president of the Jackie Sherman Group, an

organizational development and change consulting firm. "Once you're involved in the new job, memory of the old fades."

To create the best résumé, also think beyond job descriptions and accomplishments to transferable skills, said Len Rothman, an Atlanta-based business, leadership and diversity coach with ActionCOACH, an international coaching firm. "Step back and think about what you have learned in the last six months about leadership, management, team-building, etc., that would be useful for your next job," he said.

"There are résumé-writing services that can ask the right questions about your background and help you phrase your experience so that it gets attention. Engage someone to help, if you need it," Sherman said.

Create a career portfolio

Portfolios aren't just for artists and advertising account managers anymore. More professionals are creating physical or virtual records of their accomplishments as a way to market themselves.

"People should think about their own personal brand that reflects your unique selling proposition," Rothman said.

For example, Rothman said the fact that he has worked for Fortune 500 companies and has counseled many small businesses owned by women and minorities is a coaching strength that allows him to see issues from the points of view of both big and small businesses.

A portfolio is a way to tell your career story and emphasize the best chapters. What should you include? Letters of recommendation, awards, client letters, testimonials and copies of work of which you're proud — maybe a flier about the company blood drive you headed, with a note that the 75 percent employee participation was the highest ever

"You may be very happy with your job but get tapped to apply for an internal promotion. Wouldn't it be great to have a complimentary letter from the CFO at your fingertips?" Thomas asked.



LEITA COWART/Special

"Whether I'm new in a job or looking, I always read the job ads in my profession. It's easy to do with today's Internet job boards [and professional organizations' Web sites], and it tells me about changes and new opportunities. You always want to keep your eye on the markets."

JACKIE SHERMAN

President, the Jackie Sherman Group

People always need to be able to talk about their value.

"The person who never speaks about his skills and capabilities never gets the promotion," Sherman said. "Don't confuse articulating your skills with bragging."

"If you're the type of person who finds it difficult to claim your successes, bounce ideas off a trusted friend or colleague who can help you say something better."

A career portfolio is also a useful tool for annual reviews. It will remind you of what fires you put out, what extra duties you've taken on and how your project saved the company money — all of which could translate into a raise or promotion.

Maintain your professional network

"We all need to be connectors of people through networking or netweaving," which is introducing your acquaintances to each other, with the expectation that it will benefit them both, Rothman said.

Having an active business network also gives you others to turn to when you need advice about a business project, software issue or management problem, Thomas said.

"When you have good relationships with people and you aren't asking them for anything, it's like an investment," Sherman said. "It makes it easier to ask for help when you need it."

Stay involved with professional organizations

"There are local chapters of national organizations for almost every industry in Atlanta," Thomas said. "They are a great place for job-searchers to make career contacts and learn about opportunities, but happily employed people get busy and often drop the ball on organizational membership."

Don't. For one thing, the organization will help you stay current with trends in your field — you may be among the first in your company to predict that merger or department relocation overseas. You even might make a suggestion that would help your current employer.

"When you're involved and serve as an officer in your professional organization, people in your company and others will see you as a sharp, committed person — as someone who is professional and reliable," Thomas said. That's the kind of person companies want to keep or hire.

For similar reasons, it pays to read trade journals in your field.

"Whether I'm new in a job or looking, I always read the job ads in my profession," Sherman said. "It's easy to do with today's Internet job boards [and professional organizations' Web sites], and it tells me about changes and new opportunities. You always want to keep your eye on the markets."

Continue to develop yourself

"People often rely on their companies to train them, but there may be no training budget, and we all need to take responsibility for maintaining our skills and developing our careers," Sherman said. "We should all have something that we're interested in learning, and there are plenty of continuing education and online courses that are accessible and affordable."

New skills, certifications or degrees can lead to advancement or a new direction in your career.

"That's how I got into diversity training," Rothman said. "I was interested in the subject and began reading and participating in multiculturalism retreats. When I left corporate America, diversity became one of my coaching specialties."

Volunteer

"Volunteering is a great way to move outside your normal work experience, stretch yourself and meet a different set of people either within or outside of your organization," Rothman said.

Working with a group of peers and upper-level managers from your own company at a Hands on Atlanta or United Way event will teach you more about your co-workers and yourself. It will build your self-confidence and your résumé.

If you're the type who resists change, volunteer to be on the committee that implements the new software system or the fact-finding mission to explore the market in India.

"Volunteering is one way to work on your weaknesses and round out your background," Thomas said. "An accountant who wants to learn more about financial analysis so he can advance should ask to be put on the internal committees that will expose him to that kind of activity."

Save for the future

"Many Americans with really good salaries spend it all every month," Sherman said. "Everyone should have about six months' living expenses saved. If they don't have it liquid, then they should have assets that they can access easily or borrow against, if need be."

If workers put a small part of every paycheck in savings, it builds, she added.

"If you get a salary increase, don't allocate it all. After all, you weren't using it before. You can treat yourself, but

save something, too," she said.

Having a financial cushion greatly decreases the stress of a sudden job loss and can prevent you from taking the wrong job simply because you need the money.

You may never have to leave that dream job, but if it should happen, being proactive about career planning will make it easier to find the next one.

© 2007 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution | [Customer Care](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Visitor Agreement](#)

