

Surviving Redundancy - where to begin.

Losing your job can be devastating, but there are ways to soften the blow. Taking the following steps should help ease the journey to finding your next role.

- Be realistic - recognise that redundancy is one of the most stressful life events that people encounter. Losing your job changes the rhythm of your daily life – your financial security is threatened, your regular daily structure is radically changed, and for the first time in years you may suddenly have a lot of time on your hands.
- Don't take redundancy personally; it is not a reflection of your abilities. The current economic situation means thousands of companies are reducing their headcount in order to stay afloat. You shouldn't let redundancy deliver a fatal blow to your confidence and aspirations by allowing it to drain your self-belief. Stay focused on who you are, and where you are going professionally, and new opportunities will follow.
- Put together a plan of action to give your job search structure. Stress stems from feeling out of control in your environment. Being pro-active in your job search will help you to keep calm and to remain positive about the future.

Creating a high impact CV

In the present market place, you need to be able to sell yourself. Investing time in creating strong Curriculum Vitae is vital.

Basic guidelines in creating a high impact CV:

When creating a CV, not only are you giving an historical account of your career and education to date, you are also directing the focus of the reader to your strongest qualities and deflecting attention from potential weaknesses. CVs should be presented in reverse chronological order. Most recent positions should appear first and should be presented in more detail. Conversely, positions held in formative years should be given less space. Achievement driven CVs engage employers more readily. They also provide a strong opportunity to readily match your skill set to qualities sought by employers. CVs should ideally not exceed 2 pages.

For further information on CV layout including sample templates access Recruit Ireland www.recruitireland.com/careercentre/cvtemplates/ under the section "Interview Techniques".

Contacting Recruitment Agencies

Recruitment Agencies are an essential part in your career search. Whilst some employers are now advertising directly for staff, the majority of companies still use recruitment agencies as part of their recruitment process.

Agencies should be viewed as the initial stage in the interview process. In your introduction meeting with them, ensure that you clearly sell yourself and highlight your skills and attributes. Bear in mind that recruitment agents, will be assessing your interview performance. Impress them and there is a stronger chance that you will be selected for shortlists.

Keep in contact with your agent – you need to keep them up to date on your availability and any changes in your requirements e.g. if your location criteria has changed, if you are willing to consider a lower salary etc. The more flexible you are in your approach, the greater the number of roles that will

be run by you. You should give strong consideration to contract roles. Because of head count freezes and market uncertainty, many employers are now looking to appoint staff on a contract to permanent basis. In addition, contract roles could provide you with an excellent route to acquiring new skills e.g. gaining experience of a new software system.

Ask the experts:

Recruitment consultants are experts in their field. By developing a relationship with your agent you will be able to benefit from their knowledge. Ask for advice on CV presentation, get detailed information on the interview panel and company background before you attend interview. (The agency may have worked closely with this client in the past and be able to guide you on interview format and questions that will be asked). Ensure you get detailed interview feedback – this will enable you to continuously improve your performance.

Newspapers and Using the Internet

Ensure that you regularly review the recruitment sections in the newspapers (e.g. Friday edition of the Irish Times and the Thursday edition of the Independent). Small lineage adverts should not be ignored; these can often reap strong dividends as they can be overlooked by many job applicants. Local newspapers can also bear fruit.

Many employers and recruitment agents now advertise their jobs on line – visit the major websites on a regular basis (Recruit Ireland, Irish Jobs, Loadajobs, Monster etc). Set up job alerts to ensure that you are kept abreast of relevant new roles that are advertised on the sites.

Set up a spreadsheet to monitor your job application activity. You need to keep track of where you have sent your CV, date sent, whether it was a direct application or through an agency etc.

Networking

Job seekers need to be pro-active when approaching the job market. Simply relying on responding to advertisements, will limit your progress. Start networking! Let old colleagues and friends know that you are actively looking for a new position. Why not call your old boss and arrange to go out for lunch with them? They already know you and what you can do so are in an excellent position to help you. Even if they cannot directly help you, they may know of somebody else who can. Network through your university alumni – once people know that you are job-hunting and that you have been organised enough to get in touch, they are more likely to let you know if they hear about a suitable vacancy.

During your career to date, you will have undoubtedly made at least a few contacts that might be of use in a situation like this. Don't be afraid to speak to them, and any friends and family who might be able to offer something constructive to your future plans

LinkedIn also has specific sections for getting work and finding job opportunities. Your connections can recommend you for posts and let you know about jobs coming up.

What to do with your free time?

Looking for a new job should be seen as a job in itself. Structure your days. Set yourself targets and timelines (e.g. how many CVs you will send out daily, how many networking lunches/coffees you will arrange etc). Perhaps this is the time to up-skill.....do an advanced Excel course, consider doing a course in International Financial Reporting Standards.

Make sure you build in some down time and give yourself something to look forward to at the end of the week. Spending all day, every day job-hunting will quickly become self-defeating. If you have always wanted to do some volunteer work, or take up Spanish classes.....perhaps this is the time to do it. Manage your time carefully.

Get Interview Ready

When you have been invited to attend interview – make sure you are fighting fit and ready to give a strong performance. Interviews *can* be prepared for. There are common questions you can practice in advance to give you an edge over your competitors.

It is worth noting that *how* you say something is just as important as *what* you say – you will be judged on your communication skills as much as your technical ability. The way you enter a room. The way you shake hands. The way you sit. Your tone of voice. The way you engage...all of these things say something about you.

To prepare yourself effectively and give yourself the best possible chance of securing a job offer, do a mock interview with a friend or a professional interview coach. Doing a trial run with a professional will ensure that any weakness in your interview performance is identified and corrected. Through practice, you will quickly build confidence and will significantly enhance your chance of success.

At Interview Techniques we provide such a service. We select the most likely questions to be asked at interview. We record the interview, then play it back and critically assess your performance. We highlight what you do well and work with you to accentuate this. We also identify areas for improvement and give you the opportunity to practice difficult interview questions.

There is plenty of material on the internet on how to prepare for interviews. For detailed advice, articles and examples of common interview questions asked look at our website www.interviewtechniques.ie

Conclusion

During your job search, it is important to maintain perspective and not be impacted by the negativity in the media. Remember, unemployment rates for accountants have historically been lower than the national average. Accountants are needed whatever the economic climate – invoices need to be issued, annual accounts must be published, tax returns need to be submitted and financial experts are essential in maintaining successful relationships with banks.

By remaining positive and having a well defined action plan, your search for a new role will soon bear fruit.

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of [Interview Techniques](http://www.interviewtechniques.ie), a consultancy which specialises in interview preparation and coaching. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment, with a particular emphasis on the financial and accounting sectors. Laura is a regular contributor with *Recruit Ireland*, *Irish Jobs* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

For further information or to access articles on interview techniques, please access the website

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