



Here is an exercise to help you define your career goals:

### Define Your Skills

Everyone brings different skills to the workplace. List the 10 skills you enjoy using most at work.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

### Clarify Your Values

We all have personal values that determine the kind of work we choose. List the five occupational values that mean the most to you. Your values may include: variety, creativity, challenge, travel or security.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Develop a Career Action Plan

Change is a fact of life in the workplace. The best insurance you can have is trust in yourself, knowledge of your talents and the ability to tackle new situations with a positive attitude.

### Make a Plan

- Do you know where your career is headed?
- Do you know where you want to be in your professional life one year from now? In five years?
- Do you have plans to get there?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, you may benefit from developing a career action plan. A career action plan is a picture of how and where you want to work. In it, you define your career goals and map ways to meet them.

### Define Your Career Goals

Career goals are different for everyone. Yours may include:

- reaching a certain job level.
- having greater responsibility.
- learning a new job skill.

### Develop a Leadership Attitude

- Learn how to learn.
- Develop new technical and social skills.
- Associate with people who are learning new things.
- Challenge yourself to act in new ways.
- Learn to act before you have all the information.
- Develop new competencies.
- Be flexible.

### Take Action

Once your career goals are defined, start putting them in action. Write down the steps needed to achieve them in the next year. As you determine your career action steps, define them in specific terms and set deadlines for taking action.

### Evaluate Your Present Position

Does your current job utilize your talents and support your professional values? Is there opportunity for growth in your present position?

### Make Plans for Future Growth

Assuming your current occupation is a good fit, where would you like to be five years from now? How can you learn about other positions that will use your talents and fit your values?

## Overcoming the Negatives Associated with Job Loss

There are a number of negatives that accompany the loss of a job. It is important to address each problem to minimize its effect.

**Insecurity:** When your life suddenly changes due to circumstances beyond your control, you may feel insecure. However, if you can focus on a specific goal and immerse yourself in a program to reach that goal, you will quickly regain a feeling of control.

**The False Stigma of Unemployment:** Our society has traditionally defined people by their work, so people who lost their jobs were made to feel incomplete. However, the old concept that joblessness indicates incompetence just isn't valid anymore. Tell everyone you know that you are actively looking for a new situation. Leads come from other people, and often from the most unlikely sources.

**Feeling of Failure:** When we set our sights on specific goals and work toward them, just to be told they are unattainable, we can't help feeling a sense of failure. However, there are many ways to reach a goal. A well-managed job search will get you



back on track in short order.

**Financial Concerns:** Anxiety about money and the fundamental necessities of life can be alleviated by a thorough review of your finances.

While unemployed, avoid unnecessary major purchases or expenses. Avoid adding to your credit card or loan debts. Pay your bills in a timely fashion. If that is not possible, contact your creditors to work out a payment plan.

Have a full understanding of what you are entitled to from your old company including: severance pay, health care premiums, unused vacation pay, profit sharing, and pension funds. Also check with your local unemployment office to

determine what benefits are due you as soon as possible. There is a time limit to such payments, and they cannot be made retroactively.

**Fear of Creating Stress in the Family:** You may be reluctant to tell people you are out of work, but concealing the truth to avoid worrying your loved ones will add to your stress. The sensible course of action is to explain the situation in full.

**Age:** Many people over 50 feel they have a built-in disability when entering the job market, but many employers realize older workers have much to offer.

**Time Pressures:** Conducting your job search with a sense of panic may cause you to make poor decisions. An organized effort may take longer to get going, but the results will be far more satisfactory.

**Lack of a Specific Goal:** By having a specific goal, you will avoid becoming undirected, unsuccessful and frustrated. You can change your strategies and tactics as needed, but in general, everything you do should be geared toward reaching a specific objective.

## Five Behavioral Stages Associated with Job Loss

All of these stages are normal and need not be suppressed. However, the sooner you can get to the acceptance stage, the better off you will be. Only then will you be able to get your act together and begin projecting the positive image and optimistic attitude that is necessary for success.

1. Disbelief and Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Grief and Depression
5. Acceptance

Your ability to rebound from this traumatic experience, or any similar situation, will depend a good deal on the degree to which your life is in balance. For most of us, there are four major areas that make up the "life experience."

These four areas are:

1. Spirituality or Faith, or Value System, or Conscience
2. Family
3. Community
4. Work

If you have strength in all four areas, the disruption of one is less detrimental to your well-being.



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