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Pink Slip Pointers: Top 10 Tips for Surviving Layoffs

Being downsized, dismissed, laid off or let go is always shocking. In times like these, workers need all the support they can get. BONNEY is here to help, with a compilation of ten tried-and-true tips for getting back on your feet in an unsteady economy.

- **Resources:** Tapping into your resources should be your first priority. Ask what benefits terminated employees are eligible for. Ask about severance pay, accrued vacation and sick days, pension benefits, and your eligibility for unemployment insurance. Are you eligible for continuation of health and life insurance benefits? Note that by law, your employer, if the firm has over 20 employees, is required to offer health insurance coverage for terminated employees through COBRA at your expense. Request a reference letter for your file—do what you need to do to make your upcoming job search easier. Call your state's unemployment office as soon as you can to determine if you are eligible for those benefits. You may be eligible for other government benefits as well, and it's important to avoid letting pride get in the way of taking care of business. You are not alone in your circumstances!
- **Regroup:** Being laid off is unsettling, and you're likely experiencing a whirlwind of emotions. Fear, shock, anger, and hurt are all natural responses, and it's okay to acknowledge these feelings. However, do not let yourself get stuck in your feelings—rather, take this experience and use it as fuel. Regroup and refocus. Think about your future and your short- and long-term goals.
- **Review:** Where are you at financially? You may need to re-work your budget so that you can pay for your home, food, and bills. You may have to go "back to basics," but don't get discouraged. Figure out where you need to tighten up your spending. Are you getting \$5 lattes every day? Going out for breakfast and lunch? Does your cable package or cell phone plan *really* need all the bells and whistles right now? Be realistic and sensible with your money—all of us should be following this advice anyway!
- **Brainstorm:** This is a time to create a to-do list, writing down all the steps you'll need to take to mobilize your resources and be proactive in your job hunt. Brainstorm your options—does your alma mater offer career counseling services? Are there any job fairs in the area? What can you do with your major or vocational skills? Come up with a list of worst-case scenarios *now* so you have a plan to fall back on in the event that your unemployment benefits run out before you find work.
- **Networking:** Who do you know? Tap into your network of colleagues, classmates, clients, and other professionals. If you don't have a profile on the networking website LinkedIn, this would be a great time to join. This site is a valuable tool and a place where you can upload your work experience and instantly connect with other professionals in your industry.

- **Skills:** What skills and talents have you used in previous positions? Make a list of skills that could serve you well in other positions and consider a wide variety of options. Don't forget to think about your "fun" activities—perhaps you could channel your love for photography into a position at a camera manufacturing company.
- **Presentation:** Immediately update and upgrade your resume! Your resume must clearly represent you at your very best, and a strong resume (or on the flipside, a sloppy resume) can make a world of difference in the hiring process.
- **Search:** Scour the internet, follow every lead, explore staffing agencies, look within your contacts, send out your resume, meet with a recruiter, read the newspaper, research opportunities, and *interview, interview, interview!*
- **Be Patient:** It's likely been a while since you'd had to go through the process of finding a job, so the waiting game can be difficult. Know that the interviewing and hiring process is not an overnight job. Even if you feel confident about a position, keep sending out your resume and going on interviews—you might even find a better gig!
- **Be Positive:** Many employees have turned a layoff into a positive experience. A forced departure from your job can lead to a new, more satisfying, and well-compensated career that you might not have considered before. Remember, a small percent of what happens in your life is bound to happen—the rest is determined by how you respond to it!