

Baltimore

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BEST PLACES TO WORK

(and they're all hiring!)



25 BEST PLACES TO WORK →

HOW TO BE LAYOFF PROOF (ALMOST)



When it comes to protecting yourself against layoffs, there's good news and there's bad news. We'll start with the bad. "I don't think there's any surefire way of making yourself layoff proof," says recruiter Chuck Sudina, president of Timonium-based Sudina Search. "There are going to be a lot of things that are just beyond your control." Now for the good news: There's plenty you can do to help ensure that when it comes time to hand out the pink slips, you're not at the top of the list. Ultimately it all boils down to "making yourself as marketable as you can be," he says. Some tips on just how to do that:

BE VISIBLE: "This is probably not the time to go on an extended vacation and not be around," says Jodi Hume, an executive coach with The Business of Life. Instead, you want to make a concerted effort to show your value to your employer and even to those outside your company or field. "Being known as an expert in your field is gold," says Hume. Volunteer to speak at industry meetings or to use your business skills in the community. The more you can make your skills visible to others, the more opportunities you'll have.

MAKE MONEY, OR SAVE MONEY: In a recession, employers focus on jobs and people who either bring in more revenue or have skills that can save them money. Even if your job doesn't directly involve bringing in money or saving money, you can help by "thinking about your job as if it were your business," says Hume. "Really take ownership and make yourself totally invaluable."

MAKE, AND KEEP, CONNECTIONS: You might only seriously consider attending those trade association happy hours when you're in a job hunt, but networking "is something people should be doing all the time," says Hume. And don't forget to network with the people who know the job market best: recruiters. "It makes sense to have a relationship with a recruiter," says Sudina. That means that throughout your career when recruiters call, you should be friendly and helpful, even if you're not looking to switch jobs. When you do move, reconnect with recruiters, past employees, and colleagues to let them know where you've landed. It can be as simple as sending a quick e-mail to update them.

UPGRADE YOUR SKILL SET: "If you're close to a college degree, get your degree. If you need certain certifications in a given field, do everything you possibly can to get them," says Sudina. You might also consider picking up skills in areas of job growth: Right now, jobs in healthcare, IT, engineering, and sales are still relatively hot.

MOVE CAREFULLY: For most people, job-hopping isn't going to be very tempting in today's climate. In fact, in one recent survey by Accenture Ltd., only 13 percent of respondents said they were actively looking for a job, down from 30 percent in 2005. That's because the recession makes people think twice about leaving a sure thing, no matter how imperfect it may be. But that doesn't mean you should stay put under any circumstances. First, carefully investigate your prospective new employer for financial stability. And consult with the experts, says Sudina. "Call a search firm and say you're considering making a move," he suggests. "A good recruiter is going to tell you to stay put or point out 3 or 4 or 5 good options that may be available to you."