

The Best Career Strategies of 2009



How to Get Hired or Get Ahead, Even When the Economy is Getting Worse

Compiled by Bonnie Lowe
www.BestCareerStrategies.com

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My heartfelt thanks to all contributors who provided their most valuable career strategies for this report, despite their hectic schedules!

I was overwhelmed by their generous contributions, and have no doubt that lives will be changed as a result.

~ Bonnie Lowe

Table of Contents

Contributing Authors	4
Introduction	5
Strategies	7
Get very, very clear on the type of work you truly want.	9
Use networking.	10
Take a multi-pronged approach.	11
Be the CEO of You, Inc.	13
Give your career a tune-up.	14
Project a powerful image.	16
Build your personal brand.	17
Use the power of video.	19
Improvise.	20
Be a successful entrepreneur.	21
Create a vibrant LinkedIn profile.	24
Network with everyone.	25
Use Twitter to propel your career.	27
Avoid the individual approach.	31
Claim ownership of your career.	34
Follow 8 powerful principles.	35
Develop survival skills.	39
Run your job like a business.	42
Take responsibility for your own career.	44
Use career branding.	46
Get mental.	48
Lower your layoff risk.	52
Strategize your strategy.	56
Create a career portfolio	60
See yourself in 3 dimensions	65
Use New Job-Searching Paradigms for 2009.	67
Use the Force	69
Conclusion	71
Resources	74

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Introduction

If you're not out of work right now, the odds are you soon will be.

More than 2 million people in the United States lost their jobs in 2008. Most of them thought their companies were secure; their jobs safe. The idea of getting fired never occurred to them.

Despite government bailouts and economic stimulus packages, layoffs will continue and unemployment will rise dramatically during the next 12-24 months. Hundreds of thousands of workers will lose their jobs in the next month alone.

During the past two years, many people who thought their retirement accounts were sufficient and secure saw their investments wiped out. If they hadn't yet retired, their plans to do so were put on indefinite hold. If they had retired, they began looking for work.

There is enormous competition for far fewer job openings.

Finding a new job has never been easy. In today's economy, it may seem damn near impossible.

If you are fortunate enough to have a job right now, your chances of losing it have never been greater. Your chances of getting a raise or promotion have never been lower.

As we enter 2009, the only thing you can really be sure of is this: the employment game has drastically changed.

But don't give up hope. The fact that you are reading this shows you are doing more than most of your competitors. Instead of moping around feeling miserable, you are proactively searching for ways to improve your odds of getting hired or getting ahead.

It's still possible.

As a matter of fact, there's never been a better time to excel... if you master the strategies that will propel your career forward—while others are left far behind, wondering what the heck happened.

I recently asked top career experts this question:

“What do you feel is the single most important career strategy people should use in 2009?”

Their answers are on the following pages. I think you'll be surprised. Not only by what they said, but by what they didn't say.

A few short years ago, advice from career experts would've included: get a degree, improve your resume, be well-prepared for job interviews, find a mentor, seek more responsibility, keep your nose clean, and ask for a raise. While there's nothing wrong with any of those suggestions, they are simply no longer sufficient to help you obtain all of your career goals.

The employment game has changed. New strategies are required. Many of those new strategies are explained in this report.

The normal job seeker/worker doesn't have a clue about the career strategies you're about to learn.

Aren't you glad you're not normal?

But you have to do more than just read this report. You have to apply what you learn. You have to put sweat equity into your career. You can't expect anyone to give you a job, a promotion, or anything else you don't earn.

The truth is, most people who read the strategies in this report will think about them, and do nothing more.

Most people never take the necessary action to make their dreams come true.

Please don't be "most people." Learn and apply the career strategies in this report.

If you do, you may be among the few people who will be able look back next year and say...

"Wow... 2009 was a fantastic year for me!"

Now get busy learning and using the best career strategies for 2009 so you can get hired and get ahead!

Strategies

On the following pages are the responses from top career experts who answered this question:

“What do you feel is the single most important career strategy people should use in 2009?”

The strategies are not prioritized or sorted in any way, but are presented in the order in which I received them. Some are short. Some are long.

All are incredibly valuable.

Don't limit yourself.

Don't limit yourself – to a specific geography, niche or company size.

Many of my readers ask me about how they can work at Goldman Sachs in New York, advising on the largest and most prestigious merger-and-acquisition deals in the industry. It doesn't matter if they've had no finance experience or lack credentials – they set their sights for the stars.

While it's good to shoot for the stars, in a down market it is very, very tough to work at the most prestigious company in the financial world. And that applies even if you have spectacular work experience and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

So in 2009, you should do what all smart investors do with their portfolios: diversify. **Even if you've been laser-focused on a specific industry, geography or company size, go outside your comfort zone and consider other options.**

If you've only been focused on opportunities in New York, consider all those other major cities; if you've only been thinking about the US or whatever country you live in, expand your horizons. While Europe has suffered economically lately, the AsiaPac market is still in decent shape – and you could argue that some markets, such as the Middle East, are still "hot" despite the downturn.

If you've only been thinking about investment banking, what about financial consulting, private equity, or trading? If you've only been thinking about engineering, what about product design or testing?

It's admirable to aim for the top, but when the economy goes downhill you should always expand your horizons and think about other possibilities. Not only will you stay employed, you may actually be better positioned to achieve your long-term goals.

Contributed by a former Mergers & Acquisitions investment banker who created www.MergersAndInquisitions.com and wishes to remain anonymous. His mission is to tell people what working in the industry is really like and how to get there in the first place (while preserving their sanity, of course). In addition to the 100+ articles on the site, he also offers mock interview and resume editing services to job-seekers in the financial services industry.

Get very, very clear on the type of work you truly want.

The job market doesn't tolerate lack of clarity—especially in difficult times.

Start now to build personal and professional relationships with people who might help your career now or down the road—or pay closer attention to maintaining those relationships if they already exist.

Participate in professional organizations in your discipline, and commit to regular reading of trade publications and other literature to not merely stay current, but to cultivate a long-term perspective on your area of interest.

Recognize that the decisions you make today, and the actions that derive from those decisions, will have ramifications in the short and longer term—so act strategically.

Finally, spending even a small amount of time every day (15 minutes) in pursuing the aforementioned tasks is essential. The more time you spend, the better. (I recommend a daily practice where you reflect on your life and work, and even take some of these steps.)

*Contributed by **Mitchell Friedman**, Career Coach at The Job Forum of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce; Director, MBA Career Services at University of San Francisco.*

Use networking.

It's simple, yet challenging. The key to career development, career exploration and change, and job search, is networking. Networking is about connecting with others, building reciprocal relationships, and sharing information, advice and connections. It is not asking for a job and sending a resume. It is "who you know".

When people are networking, they learn, they connect, and they hear of opportunities that are not made public. When they are job searching, they do not make meaningful connections. Many, if not most, opportunities are hidden – they are not advertised or posted. They may not even be open.

I network as a recruiter and as a career coach. I use LinkedIn.com to meet new people. I learn of new opportunities, trends in the business, etc.

Networking should be proactive. Someone considering growth and/or change should be networking now, and not waiting until they "need" to make a change.

*Contributed by **Stuart Fried**, Career Coach. Find more career advice at his website, CareerSpecialist.net.*

Take a multi-pronged approach.

Job seekers need to take a multi-pronged approach to their job hunts, especially when economic times are tough. Such times require more flexibility, ingenuity, and hard work. Here's a check list:

- Use your research skills to figure out where job growth is likely to be in this new economy, and how you fit into that growth. Your research should include online keyword searches, online social networking, and in-person networking. Here's a great way to use your online and in-person network: informational interviewing. An informational interview is not the same as a job interview. It's an opportunity for you to ask questions of someone who does the type of work you think you might want to get into. In the process, you're apt to get contacts whom you can ask more questions of. Eventually, you'll learn enough about an occupation to decide if it's a good fit for you. Informational Interviewing can be done via email, phone, or in person.
- Make a short list of jobs you'd really like to have, and another list of jobs you're willing to take if your first list doesn't pan out. Prioritize the jobs on each list, so your most preferred job objective is number one.
- Create targeted resumes for each job on your short list. If you need to later, create resumes for the ones on your second list.
- Submit resumes directly to companies with job openings that match those on your first list. Where you have personal contacts, go through those channels to get your resume into the system.
- Tell members of your online and in-person networks what jobs you're looking for, ask if they know of any openings, and offer to send them your resume.
- If you don't get results after one or two weeks, submit your resume to large resume banks like Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com.
- Regularly update your online information (social network profiles, online resumes, blog, website) so search engines find you by recent online activity, as well as by keywords.
- Revisit your short list of job objectives from time to time to see if it needs adjusting. If money gets tight, resort to your second list.

Don't give up! Competition is intense; and there are many qualified applicants out there, including you!

Be diligent about each of these job search steps, and you'll find a good job!

*Contributed by Susan Ireland, author of “The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Perfect Resume.”
For more of Susan’s advice, visit www.SusanIreland.com and the [JobLounge](#).*

Be the CEO of You, Inc.

Think about this. **What if you hired a CEO to manage your career?** What would the strategy be? It would probably incorporate things like:

1. Developing a mission/vision statement. Understanding who you are and where you need to go.
2. Developing a plan to get there. It would likely include having the right relationships (vendors, customers, etc.).
3. Developing a strategic board of directors.
4. Ensuring your product is up to date, up to par.

There are tactical components of this strategy, which would include networking (and developing networking skills), having a job journal (a record of your accomplishments), etc. But the strategy is king, and tactics support it.

Assuming you got an awesome CEO, you will have a great strategy that you can now execute.

Now, the key to moving forward on this is to understand that **YOU are the CEO of You, Inc.!**

*Contributed by **Jason Alba**, CEO and creator of JibberJobber.com. JibberJobber.com helps you manage and organize a job search and career relationships. Sign up for a free account at JibberJobber.com. Jason is also the author of “I’m on LinkedIn – Now What???” and co-author of “I’m on Facebook – Now What???” Widely acknowledged as a leading career management evangelist, Jason continues to spread the word to job seekers through his JibberJobber Blog.*

Give your career a tune-up.

I like to think that 2009 is a great year to kick the tires and look under the hood. Just as you would not expect your car to keep running without changing the oil or replacing tires when needed, you cannot expect your career to keep humming if you don't do a periodic check up.

Right now, the demands of current jobs are so great that many people have simply put their heads down and are trying to just keep up with the daily demands. As a result, they have not really taken a step back and assessed whether: a) what they're doing makes sense right now; and b) whether it really is in line with the boss's goals.

Why are these two things so important? Because **those who keep up with current market demands and those who help the boss be successful are the most likely to not only hang on to a job now, but create success for the long term.**

So, let's look at a career tune-up for 2009:

- **Re-visit your last performance evaluation.** Are you still on track for the goals you set for this year? Why or why not? If you're off track because the economic situation has changed the game plan, then you need to meet with the boss again and make sure he or she understands that you need to realign your priorities. If you're on track, is there evidence of your efforts, such as reports, memos, e-mails, etc. that praise your performance? These will be critical when it comes time for your next evaluation—or used as proof that you're a quality worker should you need to find another job.
- **Communicate with the boss.** Some bosses want to have daily contact; others may only want to talk to you every couple of weeks. Some managers like communicating via e-mail, while others prefer conversations over the phone or in person. Make sure you understand how your boss likes to communicate, and how often. Nothing will get you in quicksand faster than being out of touch with the boss.
- **Get on the same page.** Understand your boss's priorities and concerns. Look for ways you can help him meet his goals, provide resources or help him resolve problems. Read much of the same material he does, whether it's industry reports, professional periodicals or certain websites. Not forcing the boss to backtrack to educate you

about important matters means that you're always moving forward at the pace he requires.

- **Tune out.** So much of our day is consumed by e-mails, text messages, phone calls, meetings, etc., that we're lucky to remember to eat lunch. Research has shown that we need quiet time in order to trigger creative thoughts and new ideas, greatly needed in the workplace today. You can be of so much more help to your boss and your career if you'll simply let yourself get bored. Don't try and entertain yourself all the time, but be willing to shut off all noise and electronic devices and simply let your mind wander. Those incredibly innovative and creative thoughts will follow.
- **Network.** It's a sad reality that in this economy everyone is vulnerable to job loss. Bolster your current career – and help yourself if a pink slip does arrive—by making new contacts and reinforcing others. While online connections such as [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) are great, you still need to focus energy on meeting people face-to-face at various professional and personal events.
- **Cut out the sloppy habits.** Being disorganized and messy, wearing unprofessional clothes, gossiping, taking too many personal calls during work hours—these are all things we know we shouldn't do, but falling into bad habits can occur over time. Take a hard look at the small things you're doing to annoy the boss and make a new resolution to stop. Or you may make it too easy for him to add you to the unemployment line.

*Contributed by **Anita Bruzzese**, author of “45 Things You Do That Drive Your Boss Crazy...and How to Avoid Them” and “Take This Job and Thrive...60 Ways to Make Life More Rewarding in Today's New Workplace.” For more of Anita's advice, visit [45Things.com](#).*

Project a powerful image.

Everyone has offered wonderful and pertinent information, and so I'd like to pitch it from a different angle. As a professional image consultant, I've helped clients for over 30 years to improve the way they dress and the way they carry themselves. They often come back to tell me how their makeover session led to either a promotion or a better paying job.

I often tell my clients your image is your VISUAL RESUME, and just like you'd never dream of submitting your resume without having it first proofed, you should pay very close attention to your appearance. But understanding impression strategies is not as simple as having a clean, typo-free resume. There are details that most people don't consider important, but you can bet potential employers will notice - even if only on a subconscious level!

Don't underestimate the power of image—especially in the current tough economy. You'll need every tool in your toolbox to rise above everyone else and show that YOU are the one who will get the job done.

And remember, dressing well has nothing to do with wearing an Armani versus Men's Wearhouse. Although you want well-made, properly fitted clothing, that doesn't mean you have to break the bank. You can build a very powerful wardrobe from just a small number of articles.

This information also applies to those who have a secure job. Ask yourself what it will take to get you to the next level. For women especially, we must level the playing field by dressing powerfully every day.

If you don't look like a go-getter, why would your employer bother to give you the big projects?

*Contributed by **Sandy Dumont**, Executive Director at Impression Strategies Institute. Find more advice at her [SandyDumont.com Blog](http://SandyDumont.com).*

Build your personal brand.

When it comes to career advice, you'll end up getting more of the same. People will tell you to dress nicely when you go to an interview, or to attend networking events.

What most people don't consider is that "career strategies" are starting to migrate to "brand strategies."

If you're reading this, then it's safe to say you're already branded, but you might not have thought about it much. Personal branding, by definition, is how we market ourselves to others. It's a process.

We all have personal brands because we are already being judged based on first impressions and we have to constantly sell our ideas to management, VCs, our friends and everyone else on a recurring basis. There is really no escape these days.

Avoiding personal branding will be lethal to your career, especially in rough economic times, where there have been over a million layoffs already.

Employers will only be able to recruit the top brands and if you aren't one of them, you will have to beg for a job that doesn't showcase your skills or makes you happy.

Personal branding is about aligning what you do to what you're passionate about and skillful at.

The goal of personal branding isn't to apply to jobs, but rather having the jobs come right to your doorstep.

Now you're asking "what can I do to build my personal brand"? Here are some quick tips you can implement today:

- Become a content producer instead of just a content consumer.
- Be the real you, because everyone else is taken and replicas don't sell for as much.
- Discover your strengths and weaknesses and play to your strengths.
- Customize everything you do, including your resume, cover letter, portfolio and blog.

- Treat life as one big networking event and every interaction as a possible opportunity.
- Reserve your full name on social networks and purchase your domain name.

*Contributed by **Dan Schawbel**, the leading personal branding expert for Gen-Y and author of "Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success." Fast Company calls Dan a "personal branding force of nature." His [Personal Branding Blog](#)® is consistently ranked in the top 100 marketing blogs in the world by AdAge, and has achieved syndication from Forbes, Reuters and Hoovers. Dan publishes Personal Branding Magazine®, is the head judge for the Personal Brand Awards® and directs Personal Branding TV®. He is a social media specialist for EMC, as well as a speaker and adviser on branding.*

Use the power of video.

Without a doubt, the single most important career strategy people should use in 2009 is **the power of video**.

For years, I've used video to introduce myself to customers or potential employers, or to build my personal brand in my industry. **There simply is no better way to stand out in a sea of resumes than to show an employer who you are.** Or to differentiate yourself from all the other experts in the industry.

If you want to use video to get a job, the trick is submitting the appropriate type of video. If you're applying for a professional position, you need to appear as though you would in the interview. Does that mean wearing a suit? Probably. Should that video be of you swimming in your pool? Probably not.

The employer wants to see how you are in person. Be yourself, but be professional.

Remember though, they're not expecting a masterpiece here. A simple video of you sitting at your home desk talking about your expertise and why you want the job is good enough.

Remember to smile.

You can also use video to boost yourself as a brand in your industry. This makes you a thought-leader or expert, which increases your value. Your career can skyrocket with this approach.

Here's a simple technique. Once a week, or day, or whatever you can do, sit down in front of your webcam or Flip cam and talk about one of the biggest headlines or trends in your industry or niche. Talk about your opinions on it and offer your perspective. Upload it to the Internet. Others will watch this video and begin to mark you as an expert.

The next time you go in for a job, send these videos to your potential employer.

*Contributed by **Jim Kukral**, a business web coach, professional speaker, author, and award-winning blogger. Jim has worked with companies such as Fedex, Ernst & Young and Sherwin Williams to help boost profits and publicity. Contact Jim by visiting his website at JimKukral.com.*

Improvise.

The single most important career strategy of 2009 in my mind is non-strategy or improvisation.

Here are My 10 Non-Strategic Zingers:

1. To embrace the spirit of improvisation.
2. To realize you are never alone, we need others to improvise both a life and a career.
3. To build on what you have and what you receive and give it freely to others.
4. To focus your work on making others look good.
5. To always put life before work as in life/work balance as opposed to work/life balance.
6. To engage fully in, and enjoy, your career time.
7. To leverage your mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and organizational energy for career development.
8. To go beyond one to two to three to four... to a full authentic network embracing mutual respect and mutual purpose.
9. To know your strengths and ensure others know your strengths...be your brand and don't be afraid to be brand new.
10. To keep asking yourself: what comes next? (And if you don't like the answer, start improvising an alternative career path).

So instead of making a New Year's resolution, why not wake up on January 1st and ask: what comes next?

*Contributed by **David Zinger**, creator of [Employee Engagement Zingers](#), and the 700-member [Employee Engagement Network](#).*

Be a successful entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurs are getting younger and younger. Just look at [Mark Zuckerberg](#) (24) and [Kevin Rose](#) (31), who have inspired me and countless other recent college grads to start their own companies instead of stepping onto the corporate ladder.

We have big dreams, but do we really understand the [obstacles out there for an inexperienced entrepreneur](#)? The number 1 criterion that investors look at before investing in a company is the team, and if you've got a baby-face, then no VC will invest in you.

So what are young, [inspiring entrepreneurs to do](#)? The answer is plain and simple – [build your personal brand](#). Invest in yourself, and countless doors will open for you in the entrepreneurial world. The E-life doesn't care about your 3.8 GPA or your fancy internship at Goldman Sachs; we care about how many hits you show when we google you, how many subscribers and followers you have on your blog and Twitter, and your ability to showcase your thought-leadership.

This is your guide to building your personal brand specifically to succeed in the entrepreneurial world.

1. Own your online personal brand

Step 1 is to completely own your online personal brand. [Purchase your domain name](#) (hopefully firstnamelastname.com) and sign up for [Twitter](#) (here are some [Twitter tips](#) for you). Use [Wordpress](#) to set up your blog on your domain name and begin writing about anything and everything. Make sure to add a link to your blog that leads to your Twitter so that people can start following your Tweets. Use [Feedburner](#) for your blog so that people can [subscribe to your writing](#).

Pretty concrete stuff to do right? My goal is to have your personal brand completely set up and running by the time you finish reading this article. Yes, it may take you sometime to figure out how to use [Feedburner](#) and [Twitter](#), but think of the time you spend as an investment on yourself. This will payoff greatly in the long run.

2. What you know DOES count

We've all heard the saying, "It's not what you know but who you know." Absolutely throw that out the window because BOTH do greatly matter. Step 2 is to develop your thought leadership. My friend Ramit Sethi writes a

blog about personal finance called [I will teach you to be rich](#). Whenever I have a personal finance question, I read his blog. This means that Ramit is a thought-leader in personal finance. What can you be a thought leader in? This is an extremely tough question that people could spend years, if not a lifetime, trying to develop and create.

The best thing for you to do is to start thinking about this early and execute on it. Think of your thought-leadership as the major you took in college. Did you stick with the first major you chose? Most likely not, but each major that you went through taught you something new about yourself. This is the same thing for your thought-leadership. Try absolutely everything until you finally reach that one thing you love and can be the best in the world at. Once you have found it, it is time to put it into action. Start blogging about your thought-leadership topic. Your writing style and content should be "pushing the edge." I learned this from [Penelope Trunk](#) who advised me to NOT blend into the masses; but rather, write on the edge of a topic. If you're writing about photography, add a unique twist to it that no one else has done. This is the only way to stand out.

3. Don't just meet people; make them remember you

Expanding your network is fine and dandy, but how many people in your [Facebook](#) do you really know? How many of your "friends" on [Facebook](#) could you call up to have coffee with tomorrow? You must make your network know who you are. herefore, it's time to take action by building your community.

Use [Google Reader](#) to subscribe to bloggers who you find interesting and valuable. [Comment on their blogs](#) and make sure to leave your blog URL so that they can come and read your blog. Follow these people on [Twitter](#) and @ reply them to get their attention and get them to follow you as well. Once you've established rapport, [request to write a guest post](#) for their blog and write the most amazing post that you have ever written. You can leverage guest posts that you have written for other blogs and publications that are bigger and harder to write for.

Create a [LinkedIn](#) account and begin answering questions on LinkedIn Answers. Remember your thought-leadership? Well this is the perfect place for you to answer questions that professionals may have. If you write a terrific answer, then these professionals will begin noticing you and you'll be able to add them to your network.

4. Teach others what I have just taught you

People will love you and forever be indebted to you if you help them in one of four areas:

1. Children
2. Health
3. Money
4. Love

What I have just taught you with steps 1 through 3 will hopefully set you up to generate a lot of money in the long run. The best part is that you can turn around and teach someone the same things that I have taught you. You can mentor someone who works for you completely for free because he or she is learning from you. If you are productive with your life, then there are people out there who are willing to learn from you, no matter how young you may be.

I have a team of 15 Campus CMOs for my company that I have personally recruited and trained to know absolutely everything I know about entrepreneurship and social media. They have worked for me for 6 months, completely for free, because I have put my heart into giving them a valuable learning experience.

How does this help my personal brand? They can tell their peers, student organizations, and jobs about me when an entrepreneurial or social media question arises. They can refer these people to [my blog](#), which in turn may lead to subscribers, consulting clients, or speaker events.

You have just gone through the four steps to prepare your personal brand for the entrepreneurial world. Remember, entrepreneurship is **NOT** a fall back career. Don't go into entrepreneurship because you "want to be your own boss" or because you got laid off. These are the people that end up failing and crawling back to the corporate world. The [E-Life](#) is the hardest challenge that you will ever have if you decide to become an entrepreneur. The only way to give yourself a fighting chance is to develop your personal brand. Good luck!

*Contributed by **Jun Loayza**. Jun is the Co-Founder and Chief Marketing Officer of [Future Delivery](#). After graduating with a B.A. in Economics and Philosophy from UCLA, he worked as a litigation and corporate finance consultant. Three months into the corporate life, he realized he truly was an entrepreneur at heart and decided to step away from the corporate world to pursue [Future Delivery](#) full-time. Get more advice at [Jun's Startup Life](#), and feel free to [contact Jun](#) to talk about entrepreneurship, branding, social media, philosophy, animal rights, indie music, or anything else that floats your boat.*

Create a vibrant LinkedIn profile.

For executives, a vibrant, brand-driven [LinkedIn](#) profile that gives a feel for who they are and how they make things happen is pretty much a given these days. Their profile should also be achievement-rich to indicate how they tackle challenges impeding corporate imperatives. And enhancing their profile with good recommendations and connections can be invaluable.

Not having a [LinkedIn](#) presence with a great on-brand profile can actually be a negative. Executives are expected to be there, actively communicating with their networks to create evangelists and keep themselves top of mind.

I also encourage my executive clients to dovetail their high-impact, branded [LinkedIn](#) profile with a more multimedia-rich [VisualCV](#), where they can house all their career marketing materials and documents on one web page, easily accessed by anyone with one click – no need to open email attachments.

*Contributed by **Meg Guiseppi**, Executive Career Strategist. For more tips, Visit [Meg's Executive Resume Branding Blog](#).*

Network with everyone.

I believe the best career strategy continues to be networking with everyone they know, and even folks they don't know.

In almost every survey I have seen, **networking is the predominant method of landing a good job**. It sure has worked with me in my career, so I can be a true testimonial to that fact. I work a lot with military transitioners and, especially at the senior level, the ones who use their extensive network get the jobs faster and are more satisfied with the results.

In a research study conducted by the Graziadio School of Business Management at Pepperdine University (paid for by Upwardly Mobile Inc. of Sunnyvale, CA), released on January 12, 2009, it was found that **consistent networking can mean higher earnings and better protection from recession**¹. That means creating a regular, purposeful networking habit, not just something to begin doing when the need arises. The professionals earning more than \$200,000/year “leverage their network more, use job sites less, and consider networking a lifestyle rather than a tool to be used when needed.”

More than 80% say networking impacts income; 58% believe a skilled networker could see up to a 100% increase in income.

The highest earners said the single most critical factor in determining the value of their network isn't the depth of their relationship with contacts or the size of their network, but breadth of connections with the right contacts—contacts willing to recommend them.

Networking used to mean passing out your business card or resume. But today, networking can also be accomplished by many other sources. With all the electronic ways to network, there is really no reason not to get your name out there. Create personal pages on MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn,

¹ Upwardly Mobile Inc. with the support of Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business Management, conducted research for the study in April 2008. A total of 637 respondents completed a Web-based survey with 22 questions. A select group of participants also elaborated on their responses during 45-minute interviews. The purpose of the study was to understand the guiding principles for professional networking and how those principles translate into regular practices and skills that enable professionals to achieve immediate and long-term career goals.

YouTube, Twitter, and many others or create your own blog as a way to be searchable. They are easy to access, easy to set up a page, and are searched by employers. One note of caution: don't put anything on these pages you would not want a potential employer to see, as it might be a deciding factor against hiring you.

One advantage of blogging is that you can establish yourself as a credible expert if you blog with an educational purpose in mind. It shows the reader you know your stuff and are willing to share it. It can also highlight your written communication abilities and your knowledge of technology.

I also am a strong believer in making your resume accomplishment-oriented. Employers want to see what you have achieved in your previous jobs, not just the duties you performed. Statistics about how you improved a process, saved money, increased productivity, boosted sales, etc., are more powerful than just "responsible for client satisfaction." Think from the standpoint of an employer and the value you bring to the organization.

*Contributed by **Darlene T. Carver** of Merlin & Associates, Inc., www.MerlinStar.com.*

Use Twitter to propel your career.

Don't be left behind! Use Twitter to propel your career in 2009.

I believe the single most important career strategy is to build, cultivate and leverage a strong network. There are many ways to grow your network, from in-person connecting (think elevator rides or cocktail parties) to online networking a la [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

One social networking tool you may not have considered incorporating into your career-building toolbox is [Twitter](#), the micro-blogging platform that invites you to share thoughts in pithy, 140-character blasts. Chances are, you:

- Have never heard of [Twitter](#).
- Have heard of it, but think it is just another way to waste your time, or
- You love [Twitter](#) and use it to keep in touch with friends, colleagues and to meet people.

If you are in the first category and have never heard of [Twitter](#), this is a good time to get acquainted! My favorite place to learn about social networking applications is on [CommonCraft.com](#). They have a great video that describes [Twitter](#) in very easy-to-understand terms.

Believe it or not, in addition to being a great tool to grow your network, you can actually tweet yourself to a job opportunity 140 characters at a time! It's been done! Statistics show that job search networking is much more effective when you make "loose" connections—touching base with people beyond your immediate circle whose networks and contacts are much different from your own.

With millions of users, [Twitter](#) offers an unparalleled opportunity to create an extended network.

Not convinced that [Twitter](#) is actually a high-powered job search tool? Read on to learn how Twitter can uniquely position you for job-hunting success!

What Can [Twitter](#) Do For You?

1. Afford access to other professionals in your field. When you follow industry leaders, you'll know who spends time with them, what conferences they attend (and what they think of the speakers!), what

they're reading and what is on their minds. This is great information to leverage for your search.

2. Provide exposure and credibility as well as personal and professional relationships when you connect to others in your industry.
3. Offer you a venue to demonstrate your expertise and share information in quick, pithy bursts of wisdom. This is perfect if you don't have the time or energy to create a blog.

Unique Aspects of Twitter

1. It is casual and immediate and a great place to "meet" informally.
2. You'll find an array of people on [Twitter](#), including CEOs, top-level executives, hiring managers, recruiters and everyone in-between! It's one-stop shopping for your networking needs. You'll be surprised to find that stars in your field (mentors) may follow you if you reach out to them!
3. Unlike Facebook, where it is kind of creepy if you start trying to "friend" people who are connected to your contacts, it is acceptable (and expected) to follow people on [Twitter](#) because another friend or colleague does.
4. It forces you to be brief. Coming up with your "Twit-Pitch"—what you have to offer in 140 characters or less—will help you clarify your value proposition. Remember: less is more!

Convinced? What To Do First?

1. Brand yourself professionally. If you are planning to use [Twitter](#) for a job search, set up a designated profile and account. Choose a professional [Twitter](#) handle using your name or some combination of your name and profession that sounds good and is easy to remember. For example, **JaneSmith** or **MarketingExpertJane**.
2. Take time to create a professional profile that will attract your target market. If you don't have a website, link to your [LinkedIn](#) profile.
3. Before you follow anyone, start posting some tweets! Don't succumb to the temptation to share your lunch menu...Tweet about an article, an idea or share a link of professional interest to your targeted followers. Do this for a few days. It may seem strange to be tweeting when no one is following, but you may be surprised to gain an

audience before you even try. Once you have a great profile and a set of interesting tweets, start following people in your industry. Aim high! Follow stars—some will follow you back.

4. Continue to build your network by using [Twitter Search](#) and Twitter's [Find People](#) tool. Manually review profiles and use [Twubble](#) to help you find new people to follow. Use directories such as [Twellow](#) and [TwitDir](#). Grow your network slowly—you don't want to follow 1000 people and have only 30 following you. That makes you look spammy, not professional.
5. Another tool to use to learn what is going on in your area of expertise is [Monitter](#). You can use it to look up information about a company where you plan to interview. It is also great to see what people are talking about and to find conversations to join on [Twitter](#).
6. Give, give, give! Think about what you can do for others. Don't blatantly self-promote. Instead, help promote others. "Retweet" (pass along information someone else shared, giving them credit)—you will earn followers and friends this way. Those who know (and like) you will become part of your network and will be willing to help you.

Sustain Your [Twitter](#) Network

1. [Twitter](#) doesn't have to be very time-consuming, but if it's going to be part of your job search strategy, make a point to keep up with it by sending out something useful every day.
2. Read what other people write and respond. Join conversations and start your own.
3. Don't be afraid to send a message directly to a star in your field. Simply address your tweet to @their [Twitter](#) name, and they should receive it. (Be aware that [Twitter](#) isn't 100% reliable, so feel free to try again if you don't hear back or have reason to believe your message wasn't delivered.)
4. Feel free to tweet that you are looking for an opportunity. (See below for a success story!)

People Who Found Jobs and How!

1. Jessica Smith found her current "dream job" as Chief Mom Office simply by tweeting to approximately 400 followers, "*Anyone looking for a marketing or biz dev person?*" Within minutes, she received a DM

from the founder of Wishpot.com, asking for a phone interview that resulted in a perfect position!

2. Kyle Flaherty used [Twitter](#) to find a job that moved him and his family to Austin, TX from Boston. He tweeted to approximately 650 contacts that he had left his job. He included a link to a blog post outlining his interest in connecting. He explains, "Within hours I had several emails, IMs, phone calls and tweets about the topic and it actually ended up that I took a new job."
3. Heidi Miller, the "Podcasting Princess," found a freelance project using [Twitter](#) by tweeting updates about her job hunt. Many of her colleagues questioned the wisdom of being so open about her search; they worried she look desperate or foolish. However, the ends justified the means.

As more and more get involved (*dare I say addicted?*) to [Twitter](#), opportunities to leverage this tool for job search networking will grow exponentially. Don't be the one left behind! Get on board and start connecting for success!

Contributed by Miriam Salpeter, career action coach, blog author, speaker and founder of [Keppie Careers](#). She is also the National Career Coach Correspondent at www.Examiner.com. Miriam encourages, enlightens and empowers job seekers for success by writing solid, accomplishment-oriented resumes and by teaching clients how to leverage marketable skills to land their dream jobs. With over 10 years of experience, she advises clients in the U.S. and abroad regarding career transitions and speaks to groups about job hunting and social networking strategies. If you enjoy reading quality advice about job search strategies, visit her highly regarded [blog](#). You can follow [Miriam on Twitter](#).

Avoid the individual approach.

I think the best approach for a career strategy at any time is to avoid the individual approach. A single individual is limited in the amount of impact they can have on their own career.

Why?

First, they have a single lens focus on what they are doing. Most people don't get sufficient feedback, and I mean "honest" feedback, on their performance.

Second, they may have a small network with little visibility to opportunities and impending changes in the organization.

The best strategy for advancing their careers in an ever-changing corporate environment is to develop and use a team of supporters who focus on influencing the perception of managers and the organization. It's a simple, active technique that doesn't require one to learn complicated concepts or figure out how to apply the typical academic advice to their situation.

I have my own team, and we meet every week to discuss new opportunities and issues. We've seen much success over the years.

In each meeting, we review our career strategy maps to:

- Identify the managers we need to influence and the best method for gaining their support,
- Determine the skills that need to be developed and who can help develop them,
- Ascertain the best path to achieve each goal and whether or not we're on it,
- Define what tasks need to be completed and how we can help each other accomplish them,
- Verify our motivation level and ensure we remain driven to succeed,
- And a whole lot more.

As an individual seeking career growth in an organization, it's too easy to try your best by working hard, building skills, and accomplishing goals but still not being able to obtain the recognition and reward we feel we deserve. Combine this with the fact that organizations are changing faster than they ever have in history and you'll find that a single strategy, like working longer hours, will only take you so far. If you find it difficult to maneuver through

the ever changing dynamics of the organization, you need to consider building a team of supporters.

George Bernard Shaw once said, "The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them."

The rapid pace of organization change today resembles a street map that changes street names daily. If you can spot your goal, you only need to create a compass that keeps you on path. That's the benefit of a team-based approach.

The team-based approach has proven to be the best approach when:

- You've hit a plateau and your upward mobility has stopped
- Your company doesn't support career development
- Corporate politics intimidates you
- You don't get opportunities to show off your abilities
- Your skills are out-of-date
- You have trouble building a career plan

Pursuing your career goals alone is a daunting challenge. So much so, many of us simply struggle to hang on to our job. While the layoffs, mergers and acquisitions grow more prevalent everyday, these changes usher new opportunities as well. That is, opportunities for those who can see them and respond accordingly. As an individual, your strategy of working longer and harder can keep you so busy that it blinds you to this potential. What should you do? The answer is simple.

- **Build a career strategy map**
- **Create your team**
- **Review and refine your maps**
- **Get to work implementing the strategy**
- **Review your progress weekly**
- **Rinse and repeat!**

Contributed by J. Todd Rhoad, author of "[Blitz the Ladder](#)." He is the Managing Director for BT Consulting, an Atlanta-based career consulting firm, www.blitzteamconsulting.com. After receiving a Master's degree in Engineering and a Master's degree in Business, Todd devoted his time to helping others achieve more success by studying and developing his own career strategies. Learn more by visiting his [blog](#). Stay tuned for his next book, "Virtual Organizations: 75 Things Your Career Should Know."

Volunteer.

President elect-Barak Obama wants America's youth to spend time in volunteer jobs supporting our great country. He has spoken about instituting a "Peace Corps-like" organization with mandatory service time for every American.

Grass roots efforts (like his historical campaign) are and will be all the rage.

Get out there and volunteer for several different groups. The people you meet in organizations such as this are positive and motivated individuals... the type of people you should be networking with.

There are many opportunities to volunteer. Choose an organization and start helping out now!

*Contributed by **Karen Banes**, Transition Assistance Program Trainer, Hawaii.*

Claim ownership of your career.

Change is the only constant in the world of work. Evidently, there are times when change becomes more amplified as has been the case for many as 2009 approaches. Consequently, the key to thriving in a changing world is to find ways to carve out opportunities amidst the uncertainty. Achieving that is a matter of being strategic and remaining creative by claiming ownership of your career.

It's [easy](#).

To own your career:

1. **Decide to work for yourself:** Quite simply, your career is the business you own. You are the product you sell. Think, feel and behave like you work *with* your employer—not *for* them—as a partner in a give-and-take relationship.
2. **Take stock of your uniqueness:** At the very least, know what rewards excite you, where your interests lie, and what your strongest skills are.
3. **Develop an action plan:** Start with the end in mind. Find out what you need to achieve in the next 5 years to feel satisfied and fulfilled in your career. Ask yourself why achieving your goals is important to you. Then chunk down your goals into bite-size tasks in a detailed action plan.

4. Take action!

*Contributed by **Silvana Avinami**. At her core, Silvana is a career owner, a strategic job hopper and a serial entrepreneur. She also has her own blog at www.SilvanaAvinami.com.*

Stay tuned in 09 for her upcoming book on career ownership.

Follow 8 powerful principles.

The workday starts like any other. You walk into your cube, turn on your computer, sit down to begin your day, and then you get the call. The boss wants to see you right away.

As soon as you walk into his office, you know something's wrong. He's not smiling. Your employee file is opened on his desk along with a stack of documents from the HR department.

"This is a really difficult thing for me to do," he begins, and then the rest becomes just a blur. You've just been pink-slipped. Canned. Laid off.

This is an event all of us dread and most of the time comes when we least expect it. Unfortunately, it's becoming more and more common.

What can you do to get back on your feet once you've heard the news?

1. Grieve, then move on.

Sure you never thought it could be you. Yes, others probably deserved it more than you. Yes, they'll miss you when you're gone. You hated this place anyway.

You'll experience a range of emotions after hearing the news, most of them negative. Get them all out of your system – then get busy with next steps. If you hang onto this baggage, it will impede your job search.

Your Strategy:

1. Take some time to process the loss.
2. Share your feelings with someone you trust.
3. Go out and do a strenuous activity (running, lifting weights, hitting a punching bag etc.).
4. Visualize the people involved and forgive each and every one of them. Seriously. Let them all off the hook. If you don't, they will continue to haunt you.

2. Let everybody know you're on the market.

Most newly unemployed people are ashamed and keep the bad news a secret. This is the wrong strategy. You'd be amazed at how many people would be willing to help if they only knew. Notifying them can be less

stressful if you use humor. Let all of your family and friends know you're a free agent looking for a new team.

Your Strategy:

1. Let your friends and family know.
2. Go through your contact list or rolodex and send a card to each person announcing (use humor if it helps) that you're now a free agent.
3. Notify everyone at every social gathering you're part of (church, school, clubs, sports teams, kids' sports teams, etc.)

3. Get your resume together.

Hopefully you've kept your resume current, but if not, get busy building or rebuilding one. Start by brainstorming a list of all you've accomplished in your last job. Think numbers, percents, or dollars saved. Don't regurgitate your job description. Choose a format that best positions you for open jobs. Seek out help from good resume-writing books or partner with a coach who can help you. This is your marketing brochure so it has to do a great job describing your worth to a potential employer.

Your Strategy:

1. Make a career catalog putting together all of your job history and accomplishments from the very beginning.
2. Put together a winning resume. Get help if you need it.
3. Start marketing your resume!
4. Reconnect with your network.

You know that stack of business cards you've been meaning to file? Get busy and go through them. Take a look at your contact list and start reconnecting with everyone who knows you. Let your family and friends connect you to people they know who may have some leads.

Your Strategy:

1. Get your network mapped out. Make lists, connect them together, and look for others you've forgotten about.
2. Develop a strategy to connect. For help, get Keith Ferrazzi's book, "Never Eat Alone." It's a great resource on how to do it!

5. Expand your network.

The first part of networking is easy – you'll just check in with people who know you. The next part can be scary. Talk to strangers! Meet as many new

people as you can. Deepen your relationship with the people at your gym who you nod and grunt to each morning or evening when you see them. Meet some new people at your place of worship. Strike up deeper conversations with the parents of the other kids on your daughter's soccer team. 60-80% of all jobs come through networking. Be sure to build a big and strong network!

Your Strategy:

1. Ask your friends and family to introduce you to their networks
2. Make it a goal to meet 20 new strangers each day!

6. Treat the job search as a full time job.

This means eight hours a day of solid work. And don't spend it all in front of the computer on those job websites. You're competing with thousands of other faceless resumes there. It's frustrating and often a waste of time. Build relationships with people, call up potential employers, join and participate in trade association and chamber of commerce meetings, and attend any and all networking events you can find. Spend an hour per day reading up on the career you're trying to get a job in. Research new job search trends. I know a professional job seeker is not a title you're proud of, but if you choose to be one, it will be the shortest career you've ever had!

Your Strategy:

1. Start planning out each day and be sure real activities are included.
2. Stay on what was your normal workday routine. Get up early, exercise, shower, shave, and dress for work!
3. Add some new productive activities such as going out for a cup of coffee (and network) or take on some physical fitness activities (gyms are great places to network)

7. Go full speed and never quit.

If you tackle a running back while approaching them at full speed, you'll barely feel the impact. The same rule applies here. The tasks you least enjoy in the process should be the ones you take on first. Pick up the phone to make your calls early in the day when you have the most energy. Don't quit. Be persistent. Your competition for each job will be working just as hard. Don't let them win!

Your Strategy:

1. Visualize success as you plan the scary or unpleasant activities.

2. Keep in mind that most people are afraid to meet strangers. If you reach out, they will be very receptive.
3. If you want friends (or network contacts) you have to BE a friend or network contact.

8. Keep your chin up.

The job search process is fraught with disappointment. It's just the way it is. Not everyone gets the job they want or are qualified for. Your only hope is to stay optimistic. Potential employers don't want to see negativity during the job interview. Keep positive even if you're not feeling it. You're in the sales business and nobody will buy from a depressing salesman!

If you find yourself on the short end of a layoff, realize it's totally normal. Most everyone goes through it. Set up a plan for yourself and work that plan. If you apply 100% of your effort in the search, you'll be rewarded with a job that's probably better than the one you left!

Your Strategy:

1. Visualize everything positively!
2. If you have negative friends, go out and find some new ones.
3. Make a conscious choice to be optimistic each day. You have to fake it to make it sometimes!

Final Thoughts

So that's it, just 8 simple principles that I believe will get you off your back and back onto the path of having a job. These are all pretty simple but not simplistic. Each requires you to get out of your comfort zone and take control of your personal and professional growth.

These can be overwhelming taken at once, so why not commit yourself to doing just one step per week? When you're comfortable, then move on and add a second step. Follow my steps and I guarantee you'll have a much better perspective on life!

*Contributed by **Malcolm Munro**, the Career Fitness Coach. Malcolm is an experienced speaker, consultant, and coach who has worked with hundreds of executives, managers, employees, and students in various levels and stages of career development. He is the author of [Marketing Yourself for Your Dream Job: How to Get the Job and Career You've Always Wanted](#). He has been featured as a career expert on WFRE Radio, The Washington Post, and writes a monthly column in Men's Fitness Magazine. You can reach him at coach@emailthecoach or on his website at www.careerfitnesscoach.com.*

Develop survival skills.

Survival of the fittest is an appropriate term in the climate of our global culture today. Not just America, but overseas – only the strong survive.

Phil Gerbyshak from [Slacker Manager](#) featured an article written by Tony Wagner, author of "The Global Achievement Gap," called **Hiring the Right Skill Set and Motivating the Millennials**. The article is excellent, whether you are a millennial, a baby boomer, or any other generational job seeker.

It doesn't matter where you are on the life line of employment. If you are a job seeker and you want to survive these challenging times, you need to develop these 7 Survival Skills. Take a look at the 7 Survival Skills with my spin on them!

7 Must-Have Survival Skills

1. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving. Can you look at a series of issues or problems facing an organization and process solutions when there is no obvious answer available? Your ability to bring solutions to the table in an organization will keep you employed long past your "expiration date." In other words, people who can articulate solutions that move organizations to new levels are employable. If you are the problem, you will find yourself in the unemployment line often.

2. Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence. Influence moves people, "big sticks" hurt people. If you can influence people and maintain authority at the same time, that is a valuable commodity and organizations will pay you well for that skill set. Your ability to influence unmotivated employees, or clients that don't want to yield to what your organization is or is not capable of doing, will keep you sitting in the board room, rather than home in the den scanning the internet looking for employment.

3. Agility and Adaptability. CHANGE is the word of the day. Your willingness to be "amebic" will keep you employed or you will break in the midst of your resistance. Amebic by my definition means you are moldable. You are like putty and can shift in the hand of those reshaping and rebuilding the organization. Your inability to change will send you home in pieces that glue won't fix.

4. Initiative and Entrepreneurship. Initiative takes RISK. You have to be willing to go new places, share ideas, and risk being wrong or not heard.

People with initiative will bring a fresh approach to the job they are doing with no prodding. They see opportunities for continuous improvement and they RISK by actually making it happen. They see the job opportunity through the lens of being an owner of the business, not just a "worker bee". Worker bees go home after the work of the day is over. Those operating with initiative will find themselves employable anywhere even when the work is over in an organization. They will take the next opportunity as a new challenge, another opportunity to take stock or ownership in a new organization rather than seeing themselves victimized by the economic swings.

5. Effective Oral and Written Communication Skills. This survival skill doesn't need a whole lot of explanation. Either you are an effective communicator or you are not. Either way, without effective oral and written communication skills you are limited in how far you will go in an organization. Your ability to articulate your thoughts will determine the level you will attain in any organization.

6. Access and Analyzing Information. Learning how to effectively use the resources available to you as well as getting creative about finding resources will make you invaluable to any organization. So many people get lost in the wealth of information available to us today. Rather being challenged to dig to find information, people want someone else to give them the answer. It comes down to your willingness to learn to fish so you will eat for a lifetime or allowing someone to feed you for the moment. Those who can dig for answers and evaluate the information they have to come to solution will be employable. Those who can't or won't will "die" waiting for someone to feed them.

7. Curiosity and Imagination. CREATIVITY! This is big. Whether you are a right-sided thinker or a left-sided thinker, creativity will move you in organizations. Creativity encompasses the previous 6 Survival Skills needed in any organization. Go back and read them again. In order to effectively problem solve, lead by influence, CHANGE, or even take RISK, you must be willing to be creative. Here are some definitions of Curiosity that may help you tie all of this together:

- Curiosity is an emotion that causes natural inquisitive behavior such as exploration, investigation, and learning.
- Curiosity or inquisitiveness; the tendency to ask questions, investigate, or explore.
- Curiosity is an open-ness to having a new opinion.

My point is that when you operate from creativity, there are no limits to your ability to problem-solve issues, work with and communicate with people.

Creativity allows you to be fluid rather than stagnant in any organization and that will also keep you employed.

There is so much more I want to share on these 7 Survival Skills for Job Seekers. But I will save those thoughts for another day.

I believe we are in a unique season for employment. It is hard to get a job out there today, but it is not impossible. "Survival of the fittest" fits the employment climate we live in today.

Our modern translation of this term, "Survival of the Fittest" refers to the those who are highly trained, physically energetic, and able to withstand organizational storms and be standing when the storm is over. The word "fittest" is referred to those animals which are the most suited to their environment. They are the ones who will survive.

If you have all of these Survival Skills, you are more likely to survive in these challenging times than those without them.

Does it mean you won't get laid off? Absolutely not! It may happen to you too, but your ability to turn it around and into employment goes up exponentially with these Survival Skills.

If you don't have these Survival Skills, than it becomes imperative that you develop them. They will keep your boat floating on the turbulent waves of high unemployment and major lay offs.

*Contributed by **Darlene McDaniel**, Interview Guru. Find more of Darlene's advice at www.InterviewChatter.com.*

Run your job like a business.

“The single most important career strategy you should use in 2009”? It’s the career strategy you should have been using all along! Here it is in six simple words: run your job like a business.

Never be so dependent on—or get so comfy in—your job that if you were to lose it, you’d find yourself with an outdated résumé, no contacts, no savings, and no idea of what to do next.

Thinking and acting as if you’re in business for yourself is the best way to ensure your job security. It isn’t so hard. Just take a cue from your friends the freelancers.

Freelancers:

- Know they need to prove their value to the client every day.
- Get all agreements/promises in writing.
- Are always looking for ways to promote themselves.
- Plan for their own retirement.
- Keep a cushion of money set aside for lean times.
- Are great at time management.
- Can work without supervision.
- Know the market rate for their skills.
- Keep their skills and certifications current.
- Establish authority in their field (e.g., blogs, podcasts, articles).
- Build a high profile through networking.
- Have a long-range career plan.

When you work like a freelancer, you are not only a stellar employee—which, ironically, makes you less likely to be laid off—but you are in a position where you could walk away from your job at any time, with a minimum of pain. That’s where you want to be.

Freelancers are basically always ready to “jump ship.” They maintain their job, financial, and psychic security by consistently being on the lookout for their next client.

You can do this, too. See list above.

You may never lose your job. But if you do (because, let's face it, the world is a very unpredictable place, even for stellar employees), you will be ready to hit the ground running.

Run your career as if it's a business; put yourself in a position of strength. A very good place to be!

*Contributed by **Karen Burns** (aka Working Girl), author of "The Amazing Adventures of Working Girl: Real-Life Career Advice You Can Actually Use," forthcoming from Running Press in April 2009. She blogs at www.KarenBurnsWorkingGirl.com.*

Take responsibility for your own career.

There is one single most important career strategy people should use in 2009.

It is so simple it is often overlooked. Here it is: **make 2009 the year that you take responsibility for your own career.**

You may think you already have taken responsibility for it, but I am betting you have not.

Here is a short Four Point test you can take to see if you are truly in charge of your own career.

1. When someone asks you “Instead of your current job, what would you really rather be doing?” what do you say? If it is not what you are currently doing, then you are most likely not in charge of your career life because you are wishing for something else.

2. Are you better at analyzing all the things that have happened to you, your company, your industry, your occupation and your community as it relates to impacting your career success? In other words, isn't it really out of your own control? For example, do you find yourself agreeing that the economy is bad, there are fewer sheet metal workers, the town does not support re training efforts, etc. These are a sure indicator of someone not in control, but of someone who chooses to believe that others determine your success.

3. Have you taken your career goal and figured out a plan to reach it? Is it written down? Is it specific, with timetables, achievements necessary, learnings required and mastered?

4. Have you given up on the idea of achieving your dream? Is it too far away, too hard, too unreasonable? If you have given up on your dreams, then how can you really be in charge of it?

It's not important what rung you are at on the career ladder. Each rung is important and you cannot skip over them. But to be in control you have to have some patience and a willingness to put in the time to master what each step along the way can teach you.

It does not come easily. If it did, it wouldn't be worth it.

*Contributed by **G.L. Hoffman**, Chairman of www.JobDig.com and www.LinkUp.com. JobDig is an employment media company based in Minneapolis with weekly jobs newspapers, websites, media partnerships and career centers while LinkUp is the only job board that captures job openings only from a company's own website. GL is a successful serial entrepreneur, a new voice in the career management arena, with a sizeable readership at his blog [What Would Dad Say](#), as well as [US News and World Report](#). His new book, "DIG YOUR JOB" is a career resource for jobseekers, generation x and y'ers, and others who want the most of their careers.*

Use career branding.

The most important career management strategy for 2009 will be career branding.

Career branding is the art of creating a clear, compelling, and consistent message of your value-add and a strong career branding campaign leverages both online and offline strategies. This is a far cry from what most job seekers implement...a haphazard, tactical and often unproductive search that simply involves updating a poorly crafted resume and blitzing the top job boards.

Whether you are currently in search or interested in proactively managing your career, here are my top 4 career branding tips.

1. Create a branded resume. A branded resume quickly communicates the 40,000 foot view of what you can offer an employer. Showcase your professional identity at the top of the document and articulate your top 2-4 brand attributes with proof of these attributes. Include an overview of your core competencies to express fit. Leverage the work experience and education sections to further elaborate on your accomplishments and use metrics whenever possible to quantify those accomplishments.

2. Develop a branded elevator pitch. This is the short audio sound bite version of your resume and you need to be able to describe what you do and prove your successes in a big picture way. The elevator pitch is often delivered in response to one of the most frequently asked interview questions, "Tell me about yourself." The goal is to communicate your professional identity, 3 core strengths and proof of these strengths, a brief overview of your background, and the reason you are interested in the open position you are applying for. By being clear and succinct, you make it easier for the hiring manager to become an advocate for you and your candidacy.

3. Build an online presence. Recruiters and hiring managers continue to conduct online searches on candidates to see what additional information they can dig up. Take control of your online identity by creating profiles on sites such as [ZoomInfo](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Plaxo](#), and [Ziggs](#).

4. Use a branded signature line. Showcase your brand each time you send an email by linking your professional identity profiles to your signature line. Or create a [Visual CV](#) and link a multimedia version of your resume to your signature line.

Contributed by **Barbara Safani**, owner of [Career Solvers](#). She is the author of “Happy About My Resume: 50 Tips for Building a Better Document to Secure a Brighter Future,” and her work is featured in over two dozen career-related publications. Barbara has over 12 years of experience in career management, recruiting, and executive coaching. She partners with both Fortune 100 companies and individuals to deliver targeted programs focusing on on-line identity, resume development, job search strategies, networking, interviewing, and salary negotiation skills. Barbara has appeared as a career expert on CNN, ABC, FOX, and ROBTv and her career advice has been featured in The Washington Post, The Salt Lake Tribune, and MSNBC online. She is a career coach for [CareerBuilder.com](#) and she regularly contributes career-relevant content to [The Ladders 100K Job Board](#) and [Kennedy Executive Agent](#).

Get mental.

The single most important career strategy for job searchers in 2009 is Getting Mental.

Thought on the front end eliminates the craziness that can potentially set in on the back end. **Your success in finding a new job—and one you love—is 70% head work and 30% skill.** Without that 70%, a well-laid-out resume and a thoughtful cover letter might get you in the door, but it won't guarantee you an offer and it certainly won't guarantee you your perfect job.

The first chunk of that 70% is **defining what you want**, because if you don't know specifically what you're looking for, chances are you won't recognize it. More than that, and probably without realizing how you're coming across to the hiring company, you'll find yourself defaulting to desperately trying to get any and every job for which a company is willing to grant you an interview.

People try to fit themselves into a job and don't even know if they want that job. As a result, people end up trying to get every job for which they interview. And yes, I do advocate that. But you need to know the difference between a job you're pursuing because it fits your profile - and jobs you're just...pursuing.

Tripping over yourself to answer an interviewer's questions doesn't impress the interviewer. What does impress them is a skilled candidate who not only knows about the company and how he'll benefit it, but has given obvious thought to where he wants to be, and will walk away if that opportunity isn't it. The difference can be glaringly obvious in an interview.

Typically those who believe they've done this taken the time to define what they want have given it only a few passing thoughts with some generic definitions, for instance a "people-oriented company" or a company that's "stable." People-oriented, reputable, progressive and other similar descriptions are insufficient. They're vague, and they vary considerably depending on who's defining them and what the relative measurement is. If you don't know your definition, it might be different from the interviewer's. How will you know?

Defining what you want in your next job isn't found by repeating your title or industry, either. "A brand manager position" or "A brand manager position with a CPG firm" is equally vague, as is "A line management marketing

position in the insurance industry.” Those fail to consider the working environment or the philosophy of the company, both of which have enormous impact on your ability to do the job, to enjoy what you’re doing, and thus be successful at doing it.

To find your perfect job, first you have to **revisit** your previous—usually non perfect—ones, and that means going back further than your most recent job. Using only your most recent job as the measuring stick can result in a total 180 degree definition of what you want, especially if you really hate—or hated—your most recent place of employment. Use your career history to provide a broad and balanced picture.

You’ll need to examine **chemistry** between you and the people with whom you’ll work, as well as with your boss. How much autonomy? How much team work? How much mentoring do you need, or believe in giving others? What about the management style of your superiors and how that affects your ability to get done what needs to be done? Don’t say you can work with anybody. Bosses are human, and they come with history and issues.

Stability is important, too, but it can apply to the company, your job, your department, your industry or all of them. In what aspect is stability most important to you? For instance, if you’re in an industry that has to do with automobiles or finance, you’re on tenuous ground these days. Some people thrive on the uncertainty of turnarounds and startups. Best you know what your risk tolerance is and be able to match that to what’s going on with the company.

Location. How far will you drive? Is traffic okay? What about public transportation, switching trains or moving from train to bus? Will you relocate? Under what circumstances? The willingness to live “anywhere” doesn’t impress hiring authorities and doesn’t give recruiters anything to work with. Get in there and figure out areas that are acceptable and ones that aren’t.

When it comes to **money** will you take a cut? If so, why? Because that’s a tough sell. Companies tend to fear you’ll eventually leave for a better paying job, so you better be able to convince them as to why a decrease is acceptable to you. And if you want an increase, is the percentage realistic?

What about **growth**? That’s your position, your knowledge, and/or the company. For some who are aggressive ladder climbers, there has to be room for advancement. That can necessitate a policy of internal hiring first or a strong and stable company looking to expand its markets or products. Or maybe you care instead about the growth of what you know. What you

don't want to be is bored. So if the job gets routine, you're going to want out. Make sure you know where you stand on these factors.

Philosophy is the most overlooked, typically the least often considered, and yet it's the most important, because it drives everything else. If upper-level management wants to make a profit at all costs, the company might be sold. Your division could be eliminated. That affects stability and growth. If you're humanist, and they aren't, eventually you'll feel inconsequential, become unhappy and less enthusiastic about your work. That affects your ability to do your job and then your stability. And different philosophies certainly affect chemistry.

If you function best in a medium-sized company and haven't stopped to consider that, you might end up at a company that's aggressively growing and before you know it, your division is now three times the size it was.

You can use these questions as a jumping off place, looking at all of your previous jobs. Examine if you liked working there, as well as why or why not. Recall your direct supervisors, how they managed you, and if you appreciated them or spent much of the time grumbling. If you were responsible for making things happen, were you able to get things done quickly or were decisions stuck in a quagmire of red tape? Were they considerate of their employees? Recognize and respect them? Did they pay for training programs? Or did they require people to stay late with little or no notice? Simple things like this tell you how important it is to the company to keep their people around.

When you look at these individual factors you begin to see a picture of what you want and what you don't want. More than that, you'll start to see patterns emerge that give you telling information about a company's personality and philosophy. Pay attention to what you're discovering. You need this information on your interview so you can learn if this company is what you want... or not. Otherwise you risk defaulting to simply trying to get the job and have a paycheck.

The second part of your mental 70% is understanding and keying in to the Law of Attraction. Now that you know what you want, you can focus on finding and getting it. When you're focused, anything that doesn't move you closer to what you want ceases to hold your attention. Simply by defining what you want and then focusing on it, you increase your odds of receiving it, because you're not wasting time on what doesn't serve your purpose or meet your needs.

The third component of getting mental about your search is remaining positive and having faith in your ability to make it happen.

And this is the most difficult part. There will be jobs you don't get, and emails that aren't returned, and interviews you aren't invited in for. It becomes easy, if you don't monitor your thoughts, to lose your vision and start taking the rejection personally. But keep your mind on the goal.

Sure, it would be great if every company wanted you, pined for you, fought over you, but you know that's not realistic. So recognize it's a process and that it doesn't happen overnight. Don't set yourself up for failure by saying things like "Well, we'll see," and "Maybe, if I'm lucky." Congratulate yourself on each and every positive thing, no matter how small, that brings you closer to your goal. When you hear yourself go negative, erase it and find the positive spin.

It's your choice how you want to view what's taking place. The greatest baseball player in history, Ty Cobb, played baseball in the early 1900s and set 90 major league records, many of which are still unbroken. One of these is for the highest career batting average. It was .366, which means he hit the ball 36.6% of the time. That also means he did *not* hit it 64.4% of the time! Success is a relative term, and you have the power to define that, too.

*Contributed by **Judi Perkins**. Prior to starting Find the Perfect Job, Judi was a search consultant for 20 years in the contingency and retained markets. She's helped many unemployed people find a job within a few weeks by working closely with them and teaching them methods that entail doing the opposite of the traditional ones. Understanding of the psychology of the process, coupled with increased awareness, results in the excitement of a rewarding job instead of increasing frustration and despair as months continue to pass with no results. Sign up for her free newsletter and learn how to take control of your job search: www.findthepperfectjob.com.*

Lower your layoff risk.

When the general economy starts to go bad, no matter how well your company was doing before, the fears of layoffs start to rumble through the company gossip chain. For good reason: Layoffs are often a company's way of reacting to trying economic times. Whether this is a wise or foolish course of action is up for debate, but what you want to do, of course, is avoid being "selected" for termination.

Some people, will, of course, be laid off despite everything they could do. While it's frustrating and (often) devastating to be laid off, there are ways you can lower your personal risk.

First, think positive.

Unless your company is shutting down (like [DHL](#) did, causing devastation to an entire town), they are going to be terminating some small percentage of the workforce. While a 10% reduction in force can sound terrifying, it also means that more than 90% will keep their jobs. And yes, the "more" than 90% is correct. A 10% reduction will often first start with eliminating any vacant positions before they start eliminating filled positions.

If you are in your boss's office sobbing about the impending layoffs, your boss may start to question your value to the company. Obviously, if you think you are a prime target, you may not be quite as valuable as your boss once thought. Instead, be prepared to demonstrate your value to the company. It may not save you if you've already been selected, but it can keep you off the list in the first place.

Second, be aware of what is going on around you.

It's a rare layoff where all groups are affected equally. What product do you support? Whether you are manufacturing, finance, sales, R&D or HR, you ultimately support a product or product line. How is that product doing? If your product is not selling well, or there hasn't been much success in the R&D pipeline in that field for a while, you need to be aware.

A company may decide that Product X isn't worth supporting anymore. They may decide to stop manufacturing it completely. In that case, even if you are a super high performing finance person, the fact that your job consists of doing the forecasts for Product X means that your name is already down on a list.

If you know your product isn't doing well, it's time to jump ship—to another product line. Check your internal postings. Can you move to Product Y's forecasting team? If you have been selling Product X, convince your boss that you can do even better selling Product Y. Even HR types may need to re-evaluate where they are. Sure, you're in the meetings where layoffs are being discussed but remember that after you turn off everybody else's light, you don't have anyone to support. Work out a deal where you will move to a new group after you finish this reduction.

Third, find out who the decision maker is.

Sure your boss thinks you are a genius, but what if her boss thinks she's an idiot? Her word isn't going to pull much weight in that situation. You need to know who would be making decisions in case a layoff is necessary. This is not advice to "suck up" to the boss's boss's boss. This is advice to know who is important and making sure they know you exist. If every power-point presentation you've ever made, and every research study you've ever completed is presented to the company big-wigs by your boss, you don't exist.

It doesn't really matter that your boss couldn't do what you do even if you held her hand through the whole process. She's not going to admit that and you're never seen. Ask to come to presentations, even if just to observe. A question will come up that your boss won't be able to answer. You answer it. Let people know that you are doing the work.

Fourth, make sure people know what you do.

Decisions for terminations are often made at high levels. These decision makers don't necessarily know what the "little people" (that would be you) actually do on a day to day basis.

My position was once slated for outsourcing. Knowing that whining won't get you very far, my job-share partner and I wrote up a detailed description of what we actually do. We presented it to the decision makers.

Up until that point, no one had ever thought to actually ask us what we did. There were assumptions running rampant. Our boss's boss and the outsourcing company thought they knew what we did based on a job title and the end results. What they didn't know was the level of knowledge and skill necessary to produce those end results.

As a result of our documentation, the outsourcing company stated clearly that they could not take on all that responsibility. If we hadn't spoken up

and presented the facts, the position would have stayed on the outsourcing list.

Make sure that those making decisions understand what you do. Your boss may not be the decision maker. Your boss may be nervous about her own position and so may not be in a position to help you.

Fifth, don't specialize too much.

Specialization has some very good parts to it. You can be a complete expert on a particular process, task or function. This is fabulous, except when hard times call for a reduction in force. Since the work still has to get done, some positions will be combined. You may be the world's foremost authority on your particular topic. Your co-worker may only know $\frac{3}{4}$ of what you do, but if he also knows $\frac{3}{4}$ of what Bob does, as well as has a grasp on his job, you and Bob (who outshine in him in many ways) may find yourself with severance packages while your coworker takes on both of your responsibilities.

You may gasp and say that your responsibilities already are a full time job and there is no way they could be combined with anything else. Well, maybe and maybe not. It's amazing how work expands to fill the time you have.

Learn someone else's job. Cross-train. Be willing to take rotational assignments. These make you well rounded and more valuable to the company.

Sixth, learn hard to find skills.

Did your company just implement SAP? Become an expert. Is there only one guy in the department that knows a certain chemical process? Learn it. Did you get an A in your advanced statistics class in college? Brush up on those skills. Everyone can do power point presentations these days, but not everyone can do the hard core statistics necessary to get the data for said power point presentations.

Don't panic and think there is nothing you can do that is special. Are you the person who can get the copier repair guy to appear in half an hour instead of 3 days? Or better yet, can you fix the copier yourself?

Find something in your department that your managers always struggle to get done and figure out how to do it.

Seventh, don't hoard knowledge.

The sixth point may seem like advice to be the only person who can do something. It's not. It's advice to know how to do hard or rare things. Learn those things and share them. Be seen as a leader.

Managers are a dime a dozen, but leaders are few and far between. Leadership can be displayed at all levels. Teach, train, mentor and guide. If you can do this, your value to the company increases.

In Summary

You may not be able to avoid layoffs. It happens to the best of employees. Honest, it does. Look at it as an opportunity to try something new if it happens to you. But, you can reduce your risk if you are aware of what is going on around you.

*Contributed by **Suzanne Lucas**. Suzanne has nine years of Human Resources experience, most of which has been in a Fortune 500-company setting. She holds a Professional in Human Resources Certificate from the Society for Human Resource Management. She blogs at [Evil HR Lady](#).*

Strategize your strategy.

An important career strategy people may need during the coming year is to simply have a strategy. Downsizing, reorganizations, and layoffs frequently catch us by surprise where we often feel like we're playing catch-up. Many people have never been without a job their entire careers and find themselves like a fish out of water, playing a game without rules; or, not knowing there are rules and just how they are played. **Having a strategy is an essential safety net to bank away for one of those days.**

One client came to see me after the weekend. He was quite excited to tell me he'd sent out 200 resumes – printed, stuffed, licked, labeled, stamped and mailed. Wow... that's a lot of labor, and icky and tough on the tongue, too! I wanted to tell him he'd probably sent 190 of them to the wrong places, but I held my own tongue. His shotgun strategy served no real purpose. Some of those companies were in other states, for goodness sake! Was he brainless? He had no real intention of selling his home and moving, unless there was lots of money in the deal! It's like he grabbed all of the arrows in his quiver, put them all to his bow, and blindfolded, sent them flying in all directions. The probability of hitting a target, any target, is slim, but to hit the bull's eye, virtually impossible.

What's your layaway career strategy? It's essential you know what and where the target is for yourself and, while it is occasionally described using different terms, I call it the **perfect workplace or PWP**.

An eastern proverb states that "without vision, people perish." A ship at anchor will never reach a destination, but a ship wandering aimlessly will soon deplete its resources, with mutiny soon following. A ship requires purpose, energy, vision and strategy to reach its intended port, and so do you, if you want your next place of employment to be the ideal and perfect workplace.

- What do you want in a new job?
- What style of leadership?
- Do you desire to work alone, in teams, or a combination of both?
- What about salary and benefits?
- What do you really need as compensation that will provide for your needs and those of your family?
- How far away are you willing to drive to work?
- What's your passion?
- Do you want to travel sometimes, never or more often?
- Just what gratifies you about going to work on a Monday morning?

- Flex hours or working at home?
- What would you do if finances or education were NOT an obstacle?

Pesky and probing questions necessitate answers and you must know these answers! If you don't know the answers to these questions, who does know? What's in your heart to do? **What does your target PWP job look like to you?**

The flipside of the above proverb says, "With vision, people have life and hope!" When you can actually envision a target, though far away, you have a compass heading. You know where to aim your resume arrows. Possessing or crafting a great resume is important. Boning up for the interview may help you best present yourself. But, where's the target?

There are many factors can drive us in a certain direction during our job search: a certain lifestyle, money, a particular location, or the type of job, itself. **What motivates you when you think about your PWP?**

"Let's make a deal!" I submit a job offer to you, right now. You may do this in any of the 48 states. I declare, yes, I know you have the skills, talents, and education to do this job. You may wear comfortable clothing of your choice. The offer includes an optional 2nd year contract if all goes well the first year of your employment. Oh... the pay. First year salary is 250 big ones! Two hundred and fifty thousand, and all the regular benefits – health insurance, 40 hr work week, sick pay – I'll even throw in your very own parking place with your name on it!

Are you interested in this position, so far? Yeah, but... you wanna know what it is, first, right? It's a fair question. Well, first of all, it's nothing immoral, illegal or unethical! Okay, here goes: you'll work alone in a medium-sized room, proper lighting, ventilation, etc., and a conveyor belt comes from one room to yours, and from yours keeps moving into another room. On the conveyor belt will be chickens. Regular ole' barnyard fresh, free range chickens who need their pretty little heads whacked off. Someone else will then remove their feather coats, and they'll be wrapped in plastic and placed in grocery stores, so all law-abiding Americans can have double-deep-fried chicken over the weekend while watching NFL football, "Dancing with the Stars," or some new reality show on their 50-inch big screens.

You are the whacker and the chickens are the whackees! That'll be your job for the 250 big ones, with the job title, Chief Chicken Chopper.

Ya still interested?"

Quit drooling! There's not one of us who couldn't do this work and not one of us who couldn't suck it up, sever chicken heads for a year and reap the proffered financial reward! But, just why would you take this job? What's your strategy? Many people might take the moola and run. Hint: the money should not be the reason!

My client sent out hundreds of resumes simply because he hoped someone would bite and offer him a ridiculous amount of money for him to move his whole family to another state. His motive was purely to have cash in the hand! However, my client's new occupation would have him working for a powerful master called money, and money would rule over and dictate his work life, probably for 99 hours a week. And, after one year of rolling in the dough like that, it's supremely difficult to leave, for almost anyone.

Do you really want this job? Will you be satisfied returning home after work, week after week, smelling like the insides of foul fowl?

Today, our work, our occupation signifies that we go to a place of employment which occupies our time and pays us money and we, then, pay our bills, and live and eat.

But what are we living for? What's our strategy for life?

Years ago, work didn't just occupy our time; it was called a **vocation**. That word, vocation, is a bit strange. It actually comes from the Latin word, vocare, which means a call, or summons to a particular course of action; or, even a heavenly call to the professional life! That's more the definition we want for our own professional careers. Something we're called to do, gifted to do, educated and trained to do, where we excel because within us there is spark of life, a goal and strategy that is meaningful with purpose; and, incredibly enjoyable, all at the same time. It also must be practical and meet our needs.

Do such jobs exist? Absolutely! And, not only in Timbuktu, Gnome, Alaska, Tierra del Fuego or Bangor, Maine, either!

Even Aristotle, that giant of intellectual and philosophical thought, knew something about work ethics when he so aptly declared, "Where your talents and the world's needs cross, there lies your vocation."

There's another word worth examining for a moment. The word is **provision**. It's a combination of two words: pro and vision. Pro means that which is to or for something. In this case, it's vision. How we provide for our family's needs comes from first having a vision! And, when we finally have

vision, the provision will come. Vision requires strategy! Ultimately, knowing our PWP answers the question “what is the provision for my vision”?

When we know our PWP, the doors opening to those types of jobs will come into focus and we'll know exactly where to shoot our superbly written resume arrows and gain invites to interesting interviews!

While you might consider being a chicken executioner for big bucks, would you really chop chicken heads, if it were for a more realistic, modest salary? Probably not!

As you write out your vision possibilities, share them with your family. They can confirm and help solidify your focus. Fine-tuning your vision unmistakably helps clarify your PWP job target, and should the time come when it's opportune to make a career transition for whatever reason, you'll be more than ready! You'll be strategically ready!

So, what's your strategy for a strategy?

*Contributed by **Shaun Davy**, Chief Consultant/Career Coach at www.shaundavy.com -- "Encouragement in Transition."*

Create a career portfolio.

Career Portfolio Planning: Your Key to Long Term Success

A “Career Path “is a thing of the past—a relic from a time when professionals had jobs that started at entry level and provided a clear path of promotions up until retirement. Today’s careers don’t follow a standard linear progression—we cycle through multiple career shifts—sometimes dramatically.

The good news is that your career no longer belongs to the company. It belongs to you. The challenge is there are very few milestones to tell you if you’re on track. Instead you are left to chart your own course. This can be fulfilling, exciting, and engaging if you are able to navigate the waters; however, it can also be confusing, stressful, and challenging.

So, what has replaced the good old fashioned career path?

Career portfolios.

I recommend managing your career as a portfolio of experiences and competencies that diversify you. Based on your strengths, interests, and level of risk tolerance you make career moves that fit your long and short term goals. You choose opportunities that stretch and expand your skills instead of focusing only on grabbing the next title on the rung. You find security in being in control of each move, rather than feeling at the mercy of your boss, your company or the economy to decide your fate.

A career portfolio opens up many paths for you instead of staying on a one-track career course. Having more options keeps you viable and having a diverse portfolio of skills increases your value in the market. Managing your career as a portfolio allows you to take risks, remain flexible and most importantly...thrive in any economic situation.

So, how do you do this? Here are my top 5 strategies for career portfolio management:

1. Take a long term view instead of making short term moves

As you would with a financial portfolio, you take a long term view. Think about your career in 5-year windows rather than just focusing on the next move.

What other career options interest you? Where would you like to be in 5 years? What are the competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and experience) needed to be there? What moves could you start making now to get you equipped?

Let me give you an example. My client Patrick came to me feeling stalled and underappreciated in his career. He knew that 'someday' he wanted to own his own PR business but he had no plan. He was just focusing on getting to the VP level in his company. But when we looked closer, it became clear he needed some very specific experience and contacts in place to give him the tools he needed to start his own business.

So we shifted from focusing on how to get the 'next promotion'—very short term thinking—to longer term planning. We mapped out the areas he needed experience in to position him for owning his own agency. And he made two subsequent career moves over the course of 3 years that gained him critical experience. From there he successfully launched his own agency—in less than the 5 years we had mapped out.

2. Diversify in several areas

As you begin to look at your career portfolio, you want to consider the following key areas:

- **People connections.** Who is in your network? How might they support your long term goals? Who else might you need in your corner? How can you begin to establish those important relationships?
- **Credentials.** Do you have the credentials you need for the future roles you're interested in?
- **Results.** Have you gotten results in your current and past positions? Do you know how to communicate them in a way that is meaningful to others, outside your company?
- **Leadership.** In what ways are you a leader? This isn't a position-specific competency. You can lead without the power of the position. Are you a leader in planning? Are you a leader in relating to diverse audiences? Where do you stand out?
- **Competencies.** Do you have a diverse set of knowledge, skills and abilities? What opportunities do you have right now to add to your competencies?

3. Say YES to things that expand your portfolio and NO to single track career moves

Everything you say “yes” to means you are saying “no” to something else. So if you take on assignments, projects, education, training or even a new role you have to be sure that you are saying YES because it expands your portfolio. Oftentimes people say yes to career moves they think they should say yes to...even if it doesn't serve their long term goals. This is guaranteed to keep you in a rut.

My client Gary is a perfect example of this. He had taken on a ‘turnaround’ department that historically had major problems and was clearly understaffed. And he was overwhelmed. But he kept saying ‘Yes’ to new projects and assignments that he and his team knew was more than they could handle. He did it because he didn't realize he had a choice...he operated under the assumption that if the boss asks, you say yes and figure it out later.

Gary's long-term goal was to land a VP level position. That was never going to happen as long as he was known as the Director who over-promised and under-delivered. Things had to turn around. So he created a decision filter that helped him determine which opportunities he could over-deliver on and which ones he had to say “no” to. Within several months the morale and performance had improved in his group and he was tapped for a new job in a different department...and one that better positioned him for a VP role as it expanded his competencies significantly.

4. Build “crossover” competencies not just skills and experience ‘in your field’

Map out at least 3 roles you'd like as options in your future. Start looking at job descriptions for these roles and identify the knowledge, skills and abilities required. Make a list and rate yourself on them. Once you know where you have ‘crossover’ competencies and where you have gaps, you can start making career moves that match up to this list.

Your goal, with any move you make, is to be able to check off at least one of the competencies on the list. Whether it's a project you take on in your current role, a training program you sign up for, or volunteer work you do...everything has the purpose of growing your portfolio and expanding your capability.

Many people make moves that keep them in their ‘field’. But that can be a dead end track. If you get too much depth in one area, even if you love it, and the opportunities start to dry up...you're going to be at risk. If you've

thoughtfully complemented your core strengths with other crossover competencies you will have options if you need them. It's effectively building your career safety net.

5. Know your "most profitable competencies"

You recession-proof your career by knowing exactly what your strongest competencies are and communicating them clearly to your employer or future employers. Instead of feeling stuck in your field or industry, look at how what you do well adds value.

These are your most profitable competencies...the things other employers and departments want to bring in to their groups. By knowing and being able to communicate your best competencies you are able to stay flexible and fill a wider number of roles in wider variety of industries.

It helps to stay current on the trends in the economy and your field or industry. Look ahead a few years and make sure you're moving toward opportunities that align with the trends (instead of leaving you on the chopping block).

This was a strategy I used in the early 1990's to manage my HR career. In the mid 90's the writing was on the wall that much of Human Resources was going to be outsourced, industry wide, in the next 5 to 10 years. I noticed the trend toward becoming more strategic and being able to support company-wide change efforts. I decided it was time to diversify in order to avoid a dead-end career track.

I volunteered for projects within my company that were oriented around changing the way we did business. I went back to grad school to earn my Masters Degree. I also had an interest in teaching, so I took electives in adult learning.

Within 5 years I took a job in Management Consulting where I could get deeper experience leading organizational change in a variety of industries. From there, I expanded my experience base by taking on a part time college teaching position.

All of these moves were designed to expand my career portfolio so that I had options, no matter what happened. I could be an HR Manager, I could consult, I could teach. I knew traditional HR functions and I knew how to implement broad scale change. All of these moves made me unique and more valuable in the marketplace.

Have fun building up your portfolio and experimenting with new assignments and possibilities. This can be an exciting process because you pursue things that interest you and allow you to grow. It pulls you out of the rut of worrying about what will happen and puts you in the driver's seat so you're ready for anything.

*Contributed by **Shawn Driscoll**. Shawn helps high-achieving executives and entrepreneurs breakthrough to the next level of success. She empowers them with the insights, tools and strategies they need to rise to the challenge of their personal mission so they can experience meaningful success while making a real difference in the world. Register for your free e-course **The 7 Surefire Strategies to Reignite the Fire in Your Belly** at www.ShawnDriscoll.com.*

See yourself in 3 dimensions.

Past, present and future make up the whole of life. In making plans for the future, it is important to look at the past and present. In addition, it is just as vital to look at what one wants in the future. To discover who you are (and have been) self-examination is essential. Many of us find this difficult, but it can be reduced to a few steps.

Nostalgia: looking back. This is the first step. Think of the golden olden days when things were fine and life was grand!

Dream Time: looking inside. Your current uneasiness is a signal that you need to make some changes in yourself and your life. But without becoming aware of one's current reality, it is difficult to know what or how to change, what to keep and what to shed.

Fantasy: looking forward. It is not always easy to know what one wants for the future, or even what the future may hold, regardless of who or what you are. What did you want for yourself as a child, a teen or a young adult? Are these still possible dreams? If not, why not? What is holding you back?

Thinking Time: the Brain Piece

Look back over your life. What particular things have you done well? Make a list of job titles, job tasks, hobbies, crafts, volunteer work and personal interactions. Of these, does anything stand out as the thing you enjoyed the most? Something that gave you great delight?

Look inside. Right now, what are you excellent at doing? What prompts compliments from colleagues, superiors, friends and family? What do you know you do well? What gives you great satisfaction?

Look forward. Have you ever thought of what you might excel at in the future? Make a list again, of job titles, new hobbies, crafts, volunteer work particular tasks or interactions that make you feel really competent and fulfilled.

Calculating Time: the Money Piece

Look back. What salary level have you made in the past? What was your lifestyle then? Did your salary and lifestyle match? Were you in debt, just making it, or able to save money? Did you feel happy with your income and lifestyle?

Look inside. What is your current income? Are you where you wanted to be, financially, at this point in your life? Do you need to restructure your spending habits or pay down debt? Do you need to develop savings or investment or retirement plans? Is this current salary the right amount of money for you to earn?

Look forward. What kind of income will you need in the future? How much money do you need to save... for a house, for retirement, for a special project? How can you do these things? How could your lifestyle change a bit to make these saving or investment plans more possible? What do you need to earn, and for how many years? How much money will you need when you get to your retirement years?

Putting the Pieces Together

So what happens next? What have you uncovered about yourself through nostalgia, dreaming and fantasy? What can you do with whatever insights you have discovered about your past, present and future? Do you see common threads? Does something become so obvious you can't believe you missed it before? Or are you in a fog and don't have a clue?

What happens next is that you take one step at a time, just as you always have. Incredibly, you probably know yourself better than anyone else does, and you only need to take the one step. This may be enough, to see the future and yourself in that future one bit at a time. Or it may be very uncomfortable to do this, and you will need to develop a more structured plan. The point is, you are the guide to your own future. It's all in there! Best of luck and bon voyage!

*Contributed by **Pamela Schulman**, MA, CRC. Pamela assists persons with and without disabilities in achieving self-actualization through personal and career assessment, exploration of dreams and goals, and guidance with career steps, resulting in restoration of motivation, work ethic, enthusiasm and individual and professional success.*

Use New Job-Searching Paradigms for 2009.

In 2009, with the current economy being what it is, it will be more important than ever not to settle for any old job, but to go for your dream job instead.

Finding and landing that dream job isn't just about gaining job-seeking skills, it's about shifting our job-searching paradigms. Before we can become skilled job-seekers, we need to take a look at the old paradigm, understand what's wrong with it, and then replace it with something new. The old paradigm of job-searching states that if you want to make a lot of money (or even a decent amount of money), you've got to work really, really, really hard.

The old paradigm doesn't make all that much sense if you think about it. I'm making the next sentence bold because it is the critical insight that you need to wrap your brain around. Here it is: **When we feel like we're working very hard, it is usually because we're doing something that we aren't very good at. Why would anyone pay you a lot of money for something that you aren't good at?!**

The new paradigm is all about bringing value to the table. Forget (for a moment) about finding a job, earning money and paying your bills (I know it's hard, but trust me!). Focus instead on the value that you can bring to the table. Answer the question "what can I do better than anybody else" – and trust me, everyone has something that they can do better than anybody else.

This is where the fun begins. The fact that you tend to like what you're good at is not an accident. You like it because when you are building upon your strengths, you feel good. Following the directions that your strengths lead you towards will land you a job you actually enjoy.

Focusing on the value that you bring to the table is the key that unlocks every possibility, all because of one simple equation: **VALUE > COST**. That's all there is to it – so long as value is greater than cost, everything works. If your customers are getting more value than it's costing them, you've got lots of happy customers. Well, the product that you're selling to a prospective employer is yourself and your expertise.

Focusing on value leads to the "long tail" approach to marketing yourself. This approach is based on uniqueness, and the idea that success comes from finding a niche where your uniqueness is needed and appreciated. By focusing on this niche, you can avoid focusing on the wider spectrum where

you can waste a lot of time and energy on employers that don't need you, or maybe even have any interest in you. There's a lot less competition in a creek (your niche) than in the ocean (the entire job market).

By figuring out where you really belong, your unique strengths will make you the uniquely appropriate candidate. With this approach, you're no longer wasting your time applying to all the same jobs in all the same ways as everyone else. You're maximizing your strength as a candidate by positioning yourself in the right place. Since you're focusing on what makes you unique, you're no longer trying to fit yourself to the same mold that all the other candidates are trying to fill – you're creating your own.

*Contributed by **Danny Iny**. Danny describes himself as a compulsive entrepreneur, with experience in Strategic Communications (www.DannyIny.com), and in educational technology (www.MaestroReading.com). He has won awards for innovative business planning, and is the author of the book, “Ordinary Miracles,” which has a five-star rating on Amazon.com. He has sat on both sides of the job interview table, and has helped many people solve problems at work and find fulfilling employment, leading to his most recent ventures: [HuntingToHired](#), and the [Tough Economy Jobs blog](#).*

Use the Force.

Yes, I'm a "Star Wars" fan. No, that's not the "Force" I mean.

Did your high school or college offer comprehensive courses in "Choosing the Right Career," "Creating a Compelling Résumé," "Job Interviewing Success," "Climbing the Corporate Ladder," "Avoiding Layoffs" or similar topics to teach you all about the various stages of career development?

If the answer is yes, count yourself lucky... but not too lucky. Most of what you learned is outdated and ineffective for today's career environment.

If the answer is no, join the crowd.

One of the most important areas of your life—your career—is left up to you to learn about... through the painful "School of Hard Knocks."

Ouch! No wonder so many people make so many career mistakes. The sad part is, many of them don't even realize they're doing anything wrong. When their career doesn't advance as expected, they chalk it up to things like bad luck, ignorant supervisors, or unfair practices by employers.

So they keep making the same mistakes over and over. Twenty years can go by as they struggle from one dead-end job to another.

That's the bad news.

Here's the good news: there is a powerful Force that can help you.

This Force allows you to learn from the knowledge, wisdom, insights and experiences of many people. It can teach you the best career strategies and answer all of your questions, even the ones you don't know to ask. It enables you to see multiple paths to success. It is a benevolent Force, with no "dark side" to avoid. When you use the Force, you become part of it as it grows and helps others.

You may know the Force by other names: association, group, team, network—or my personal favorite—a *community of learning*.

The most powerful Force doesn't require you to be a "networker." It doesn't judge you by the connections you have, or how far up (or down) you are on the corporate ladder. It accepts you as you are; its goal is to help you become what you want to become.

All you have to do is find the Force that is best for you—and USE it.

The best place to start is with the list of resources at the end of this report.

You can also put your favorite search engine to work using terms like "career discussion forum," "career community," "career Ning," and "career and social networking sites."

You see, there's really no need for you to continue struggling alone, trying to figure out the best way to advance your career through painful trial-and-error.

You're already feeling some mild effects of the Force by reading this report and benefiting from the knowledge, wisdom, insights and experiences of the many people who shared their career strategies with you.

Don't be afraid to take it to the next level.

Use the Force!

*Contributed by **Bonnie Lowe**, author of "The Job Interview Success System." Bonnie is the creator of www.BestInterviewStrategies.com, and is currently developing one of the most powerful Forces for ensuring a successful career: www.BestCareerStrategies.com.*

Conclusion

I hope you read through all of the strategies outlined in this report... even the ones that you didn't think apply to you or your situation.

If you did, you learned about many eye-opening concepts, including:

1. Get outside your comfort zone and consider new options.
2. Act strategically.
3. Build relationships and make connections.
4. Use a multi-pronged approach.
5. Actively manage your career.
6. Build your personal brand.
7. Use social networking and other online tactics.
8. Adopt an entrepreneurial attitude.
9. Get creative.
10. Build a diverse career portfolio

And many more.

What About "Climbing the Corporate Ladder"?

Climbing the corporate ladder was never really "easy," but we all had the same basic path. We knew where we were on the ladder at any given time, we could clearly see where the next rung was, and we had a good idea of how to get up to that next rung. We progressed in our careers one rung at a time. Some of us stayed on a rung longer than desired; some of us even slipped and dropped down a rung or two before stabilizing ourselves. Heck, many of us jumped off one ladder so we could start climbing a new one. But the path upward, regardless of the ladder we were on, wasn't terribly complicated.

As long as we were determined to climb it, were careful to hold on, and took a step upward whenever we had the chance, we knew we could eventually reach the top.

Well, as I said in the Introduction, the employment game has drastically changed.

The “corporate ladder” no longer exists. It’s been pulled out from under us and disassembled.

If you want to reach the top, you’ll need to change your strategies and use different tools.

I realize many of you will be reluctant to do this. Few people willingly give up familiar and comfortable surroundings in order to face new and unfamiliar challenges... even when doing so can result in wonderful rewards.

That’s why there’s never been a better time to be a person who will leave the broken ladder behind and learn to use new tools—new strategies—to reach the top of your career goals.

This report outlines many of the strategies you can use right now to begin developing and achieving a successful, rewarding career.

It mentions many of the amazing new tools that will allow you to find and take advantage of opportunities you would otherwise be oblivious to.

It demonstrates the power of *community learning*. The diverse strategies in this report could never have come from one person, no matter how great an expert he or she is on career success.

It represents the foundational knowledge and the proper mindset for embracing a new concept for career development and advancement: the use of an interactive community learning environment.

I’ll be providing you with additional free content beyond this report, with tips and strategies you can use to get hired or get ahead. (That’s assuming you received this free report after signing up for the Best Career Strategies list at my website, www.BestCareerStrategies.com. If you received it another way, go there now and provide your email address so you won’t miss the additional free tips and strategies I’ll be providing.)

But for those of you who want to get on **the fast track to career success**, I have another option.

I plan to offer a training program to teach people how to master the dozens of strategies mentioned in this report, and many more.

It will be enlightening and effective. It will be interesting and interactive. It will even be fun, because it will be *a community*—a powerful Force you can use and become part of—which will help you achieve your goals.

Stated in a different way, this training program will be your **shortcut to the top**.

What Now?

First, please go to our blog and post a comment telling everyone what you think about the strategies in this report. I'd love to know your opinion (good or bad). Were they helpful to you? Do you think they'll be helpful to others? If you've got results from using them, please let us know!

Then make sure you're signed up for the [Best Career Strategies list](#). Don't worry, you will not be spammed with a bunch of promotional hype related to the training program I'm developing. I'll let you know when the program becomes available (hopefully soon), and any other articles you receive will be useful tips and strategies you can use to advance in your career, whether you become a student of the training program or not.

Thanks for reading this. Feel free to share it with your friends.

I wish you all the very best career success... and I hope to have a new and exciting relationship with some of you soon that will help you get hired or get ahead!

Bonnie Lowe

www.BestCareerStrategies.com

Resources

[45Things.com](#)

[BestCareerStrategies.com](#)

[BestInterviewStrategies.com](#)

[Blitz the Ladder](#)

[CareerBuilder.com](#)

[CareerFitnessCoach.com](#)

[CareerSpecialist.net](#)

[Career Solvers](#)

[Employee Engagement Network](#)

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[Evil HR Lady](#)

[Examiner.com](#)

[Facebook](#)

[FindThePerfectJob.com](#)

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[JobDig.com](#)

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