

# 25 Ways to Stay Employed

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It's no secret: life is uncertain. Restructuring, downsizing, and mergers can force companies to layoff even excellent performers. Many employees live in a constant state of fear about losing their jobs. Our research in more than 80 organizations has shown that, on average, 1 out of 2 employees believe that they do not have a good future with their organization.

Staying employed involves more than just doing a good job. Here are 25 things you can do right now to tip the odds in your favor:

## **1. Focus on accomplishments**

You deliver value to your organization by amassing accomplishments, and there are only three ways to do that: make the organization money, save the organization money, or develop something new for the organization. Your value will increase in your organization and in the marketplace if you can point to tangible results that you have achieved, either directly or indirectly.

## **2. Volunteer for assignments**

Be the first person to say yes to a new assignment, project, or committee, if you believe that your participation will lead to tangible accomplishments that you can tout at your next performance review, list on your application for an internal promotion, or add to your resume.

## **3. Provide value to your boss**

You should have a clear understanding of what is important to your boss and how you can help him or her attain tangible accomplishments. Become the person who your boss turns to when something important needs to be done.

## **4. Focus**

Make certain that you are not spread too thin. Focusing on one or two projects, activities, or initiatives will increase the probability that you will achieve tangible accomplishments.

## **5. Become a valued resource rather than a readily available commodity**

If you are just one of the many accountants, claims representatives, or sales consultants in your organization, you will be viewed as a commodity that can be easily replaced. Develop a unique expertise, clientele, or knowledge base.

## **6. Avoid becoming an expert in non-marketable arenas**

If you focus on becoming an expert in an aging technology, product, or service, you will eventually become a dinosaur and a prime candidate for the next round of layoffs.

## **7. Don't make enemies**

You never know what might happen if you make an enemy within your organization. Your enemy could speak ill of you to your boss, spread damaging rumors about you, or even become your next boss. Provide the best service possible to all of your internal customers. Make certain you do not intentionally embarrass or speak ill of others in the organization.

## **8. Don't finger point**

It is easier to change your own behavior than to change the behavior of others. Instead of pointing fingers at other departments or other people, focus instead on what you can do to improve the situation.

## **9. Be visible**

If you just hide out in your office or cubicle, you will not develop the relationships with others in the organization that can help you stay employed.

#### **10. Work on assignments that are core to the business**

If you focus on working on activities that are at the periphery of the organization's core business, you too will all be viewed as peripheral.

#### **11. Stay ahead of the curve**

Just as late adopters to new technology are viewed as behind the times, late adopters of any new philosophy, goal, or strategy are also not valued.

#### **12. Get involved in "sure thing projects"**

Seek out opportunities to become involved with projects, programs, or initiatives that have a high probability of success.

#### **13. Curry favor with your boss's boss**

Maintain visibility with your boss's boss. Go out of your way to meet his or her expectations.

#### **14. Recognize the signs**

Don't turn a deaf ear to news about the organization's declining profits, rumors about a merger or acquisition, or changes in the direction of the organization. Be alert for signs that your boss does not hold you in high esteem. Ignore these signs at your own peril.

#### **15. Network within the organization**

Get to know the department heads and other key players throughout the organization. Sometimes an internal transfer can help you advance or stay employed within the organization. Switching jobs internally is often more beneficial than switching organizations because it will enable you to keep your seniority, salary grade, benefits, accrued vacation days, and retirement vesting.

#### **16. Network outside the organization**

People who are well connected to others have a much easier time finding jobs than those who live and work in isolation. Seek out opportunities to get to know people in other organizations who might eventually hire you or provide you with referrals. This includes colleagues in other organizations, competitors, suppliers, and consultants.

#### **17. Join professional associations**

Become an active member of at least one professional association in your field. Attending professional meetings will enable you to learn from the speakers and your colleagues. It will also be a place for you to learn about new job opportunities. Choose organizations that meet at least monthly so that you have the opportunity to get to know the other members. Volunteer to work on a committee but choose one that provides you with additional opportunities to get to know others in your field rather than one where you could be working in isolation.

#### **18. Keep in touch with recruiters**

You may periodically receive what you view as annoying calls from recruiters. However, they often know about opportunities that are not advertised. When recruiters call and you are not currently interested in leaving your organization, thank them and tell them to keep you on their call list. Also, get their contact information and enter it on your personal computer (not the organization's computer, which could be confiscated if you are suddenly laid off).

#### **19. Continually develop your marketable skills**

If you don't have one, consider getting an advanced degree by attending evening classes. Also, seek out opportunities at work that enable you to gain new marketable skills. These could be hard skills such as a new programming language or accounting method, or soft skills such as managing, selling, or marketing.

#### **20. Keep in touch with former co-workers**

Former co-workers are an important part of your professional network. You will likely rely upon them heavily during your next job search. Stay in contact with them via e-mail or phone. Go out of your way to meet with them as well.

### **21. Keep in touch with former bosses**

Your former bosses are also very important members of your professional network, particularly if you know they continue to respect your skills and abilities. If they hired you once, they might hire you again or refer you elsewhere.

### **22. Move to the tension with your boss**

If you believe your boss does not view you positively, don't ignore the situation. Avoiding your boss or denying that there is a problem will only make it worse. Schedule a sit down and discuss any concerns about your performance so that you can improve.

### **23. Start looking when you are assigned a new boss**

When you are assigned a new boss, your days may be numbered. The boss who hires you is invested in your success; a new boss usually is not. Do your best to meet all of your new boss's expectations but realize that he or she might prefer replacing you with a hand-picked new person.

### **24. Keep your resume current**

This will help prepare you for sudden unemployment. It will also focus you on amassing tangible accomplishments in your current job.

### **25. Be ready and willing to abandon ship**

If all else fails, be ready to leave. The unstated employment contract today is that organizations will be loyal to employees only as long as it is in their best interest. You need to adopt the same attitude. If you are not learning or growing, doing the type of work you enjoy, or earning the money you feel you deserve, be ready to jump to a position that better meets your needs.

### **Conclusion**

You never know. Through no fault of your own, today could be your last day at your current job. Don't be caught unprepared. Take stock of whether you are doing all of the 25 things outlined above to stay employed.

### **About the Author(s)**

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