

Your Next Job

How to Bounce Back
From a Job Loss
Better Than Before



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Chapter 1: You Just Lost Your Job. Now What?

Bad News

If you are reading this book, chances are, you've had better days. You went into work this morning, or however long ago it was, and next thing you know, you're being shown the door. Permanently.

Take a deep breath. Count to 10, or maybe 100. It's going to be okay. You've lost your job. That's the bad news. But there's good news, too.

Good News

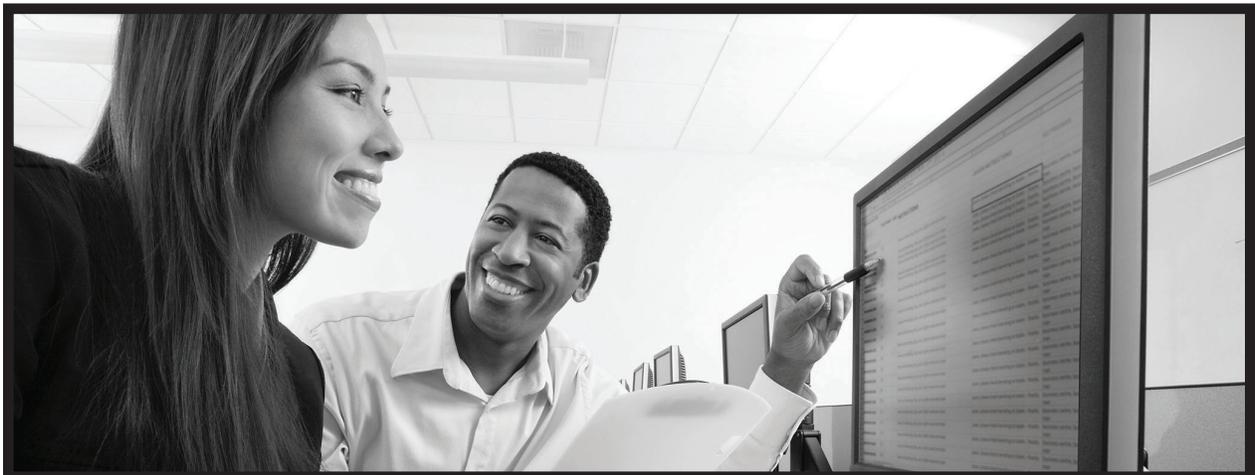
First, **you will again have better days than this one.** Much better days. You *will* get yourself another job. Say it. Right now. Out loud if you're in a safe space.

More good news. **You are reading this book.** Your goal is very clear: to get yourself another job. The book you are holding in your hands right now is tailor-made to help you bounce back from what has just happened to you.

Most important of all – **You are not alone.** You have friends. You have family. You may have other people in your life who have been through what you're going through now. Don't be ashamed. Talk to these people. They want to help.

Also, **you have the Texas Workforce Solutions network.** That's the Texas Workforce Commission (the people who published this book) and the 28 local Texas Workforce Solutions boards. Even if you are not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits (see step #4 below), you are still entitled to Workforce Solutions services.

This vast system is built to help people like you bounce back from a job loss. The taxes that you and other Texas workers pay help finance this system. It's literally yours to use at no cost. Please do not hesitate to use it!



Do These Nine Things Immediately When You Lose Your Job

There are a number of steps you will want to take immediately—within 24 hours—after you get terminated from your job. If that window has already passed, don't worry. Just make it a goal to accomplish the following things by this time tomorrow.

- 1) Visit a Workforce Solutions office and connect with a staff person
- 2) Update your résumé
- 3) Register for WorkInTexas.com to receive information on job openings
- 4) Apply for unemployment insurance
- 5) Manage and channel your stress and emotions
- 6) Adjust financially
- 7) Get key information from your former employer
- 8) Start looking for your next job
- 9) Remember: The shorter the gap, the easier to land

Now here are the details.

1) Visit a Workforce Solutions Office and Connect with a Staff Person.

If you've done this already, great. If not, finding the Workforce Solutions office nearest to you is pretty easy if you have internet access. Go to texasworkforce.org or, which is the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) website, and click "Find Locations" at the very top of the screen. Type in your zip code. A list of the nearest locations will pop up. If you don't have internet access, go someplace public that does, like your local library. You can also call TWC's main switchboard: 512-463-2222.

There's a reason this is the first thing on the list. The professionals at Workforce Solutions can assist you with just about everything that this chapter and this book instruct you to do. Updating your résumé, applying for Unemployment Insurance, job hunting, interview preparation, stress management, financial management, support groups—this is their bread and butter. Either they will be able to help you directly, or they will know who can.

Remember: You can talk with Workforce Solutions staff about more than just your résumé. If you are experiencing any kind of anxiety related to your job search or employment situation in general, you should make step 5 on this list, managing and channeling your stress and emotions, the very first thing



Visit the Texas Workforce Commission's homepage at texasworkforce.org and click "Find Locations" at the top of the page to find a Workforce Solutions office near you.

you discuss with staff. They can help you and provide resources and strategies to cope. Then you can continue to step 2.

It's the biggest favor you can do your future employed self: find a Workforce Solutions office, go to it, and start a conversation with a professional on staff.

2) Update Your Résumé.

This is the key in the ignition that gets your motor running from here to your next job.

Maybe the last time you updated your résumé was 20 years ago. That's okay. It's not uncommon for Workforce Solutions staff to encounter new job hunters who need training in software like Microsoft Word in order to put together a résumé.

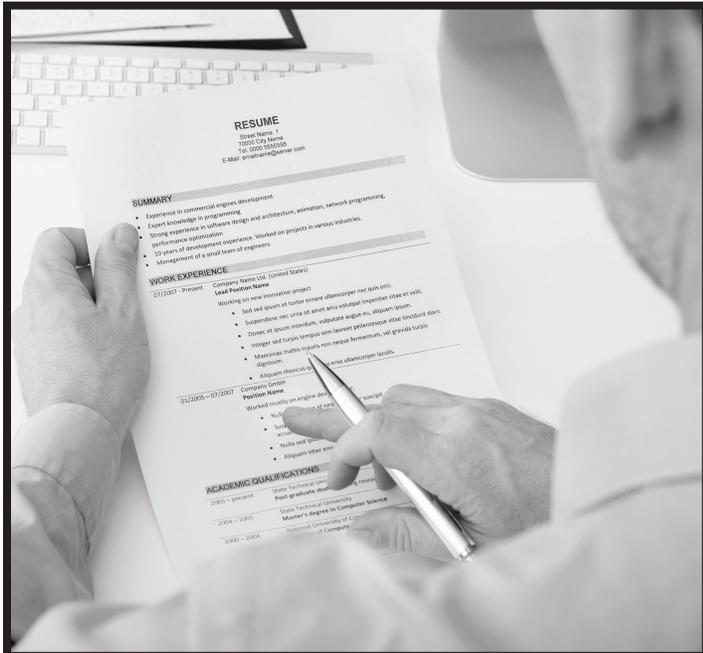
Maybe you come from a specialized skill trade that you enjoy precisely because of how different it is from your memories of high school writing classes.

If that sounds like you, then you may have an easier time talking about your work history rather than writing about it. So start there by talking to a staff person about your work experience and she will help you package all that great stuff into a compelling résumé that will make your potential employers want to interview you.

That is the goal of a résumé, after all: to make people who hire people want to talk to you, to learn more about you, in order to decide ultimately whether to hire you. Your résumé is like your own personal "ME INC." commercial advertisement. Its purpose is to make potential buyers (employers) interested in your services. Workforce Solutions staff will help you do that.

One last note about your résumé. In the past your résumé consisted of just the sheet or two of paper you handed to a prospective employer. Today it's different. Today there is a whole host of online platforms to which you can post information about yourself, that can give employers an idea of who you are – and whether they want to interview you. These online platforms are called "social media" – think

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and more.



We'll talk more about social media later in this publication, but for now, know this. If you're not on social media, you'll want to start building a presence there. If you are on social media, you will want to make sure your content contains material that will encourage rather than discourage employers to talk to you. Again, a Workforce Solutions staff person can help you do that.

Also, it is smart to **put your social media handles on your physical résumé** next to your traditional contact information. Your LinkedIn information would be best, if you are on that network. You don't need to include

your Facebook or Twitter information. However, you should assume the employer will search for you on those networks.

3) Register for WorkInTexas.com to Receive Information on Job Openings.

Once you have a résumé with your work history, you can load that information onto WorkInTexas.com (WIT), the premier job matching website in Texas. In addition to personalized job matching, WIT helps you build your résumé and provides access to career tools like:

- Job Search options, tips and techniques
- US.jobs website by the National Labor Exchange
- Federal contractor job postings for veterans
- Skills matching for new careers
- Hints on how to complete a State of Texas job application
- Texas labor market information
- Information about the public transportation system in your area

Once you get your résumé loaded on WIT you will be able to set several preferences to the type of job you're looking for, such as where you want to work, salary, and more. You can choose to receive emails from WIT when new jobs are posted that match your preferences.

Make sure you cast a wide net. The variety of preferences that WIT allows you to set are helpful, but make sure you don't set them so specifically and narrowly that you eliminate real possibilities.

A Workforce Solutions professional can walk you through how to register on WIT in a way that helps you get the most out of it.

Registered job seekers, employers, and workforce staff

User ID: Enter User ID
Password: [input field] Logon

WORK IN TEXAS
com

Find A Job. Find An Employee.
Find Another Reason To Love Texas.

Join the Largest Free Job Matching Network in Texas

4,370 Jobs Posted Today	246,467 Total Job Openings	409,016 Active Resumés	2,290,952 Total Jobs Filled
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Employer Registration Job Seeker Registration

Visit and set up an account on WorkInTexas.com, the premier job matching website in Texas, within 24 hours of your job loss.

4) Apply for Unemployment Insurance.

To apply for unemployment benefits, you will need your social security number, contact information for your former employer, dates of employment, hours you worked and pay information, federal or military employment information if you worked for the federal government or served in the armed forces in the last eighteen months, and an alien registration number if you are not a U.S. citizen. You can apply:

- Online: Log on to TWC's Unemployment Benefits Services (UBS) at ui.texasworkforce.org. You will also find several tutorials for how to use the self-service options available on UBS.
- By phone: Call 800-939-6631 to speak with a customer service representative.

Unless exempt from work search, you must also register for work search in the state where you reside. To register in Texas, go to WorkInTexas.com and complete the "Register as a Job Seeker" application.

After you apply, you must request payment every two weeks to receive benefits. When requesting payment, you will answer several questions regarding your work and earnings and whether you met eligibility requirements during the claim period. If you work during the claim period, you must report your gross earnings as part of your payment request. For detailed information on reporting earnings, go to texasworkforce.org/unemploymentbenefits and select "How to Report Your Earnings." If you do not correctly report your work or earnings, you will have to repay any benefits received in error, and may lose your remaining benefits.

Important Note: Depending on your specific circumstances, you may or may not be found eligible for UI benefits. This is why you want to apply for UI benefits as soon as possible, so you can know how much money in benefits, if any, you can rely on.

5) Manage and Channel Your Stress and Emotions.

Depending on how urgent your emotional needs are, this may be the first issue you need to address after losing your job. Do what you need to do to get emotionally well. At times like this, it is easy to act rashly and make mistakes that only make your situation worse.



Again, recognize that you are not alone in this. If you were part of a mass layoff in which the employer called in a team from the local Workforce Solutions office, you may have received information regarding stress management programs. And some employers may make mental health assistance (known as an “Employee Assistance Program”) available to employees even for a period of time after laying them off. Take advantage.

Check with a Workforce Solutions staff person to see what other resources are available in your area to help you cope emotionally. There may be job support groups at religious or other non-profit institutions in your area.

Stress management is an absolute must in order for you to be able to focus on the tasks before you, including finding your next job. It may be especially important if you have been told you will be laid off at a fast-approaching future date. If you let your emotions get the best of you, you might say or do something regrettable (either at work or somewhere public like social media) that allows your employer to fire you for cause. To say the least, that would not help you find your next job.

Get whatever help you need to manage your emotions and channel them into positive behaviors that can help, not hinder, your job hunt and your overall healing process.

6) Adjust Financially.

This is one of the smartest, most high-impact steps you can take. Look at your finances. Assess your situation and make a budget. Cut your expenses. A good frozen pizza from the grocery store may cost a fraction of a delivery.

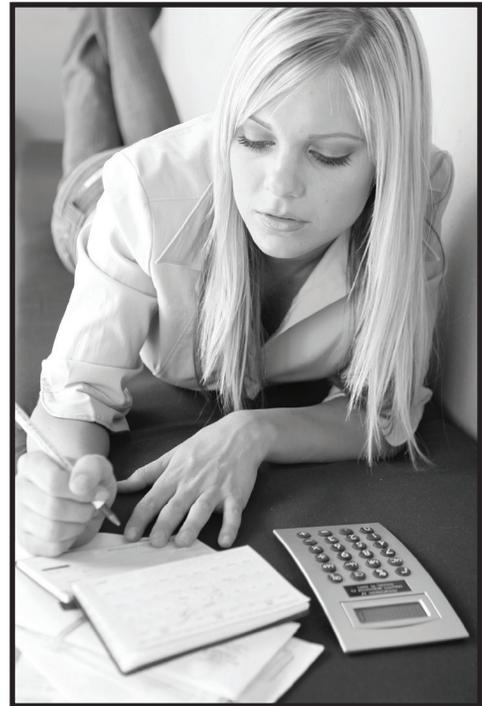
Don't make any new major purchases, or go on any European vacations.

Pay off your debts as rapidly as you can.

7) Get Key Information from Your Former Employer.

In the course of laying you off, your employer should have provided you with certain important facts. Here is some of what you should expect your employer to tell you. If your former employer hasn't given you this information, call the human resources department and ask:

- When you should expect your last paycheck
- Whether you will be paid for the sick and vacation leave you have left
- Whether the company will agree with your UI application
- Whether you are vested with the company laying you off [this could impact your 401(k) if you have one]





- Whether there will be a severance package
- If your health insurance will be continued for any length of time under COBRA
- Your former employer’s contact information (phone number and email address) so that prospective employers can verify your employment

If you are having trouble getting this information from your former employer, talk to a Workforce Solutions staff person who can help you directly or refer you to someone who can.

If you believe your former employer still owes you a last paycheck, you can call TWC’s Labor Law Section (800-832-9243 in Texas only, 512-475-2670 in Austin and out of state). You can ask TWC what your options are, including submitting a wage claim under the Texas Payday Law.

8) Start Looking for Your Next Job.

Now you’re ready to start the nitty gritty of looking for a new job.

Actually finding your next job requires a lot more than just looking. But starting to look will get your mind working on what your next steps are, and you might even identify a target. (If you do, write it down in a place you know you will be referring back to.) You don’t have to spend a lot of time doing this your first day. Just a few minutes may help warm you up.

Understand, going forward your new full-time job will be your job hunt. Eight hours a day, five days a week. True, you won’t be getting paid to do this. But by taking this seriously, you’ll be doing yourself and your family a favor.

9) REMEMBER: The Shorter the Gap, the Easier to Land

When some people suffer a job loss, they think it may do them some good to take some time off “for themselves” before starting to look for their next job. If that’s you, please read this very carefully.

First of all, if you are determined to take some time off, define it. Decide right now how much time that's going to be. The coming weekend? The next calendar week? Right now, schedule the date you will start job hunting, and commit to being ready to start on that date.

The less time you take off, the easier you will make it for yourself to find your next job.

The reason is simple: Résumé gaps are bad. A résumé gap is a stretch of time between your most recent job and the present day. The longer that gap, the less attractive you will appear to employers – at least on paper, which is often the first contact they will have with you. Gaps may be unavoidable sometimes, but they're still not desirable.

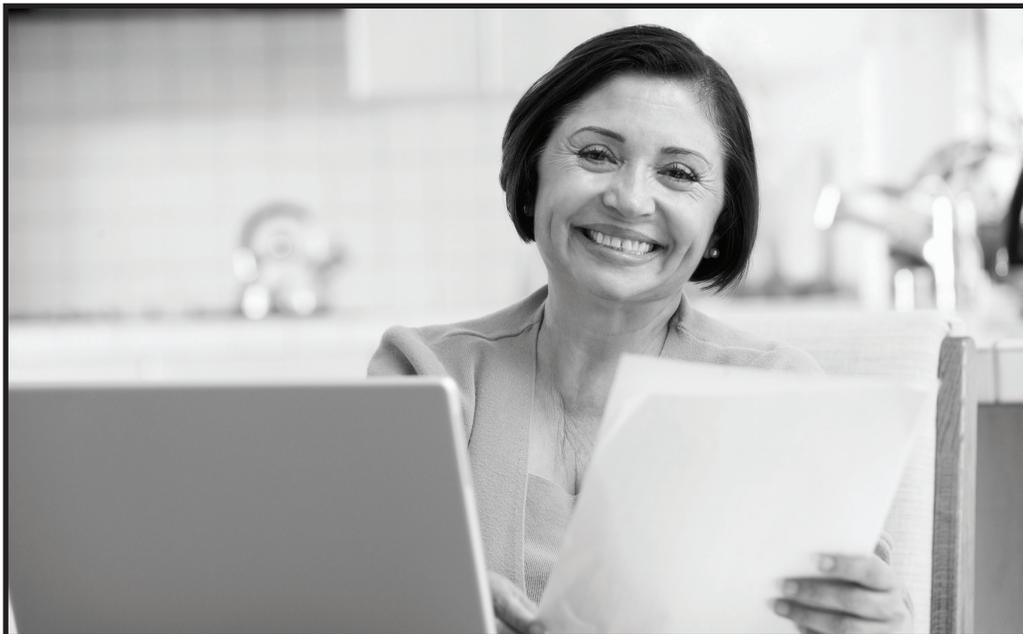
Your Next Job

You have the power to decide where you go from here.

You are not alone.

Your next job may be just around the corner. All you have to do is bag it.

But to bag it, first you have to hunt for it. That's Chapter 2.



Chapter 2: Job Hunt Like You Mean It

Organize, Search and Identify

The Job Hunt is Now Your Full-Time Job

If you're going to job hunt in a way that gets the results you want, you have to treat it like a full-time job. Monday through Friday you get up and go to work. Eight hours a day, 40 a week.

If you commit yourself to spending this much time on your job hunt, it will also effectively set boundaries so you don't neglect other areas of life, like your family. If you spend eight solid hours at a Workforce Solutions office on Tuesday, lining up your leads, tailoring your résumé, connecting with local trade associations, you should have no guilt about enjoying time with your family on Tuesday night.

On the other hand, not treating it like a full-time job will naturally lead you to wonder at dusk each day if you really gave it your best shot. That doubt will lead to stress. And stress is poison to a job hunt.

At a typical full-time job you get breaks, lunch, and weekends. If you devote eight hours a day Monday through Friday to your job hunt, you can enjoy all these things guilt-free.

True, no one is paying you to do this ... **yet**. The pay comes later. It's like a sales job based 100 percent on commission. And you're selling your very own goods and services.

Maybe you haven't had to do this in 15 or 20 years. Maybe you had to do this a year ago. Either way, this chapter is going to help you get started, and show you where you can go to get help.

Your New Office

One of those places is your local Workforce Solutions office, which you can find by following the steps on page 2.

You're probably used to going somewhere outside your home each day for your job. If so, your local Workforce Solutions office could serve as your interim workplace until you land your next job.



Maybe you don't have access to your own printer or your own paper – which you will need – at your personal residence. Your local Workforce Solutions office will. If you don't have internet, Workforce Solutions will. And Workforce Solutions will have professionals on staff to help you with everything that follows in this chapter and this book. They can help you search and apply, develop your brand, and organize yourself to keep track of all the jobs you're hunting.

Searching vs. Applying

An important distinction to understand before we go further is searching for jobs versus applying for jobs. Searching is the first step. But all the searching in the world – **by itself** – is not going to get you to your next job.

If you want to job hunt in a way that gets results, if you want to job hunt like you mean it, you need to take the necessary next steps, of identifying your real targets, preparing, connecting, and applying.

If you are like many job seekers, you will be going through this basic process with dozens, possibly hundreds of potential job openings and potential employers. Notice the first seven words of that sentence. This is **normal**.

Important note: If you are receiving UI benefits, make every effort to know as much as you can about a job before applying for it! Depending on your circumstances, TWC may be unable to pay you unemployment benefits if you refuse to accept an offer for a job that is suitable for you. Suitability is determined based on criteria including your experience, qualifications and training, as well as the pay for similar work in your area. Go to TWC’s homepage at texasworkforce.org and click “Unemployment Benefits and Services” for more information.

To get positive results from your job hunt, you need to know two things: Your Brand, and Your System.

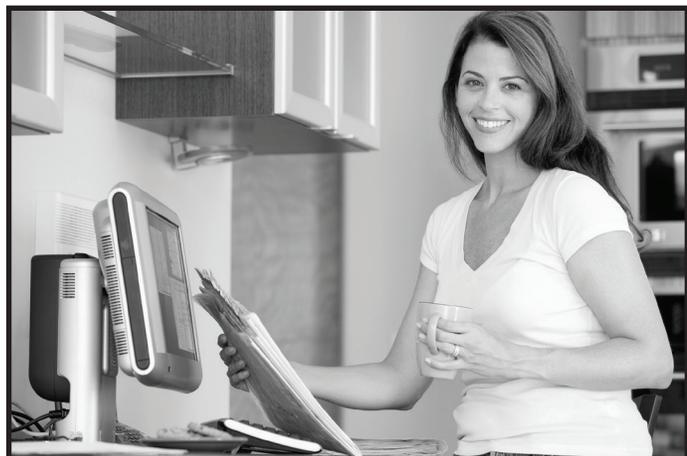
Your Brand: What You Offer

What does Coca-Cola offer? You probably well know, as do many people across the planet, that Coca-Cola offers or at least advertises refreshment and great taste. “Enjoy” is a favorite word of the Coca-Cola brand. Great taste. Enjoyment. Happiness. These are simple and universally enticing concepts. It’s part of why Coca-Cola is so successful, even though these are not the product per se.

These concepts are part of Coca-Cola’s brand. You consume the product, but before you do, you **see** the brand. You **see** and mentally digest what a can of Coke offers before you physically digest its contents. It’s the brand that sells you on popping the top.

In the same way, potential employers will have to mentally digest the branding of the people they are considering and interviewing before deciding to go all in and buy what the candidates are selling.

So, what is your brand? Do you offer a creative problem-solving mind? A strong builder’s back? A leader’s vision? Clear and precise writing? Wide-ranging technological expertise? These are just examples of the kinds of very simple ideas you want to pop into potential employers’ heads when they think about you. It’s your “ME, INC.” branding. It should be front and center on your résumé and everything in that résumé should back up and reinforce it.



Action Item 1: Using eight words or less, describe in the simplest possible terms what you can offer a potential employer and customers.

Another way of thinking about this is your 30-second elevator speech.

Imagine you are in an elevator with your potential employer. She is on her way to a business meeting and only has 30 seconds to talk to you while the elevator is going up. You have to tell her before she exits why you would be a great addition to her company.

What do you say? She may be a top executive, but even most top executives will not remember something that's too long or too complicated for a reasonably intelligent person to understand. And after 30 seconds she's out the doors anyway.

This is not just a mental exercise. You absolutely need to develop your brand for your job hunt to get the results you want.

Action Item 2: Write your 30-second elevator speech. Then, practice it over and over again. You should be able to say it out loud at an ordinary relaxed pace and be done in 30 seconds or less.

Your System: How You Keep Track of It All

If you are job hunting in a way that gets results, hunting like you mean it, then you will be chasing down dozens if not hundreds of leads, every week. Once you get in a rhythm you want to be submitting six to 10 job applications every **day**. You will need a system to keep all that straight in your head.

What that system looks like is up to you. Maybe get yourself a three-ring binder and a hole-punch. If you're computer savvy you can make a workbook in Excel. Maybe designate a wall in your apartment or house as the "job leads" wall, hang butcher paper on it and go to town.

Action Item 3: Develop a filing system that will contain the information about the companies and jobs you're hunting, as well as the materials you've prepared as part of your application for those jobs.

Or maybe a combination. Maybe you use three-ring binders to keep track of all the detailed materials about the companies you're applying to and your application materials, while using your computer to maintain an at-a-glance chart of what steps you've taken and need to take in chasing down your job leads.

It's very important to print out or digitally save (or both) the job description for the position you're applying for. Sometimes job descriptions may no longer be posted by the time you are called in for an interview. Imagine you're in there with a hiring manager and find yourself forgetting primary duties of the job you want! It has happened to others. It can happen to you. Your system will prevent that.

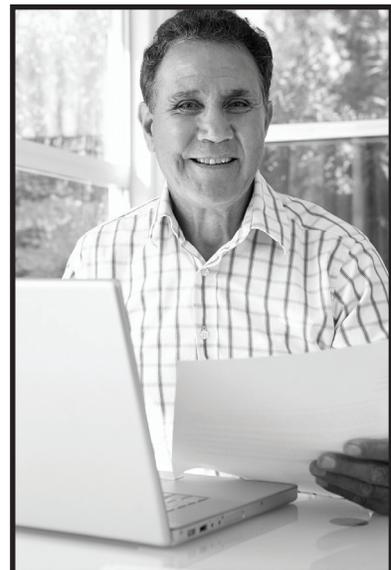
The Job Hunt Dashboard

The two at-a-glance charts on pages 14 and 15 together make up the “Job Hunt Dashboard.” These tables contain a lot of information. Both charts include the job title and your preference. (Preference “1” means of all the jobs you’re hunting, this one, Chief Executive Officer, is your first choice; “2” means second and so on). The first chart contains the facts about the job you’re interested in. The facts you absolutely must keep track of include the following:

- What the company is (“employer”)
- Who at the company you should contact for information, scheduling interviews etc (“point of contact”)
- Your point of contact’s phone number
- His or her email address
- The company’s physical location
- The salary the company is offering in its job posting, if available

The second chart tracks your progress in hunting each of these jobs. Across the top you’ll see numbers from 1 to 16. Those numbers correspond to the steps written out below. If a cell contains an “X,” that means you’ve done it. These steps include:

- 1) **Tailoring your résumé** to show how you meet the specific needs the company is looking for
- 2) **Writing your cover letter** to go on top of your application package
- 3) **Filling out the standard job application** if the company has one
- 4) **Packaging and submitting your complete job application** (cover letter, résumé, company application form and – if the employer requires it – your application on WIT)
- 5) **Calling (if appropriate) and emailing the company’s hiring manager** to let him or her know that you have applied for the position and look forward to hearing back from them
- 6) **Scheduling an interview** – you can only complete this step if the company calls you for this purpose
- 7) **Preparing for the interview** by developing a list of questions the company’s interviewer is likely to ask and questions you want to ask the employer (and yes, you should have some)
- 8) **Actually Interviewing** with the company’s hiring manager(s)
- 9) **Writing and sending a sincere thank you** letter to the hiring manager(s) following the interview
- 10) **Scheduling the second interview** – again, this one is up to the company



11) Preparing for the second interview by developing any new questions you may have and questions the hiring manager(s) may ask you in light of the previous interview

12) Interviewing a second time

13) Sending a second thank you note

14) Receiving a job offer – if the company makes one

15) Negotiating terms like salary and benefits – if necessary and advisable

16) Accepting the job offer – if it is right for you (Remember the important note regarding unemployment benefits eligibility on page 5)



Notice that the charts on pages 14 and 15 contain 10 different rows of information, each representing a job lead at a different stage from others. Even if you remember nothing before this moment, just by looking at this Job Hunt Dashboard you know several things, including:

- 1) You've just had your second interview with your third choice job, as a Construction Manager with HighRise Inc. The next step is to send a second thank you letter (see page 33). And you should, because you can expect whoever else interviewed for the position will send one.
- 2) You've interviewed with the Big Factory for Chief Executive Officer, and you've sent your first thank you note. So now it's up to the employer to contact you for a second interview.
- 3) You still need to start tailoring your résumé for the Office Manager and Animal Trainer positions.

Remember though: these charts only have 10 example job leads, whereas yours, if you're job hunting like you mean it, will contain possibly 10 times that many.

Also notice that in the example charts most of the job titles differ widely from each other. But if you know what kind of job you want, and if there are many postings for those types of jobs in your area, then you may have dozens of jobs on your dashboard that look pretty much the same, just for different companies. Nothing wrong with that. In fact, the more you fill up your dashboard with jobs you really want, and the more diligently you hunt them, the better chance you give yourself to turn at least one of those leads into a job offer.

The value of a good system is that it makes it clear to you what you need to do next, so you're not just trying in vain to keep it all straight in your head. Knowing what to do next is a key ingredient of success in any full-time job, which your job hunt is right now.

Facts about the Job You're Hunting

Employer	Point of contact	Phone	Email	Location	Salary	Job title	Preference
The Big Factory	Bob Roberts	123-4567	br@tbf.moc	987 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$112,000	Chief Executive Officer	1
Gadgets Inc.	Jane Janson	987-6543	jj@gi.moc	123 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$88,000	Software Engineer	2
HighRise Inc.	Jake Jacobs	135-7913	jj@hr.moc	101 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$93,000	Construction Manager	3
Help Me Healthcare	Dave Davis	221-1009	dd@hnh.moc	211 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$70,000	Registered Nurse	4
Ideas Inc.	Beth Burton	246-8246	bb@ii.moc	456 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$65,000	Office Manager	5
Corporate HQ	Donna Donaldson	998-8776	dd@chq.moc	737 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$48,000	Administrative Assistant	6
Office Company	Glynn Gordon	975-3197	gg@oc.moc	525 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$61,000	Office Manager	7
LightsOut Energy	Wendy Day	775-5331	wd@loe.moc	817 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$52,000	Power Line Repairer	8
The Daily Flute	Mary Martin	655-4433	mm@df.moc	658 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$40,000	Reporter / Staff Writer	9
The City Zoo	Hank Hanks	864-2864	hh@cz.moc	789 Name St, City, TX 7xxx	\$34,000	Animal Trainer	10

Steps You Need to Take to Hunt the Job

Job Title	Preference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Chief Executive Officer	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Software Engineer	2	X	X	X	X	X											
Construction Manager	3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Registered Nurse	4	X	X	X	X												
Office Manager	5																
Admin. Assistant	6	X	X	X	X	X	X										
Office Manager	7	X	X														
Power Line Repairer	8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Reporter / Staff Writer	9	X															
Animal Trainer	10																

Action Item 4: Develop a dashboard that makes it clear to you at-a-glance the jobs you’re hunting, the steps you’ve taken to hunt for those jobs, and what you need to do next in pursuing each job lead.

This chapter is about building the system that includes the job hunt dashboard. Chapter 3 will take you through steps 1 through 5 on the dashboard (applying for the job). Chapter 4 will take you through steps 6 through 13 (interviewing for it). Chapter 5 will take you through steps 14 through 16 (securing it).

Where to Hunt

Now that you have a system, you’re ready to start filling it in with your job leads. It starts with searching. Where?

Social Media and the Internet

You’ve probably already started internet job searches on your smartphone or computer. If so, great – just remember that this is “searching.”

If you come across a position you want to pursue, **write it down** on your dashboard. Create a tab for it in your binder. Your brain might forget it when you go to sleep tonight but your system won’t.

When you’re on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, keep your eyes open for job leads from your family, friends and colleagues. You can also follow career experts on these platforms.

You can start by using a good search engine. Type in something like “Austin TX registered nurse,” and see what comes up. You might be surprised. Or you can start with job search engines such as at WorkInTexas.com or Indeed.

Action Item 5: Spend 30 to 60 minutes online each business day identifying target job leads and placing those leads into your system so you don't forget them and can start pursuing them.

Your Local Workforce Solutions Office

Again, a good place to go to start this process is your local Workforce Solutions office. Staff there can:

- Help you look for job leads by searching through available openings and making referrals – remember these professionals are plugged into the local employer community so if someone local is looking to hire a reliable employee with your skillset, they can give you a referral
- Provide you with labor market information to help you identify career options
- Help you improve your basic education, job readiness and vocational skills
- Help you use additional resources like WorkInTexas.com, which you should spend plenty of time perusing each day

Friends and Relatives: “The Hidden Job Market”

Let your friends and family know you are looking for a job. Remember page 1: these people want to help you, so don't be ashamed to let them know your situation and that you're hunting. You can let your inner circle know face-to-face or over the phone, and then either send a mass email to people, or you can post something on Facebook or other social networking sites.

If you post something to social media, remember: *Keep it classy*. No blaming your former employer or anyone else for your situation. Let people know you're excited about your job hunt and eager to start the next chapter of your professional life.

If your friends are currently employed and professionally active then they might have some inside knowledge of job openings at their companies that have not been publicly advertised. It could help get your foot in the door.

Action Item 6: Let your friends and family know you are looking for a job.

Target Employers

Maybe there's an employer you really want to work for, but you're not seeing many or any job openings posted online. That's okay. You can call the Human Resources department at that company and ask for an “informational interview.” This is like a job interview except you're asking the questions. You may want to ask what it is like to work at a particular occupation for this employer. You can give the person your contact information, connect on Facebook or Twitter or LinkedIn, and then you've got a line of connection whereby you can be made aware automatically when there's a job opening.

When researching employers, be sure to take into account factors such as the size of the company, and how it's doing financially.

Some employers you're targeting may have social media pages and/or websites that advertise job openings. Pin their websites to your list of favorites in your internet browser, and follow the companies via social media. Look for "careers" or "human resources" subpages. Come back to those pages often. When the company advertises for a position whose services you offer as part of your branding, add it to your job hunt dashboard and let the chase begin!

Action Item 7: Identify key employers to follow via social media and online.



Temporary Employment Services

Temporary employment agencies place workers in jobs with different employers for a limited period of time. These jobs can provide income for you and your family to meet daily expenses and provide valuable experience, job leads and contacts. Some temporary jobs can lead to permanent ones.

Jobs in Government

If you've set up your WorkInTexas.com account already, you have a good window into state government job postings. You can also check each state agency's website for job listings. For information about federal government jobs, you can also set up an account at usajobs.gov.

For information about local government jobs, you can check the city and county government's website, local newspapers, and city halls or county courthouses.

School Placement Programs

If you're a current or past student at a postsecondary school, see if the school or its alumni association can offer you help in finding job openings.

Job Support Groups, Labor Unions and Professional Associations

Your local Workforce Solutions office will be able to hook you up with one or more job support groups. If you were part of a mass layoff from your previous employer, there may be a support group specifically for others who lost their jobs there (or ... you could start one!).

Depending on your occupation, you may be able to connect with a labor union that can help you with your job search, and give you leads. Or you can look up and connect with professional associations of people in your career field. These associations often aggregate on their own websites or social media pages different job postings in similar fields from various employers. Going to the right professional association web page could give you a handful or more leads to plug into your job hunt dashboard.

Action Item 8: See if there are any local job support groups, unions or professional associations whose meetings you can attend. Subscribe to their social media pages if they have them, and get on their email lists so you can receive news about job postings.

Newspaper Want Ads

Of course there's always the old-fashioned way, of combing through want ads in your local newspaper – both print and online. The most promising ads to follow up on are those that list the job title, qualifications, business name, address and/or phone number.

Protect Yourself From Job Scams!

Scammers are known to pose as potential employers in order to collect money in exchange for non-existent jobs. These scams can happen online, by phone or in person. Legitimate employers will **never** ask for money as a condition for starting work. You should **never** provide your personal information to an employer unless you have had a face-to-face meeting at the worksite or contacted the human resources office to verify a job offer.

If you believe you have encountered a false job scam, please call TWC's Fraud and Program Abuse Hotline at 800-252-3642. For more information about potential employment scams, visit: consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0243-job-scams.

The Possibilities

Now that you know where to look and you have a system for capturing your job leads, you can fill up your job hunt dashboard – at least the left-hand side of it containing the information on how to contact the companies whose jobs interest you.



If you search diligently you may find literally dozens of openings in and around your local area. Capture them one by one in your system. Decide which ones interest you the most and make those your top priority.

When you're ready, your next task is simple. You must make the employer want to sit down and interview you. You can. Chapter 3 is about how.

Chapter 3: Make Employers Want to Interview You

Apply, Follow Up, Repeat

It's often referred to as in the previous chapter as the "Job Hunt." But sometimes it's less like "hunting" for four-legged creatures than it is like fishing. It starts with a lot of very coordinated, focused, concentrated activity where you position yourself in the right location, you get your equipment ready, you bait your hook, you cast it as far as you can into a carefully selected spot and then you ...

Wait. That's it. You wait. You won't see what's happening beneath the surface until you feel that tug on your line and then the excitement begins.

The difference is that if you are dedicated, focused, patient, and fortunate enough to "catch" a job, you won't be eating it. But it will help feed you and your family.

The other difference is you will have not just one hook in the water. As a job hunter, you are like a fisherman with dozens of hooks and lines in the water all at once. And you are constantly baiting and casting. That's the beauty of your system. While you're waiting to see if you get a bite on these hooks over here, you can still be baiting and casting for that spot over there.

And any fisherman can tell you, sometimes you may go for a really long time and get no bites and then all of a sudden you catch four fish in an hour! The key is patience and discipline and never giving up.

This chapter is about how you bait your hook and cast it in a way that will get you the most bites.

Before You Get Started

This chapter will assume that the employers whose jobs you're casting out for will want all three of the basic elements of an application package: the résumé, cover letter, and company job application. We do this to give you the most complete information on how to fish for your next job. But don't assume every employer wants everything the same way.

Make sure you know exactly what employers expect in the job application packages they receive from candidates. The devil is in the details here. Some employers may have no company-provided applications and expect you to provide your own cover letter and résumé. Others may expect all applicants only to fill out a company-provided application – with no cover letter or résumé. You have to get these details right just to be considered for positions.

Baiting Your Hook

Here are some basic tips for going through the step-by-step process of pursuing your job leads (in the job hunt dashboard, steps 1 through 5).



Step 1: Tailor Your Résumé

The best fisherman is the one who knows what different types of fish like to eat, baits his hooks accordingly, and then casts that particular bait to where those particular fish are. In the same way, the best job seeker is the one who understands what each different employer is looking for in a job candidate, and tailors his whole application to that – while still remaining true to his branding, of course.

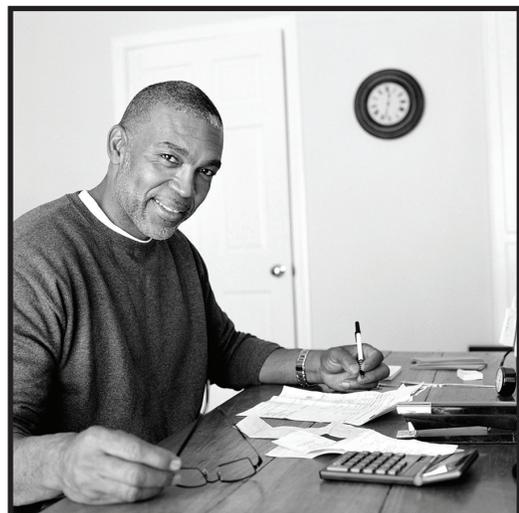
Here's what that means for your résumé.

- 1) **New job lead – new version of your résumé.** You should have one prototype résumé that captures who you are and what services you offer. But if you're pursuing a new job and you're serious about it, you need to tailor your résumé to it. Hiring managers can often tell in an instant whether an applicant has taken the time to do this or not. If you're pursuing many jobs you could conceivably have many versions of your résumé. If you have a good system in place you should be able to keep track of them all.
- 2) **Remember your branding.** Everything about your résumé should reinforce your brand, even as you're showing the employer how your skills would be a uniquely good fit for its needs.
- 3) **Mirror action verbs.** Look at the action verbs that the employer uses in its job posting. Look for places in your résumé where you can use those action verbs. For example, if Gadgets Inc. is requiring that an applicant have "10 years experience programming heavy machinery," and your work history meets that qualification, you can mirror that verbiage prominently in your résumé.
- 4) **Don't reinvent the wheel.** As you apply for more and more jobs, you may come across a job lead whose qualifications are pretty similar to another job you recently cast out for. You can start with that résumé to save you some work in the tailoring process. But be very careful that there is no trace of employer X in your application package for employer Y.

Step 2: Write Your Cover Letter

The same principle applies to your cover letter. Frame it in terms of what the employer wants.

- 1) **Keep it short.** No more than one page. More than 300 words is pushing it. More words doesn't mean the employer will spend more time reading your beautiful words. It means they will spend no time reading your beautiful words. If your bait is too big for your hook, when you cast it, it will fly off your line and sink uselessly into the water.
- 2) **Remember your branding.** Create your own letterhead if you can.
- 3) **Find the One Big Thing.** Try to deduce from the employer's job posting what the most important thing is that it is looking for, and present the basic reason why you can meet that need. Keep in mind Tailoring Your Résumé tip #3 above.



- 4) **Address it to a person**, never to a generic title or “To Whom It May Concern.” Generic salutations are like cardboard on a bait hook. All the fish in the sea will say, “Obviously this is not for me.”
- 5) **Cite your connections**. If someone known to the Company referred you to the posting, mention that person’s name and title in the first sentence. Employers value candidates who can show that they have built and can maintain connections with other people.

Step 3: Complete the Company’s Application

No matter how skillfully you bait your hook in steps 1 and 2, some companies won’t even sniff the bait without this step.

- 1) **If you’re filling it out by hand, get or print two copies of the application**. Fill one out as a first draft, and review it to make any changes or improvements. Then fill out a nice clean version, which you will submit to the employer.
- 2) **Read all the directions carefully before you start**.
- 3) **Leave nothing blank**. If you leave something blank on the application, be it an online or printed application, you can effectively disqualify yourself from consideration, regardless of how amazing the rest of your stuff is. If a question absolutely does not apply to you, simply fill in “N/A” for “not applicable.” If you’re really not sure what to put for a particular question, you can always call the human resources department at the hiring employer and ask for some clarification or guidance.
- 4) **Be completely honest**. Whatever information an application asks for, provide complete and accurate responses. Do not exaggerate or embellish. You may think this goes without saying, and it probably does for you. You may be surprised to know that some people actually have to be informed that if they did not actually graduate from college, indicating on a job application that they have a Bachelor’s degree is a bad idea!
- 5) **Put “will discuss,” “open,” or “negotiable”** in the space requesting salary information. If the company requires you to put a number in that box, and you’re not sure what to put, do two things:
 - a. **Go to TexasWages.com**. This TWC website shows detailed wage and salary information for more than 800 different job titles in Texas, broken down statewide and by region. This will give you a good idea of what’s reasonable to ask for.
 - b. **Consult with Workforce Solutions staff**. They **may** have detailed knowledge of how to negotiate salaries with particular employers.
- 6) **Make sure everything on the application matches your résumé**, including name and address.

Step 4: Get Clear on How the Company Wants to Receive Your Application Package

Before you submit anything to the company, make sure you know how they want to receive it. Actually, you'll want to know who, what, when, where **and** how. Different companies may have different ways they prefer to receive their applications. You absolutely must pay attention to detail here. Get any of these things wrong, and you'd just as soon cast your expertly baited hook onto a sidewalk.



How: Presentation format

Do they prefer receiving applications electronically or in hard copy? If electronically, do they prefer a particular file format?

Also, does the hiring employer want the company application first, followed by the cover letter and résumé? Or do they prefer cover letter on top, then résumé or application, or something else?

How: Is submitting in person an option?

If so, it may give you peace of mind to personally visit the employer to which you're applying and drop the application off with the hiring manager's assistant. Then you **know** your application is going to the right place.

Who: Person to address

Does the employer have a specific person to whom the application package should be addressed and submitted? Also **What** is his or her name, position, and title? (This may also impact to whom you write your cover letter – see #4 in that section above.)



Where: Physical and or email address

Depending on whether the package is to be submitted to the company physically or via email, make sure you know what the appropriate address is to which to send it.

When: Deadline to apply

Most job postings will include the deadline by which you must submit your application package. Remember, you will be hunting and casting out for dozens of jobs, so you will want to make sure you keep track of the deadlines for each one.

You might even add that information to your job hunt dashboard.

Step 5: Review and Submit

Once you have everything ready, in the proper format and order, check everything one more time **before** you submit anything to your target employer. You may be tempted just to skim over everything. Don't. Read every word of your application package. Make sure the following things are complete and error-free.

- Your cover letter
- Your résumé
- Your company-provided job application

The first time you submit an application for a new job may be the most excited you've felt since you lost your old one. Chase that feeling again and again.

Step 5 and a half: Follow Up with the Company

After you've submitted your whole package to the hiring employer, mark your calendar a few days out, say a week. Remember Cover Letter tip #5: Employers value candidates who can build and maintain connections with other people.

Submitting your job application was the first step in building a connection with this Company. Now you can show that you are capable of connecting voice-to-voice or even face-to-face. This gives the employer a clearer picture of you, making you more of a known quantity. Employers love known quantities.

Don't come on too strong here. When your baited hook is floating in the water, the best thing is mostly to leave it alone. Maybe you can gently tug the line, just enough to remind the fish that the tasty morsel is there. But if you thrash it around violently the fish will get wise to your act and swim away.

Similarly, the purpose of a post-application follow-up is to remind the hiring employer that you're there, and that you are a capable and friendly professional person interested in the job they've posted. Anything more than that, like begging for an interview, will come off as desperate. The employer will get wise to your act, and swim away.

So call the employer, about a week after you've applied. You may find yourself speaking to the hiring manager herself, or



to her assistant. Either one is fine. Just let either of them know you're calling to make sure they got your application. If you speak to the assistant, make sure he passes on to the manager that you called and that you are looking forward to hearing from them.

After your phone call, you can send an "It was nice talking to you today" email, reaffirming your eagerness to hear from the company about the position.

Cast and "Wait"

Once you've taken all these steps, the next one is to schedule an interview. This step is up to the employer to contact you and take, same as it's ultimately up to the fish to bite.

But remember, you're not really waiting. While your line is floating in the water, you're baiting another hook (i.e. going through the process laid out in this chapter) and casting out for another job. You may have dozens of hooks in the water all at one time.

Don't dwell on the fact that you're still waiting for a tug on the line you cast for job A. Keep baiting and casting. Return to your job hunt dashboard to see what next steps you need to take for jobs B, C, D, E, F and G. Then take those steps. You may feel like you've been doing this forever with no results, and then all of a sudden you have five or six lines going crazy all at once.

What do you do then? That's Chapter 4.



Chapter 4: Make an Employer Want to Offer You a Job

Prepare, Interview, Follow Up

There are few feelings in the world like getting called in for a job interview. You've done all this work, you've given so much of yourself to the hunt, you've been disciplined and patient. And for maybe weeks or even months the phone hasn't rung.

Until now.

Any fisherman who has ever felt a tug on the line can tell you: Now is the time to stay calm, focus and take action.

You don't have the job yet, any more than a fisherman who feels a tug on the line has a catfish. So it's not the time to get excited. Well, maybe a little. But certainly not to celebrate.

The real work – of convincing the hiring manager on the other end of the line that she actually wants to offer you a job – starts now.

Focus, Don't Fixate

Interviewing for one position at one company may involve multiple interviews and can span several calendar weeks or even months. It is very important during this time that you not fixate on this one job opportunity at the expense of all the others you have listed on your job hunt dashboard.

Fixating is easy to do, and understandably so. This is the farthest you've gotten with any job lead so far. Why not pour all of your energy into it?

Because at this stage in your professional life you need to keep your options open. And you need to walk into an interview knowing that your options are in fact open to be able to project the confidence that employers are looking for from their next employee. No employer wants to be anyone's "last best hope."

Job leads where you reach the interview stage should certainly receive some priority, but keep the other ones alive. Those hooks are still in the water and you may get another bite at any time. If and when you do, you should respond to it with the same focus and excitement that you have for the interview you're preparing for now.

So continue filling up your job hunt dashboard with new leads, and continue researching those employers, and taking those leads through the same process. That process, combined with your savvy, has gotten you this interview, and it'll get you more.

If you're really treating the job hunt like a full-time job, 40 hours a week should be plenty of time to find new job leads and still nail the interviews you have coming up.

Don't Try Too Hard

It's almost as easy to lose a fish after you've hooked it as it is to lose it before you do. Once you hook a fish, it goes a little crazy. It doesn't want to get caught, obviously. It's going to swim away from you as hard as it can.

Sometimes you have to let the fish go crazy, and patiently reel it in little by little. You may even have to let it have some of your line back. If you try to reel too hard, too fast, too frantic, you lose the catch.

In the same way, if you go into an interview all amped up and talking too loud and projecting arrogance and pushing the hiring manager too hard to make a decision, you're likely to lose your catch. Remember, your target employer is interviewing other people for the position as well. The hiring manager has every right (and obligation, in fact) to take a good, close, skeptical look at every candidate that comes in for an interview. It's likely that other candidates will walk in and be aggressive to a fault, making the hiring manager feel rushed.

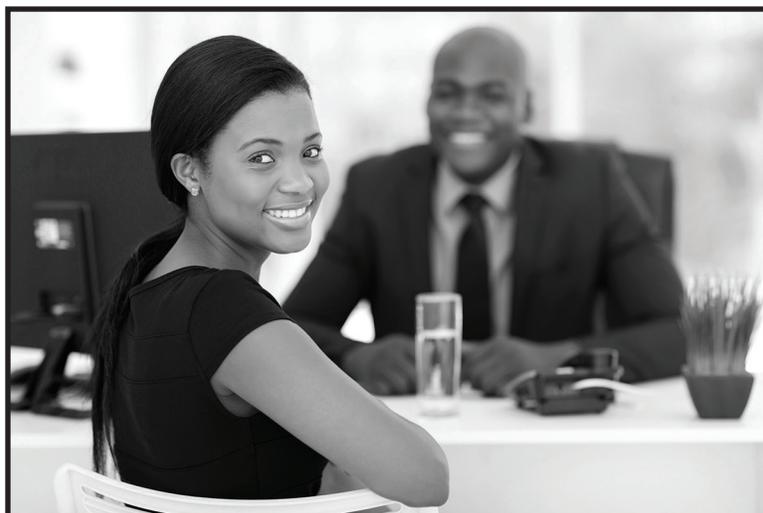
Instead, project calm as well as confidence when you sit down with the hiring manager. Let the hiring manager know that you, like her, want what is best for the company.

Want the Best for the Company (and Believe It Is You)

Yes, you really do want what is best for the company – provided you believe in your heart that it is you. And you should!

National Football League quarterback Tom Brady was picked up very late in the draft in the early 2000s by the New England Patriots. When he first met the team's owner at training camp, he informed said owner that picking him was the best decision the team had ever made.

Brady had a pretty successful college career, but he didn't get that much press, he wasn't too flashy. He certainly didn't make pro scouts' mouths water. But he knew in his own heart that he was the best decision the organization had ever made. **And he was right.** By the time of this publication's printing, this (by NFL standards) scrawny sixth-rounder quarterbacked his team to unparalleled success.





He knew at the outset that he could do a better job for his team than any of the (many) quarterbacks drafted before him that year, because he was going to work harder, learn smarter, and play more selflessly than anybody else. He was going to lead.

That has to be your mindset when you walk into a job interview. Yes, you may have suffered a job loss. The greats always get knocked down before they become greats. They pick themselves up, they keep learning, they work hard, and ultimately emerge as stronger professionals than they ever were before, **or would have been** if they had never been knocked down – all to the benefit of the team that had the foresight to snatch them up as free agents.

Prepare to Nail Your Interview

You can begin to demonstrate to the hiring managers that you will work hard for their company and get results by working hard right now to nail your interview.

Define the Value You Bring to the Organization

You want to go into the interview prepared to tell the employer in simple and memorable terms the value you bring to the company. Make your message about the employer's goals and how you can help the team meet and surpass them. You might even make it one of the questions you pose to the hiring manager. (See below on developing your own questions.)

Anticipate the Company's Questions

Two things to consider when preparing for an interview: one is going in with a good understanding of the unique employer whose job you want, and the other is recognizing that all employers are basically concerned with similar things when it comes to job candidates.

First the specifics. Review your research and try to glean from what you know about the employer and the job you're pursuing what kinds of questions the employer might ask. You're about to try to show the employer what sets you apart, so try to walk in with an understanding and appreciation of what sets the employer apart. If you can convey that appreciation to the hiring manager, it could go a long way.

Next is the universal stuff that all employers want to know about their employees.



If you feel comfortable answering these questions, known as the “Super Seven,” you can handle anything that employers ask you. In the end, all other questions are really just different ways of asking one of these.

1) Are you trustworthy?

What kind of person are you? Are you honest, responsible and dependable?

Respond honestly. Make good eye contact. If you’re genuine and your appearance, words, tone and body language all match, you’ll be trusted.

2) Can you do the job?

Are you technically competent? Do you have the knowledge, skills and abilities to do the job well?

Focus on your skills and how you can help the organization and employer in the short and long term. Tell stories about your past experiences that demonstrate your expertise.

3) Will you really work at the job?

Do you work hard and willingly and eagerly?

Show your enthusiasm and eagerness. Tell stories that demonstrate your work ethic.

4) Will you fit in?

Will your personality and work style mesh with the company’s? Can you get along with the people here?

Describe positive interactions you have had with supervisors, coworkers and customers in the past. Get along well with the interviewer!

5) Will you leave soon?

If the employer hires you today, will it have to go through this whole process again in six months?

An enthusiastic “yes” is the right answer for every other question on this list. Not this one. If you are the right person for the job, the employer wants to know that the organization will benefit from your skills and expertise for some time to come. Remember: to the employer, you are an investment. And every investment carries risk. The risk with you, as with any worthwhile human resource, is that you will leave. As much as you can honestly, minimize that risk in the employer’s mind.

6) Are you safe?

Can you manage your temper and control your behavior? Or, will you hurt customers or coworkers?

Few questions directly address this concern, but you can bet your interviewer will be looking for clues. Always be friendly. Don’t try to intimidate or be confrontational. Keep your appearance neat,

professional and relaxed.

7) **Can I afford you?**

Are the salary and benefits within range?

The employer doesn't want to waste time if he can't afford you. If this question comes up, you can start by asking if the employer is offering you the job. If so, then you can start negotiating. That's the next chapter. If not, then say you would prefer to keep discussing whether you're a good fit for the job before discussing compensation.

Develop Your Own Questions

It's good to bring 10 to 12 questions for the employer with you into the interview.

Good questions to ask include:

- Is this a new position or an existing one?
- If it's an existing position, how long was the person in this position previously? Was he or she promoted? Fired? Got a job outside the organization?
- What are your two most important expectations for someone coming into this position?
- What are the big-picture goals of this company? (If you're comfortable, you can follow up to the interviewers' answers to this question by letting them know or repeating how your skills and expertise can contribute to those goals. The better you know your branding, the more equipped you'll be to do this.)
- What's your idea of an ideal employee?
- How do you measure and review performance?
- What's a typical day and week on this job like?
- Every job has a mixture of enjoyments and headaches. Give me one example of each in this job. (A similar question you could pose: What is one project that you've worked on and really enjoyed?)
- How long have you worked here?
- What is the company culture here?
- What projects will the person in this position work on in the next several months?
- What are the next steps after our meeting?
- When will you make your decision?





Of course, take note if the employer answers these or other questions you've prepared prior to your asking them. You don't want to give the employer reason to think you weren't listening!

Prepare Some Stories

Try to have at least one story that can help answer each of the Super Seven questions above. (You don't necessarily need seven different stories. For example, if you have one story that answers questions 1, 2 and 6; another story that answers questions 3 and 4; and a third that answers questions 5 and 7, that's a pretty effective arsenal.

Use the stories to reinforce your branding.

One powerful type of story could be one where your previous employer was faced with a difficult problem that you helped to solve, or that you proved instrumental

in solving. A good personal story can also give employers a sense of who you actually are in a way that looking at your résumé, or even talking shop with you for an hour, won't give them. It can help convince them that you, specifically, would be a good person to have on the team.

Prepare Yourself Mentally and Physically

The interview is going to happen. You're probably going to feel nervous. That's okay. Celebrity stage performers feel nervous before a show begins. They just know how to deal with it because they know that it is normal. That's right. Normal. Your goal is to, as much as you can, relax.

R-E-L-A-X

Relax. Say the word to yourself.

There's a time-honored strategy from early twentieth century writer and lecturer Dale Carnegie for reducing one's level of worry and relaxing. It is simply to think about the worst thing that can happen in your situation, and then to plan for it. In your case, what's the worst that can happen? That's pretty simple. You might not get the job. But then what have you lost? Nothing, since you didn't have the job to begin with.

Okay, maybe you lost the time that you spent chasing this job lead. But if you've focused on this lead rather than fixated, then you have more in the hopper. So losing the time you've spent on this job lead has by no means cost you all your hopes of getting your next job.

In other words: if you're job hunting like you mean it, **then you are already planning for the worst that can happen.** That's the beauty of your system.

Don't worry about perfection

Don't try to be perfect. Do what performers do. You stumble over a word, you have to correct yourself, let it go and move on. Managers, including the one interviewing you, know that everyone makes

mistakes and they want to know how you will deal with it when you do. Showing them you have the power to let go can work to your advantage. Of course, none of this means you should make a mistake on purpose!

Take routine physical steps to prepare

Wash up the night before or the morning of. Get plenty of sleep the night before. Wake up in plenty of time to make it there 15 minutes early. Go through your normal routine. Brush your teeth, comb your hair, and so on.

Dress Appropriately

Maybe a day or two before your interview, visit the workplace. Observe what other people are wearing, then dress one step more formally. You can also ask the human resources department (not the hiring manager!) what would be appropriate.

Avoid anything that will distract the employer. Remember: you want the interview to focus on your brand, your skills, your expertise. You want the employer to remember what you can do – not your eyebrow ring.

Nail the Interview

If you prepare everything above, you'll be very well positioned to nail the interview. Here are a few last big-picture items to keep in mind.

Show Them You Want It and Why

Hiring managers like to know what motivates their candidates. So, let them know what motivates you.

Is it personal success? Do you want to create something that people will look at, consume and enjoy? Do you want to provide for your loved ones? Do you want to help people? Do you want to make enough money to someday donate large sums to worthy causes (publicly or anonymously)? What's your big thing that you want in life?



Once you've answered that, connect it to the job you're applying for. Tell the employer credibly what it is about this job that helps you get to where you want to go in life.

Now the employer knows you will be motivated personally to do a great job for the company. Between that and actually wanting to help the company to achieve its own goals, you're likely to leave a strong positive impression with the hiring manager.

Don't Bring Up the Job Loss

You may have noticed your job loss has come up rarely since the first chapter in this book. There's a reason for that. When you're casting out for a job (Chapter 3), for example, it makes no sense to bait your hook with something that mentions your personal misfortune. Even if the job loss wasn't your fault, it's not going to attract any fish.

Same with the interview. You want the interview to be a pleasant, positive experience for the hiring manager. Talking about your personal misfortune won't do that. Employers are looking for people who are excited about the future, not preoccupied with the past.

Of course, there is always the chance that the job loss comes up. If the employer asks about why you are looking for something new, you may feel it wise to be transparent about your situation. That's up to you. Or the employer may ask point blank if you've been fired or laid off.

If there's no getting around it, then you can let the employer know about your job loss, but you don't want the interview to become about that. This is about you and the company and what a great match the two of you would be. So ...

If Your Job Loss Comes Up, Here's How to Handle It

- **Keep it simple and don't sweat it.** Remember the 30-second elevator speech about why you would be great for this company? Make this a 15-second elevator speech. "Yes, my previous employer merged with another and went through a reduction in force, which I certainly understand happens from time to time." This takes about seven seconds to say, and conveys the circumstances of your job loss while also showing the employer that you have a sense of perspective and are not taking your job loss personally. It further conveys you're a well-adjusted individual who can handle adversity. Boom.
- **Focus on the positive.** An example of something you can say is, "I'm actually really excited to figure out what I'm going to do next." This shows you're positive and forward-thinking, while bringing the conversation back to the reason you all are here.
- **Dispel any fears.** Explain to the employer in simple and convincing terms why the problem that



led to your job loss won't be a problem at your new position with this employer. If you were laid off through no fault of your own, then this should be easy. If you were terminated for cause, however, then you should definitely devote some real time and energy prior to the interview to preparing your explanation. The more you can convey to the employer that you are comfortable talking about it openly, the better off you will be. On the other hand, if you're hiding something now, the employer will have reason to think you would hide something once you're hired.



Nail the Follow-up

It is customary after a job interview for the candidate to send a thank you note. If you want any chance of being invited back for a second interview or being hired, you must send at least a brief, neat, error-free note thanking them for the opportunity to come in and speak, repeating that you are well-suited for and want the job. It can take any one of several forms:

- email
- physical note on letterhead in a stamped envelope
- postcard

That's right, a postcard. Sending a postcard can further set you apart from the other candidates. It's a strong move because:

- It's a physical, visually appealing token, which will
- remind the hiring manager of you personally whenever she looks at it, which will
- reinforce your branding, which will
- make her that much more likely to buy what your branding is selling, i.e., hire you!

What Happens Now

Congratulate yourself for making it this far. It isn't easy.

Now the ball is back in the court of the hiring employer, which means you're back at the beginning of Chapter 3 – you're waiting for the phone to ring (figuratively if not literally).

Remember: Focus, don't fixate. While you're waiting to hear back from Employer A, make sure you're moving the ball with employers B, C, D, E, F and G.

If the employer calls you, it's almost always for one of three reasons:

- 1) To invite you to a second interview
- 2) To let you know the job is going to a different candidate
- 3) To offer you the job

If it's the first possibility, that's great. Now, repeat the process you've just gone through. Brush up on what happened in the first interview. (If it's been more than a week, there's a good chance you will have forgotten much of it by now!) Reinforce your branding and your messaging, and your elevator speech. Anticipate the follow-up questions they may have and prepare your responses. Develop your own follow-up questions. Prepare new stories. R-E-L-A-X. Remind them that you want it and why.

If it's the second possibility, then there's no question that is rough. You may want to take a day or two to process the emotions you experience as a result, not unlike when you first suffered your job loss. "What am I gonna do now?" you may be wondering. Just remember that you are not alone; you have supports and you should tap into those at this moment.

And now you have something more. You have a **system**. If you've been regularly searching and identifying targets and filling out your application packages, then all you have to "do now" is continue pursuing those job leads. You're a fisherman who had a bite but the fish got away. You still have lots of other hooks in the water, and any one or more of them could start tensing at any moment. Mourn the fish you lost just now, but be ready for what happens next.

If it's the third possibility, **awesome**. Congratulations. Chapter 5 is about what you should do now.



Chapter 5: Secure the Job

Review and Decide

Whoa. You just got offered a job. After everything that's gone wrong – your job loss, however many rejections – someone has finally said, “Yes, we want you.”

This is awesome, but a lot still needs to happen between now and your first day at your next job.

Don't Celebrate Yet

Remember, you do not have the job yet. Something could still go wrong. Picture this: The fish is out of the water, dangling from your hook. You start fiddling with the hook. Your hands shake a little as your excessive excitement makes you clumsy.

The fish drops off the hook, onto the stern of your boat, flops around like crazy and before you know it – sploosh. He disappears into the water.

You cry out, “Aw man! I had it!” Yes, you did.

Many employers start out by **preliminarily** offering the job to a candidate. If the candidate gives the employer a reason to second-guess, the employer can always withdraw the offer and give it to the second choice. Seasoned hirers know that sometimes their second choice turns out to be the best in the long run. So even now, it is not yet time to celebrate.



Keep Doing What You've Been Doing

You don't want to give the employer a reason to second-guess. How to avoid that? The simplest answer is to continue conducting yourself as you have been throughout the application and interview process.

Imagine you are a hiring manager. A job candidate projects every positive trait in this book, does everything right, and as soon as you offer him the job he thinks he can drop all that and start making demands. What are you supposed to expect from someone like that once he is working for you?

Being the best version of yourself has gotten you this far. So keep being it now, in the job offer and negotiation process, as well as when you actually start. You've been polite and open? Be polite and open now. You've shown a positive attitude? Show that now. You've projected confidence? Project it now. You've focused on the employers' interests rather than your own? Do that now, and from now until you move on to your next, next job. (Yes, there's a good chance there will be one.)

Make Sure You Want This Job

At the same time, you need to make sure you don't have any reasons to second-guess your own interest in this job. You need to make sure you really want it.

Keep in Mind Your UI Benefits

First make sure you have flexibility to negotiate without jeopardizing your unemployment benefits – if you are currently receiving them. If you are, be aware that **refusing** a job could negatively impact your eligibility to continue to receive benefits. If you refuse a job offer, TWC would investigate your situation to determine if that refusal affects your claim.

But if you are comfortable with it, and you want to, then you can start negotiating wisely in a way that won't put off your next employer.



Ask 24 Hours to Review the Offer

There's a lot to think about here. You may be about to start a whole new chapter of your life. You want to start it off right by giving yourself time to think it all through so you can be confident in your decision, while at the same time not making your next employer immediately regret the decision to offer you the job.

First things first: Don't accept any offer on the spot. Show interest, even appreciation, but ask for time to think it over – 24 hours or so. Refrain from disclosing your need to discuss the job offer with your spouse. Also, get the offer in writing.

Maybe your next employer called you up and offered you a sweet deal. Good salary and benefits. Reasonable hours. But you still want to review your checklist (which you'll find below) to make sure everything you want is there.

Is it ever okay just to say "Yes! I'll take it!" on the spot? Even if everything the employer is telling you sounds great, you still want to review the offer in writing to make sure everything is consistent. Email works fine here. Step away and think about it for 24 hours and give yourself some time to remember questions that you might be forgetting in the heat and joy of the moment. Legitimate employers who really want you on their team will not begrudge such a request.

Also, you'll have the added bonus of emailing your employer back to accept the offer. Then you have the offer and your acceptance both in writing. It is always best to have documentation that you can refer back to for momentous occasions like this.

You Don't Have to Ask for More

In cases where you review everything and conclude you actually are happy with the offer as is, you don't **have** to ask for more. In fact it may be wise not to. If the employer is a state government agency for example, it may be prohibited by rule or law from offering you more. So asking more may be asking the impossible.

Also, look at it from the employer's perspective. "Gee, this guy hasn't done squat for our organization yet and he already wants a raise?" Not a good first impression.

Your Job Offer Checklist

Write down a list of the information you want to make sure you get from an employer who is offering you a job. In evaluating offers, consider title, opportunity for advancement, company reputation, culture, commute, and ability to work with the potential manager.

Be sure and ask the offering employer about the following:

Job Title

Review with the employer what your job title and responsibilities will be.

Wage / Salary – including promotion and raise schedule if there is one

The employer should be the first to name a salary expectation, not you. If you do, you might seem too demanding, out of range or under-qualified. Salary discussions are best left until after all interviews and when the employer is offering you the job. You have a much stronger negotiating position after they

determine you are the best person for it.

You do need to be able to compare their offer against wages commonly offered for similar jobs in this industry. You can find that by going to TexasWages.com, which contains wage and salary information for over 800 job titles in Texas. Study salaries of comparable jobs with similar companies by looking at other job posting sites. Knowing your market value will strengthen your negotiating position.

Most jobs have salary ranges. Make sure you know from the employer what range is authorized for your position. You may have some idea of the range from the job posting. Negotiate from there by focusing on your knowledge, skills, abilities and experience.

When you discuss salary figures, you may provide your own range—your expected salary at the bottom and what you desire at the top. For example \$40,000 to \$50,000: you expect \$40,000 but hope to negotiate higher.

The lower the job level, the less negotiable the salary, because there are generally a higher number of qualified applicants for these jobs.

If the offer is unacceptable, don't be afraid to ask directly if that is the best offer the company can make. Show flexibility; counter the offer instead of immediately rejecting it. If you must receive more than is offered, you might suggest additional responsibilities to increase the salary, or ask for an earlier performance review.

Make sure you negotiate based on the cost of living where you will be living and working. You can find this information at bestplaces.net.

Hours

You'll want to know how many hours you'll be working each week, shifts, flexibility, overtime and telecommuting options if any exist.

Work space, office and equipment

Know whether you'll have your own office or a desk or some other kind of work station, and what kind of equipment you'll be using. Also be sure to nail down where you should park if you'll be driving there.



Benefits

Benefits are often about one-third of a compensation package and can be negotiated. Here's a quick list:

- Insurance – what kind you will receive (medical, dental, vision, life and disability) and when you will be eligible for it (usually three to six months after you start)
- Ongoing education and training (type and frequency), if any
- Tuition reimbursement, if any
- Dependent care
- Profit sharing or employee stock options
- Earlier performance review (and therefore earlier opportunity for a wage increase)
- Vacation, sick leave and personal time off
- Pension or 401(k)

Not all jobs will include all of these benefits or other elements in their compensation plans. Part-time jobs will not include insurance. Even some full-time jobs may not include ongoing education, tuition reimbursement, or stock options. If you have multiple offers, be sure to take note if one potential employer is offering a certain type of benefit and another is not. That's leverage (see below).

Make sure you understand everything before you negotiate. Be thorough but don't be aggressive. When they first call to offer you the job, go down the list above, just to make sure you have all the blanks filled in. Then get it in writing and make sure everything is consistent. Hold off on providing the employer any information about how you feel about the particulars of the offer until after you've had a chance to step away and think about it for 24 hours or so.

Remember, You Can Call Other Employers Who Have Interviewed You

If you've been following the system, hunting like you mean it, and focusing rather than fixating, then chances are you have other employers with whom you have interviewed and from whom you may be waiting to hear back. Under most circumstances you would wait until they call you.

This is the exception to that rule. If you want to give other potential employers the opportunity to match the offer that has been made to you, you can call and let them know. See what happens! Please note you are under no obligation to tell the offering employer that you're doing this.

If You Get Multiple Offers

The dream scenario, especially for someone coming off a job loss, is to have multiple employers interested in hiring you, having to compete against each other by sweetening their deals. If this happens to you, great!

But imagine having four fish splash back into the water all at once. It can happen. So remember, continue doing what you have been doing. Don't get a big head now. Be respectful, polite and positive with all parties involved. Nothing is set in stone until you have a final, agreed-to offer in writing from your next employer.

You Got the Job! Now What?

Once all the i's are dotted and t's are crossed, and you have a final offer in writing and signed, you're ready to take it. Congratulations!

Here's a few quick tips.

- **Show up early your first day.**
- **Expect your new job to take some getting used to.** You may have had a certain comfort level at your old job. Remember that that comfort level took time to reach, and it will with this job too.
- **Keep doing what you've been doing.** Remember how hiring managers feel about candidates who morph into demand-making prima donnas as soon as they get an offer? Managers' other pet peeve is candidates who turn into different people their first day on the job. Be the same pleasant, selfless, goal-oriented team player you convinced the employer you were in the application, interview and hiring processes. That's called dependability, and your new employer will love it.
- **Build relationships.** Go to lunch with your new coworkers. Get to know them personally, and you will be better at working with them professionally.
- **If you've been receiving unemployment benefits, then after your first week of full-time work, stop requesting payments.** Once you have returned to full-time work, you are no longer eligible for unemployment benefits, even if you have a balance remaining on your claim. You can also follow the instructions in your claimant handbook for requesting your "waiting week" benefits.
- **You have probably built up a store of contacts and connections at other employers over the course of your job hunt. Keep them.** Stay connected via social media. This will keep you plugged in to what's happening in your career field, so if you see an opportunity sometime in the next few years, you can go after it. The goal now is for you to decide for yourself when it is time to move on to your next job, rather than someone else deciding for you.
- **On your first day, sincerely tell the people who hired you, including and especially your new boss, "thank you."** And back it up by doing the most excellent job that you can every hour of every day you're on the clock.

Welcome to Your Next Job.

Appendix A: If You Haven't Been Laid Off Yet

This book has assumed that you were laid off from your previous job without more than a few hours warning. But perhaps your (soon to be) previous employer has given you a head's up. If so, here are some tips to handle the transition.

The most important tips, which you'll read more about below, are as follows:

- 1) Stay at your current job until your official dismissal date and make the most of the time you have left there
- 2) Start looking for your next job immediately when you're not at work (or only when you're on break at work with your supervisor's permission)

Before Your Last Day

Chapter 1 lists nine things that you should try to do within 24 hours following your job loss. If you have been given a head's up, you should try to accomplish **most** of these action items before your last day – with the very important exception of applying for unemployment insurance benefits.

You should apply for unemployment benefits as soon as you become unemployed, but not before. When you apply for unemployment benefits, the effective date of your initial claim is the Sunday of the week in which you apply. TWC cannot pay benefits for weeks before your claim effective date.

So here's what you do want to accomplish before your last day at your current job:

- 1) Visit a Workforce Solutions office and connect with a staff person
- 2) Update your résumé
- 3) Register for WorkInTexas.com to receive information on job openings
- 4) Manage and channel your stress and emotions
- 5) Prepare financially – If you don't have one already, create a "Rainy Day Fund" by setting aside as much money as you can before your job terminates – preferably saving for three months' worth of expenses, but every little bit helps.
- 6) Get key information from your soon-to-be former employer
- 7) Start looking for your next job

You can review these items in Chapter 1 starting on page 1.

Exit Gracefully

As mentioned on page 5, it is very important to manage and channel your stress and emotions because you want to be able to conduct yourself professionally as your layoff date is approaching. Here are some tips for exiting gracefully.

Be the Best Employee You Can Be

If you think there's still time to prove yourself worthy of staying on, do it. If you do what needs to be done and you exceed expectations, the company may decide to keep you. But recognize at the outset this is not likely, and know when you are better off searching for your next job rather than trying to save your current one.

Stay Professional to Your Former Co-Workers

Just as you're staying positive on social media and in other public places outside work, also stay positive and professional to everyone at your soon-to-be former employer. "Everyone" means your supervisors, your colleagues (staying and going), your subordinates if you have any, the receptionist, the CEO, the maintenance staff and the potted plants.

Stay Positive to Yourself

From the same post on Forbes: "This also isn't the time for negative self-talk. ... Dwelling on what might have been is not going to help you and will in fact fuel additional anxiety and frustration. Instead, think of obstacles you have overcome in the past to focus on things that will give you confidence."

Stay at Your Current Job until Your Official Dismissal Date

If you are not being laid off immediately, try to think of that as a blessing. This is managing your emotions again. Don't get angry, quit and storm out. If you do, you'll be ineligible to receive unemployment benefits, you forfeit your severance and may have a more difficult time getting re-hired.

Stay on until your official date arrives. When you're off the clock, or when you're on break and out of view of your colleagues, start looking for a job. Make sure your supervisor is okay with you doing this.

Who knows, you just might find your next job before your official dismissal date arrives. It does happen, and it can happen to you!

Be Ready to Explain to Employers What Happened

You don't want to bring it up necessarily, but if your job loss comes up remember to keep it simple, focus on the positive, and dispel any hesitations the hiring manager may have (see page 24 "If Your Job Loss Comes Up, Here's How to Handle It").

Collect Your Colleagues' Permanent Contact Information

Building your professional network starts as soon as you know when you're going to be laid off. So gather permanent contact information from your work colleagues including their social media handles and LinkedIn profiles. Your colleagues may be able to provide you with inside job leads as your hunt begins.

Leave on a Positive Note with Your Supervisor, Colleagues and Human Resources

As much as possible, you want your employer to be sad the day it lets go of such a smart, positive, capable employee. The more good will you can build up with your employer and your work colleagues, the better references you can count on getting when the time comes to start applying (Chapter 3).

Appendix B: TWC and Workforce Solutions Resources

Here is a list of resources available to you through the Texas Workforce Solutions system.

Workforce Solutions offices

Workforce Solutions offices can serve as your workspace while you're looking for your next job. They have computers with internet access, they have printers, pens and paper, and other supplies you'll quickly discover that you need for your job hunt.

As stated in Chapter 1, finding the Workforce Solutions office nearest to you is easy if you have internet access. Go to TWC's website texasworkforce.org and click "Find Locations" at the very top of the screen. Type in your zip code. A list of the nearest locations will pop up. If you don't have internet access, go someplace public that does, like your local library. You can also call TWC's main switchboard: 512-463-2222.

Workforce Solutions staff

This book provides guidance and suggestions on what to do if you suffer a job loss. But there are exceptions to every rule. Your circumstance is unique. The best way to apply the guidance contained in this book, or find out if you're an exception, is to share your specific situation with the professionals at your local Workforce Solutions office. They have experience helping diverse people in diverse situations. They can help you.

The Texas Workforce Commission

TWC is the state agency charged with overseeing and providing workforce development services to employers and job seekers of Texas. TWC strengthens the Texas economy by providing the workforce development component of the Governor's economic development strategy. Texas boasts an incredibly skilled workforce ready to attract enterprise to the Lone Star State. By focusing on the needs of employers, TWC gives Texas the competitive edge necessary to draw business here.

TWC's major functions include developing the workforce, providing support services including child care for targeted populations participating in workforce training, and administering the unemployment benefits and tax programs. TWC also provides information and analysis on shifts in occupations and industries within the state and seeks to reduce discrimination in employment and housing through education and enforcement of state and federal laws.

The following are just a few resources available through TWC. You can find them and many more on TWC's website: texasworkforce.org.

WorkInTexas.com

This website provides recruitment assistance to Texas employers and job search assistance to anyone seeking work in Texas.

Career Exploration and Trends

Plan your future. Learn about hot jobs and careers in Texas. Get wage and occupation information including the outlook for different jobs. Find tools to target your job search and salary needs. Take a self-assessment of your interests, aptitudes and skills, and match them to careers. Go to texasworkforce.org/jobseekers and click “Career Exploration & Trends.”

Resources Just for Veterans

You’ve served your country – now let Texas serve you! Whether you want to know more about the transition to civilian life, job search assistance and resources especially for veterans, or other veterans’ benefits, we’re here to help. Go to texasworkforce.org/jobseekers and click “Just for Veterans.”

Employee Rights and Laws

Find answers about employment discrimination laws and complaint processes. Get help with claims for unpaid wages and child labor laws and complaints. Get information about minimum wage requirements in Texas. Go to texasworkforce.org/jobseekers and click “Employee Rights & Laws.”

Employment Support Resources

Learn how to overcome some of the life challenges that may affect your ability to work. Explore child care financial help and other dependent-care options. Find local transportation options, food and housing assistance, and other community services. Go to texasworkforce.org/jobseekers and click “Employment Support Resources.”

Rapid Response

When businesses close plants or lay off workers, Texas Workforce Solutions can provide immediate on-site services to assist workers facing job losses. Rapid Response provides early intervention assistance designed to transition workers to their next employment as soon as possible. Rapid Response services are tailored to each company, based on the needs of the affected employees. Go to texasworkforce.org/businesses/rapid-response to learn more.

Here are some specific Rapid Response services.

Job Search Assistance

Rapid Response can assist you with:

- Accessing community resources
- Job application and résumé preparation
- Assessing accomplishments and skills
- Résumé development labs
- Interviewing skills and effective interviewing techniques
- Coping with your job loss

Unemployment Benefits

You can get information on basic eligibility for unemployment benefits and how to apply.

Labor Market Information

At lmc.state.tx.us you can find a host of resources including information on job titles that are growing in Texas, statewide and in your local area. It can help you plan for which jobs you want to target for application.

Group Stress Management

Group seminars can help you and others impacted by job loss manage stress, its impact on your family and on maintaining community relationships. Available on a regularly scheduled or as-needed basis.

Group Financial Management Seminars

These seminars can help you develop financial planning skills to maintain your household budgets and negotiate manageable payment schedules with mortgage, finance and various lending institutions.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

This program provides training, reemployment services, temporary financial assistance and other services to individuals who lose their jobs due to foreign imports of goods and services or job shifts.

Benefits and services available to certified trade-impacted workers vary. Broadly speaking, the benefits and services include:

- Skill assessments, career counseling, job search assistance, information on training and more
- Vocational and remedial training
- Wage subsidies for workers enrolled in full-time training
- A wage subsidy for up to two years for workers age 50 or over who are reemployed at annual wages of \$50,000 or less
- Reimbursement for job search costs outside the worker's local area
- Reimbursement for relocation costs for a job outside the worker's local area

Go to texasworkforce.org/programs and click on "Trade Adjustment Assistance" to learn more.



Texas Workforce Commission
Labor Market and Career Information Department

101 East 15th Street, Room 0252

Austin, Texas 78778-0001

Phone: 512-936-3200

FAX: 512-936-3204

texasworkforce.org/labormarket

Career Information Hotline: 800-822-7526

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice).

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