

STARTING AFRESH

Redundancy doesn't have to be all doom and gloom. Career coach Steve Preston explains how you can use it as an opportunity to change your life for the better



Despite the upturn in the UK economy, organisational restructuring and redundancies are still on the agenda and are likely to continue for some time. So, what to do when redundancy strikes?

Don't do what many people do and immediately waste time firing out your curriculum vitae (CV) to all and sundry until you have decided what you want to do next. Only once you have done the work to ensure your CV is targeted and focused will you hit the target and avoid the frustration that this 'scattergun' approach fails to achieve. There is no point in even looking at your CV until you have taken stock, which is usually way down the line for most people.

You may decide not to get another employed role, and instead set up a business of your own, in which case you won't even need a CV. Remember the age-old adage: more haste, less speed. Try following these six key steps from my

Career Navigation Cycle process, which have helped to transform the lives of thousands of people.

Step 1 > Let go and look forward

As a result of your redundancy, you are at a career crossroads. Living in the past will achieve nothing. However you feel

about your redundancy and as difficult as it might seem to tackle any major change, you have to alter your thinking. You must learn to look forward, not back. This will help you start to see your situation from a new perspective, and view it as an opportunity rather than a threat – seeing things in a different way can open up new doors. You may think you can only do the job you did before or have done for most of your career, but it is never too late to change, as countless people have proven.

Step 2 > Re-evaluate

Now is the time to take stock, which most of us rarely do. What does success mean to you? Is it about money and material wealth or is it about being able to do what you love and be happy in your life? You now have a great opportunity to consider what is important to you in your career and life, and *why* and what makes you happy. What is your financial situation and how much breathing space do you

have before you need to get another job? How much do you need to earn to lead the life you want?

Give thought to what change really means to you and what will happen if you don't change and just do the 'same old' again. Most people do jobs or work they don't enjoy and are unhappy. My mantra is: "You spend more waking hours at work than in any other activity. Life is too short, so why be unhappy? Take 'the leap of faith' and do what you love!" Consider what this means to you. Maybe it is time for a career change? Or perhaps start the business you have always dreamt about?

Step 3 > Establish your true marketability

How well do you know yourself? Self-awareness is key to selling and marketing yourself effectively for your next job or change of career. Unfortunately, most people have little understanding and confidence in themselves. Get to know yourself, who you are and what you have to offer an employer or as a potential business owner. Transferable skills are important, but are only a part of the picture. Consider your personal attributes, attitude, strengths, knowledge, achievements, passions, interests, connections and the skills you have developed outside of work as well as in any previous jobs you have had.

Understanding your 'complete package' is very powerful, as this will help you to sell yourself in a much more positive way on your CV and in general conversations. It is always easier to see qualities in other people than it is in ourselves, so ask people you know and trust for their views about you. This often helps you to contemplate new opportunities you had never thought possible before.

Step 4 > Explore opportunities

You have a choice in what you do next. Before you jump out of the frying pan and into the fire, research the type of job, employer and work environment or maybe even a business idea you may have. At this key stage, it pays for you to network with and talk to as many people as possible who can help steer you in the right direction. What you say, how you say it, and who you say it to, are really important. It is often the most unexpected people who can unlock the key to your future. If you want to try

something different, then a good option is to look for work experience opportunities, volunteering or work shadowing so you can see first-hand if it is right for you before you take the plunge. It will also look good on your CV and build your confidence.

Step 5 > Decide what to do

Having done your research, you are now much better placed to know what you want and where to find it. Do you still want to be employed or do you like the idea of being your own boss and starting your own business? If you decide to set up a business it is crucial to get buy-in from your partner, if you have one, as you are likely to have peaks and troughs of work and income, which is completely different to getting a regular salary from an employer.

Consider the pros and cons of self-employment and focus on what you enjoy and are good at. Whichever route you decide on, consider whether you need to upskill or gain new knowledge. If so, make allowances for this and view it as short-term pain for longer-term gain.

Step 6 > Take positive action

The future may look scary or exciting. Either way, follow the Nike adage and 'just do it'. You must develop your plans and follow through with these to succeed. Only you can take responsibility for your future. What have you got to lose by trying something different?

Keep focused, review your progress regularly, and look at what is working and what is not, as Rome wasn't built in a day. Realise that only by moving out of your comfort zone, having the right mindset, believing in yourself and taking positive actions will you achieve success. That would feel great, wouldn't it? ♥



Steve Preston is a career coach, author, speaker and director of SMP Solutions (www.smp-solutions.co.uk). Read more about the Career Navigation Cycle in his book *Winning Through Redundancy - Six steps to navigate your way to a brighter future*.

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SIX STEPS FOR EMPLOYERS TO WIN THROUGH REDUNDANCIES

◆ Plan for reorganisation

A well-managed programme should focus on getting the right people with the right skills into the right jobs and protecting your top talent.

◆ Manage the execution

Effective planning and preparation will maximise the chance of achieving successful outcomes. Showing a caring attitude - with correct human resources procedures - will minimise risk and have a positive impact on employee engagement.

◆ Manage the emotional reactions

The key is to be honest and keep your people informed so they know what is happening, when it will happen, who is at risk and, above all else, explain *why* change is happening.

◆ Get the communication right

Communication is crucial to your success. Empathy and sensitive handling of all written and verbal communications from the right people are essential to avoid damaging rumours. Inexperienced managers may need coaching or support at meetings.

◆ Manage the survivors

This will have a massive impact on how quickly things return to normal. Close management and the right coaching support will help people regroup, regain focus and motivation, and carry out their roles effectively.

◆ Arrange outplacement services

Proactive outplacement creates goodwill and corporate social responsibility by ensuring that displaced employees leave on good terms, while sending out encouraging signals to the rest of the workforce, creating positive PR.