

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

March 24, 2009

This Week's Message:

**Stand Out and
Protect Your Job.**

Paths Forward

**Tired of boring
meetings??**

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Stand Out and Protect Your Job.

I am distressed by the number of recent e-mails I have received asking me for ideas regarding how best to save one's job in these uncertain times. I sure wish that my

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customary advice to meet and, to the best of your ability, exceed your performance goals would guarantee your retention in a job well done. But these are not typical times and traditional advice alone will not suffice. We all know of someone who is currently unemployed irrespective of his or her solid or even superior job performance.

In circumstances such as these one needs to take a cold, hard look at the organizational dynamics of your workplace. These are often derisively called office politics. I'm not crazy about this term because it implies many negatives such as gossip, manipulation, subterfuge, or currying favor in a grossly obsequious manner (known colloquially albeit distastefully as brown-nosing). However, even the best organizations have some office politics that include power and reward structures, informal rules of behavior, some folks identified as "contributors" and others known as "slackers", as well as some employees who share interests or friendship outside of the workplace. These are not necessarily negative and can be contributing factors to organizational success. So in this way office politics resembles governmental politics; they can be characterized by either positive or negative intentions.

I suggest that you look for the positive intentions in your office politics and play towards them. Success is not a zero-sum game in which someone else must lose if you succeed. The decision about who gets to lose or keep a job is probably made somewhere above your pay grade. Using office politics wisely and ethically means doing your best to advance your case for retention. It does not mean doing anything that will hurt someone else's job or career.

With these caveats in place let me share some practical ideas to help you stand out and protect your job in these uncertain times.

Paths Forward

- **Find The Positive.** It's easy to act positive when things are going great. It takes some thought and effort to do so when things aren't so great. Connect with those who have a positive attitude. This works for you in two ways; we are often labeled by the company we keep and another benefit is that they will help keep you upbeat No matter how bad you or others think things are don't "go negative". Remember the old SNL "Debbie Downer" skit? She repelled everyone around her by finding the negative even in the

best situations. It's funny on TV but not at work. Stay optimistic (or at least act optimistic). When others start to complain offer a couple of positive suggestions. If this doesn't turn the conversation around subtly move away lest you be lumped in with the "woe is me" crowd.

- **Manage Your Reputation.** Do not wait to be "discovered" as a star. Volunteer for visible challenges and projects. When working on something important get in front of your boss and other managers for their input and counsel. Share your results with as wide an audience as possible. Review your old performance evaluations, make sure you've addressed (or are addressing) any problem areas and, when the time is right, subtly bring this to the attention of your manager. Volunteer to finish the projects of departed colleagues; this will identify you as a "can do" person. Speak up in meetings with positive ideas and never present a problem without offering a potential solution or two.

- **Be A Contributor.** No one truly knows how they are perceived by others. But now is the time to think about it. Don't act like you're just along for the ride or that you are in survival mode or are solely concerned about your individual role. Think like a "line" person even if you are in a "staff" role. Identify areas of essential importance to your enterprise. How can you positively affect them? Bottom line ideas to increase revenue, resurrect old clients, find new customers, reduce recruiting costs, identify new leads, lower return rates are always welcome but are especially valued in tough times. Often you can also see opportunities in departments other than your own. Don't be shy about writing these ideas up and sharing them where they might help.

- **Stretch.** Working harder isn't enough - but it sure doesn't hurt. When there are fewer folks around to get a job done it stands to reason that each remaining person will have to take up some slack. You can whine about it or jump in cheerfully. Take a wild guess which option makes you look like someone an employer wants to hold onto. Keep filling that toolbox: seminars, workshops, webinars, brown bag sessions, professional and technical meetings all can increase your skill base and make you a more valued "utility player". Asking more of yourself will improve your performance, your reputation and your visibility.

- **Be Visible.** Networking is not just a tool for job hunters. Now is a good time to extend and develop your contact base

within your functional area, within your entire organization, and within your industry or profession. Your contacts can alert you to new developments and opportunities that may be key in helping you retain your current position. (And, in a worst case, help you find a new one more quickly.) Overcome any natural shyness to introduce yourself to managers and leaders of your and other organizations. Productivity certainly beats visibility but both together are nearly unbeatable. Thus, break any tardiness habit you may have fallen into, don't abuse the opportunity to work from home, and don't be afraid to get in early or stay late as a concrete demonstration of your work ethic.

LifeMap is about using practical, proven and positive strategies and techniques to succeed in any kind of economic climate.

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Sincerely,

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