

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."

February 19, 2008

This Week's Message:

Fired or Fired Up.

Paths Forward

Resources

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Fired or Fired Up.

About a month ago I received a desperate sounding message on my voice mail from an executive whose organization I had consulted with a few years ago. This person has a varied, multi-industry background, is quite competent and has been very successful in his career. And he had just been fired!

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"Fired" was the word he used. What Dan (not his real name, per his request) was actually told was that the impending acquisition of his company (which he had helped arrange) would mean a certain number of middle level and senior level management jobs were going to be eliminated as these functions were going to be handled by the new parent company. The way Dan was informed of this decision could have been handled a bit more professionally (e.g. early in a day that was early in the week versus doing it last thing Friday afternoon). But, all in all, it was far from terrible. Dan received fair (if not overly-generous) severance pay,

continued insurance coverage for some months, accelerated vesting in the profit-sharing program and some third-party career coaching. Compared to what I've seen offered to other folks in similar situations Dan made out fairly well. But, in his initial conversation with me he alternated between shock and total disbelief on one hand and fury and outrage on the other.

This had never happened to Dan before even though it is an experience shared by millions. He felt it *shouldn't* have happened to him because he was a highly skilled, highly motivated professional whose contributions had been regularly recognized. And in a perfect world Dan would be right. What Dan had a hard time believing was that this type of thing happens regularly to skilled, motivated, contributing professionals. But the fact is that the world is not perfect, it is not fair and these kinds of things do happen. In fact, if Dan had kept his eyes open in past years he would have seen it happen to some around him and if he had taken a hard look around over the last year he may well have seen that it was likely to happen to him.

But like many folks Dan preferred to work hard, do a good job and assume that this was the path to job security. Dan now understands that this accounts for his disbelief and shock over the loss of his job. But he's having a harder time with his anger because it's easier to focus on others (who he suggests "played politics" or "kept (him) in the dark") than it is to see that he is somewhat implicated in his termination because he was focused solely on his "job" at the expense of the time and effort it takes to manage one's career given the realities of today's job market.

The purpose of this issue of LifeMap is twofold. My first goal is to rattle your cage, wake you up and have you realize that if this can happen to someone like Dan then it can happen to you. Even if you are a CEO or if you are self-employed you must realize that markets can disintegrate, products can become obsolete, companies can fail, customers can be lured away, technology can surpass you and suddenly you may be standing there with no job. Thus, you really have two jobs: one is focusing on your current performance and the other is the on-going management of your career. A regular LifeMap topic is career self-management in general and last Fall I wrote specifically about what you can do ahead of time to prepare for your own future "Black Friday". (Go to www.drpaulpowers.com, click on LifeMap Archive, open 10/23/07 *Pack Your Parachute.*)

My other goal is for you to put this LifeMap into either your digital or hard copy career file because I am going to share with you those things I counseled Dan to do in order for us to get his career continuation program off to a good start after being fired. The reality of today's world of work is not if you will someday need this list, the question is when you will need it.

Paths Forward

Ask, Ask, Ask. You may feel like fighting but keep your cool and you'll be much better off. Ask if there is someone to whom you can appeal this decision. (In hundreds and hundreds of cases that I've seen, this has rarely worked but every once in a great while it has.) Ask about your separation agreement or package including salary continuation, insurance, bonus, profit sharing, stock options, vacation time, sick pay, or anything else that you feel should be coming to you. Do you want an office, phone or computer to use? Do you want some career coaching to help you with your job search? If you can, get anything that has been offered or promised in writing.

What You Can Take With You. Only take what is yours. Leave every thing else. It is just that simple. Your dignity and reputation is worth a heck of a lot more than a stupid stapler, a corny motivational picture or a soon to be outdated laptop. This includes hard copy files and computer files. However, if in the ordinary course of your job you have come across non-proprietary information that would be useful to your career advancement you should put such information into a personal file to which you should be entitled. Some suggest that this kind of personal file (that contains among other things, your contact network, association membership lists, names of recruiters with whom you've developed relationships) should be kept at home as a precaution.

Think About Your References. Find out who will be allowed to say what about you, your tenure and your performance. Sometimes written letters are offered. They tend to be bland, generic and not especially helpful. But if one is offered, take it. Later on you can decide if and when to use it. What is much better is to compile a list of potential, verbal references while you have access to their names and contact information. Do nothing to jeopardize these relationships, as they will be vitally important to you at a later stage of your job hunt.

Go Home. Do not stop along the way to commiserate with others or drown your sorrows. It's damn difficult to conduct an effective job search from a hospital bed or a jail cell. Don't try to hide what has happened. Talk about it with those closest to you and get the support you need. Start making whatever plans will be necessary to conduct an assertive, professional job hunt.

Plan . . . Before You Talk To Anybody. If you just got fired you are not in the best place - intellectually, emotionally, professionally - to start exploring new opportunities. Line up your resources, set up your voice and email and establish some realistic job targets first. What new books are out there to bring you up to speed on the job hunting / interviewing process? What job hunting resources are located at your local library? Where are the local and regional job networking groups that you should be

joining? What financial or job counseling help exists at the local employment office? Get your resume in shape. Put together a couple of good sample letters and get some feedback on them. Compile your reference list. Keep yourself busy and productive until you are ready -in every way- to present yourself to the world in a positive, optimistic and professional manner. Nobody is going to hire an angry, grudge-bearing malcontent.

You've Got A Job. It's called job hunting. And until you succeed at it you don't get to do other stuff that you'd prefer to be doing. Yes, finances may be tight. Yes, there is a lot of rejection involved. Yes, it is a full time job but, hey, you can do it on flextime. Unless you're doing this right out of school you have already done this successfully before - maybe more than once. Now there are many more resources available to help you find a job in which you can truly invest yourself. It may not feel like it now but this is an opportunity to make a substantial, positive change in how you spend the majority of your days.

LifeMap is about taking charge of all aspects of one's life and that includes becoming a tough-minded careerist - one who collaborates effectively with others and knows that career management is, essentially, self management.

Resources

Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

To order the best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. "Winning Job Interviews: Reduce Interview Anxiety, Outprepare the Other Candidates, Land the Job You Love" by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? To order your copy of "Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding a Job You Love" by Dr Paul Powers, click the link below.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksarticles.html>

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Have an issue or question you'd like Dr. Paul to address in a future edition? Send an email to the email address list below.

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