

Three Ways To Crisis-Proof Your Career

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Photo:

With multiyear growth in the job and stock markets, there have been few overt macro problems that remind us of the Great Recession. The very general feeling is there are lots of jobs and the economy is good. Many people forget easily, and when there are tremors and real scares that consume headlines, they don't remember the lessons, the harder lessons, that hit business and jobs.

Then there is the cliché that often rings true during difficult times: A recession is when someone else loses their job, and a depression is when you lose yours. If you are not facing a career threat, you can still take nonpanic actions that will help you sustain during real emergencies. Just the ramped-up, immediate crisis of a sudden shock to your career can be used as a reminder to most of us that it's time for a career check-up. It is always time to crisis-proof your career.

A crisis can happen externally that you didn't expect that can interrupt your career. It could come from a recession, a market setback or even a buyout or merger of your company. A career crisis could come in the form of you having to deal with an illness of yours or an immediate family member that takes you away from your job for a short or long time. How can you build in career protection or even a kind of career insurance mindset if a sudden storm that has little to do with your performance blows in?

The definitions of a crisis also come in various forms. [According](#) to Merriam-Webster, it could be "the turning point for better or worse in an acute disease or fever; a paroxysmal attack of pain, distress, or disordered function; an emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life; an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending." When it comes to your career, it is often hard to see where you

are vulnerable — where you may need to pivot or make a change when the unexpected hits.

The key, if you can, is to stress-test yourself and your career now before a storm hits. If you have faced a tough and immediate career threat, try to channel that, using the negative situation as motivation to protect your career with fundamentally sound choices.

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Here are three ways you can think about protecting your career from a serious crisis or sudden threats:

1. You Must Not Panic, But Improve Yourself.

As one example, sometimes a global health concern impacts the workplace. At times like these, if people have not yet started freaking out around you at work about shaking hands, traveling to international business destinations or facing supply chain disruptions, they will. What good, though, does coffee-talk rumor and panic do in helping you adjust your career or handle the mental processing of the bad that might happen? It doesn't. You should stay away from anything other than sound facts and the reality of the situation.

For example, here is what happened to my clients and me recently. Four of us were booked into an event at an international company to speak to up to 350 people and then breakout groups of 100-plus. That paid event for us was postponed due to a change in corporate events starting in Europe and rippling into the United States. The crisis hit us. What did we do collectively? Our team met at the same time, at a different location, and improved our talks and training. We recorded it and critiqued it. We created a training series around the shared themes for other companies to use in person or electronically. We

improved ourselves, our reach and our options when the little career-impacting storm hit. You can do this in small ways or even go bigger. Pivot and improve.

2. You Need To Create Career Options If The Worst Does Hit.

If you ever get laid off or let go and you need a job, it can be a panic-type situation. What would you do if the unforeseen happened and you lost your job? Who would you meet with? How would you refine your LinkedIn? What networks outside of your so-called secure job have you built while you felt more comfortable? Create a list of key connections, and start building those relationships. Improve your network and your key connections, and find ways to have the most updated version of your résumé and your bio sketch ready for anybody. Link with and update the skills you would need to have by taking a community college or online class outside of work. Find six to 10 target companies or organizations where your talents may be needed in the future, and find ways to network with them.

3. Create Or Build Your Crisis-Ready Side Hustle(s).

One of my clients began creating side hustle options about a year ago. He wanted to upgrade his title from "maintenance manager" to "business process manager." The perception of him with the new title and role would make him attractive to potential companies in our area if he ever decided to go for other roles. "Maintenance manager" didn't bother him, but we determined his title suggested he led maintenance at an apartment complex or a building, when his true role was more transformative and spoke to improving IT business processes as well as upgrading technology. He made the name change and negotiated a small raise. We then took his new title and role and used it to market him to the small business, startup and consulting community as a

"business processes and IT change agent." That twist helped him land small contracts. He now has the foundation for a full-time consultancy.

Let any micro or macro panic or career crisis remind you to do a career check-up. Whether it is a small blip of a speaking engagement postponement or something scarier, like a full-on, career-threatening situation, be ready with a calm mindset and career options.

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