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7 Ways to Avoid Losing Your Job

A career coach offers smart tips on how to protect yourself from getting laid off. My 20 years doing career coaching has shown me that you can lose your job for many reasons. Some are out of your control: Your employer is losing money. The department is eliminated. There's a corporate merger and you've suddenly become redundant. But some layoff triggers are ones that are within your control – you're not meeting your performance expectations, for example, or the chemistry between you and your boss is not optimal.

So although you can't make yourself invulnerable to a layoff, you can take steps that help you keep your job in 2012 and beyond. Here's how:

Understand the priorities

Unfortunately, in the current Darwinian corporate environment, you can't just meet your own performance expectations. The way to win the employment game is to understand your company's strategies and objectives and your boss's priorities, and then align your work performance with them.

Be flexible, resilient, and adaptable. One Human Resources Vice President I know managed to keep her job because she dramatically changed the way she worked, implementing cost-cutting efforts that reduced HR expenditures significantly. Although she had spent more than three years dealing primarily with outside partners, the VP quickly responded to a new corporate mandate to bring all training and coaching in-house.

Learn how to manage your boss

Make an effort to thoroughly understand your boss's management style and needs, and then cater to them. Learn to convey information and ask questions strategically, and in a way that mirrors your boss's communication habits.

Find ways to make your boss's job easier. Ask: "Do you really need to handle that? Can I take care of it for you?" One client who was a firm's new Senior VP of Compliance kept his job by taking over some of his boss's day-to-day responsibilities. He ended up with a higher profile at the company and helped his boss appear as less of a micromanager.

Brand yourself continuously and effectively

Promoting yourself modestly is a key part of protecting your job. Express opinions at meetings, when it's appropriate. Pass along a piece of research you've done to someone at the company who might find it useful. Volunteer for a committee that a senior officer of the company is on, or for the board of a senior officer's favorite charity. Send your colleagues articles from the business press that they might find interesting and useful.

Understand the culture

Behaving in a way that is antithetical to your company's culture is the quickest way to lose your job. Don't disagree publicly in a meeting where consensus is emphasized. One of my clients who was a senior attorney did just that in his first month on the job. He's no longer working at the firm.

Make sure that you go to corporate events, parties, and lunches at companies that stress corporate camaraderie, even if you're introverted. Although you might rather read during your lunch hour, it might be better to play that game of foosball with your colleagues.

Learn to play office politics

Many people hate office politics and some choose to refuse to play the game. But if you're politically tone-deaf, you could wind up making mistakes at work that could cost you your job, no matter how good you are at it.

Savvy political players usually have mentors or shepherds who can help shield them during corporate downsizings. How do you acquire a corporate protector? If your company has a formal mentorship program, participate in it. Also, make sure your projects create win-wins for others. One of my clients who was developing an employee-relations wiki kept her job during the company's third downsizing by bringing in the Chief Technology Officer and the head of product development as part of her team. These two executives quickly became her guardians.

Improve yourself continuously

Always be on the lookout for ways to make yourself a better employee. If you're not reading journals or attending at least two conferences a year for business, you're headed for trouble. Additionally, take at least one self-improvement course per year (perhaps in leadership training or building interpersonal skills) that can be translated into doing your work better. If you think you're a Luddite when it comes to social networking, get a reverse mentor – a younger person at the office who can show you the ropes.

Know that the small things count

Many of the things you were taught in kindergarten still apply: Be neat. Be on time. Always say "thank you." Never start fights. Share. Congratulate others on their successes. Welcome newbies to the staff.

No matter what, be prepared for the worst

Even if you've taken all the previous steps, you might still become a victim of downsizing or restructuring. So make sure you're always quietly on the prowl for your next job, either inside

or outside your company. Try to go to at least one networking event per quarter, where you'll get out of your comfort zone and meet at least five new people. Then, remember to stay in touch with them. Keep your LinkedIn profile updated so prospective employers know what you've been doing. Every time you change the profile, your LinkedIn contacts automatically know about it. The more you do to stay visible, the easier it'll be for you to land that next job.

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13 Things HR Won't Tell You About Keeping Your Job

By Michelle Crouch

It pays to get along.

"The No. 1 thing in job security is your relationship with your boss. Even if he says, 'I'm sorry I really wanted to keep you, but they made me lay you off,' that's almost never true. He probably made that decision."—Cynthia Shapiro, former human resource executive and author of *Corporate Confidential: 50 Secrets Your Company Doesn't Want You to Know*

"Even in jobs where you test applicants and those with the top scores are supposed to get the job, I've seen hiring managers fix scores to get the people they like." —HR representative in the manufacturing industry.

It's network or not work.

"Networking does not mean using Facebook or Linked In. It means going to events, getting your face in front of people and setting up informational interviews."—A human resources professional in New York City

Don't get too friendly with HR.

"If you have a question, come to my office. Don't corner me in the bathroom."—HR professional at a mid-sized firm in North Carolina

"My LinkedIn profile is for myself, a way for me to find another job. It's not a way to find a job with me."—A human resources professional in New York City

"Don't stalk me."—A human resources professional in New York City

Be professional at all times.

"Children and hobbies do not belong on a résumé. And never, ever say, 'Now that my kids are in college, I'm ready to get back in the workforce.'" —HR professional at a mid-sized firm in North Carolina

"Someone might tell you to 'Be yourself' in the interview. Don't be yourself. That's the worst advice ever. We don't want people who are neurotic and quirky and whatever else. All we care about is your skill and experience."— Laurie Ruettimann, HR consultant and speaker in Raleigh, N.C.

"I know many of you met your former spouse at the company. But the thing is, for every one of you, there are five people it doesn't work out as well for. And your office romance can and will be held against you."—Kris Dunn, chief human resources officer at Atlanta-based Kinetix who blogs at HRcapitalist.com

"I had somebody list their prison time as a job. And an exotic dancer who called herself a 'customer service representative.' "—Sharlyn Lauby, human resources consultant in Fort Lauderdale, Fla

"It doesn't take 40 hours a week to look for a job. So if you're unemployed, do something: take classes, meet people, go to industry meetings, start a blog, read a book a week. Just don't sit on the couch and eat Doritos." —Ben Eubanks, HR professional in Alabama

Be appropriate when saying "Thank you."

"I once had someone send me Forget-me-not seeds with their thank you note. Yes, thank me for taking the time, that's great. But sending me seeds? That's weird."—Sharlyn Lauby, human resources consultant in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

"One time a candidate sent—I love this—a thank you card with a professional picture of herself, which quite honestly became the running joke for weeks. The picture was blown up and posted in my office with hearts drawn around it."—HR director at a financial services firm

Be original with your answers during an interview.

"You're right to be paranoid. The company is always watching you, and there's a record of everything you do: every phone call, every text, every tweet and instant message. At most companies, they save that data forever."— Laurie Ruettimann, HR consultant and speaker in Raleigh, N.C.

"I know a lot more about you when you walk in the door than you realize. I'll search for you on the web and often use my own personal network to do a pre-interview reference check."— Senior HR Executive in New York City

"I have better things to do than deal with who slept with who, or who's talking about you behind your back. Sometimes I feel like a high school guidance counselor."—HR professional at a mid-sized firm in North Carolina

"If you call to check on the status of your résumé and I ask, 'What job did you apply for?' If you don't know, you're done."—HR professional at a mid-sized firm in North Carolina

Never say yes right away.

"Never accept the job immediately. Say you need to think about it overnight. Once you sign on the dotted line there's no room for negotiation."—A human resources professional in New York City

What to know about job security:

"When we had someone go out on disability and we knew he was faking it, we didn't want to go to court to prove it. So we put him on the end of the assembly line in a job where we knew he wouldn't succeed. Eventually, we were able to fire him." —HR pro at a mid-level staffing firm

"Generally speaking, you only put someone on paid leave if you're pretty certain that they might be terminated from the company once you do your investigation." —Kris Dunn

"Companies do have black lists. It's not written down anywhere but it's a list of people they'd be happy to get rid of if the opportunity arises. If you feel invisible, if you're getting bad assignments, if your boss is ignoring you, or if they move your office, you're probably on it." — Cynthia Shapiro

"Your job isn't safe just because you're pregnant or a new mom. Lots of people get pink slips while they're on maternity leave. Companies can do it as part of a larger layoff, include you in there and create a justification for it." —Cynthia Shapiro

"I don't lay people off at the end of the day because I think it's rotten to get a whole workday out of someone, then lay them off. I always lay them off in the morning." —A human resources professional in New York City

Getting fired:

"If you get fired, don't just stomp out and go on with your life. The company may be willing to give you some severance, especially if you can point to someone different from you who didn't get as severe a punishment. Just saying, 'Well, I talked to my attorney' (even if you don't have an attorney) can also give you some leverage.'" —Suzanne Lucas, a former HR executive and the "Evil HR lady" on bnet.com

"I may say 'I'm terminating you because you didn't meet performance measures.' I'm not going to say it's because you're a pain in the butt and piss people off every time you interact with them.'" —HR Manager at a healthcare facility

More secrets:

"I was asked by one CEO to hire the long-legged girl with the long dark hair even though she didn't have the right skills. Another time, I was instructed not to hire anyone with children

because the company had too many people leaving for soccer games. That kind of thing happens all the time."—Cynthia Shapiro

"Many people think, 'If I work extra hard, I'm going to get noticed.' But it doesn't work that way. If you want to advance, some of the responsibility falls on you to toot your own horn. Make sure your supervisor and your supervisor's supervisor are well of aware of what you're contributing." – Michael Slade, HR director at Eric Mower and Associates, an integrated marketing communications agency.

"Some companies do everybody's raises on their anniversary dates. I'm not a fan of that because if the budget comes out in January, those poor people hired in December get, 'Oh sorry, we'd like to give you more but we gave a huge increase to Bob so you're just going to get 2 percent.'" –Suzanne Lucas

"I've seen managers not hire a woman because the environment is mostly male, and they're worried that no matter how smart or talented she is, she won't fit in." –HR representative at a Fortune 500 financial services firm

"If it's been a week or two and I tell you 'I don't have an update yet,' that often means there's a better candidate we're talking to, but we can't tell you that in case they decide not to take the job." –Recruiting consultant Rich DeMatteo. Philadelphia, Pa.

Money matters.

"If we ask 'What salary are you looking for?' say you're flexible, or say it depends on the responsibilities of the job. Try not to name a salary unless we really push you, because that gives us a leg up in the negotiating."—A human resources professional in New York City

"Don't lie about your salary. Ever. Even if your employer doesn't tell us (and most do), we'll find out eventually. I've terminated two people for doing that."—A human resources professional in New York City

"Yes, I have access to everyone's salary but I don't look unless I have to. There's nothing worse than having to reprimand someone, and then seeing they make \$60,000 more than me."—HR professional at a midsize firm in North Carolina

"Don't ever tell me that you have to have this job because you're going to lose your house, your kids have nothing to eat, your mother has cancer. Companies aren't a charity."—Suzanne Lucas

Your résumé:

"We get résumés on fancy schmantzy papers. We get them with gold-pressed lettering. We get them in binders and in document protectors with ribbons.

None of that sways me."—HR Manager in St. Cloud, Minnesota

"98 percent of the résumés we receive when we post a position on a big jobs site are junk, come from people who are nowhere near qualified. We'll get a guy who's a bar manager applying for a director of public affairs position. Or a shoe salesman. That's why we like posting jobs on websites that target specific industries."—Michael Slade, HR director at Eric Mower and Associates, an integrated marketing communications agency.

Do's and Don'ts of Keeping Your Job (In Good Times — and Bad)

by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.

Whether you love your job, hate your job, or simply see it as a means to an end, there are times when your focus is less on job satisfaction and more on job preservation. When your profession or industry is on the decline or when the economy is in the tank and employers are cutting jobs at a dizzying pace, it's time to hunker down and focus more on protecting your position within the organization.

With this goal of job preservation in mind, here are some crucial do's and don'ts (rules and guidelines) for helping currently employed workers keep your job — and these techniques can be used both in good times, as well as in bad times.

Do your job well. Too obvious? Perhaps, but if you generally aren't happy with your job, it shows in your job performance, so now is the time to step it up and show that you can excel in your job (whether you love it or hate it).

Don't stand out for the wrong reasons. Now is not the time to complain about the snacks in the breakroom, argue over the temperature in the office, or otherwise act as if you are entitled to things your employer doesn't currently offer.

Do keep your boss informed of your activities, especially as you finish major projects. If your boss isn't aware of all your accomplishments, it makes it much easier for him or her to see you as expendable when budgets are cut. And do listen to what your boss says — and try and find ways to make his/her job easier. Keep a "paper" trail by emailing your boss with weekly updates or progress reports.

Don't even think about gossiping. It's best to stay as far away from the office water cooler and any of the regular gossipers because the easiest workers for management to cut are the ones perceived to be the unhappy (and ungrateful) bunch. But do keep an ear to the ground (and an eye toward Google alerts about your employer) so that you are not blindsided by bad news. Do volunteer for new projects or to help complete tasks previously done by others who have already been laid off. Showing your care and concern — even if it makes your job harder and longer — goes a long way to securing your spot with the organization.

Don't be negative — about anything. You don't have to walk around the workplace as if you have popped some happy pills, but you don't want to be perceived as Doug the Downer, so no trash-talking or bad-mouthing about work, the economy, the climate crisis, and so on. Do focus on maintaining current skills and certifications — and obtaining new ones that make sense for your career. Even if these skills

and certifications are not appreciated by your current employer, you'll want to be prepared to show your next employer that you are on the cutting edge for your field.

Don't grab the limelight. While it's important for your boss (and his or her boss) to know that you are performing great work, you don't want to be seen as a prima donna who does not recognize the work of others.

Make sure the boss knows of the accomplishments, but make sure the team also gets the credit. Don't bad-mouth or backstab of any team members.

Do continue networking — both within and outside your employer. Building relationships is the name of the game in job-hunting and career success. You can build your reputation and better protect your position with a strong internal network. By increasing your network outside the organization, you increase your chances of succeeding in your job-search should you lose your job.

Don't forget about developing a back-up plan. Your employer is in trouble, your industry is shrinking, and you can't just go to work and pretend that everything is fine. Develop a plan for dealing with a potential layoff, including a job-search strategy and a savings and budget plan. Do keep an open mind. You may be asked to work two jobs or take on responsibilities you never imagined — or that you know you won't like — but now is the time to be open to new job duties and responsibilities, especially if it means securing your position for at least the short-term.

Don't ask for a promotion or raise. If the organization is struggling and workers are being laidoff, you'll look like either a fool or an egomaniac in asking for a promotion or raise. Do become a "company man" or "company woman." Now is the time to arrive to work early and stay late — and work hard all day long. Face time is especially important, so don't telecommute — or don't telecommute as often as you did in the past.

Don't give up. If it appears as though your job is in serious trouble, you may be able to negotiate with your employer to keep your job by working fewer hours, by taking a temporary pay cut, or by becoming an independent contractor.

Do keep your resume current. While it's a good practice to always to keep your resume regularly updated with your most recent accomplishments, it's especially important in times when your current position is not very secure.

Don't lose sight of your goals. While you may feel stuck in your current job — with no short-term options for escape — stay focused on your long-term job and career strategies. While you may need to adjust your timetable, do your best to keep building toward your goals.

Do look for opportunities to build your brand — and possibly land a better job. While you may need to be more conservative about saying how great you at the office, it's still important to build your brand both within your company and within your profession. Consider writing position papers or other articles for your professional association, developing or enhancing

your personal Website, and maximizing the use of social networking sites — all with the idea of strengthening your digital presence.

Don't stop job-hunting. Even in a horrible economy, some employers are still hiring. Job-hunting will take much more time, energy, patience, and persistence, but you can find a new job in any economy if you have the right plan and execute it well. Just don't advertise the fact that you are looking for a new job.

Final Thoughts on Keeping Your Job

Most of us will face times in our lives when we have to maximize our efforts to protect and keep our jobs — even for jobs that we may not particularly like or

enjoy. By following the advice in this article, you'll use proven techniques for helping you fight for your current job while also keeping a foot in the job market so that you are ready to find a better job when the opportunity arises.

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Keeping the Job

Congratulations - Now that You Have the Job, Keep It.

The hard work is not over. Once you have accepted the job, your real work begins. Doing the work is only part of being successful in your job. There are other things that will also influence your success with the company.

It is important to note that longevity in a job demonstrates commitment, loyalty, and achievement—all qualities that future employers will value. Whether you're being evaluated for a promotion in your current company or for a better position at a new company, your ability to succeed in your present environment will help you.

Below are some important things to help you keep your job and grow within it.

Attendance

Arrive on time every day. Return from lunch promptly. Show up for your meetings on time, every time. This type of punctuality demonstrates respect for others and their time. Many companies document attendance. In some states, poor attendance and chronic lateness are grounds for termination.

This type of behavior indicates to the employer that you do not value your position or the job that you do for the company. To some, it signals that you cannot be trusted, and you may not be given the opportunity for advancement.

Dependability

Follow through. If you've been given an assignment, do it. Carry a notebook and take notes when you're given instructions. Make sure you ask questions when you're confused. It takes less time to do the project right the first time than to do it twice. If it looks like you can't meet a specific deadline, tell your supervisor as soon as possible, as other people may be depending on your work.

In today's customer service-oriented economy, dependability is key. We must always respond to our customers and co-workers in a professional way in order to keep our company efficient.

This is an

important issue if you care to grow in the company. If your manager can depend on you to get your work done in a timely manner, he/she is more likely to help you grow your career.

Knowledge

Find ways to expand your knowledge of the company. Ask to attend training sessions. On your own time, read company manuals. Network with company professionals within and outside your department. The

more you know about how the company works, the more you can contribute to its success.

Demonstrate Commitment

Those who take on new projects, get more responsibility and ultimately, more reward. Sometimes, you need to ask your supervisor for more work. He/she may not realize that you're capable of doing more. Don't wait for your supervisor to give you work. Be proactive and ask for it.

Make sure that you are completing your existing projects successfully. Your supervisor will not be inclined to give you more work if you're not getting your current job done accurately. Look for ways to add

value. If you see a way to save money or time in a specific task, tell your supervisor. This type of behavior will show your boss your interest in making your company successful.

Problem Solvers

Instead of telling your supervisor about a problem, tell him/her about a solution. Whenever you uncover a problem or face a difficult solution, figure out the solution on your own. If it's a big problem, you may want to discuss the solution first before acting on it. Regardless, your supervisor will appreciate the thought you put into turning a wrong into a right.

Companies want to hire problem solvers. Every day a manager is faced with a complication of some kind with a customer, employee, or product. Your ability to help solve these problems and avoid them in the future will help your company and career grow.

Responsibility and Ownership

When you're given a project, make it your own. Draw on your experience to complete your work. If you're hired to handle customer service complaints, use personal manners to help your customers feel more at ease. If you're given a book keeping project, think of it as being your own money. You would save as much of your own money as possible. Your company deserves the same respect. Sometimes you need to discuss your plans for completing a project with your supervisor before carrying it out. Your supervisor will appreciate the thought you put into the project, and will be more willing to help you if problems arise. Your work will be valued much more if you demonstrate ownership. When you make a mistake, accept it. Don't blame others. Also, try to fix the problem. This goes along with being a problem solver. Ultimately, it will be your solution that is remembered, not the mistake that you made.

Mentors

Look for people to give you guidance. In everything that we do, there are always times we seek advice from others. Generally, people want to help. Look for people who have been successful

in their jobs and ask them for advice when making hard decisions about your career. If you work on a construction site and your foreman has been with the company for a while, talk to him about how to get onto other job sites. You may ask him if you can help him with his work when your shift is over. Sometimes, just “shadowing” a boss or supervisor in his/her job can help you learn more about your own.

Customer Service

In any job, you have several customers. Those that buy the company’s product are the most obvious. Other people within your organization are customers too—people that depend on your work. Do your best to make sure that your coworkers can easily get their jobs done. If you respect the work of others the job gets done quicker, the customer is happier, business grows, and your position improves. Most jobs in today’s economy involve customer service. Whether you work as a waitress in a restaurant or in sales for a telecommunications firm, you are working with customers. Learning how to work with others is key to success in these types of positions. As an employee, you are a representative of your company. As that company’s ambassador, your behavior is watched carefully by your customers. If you treat them badly, then they will assume that the company is at fault. As a result, you will lose their business. Most people will tell at least ten people about an unpleasant circumstance with a business. Your customer service attitude can make a big difference in your company’s profitability.

Attitude

Perhaps the most important factor is a positive attitude towards your employer and your responsibilities. Whenever people are enthusiastic about their job, they inevitably do it better. Customers will respond to a positive person, conduct repeat business, and recommend businesses that they like. A simple smile will go a long way in making an unhappy customer happy again. Company fit is important. As you learn about your job requirements, take the time to also learn about your company culture. Notice how things get done in your company. Get to know your coworkers, as your attitude towards your peers is also very important.

In every job, there are responsibilities and/or coworkers that you won’t like. Your ability to accept those negatives and still thrive and deliver quality work to your employer is valued and appreciated. It will certainly be considered when it’s time for a raise or promotion.

Ten Signs You Should Keep Your Job

Unsure whether you should keep your job or seek greener pastures? While a shaky economy shouldn't keep you in a job you can't stand, you can watch for these 10 signs that could tell you you're fine right where you are.

1. You're Happy

We're not talking mere complacency here, but genuine happiness. If you're happy, you're going to be more productive, and that will impact the company's (and your own) bottom line.

2. You're Learning

You can race up the corporate ladder with agility, but if you don't learn anything on the way, you won't enjoy a lengthy stay. Anything you learn is another bullet on your resume.

3. The Company Is Hiring

This is not the smart hiring you're used to seeing, after all times are tough. But as attrition occurs, is your company replacing essential personnel? You want to see your employer focusing on the bottom line without putting its continued success in jeopardy.

4. The Company Listens to Its Workers

Employees are often a company's most valuable asset. If processes don't work or morale is low, the workers are the ones to know. But remember: Decisions are based on the big picture, which may include some facts every employee cannot be privy to.

5. The Company Has a Plan

Does your employer have a mission and clear goals? Is there a plan for reaching those goals? Clarity is important for every worker, and it's even more important for the larger business.

6. The Company Fixes Its Problems

Everyone makes mistakes, and true virtue lies in how they're corrected. If your company actively tries to mend itself, then you know it's getting ready for the long haul.

7. The Company Promotes from Within

This goes back to employees being a company's biggest asset. Does your company reward its workers and promote accordingly? That shows the company is willing to invest in you, and your investment in the company could have a payoff.

8. The Company Is Open About Its Financials

If your company shares only its successes, beware. But if your employer shares information around profits and loss, it's inviting you to be a partner and is empowering you with the information you need to help.

9. Your Accomplishments and Contributions Are Noticed and Valued

Do you get credit for the work you do? No one should be taken for granted. If your employer notes your accomplishments, you're more likely to move up or be able to take on more challenging projects.

10. You Look Forward to Monday

Everyone enjoys a day off, but do you look forward to returning to work? Whether it's your job, your colleagues or the office culture, if there's something that stops you from dreading Mondays, you've struck career gold.

Improve Your Situation

If you realize your current employer and position are not right for you, you need to take some action. Start with these four steps:

1. What's Wrong?

Are you unhappy with your current job, or are you concerned for your company's future? You need to determine the current problem before you can find a solution.

2. Assessments

Introspection can only lead to more clarity where your career is concerned. Look into taking career assessments to discover where your interests and aptitudes meet, and determine what type of workplace culture would be best for you.

3. Update Your Resume

Even if you're completely content in your current position, you should always

keep your resume updated. You never know what might happen next, even at a thriving company.

4. Network

Talking to people is one of the best ways to learn about job openings or even a new field you had never considered for yourself. Don't just join professional organizations, but be an active member. You need to put yourself out there and take some risks to find the job that's right for you.

Ten tips that will help you keep your job

Cubicle etiquette, office romances and much, much more

If you find yourself cleaning out your desk and starting a new job every nine months to a year, the problem is you — not your boss or colleagues.

It's important to understand your company's corporate culture and to match it in words and actions. For starters, if you work in a prim-and-proper button-down office, don't show up in jeans and a T-shirt boasting about wild times in Tijuana.

"Size up the culture and show a strong work ethic," says Andrew J. DuBrin, a professor of management at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, N.Y. "Don't walk around saying, 'It's Wednesday — hump day — and Friday will be here soon.' "

Here's betting that Microsoft, Wells Fargo, Intel, Exxon Mobil and McClatchy Newspapers have distinct corporate cultures. The smart employee scopes out the territory ahead.

You got hired because the boss thought you could do the job. But competence alone isn't enough to succeed. Be passionate about your work and take pride in it. Tossing things together at the last minute won't cut it.

If you're smart and a little lucky, you'll find your work challenging and your co-workers engaging.

Many young employees talk about having "fun" at work. It's a mistake.

There's always an element of levity in a good office — clever quips and groaner puns from the office wag, for example — but remember that you work to make money for the company, not to have fun on the days between weekends.

"When in doubt, behave traditionally," DuBrin says. "Be on time, be a good corporate citizen and go out of your way to help people. Traditional values are still held in high esteem by most employers."

Catch the rhythm of the staff meetings. Are they formal or informal? Is it acceptable to do other work on a laptop and occasionally check your cell phone for text messages, or would that drive the boss nuts? When in doubt, leave the laptop and phone behind.

No one's perfect, and if you make a mistake, immediately take full responsibility for it. Don't blame others, and certainly don't try to slough it off on your immediate boss. Saying, "I'm sorry, my mistake. It won't happen again" will help you put all but hanging offenses behind you.

Much like there's a division between church and state, draw a line between your personal life and work. Don't talk incessantly about your life outside work. If you're having trouble in your personal life, keep it to one or two confidants. No one else at work needs to know — or more to the point, wants to know — about your travails at home. Remember: There is no way that broadcasting your personal difficulties will improve your standing with the boss.

Little things can become a big deal at work. Here's how: Your dentist will love you for flossing, but your co-workers won't if you do it at your desk. Perform personal hygiene duties at home.

Here are ten things you must get right to avoid killing your career. In most cases, no single faux pas is serious enough to get you a pink slip on the spot, but the steady drip-drip-drip of inattention to one or more of these basic points will seriously erode your position, and before you know it, you'll be cleaning out your desk ... again.

Know what's expected. No one wants a drone or a yes-man, but if you don't understand the corporate culture and if you don't know what's expected of you, you're gone. It's possible to fit in without squashing your creativity.

Remember whom you work for and why.

Money isn't everything. Don't create the impression that you're working just for a paycheck. That's the hallmark of a clock-puncher and will kill all chances for advancement. If you're so unhappy with your job that you live for the 15th and 30th of each month, it's time to start sending out résumés.

Leave the gossip to the supermarket tabloids. Idle chit-chat at the water cooler is a fact of life and acceptable, and is even expected in small doses. But don't chatter endlessly about who's in and who's out. To do so reflects badly on you and takes time away from turning the wheels. Your boss will notice if you spend more time yapping than working.

Flubbing deadlines. Deadlines are real and must be met because, believe it or not, the world doesn't move to your beat. Missing deadlines will back up the whole show and make your boss look bad. A bad hair day is no excuse for missing a deadline. Work late to get the job done if you have to.

Cubicle etiquette counts. Leave it to future historians to determine how cubicle culture changed America. All you have to do is live with it. Remember: Privacy's nonexistent in a cubicle, so don't have phone conversations that you don't want others to hear. Personal decorative touches should be tasteful.

Personal e-mails are death. Here's a basic truth many employees miss:

The company e-mail system is for company business. Don't use it to gossip, and don't write anything that you don't want read by the boss, because many systems save deleted messages

to a master file. Horror tales of someone hitting "Reply to All" and mistakenly sending a juicy note about the boss to everyone, including the chief, are common. Call up your personal e-mail account to send personal notes, and keep it short; you're at work.

Isolation leaves you vulnerable. You don't have to constantly hang out with co-workers after hours, but don't isolate yourself with standoffish behavior. You don't want to be seen as someone who thinks you're too good for the proletariat. Extend the simple courtesies to your co-workers: good morning, good night, please, thanks. Your mother was right: Manners count.

Don't climb ego mountain. No one likes an egomaniac, and for good reason: They're boring, obnoxious, trivial people. Listen to what your co-workers tell you. Ask questions. Learn from the experienced hands. Improve your skills and boost your productivity.

Don't take credit for others' work. It's a familiar tale: The office go-getter takes credit for other people's work. Such people overlook a basic point: It's dishonest. If you do this, word will eventually reach the boss, and your standing will crumble instantly. Along the way, the long knives will be out, and your co-workers will root for, and cheer, your demise. Some may even knife your aspirations.

Office romance invites catastrophe. We all work long hours, and sometimes work becomes our social life, leading to romantic entanglements. This is fine if you get married and live happily ever after. What are the chances of that? Think: What will you do if the relationship ends badly?

Never become involved with your boss. Your accomplishments and promotions will become suspect, and one of you will have to move to another department, and perhaps another job, when the romance becomes known. Helpful hint: Look outside the office for the sweetie of your dreams.

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Tips for Keeping the Job You Have

By Alison Doyle • Updated November 21, 2016

One of the comments I get over and over again from job seekers who are unemployed is to do whatever you can to keep your job, if you have one.

If you have a job you're not thrilled with, before you turn in your resignation, take a look at these tips on how to keep your job. You don't need to stay forever, but, if you can, you may want to stay at least until you have another job lined up because it's harder to find a job when you're unemployed.

Top 10 Tips for Keeping Your Job

Try and Make the Job Work. Is there anything you could be doing differently to make the job work? Could you ask for a transfer or a shift change? Is there anything that would make a difference and convince you to stay?

Work Hard. Most employers don't mind a little time spent on Facebook or texting, but do focus on your job and give your employer the time you're getting paid for. When it comes to making lay-off decisions, and the company has to choose, the most productive employees will get to keep the job.

Be On Time. The workers who are late to work, take a long lunch hour, use a ton of sick time, and/or leave early every day aren't going to win any points with their boss. Be punctual and be there, instead of making excuses for why you can't be at work.

Be a Team Player. The employees who don't get along well with others, who gossip about other workers, or who aren't willing to pitch in to help, aren't going to be appreciated.

Be Flexible. Flexibility can be a key component of hanging on to your job. When the company needs someone to change shifts, work weekends, put in some overtime, or work a different schedule, think about volunteering if your personal schedule permits.

Don't Complain. Nobody likes complainers, regardless of how legitimate the complaints are.

If you don't like your job, I can guarantee there are plenty of other people who would jump at the chance to get it. When the job market is as upside down in the employer's favor as it is now, be really careful about complaining.

Offer to Help. One of the best ways to get (or keep) job security is to volunteer for new initiatives, to offer to help with projects, and to take on more responsibility.

Keep Your Thoughts to Yourself. Even if you hate your job, keep it to yourself and your family or close friends. Don't tell the world, because the wrong person is probably going to see what you posted. That, in and of itself, can cost you your job.

Be Positive. Negativity is contagious, but so is a positive attitude. I have a Post-it not on my desk with a quote from Rosanne Cash which says: Cheerfulness is a choice. The more you stay positive, even if you're in a tough situation, the better you'll be able to manage.

Suck it Up. Maybe it's not your favorite job. Maybe you'd rather be doing something else.

However, it is a paycheck and if you need the income, it can make sense to stay until you secure a new position.

When All Else Fails. When keeping your job simply isn't feasible, and it isn't always, take the time to prepare to job search and plan your departure, so you're not scrambling to find a job because you just got terminated.