

How to bounce back from retrenchment

Sandra Olivier - Friday, April 17, 2015

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It was in 2009 that retrenchments in South Africa became a reality for many employees, and while our economy didn't suffer as badly from the 2008 global economic downturn, retrenchments still continue in 2015 on a smaller scale. If you've been retrenched, we've got some strategies for you to use, to help you bounce back from being retrenched.

1. Tell everyone

Telling everyone you've been retrenched sounds counter-intuitive, especially when a retrenchment can hit you right in the self-confidence. However, telling people about your retrenchment can serve two purposes: firstly, it can relieve you of a lot of the stress that comes from being retrenched; knowing that you're not alone in this experience. You may even help other "retrench-ees" to open up about their own work situations and find mutual support.

Secondly, telling people you've been retrenched is a great starting point for networking yourself and your skills. Instead of: "Oh no, poor me, I've been retrenched", the narrative can sound more like: "Now that I've been retrenched, my broad skills range and vast experience can be invested in a company with a vacancy for which I'd be perfect."

2. Review your budget and finances

It's necessary to take care of business first, so now's the chance to review your budget (which means perhaps tightening your belt a bit on the spending and ensuring your money only goes towards the bare necessities like home and car loans, retirement annuity, medical aid, and existing investments, etc.). If you've been contributing towards UIF during your employment, then you have up to six months from the date of your retrenchment to apply for UIF claims, which will certainly help to keep money worries at bay while you...

3. Make the job hunt your new full-time job

It might be tempting to fall into the trap of waking up late (because you can) and staying in your PJs all day (because you can) while you browse the internet for potential new jobs. Instead, to keep your confidence up and feel like you have a sense of purpose, treat your job hunt as you would an eight-hour work day: shower, shave, dress up, and be at your computer by 08:30 to work on finding a new job. Arrange meetings with recruiters and see them as business meetings – be punctual and professional.

Take the opportunity to really review and polish your CV, using it to communicate the job you want. That being said...

4. Reflect honestly on your career

If you're able to keep a positive mindset, you'll likely treat your redundancy as an opportunity instead of a tragedy. Be 100 % honest with yourself: was your last job the job you always wanted? Or have you secretly been wishing for a job in a different industry? What do you *really* want to do with your life? A redundancy is the perfect (and exciting) opportunity for change – if you're willing to see it that way.

5. Embrace the change – upskill

If you do decide to change your career, the upside to retrenchment is that you'll get a retrenchment pay-out. This doesn't mean you can avoid the realities of your life by going on a cruise in the Mediterranean or buying a new car. It means that you can afford (the money and the time) to upskill in order to make a proactive shift into your new career.

6. Get a recruitment specialist involved

No one knows the employment landscape in your industry better than a recruitment agency that specialises in it. Approach the relevant agencies and provide them with your newly polished CV as well as a well-articulated motivation letter for why you're the perfect candidate for the job you desire. Keep your interview skills fresh and talk about your accomplishments and your passion for what you do. There *are* companies out there that need you – involving a recruitment agency will make it easier for you and your new employer to find each other.

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