



Adopt strategies to make yourself invaluable on job

By Gregory Weaver, The Indianapolis Star

As pink slips rain all around them, workers left on the job should find a way to throw themselves a life preserver to avoid drowning in the next round of layoffs. That's the advice of career counselors, who say workers often can keep themselves from becoming the next downsizing victim if they prove themselves to be invaluable to their employers.

Obviously, not much can be done if a company goes bankrupt and closes up shop, said Larry Beck, associate director of the Ball State University Career Center.

But within those companies that remain afloat, workers need to demonstrate the value they bring to the organization if they want to stay on the job.

"Even in the toughest times, employees can be in charge of their own destiny by seeking ways to make themselves more valuable to those they work for," said Bob Nelson, a California management consultant and author of *Please Don't Just Do What I Tell You! Do What Needs to be Done* (Hyperion, \$17.95).

Among the most effective strategies is to volunteer to take on additional daily responsibilities or to chair task forces assigned to tackle cost-cutting or customer-service improvements.

That alone won't be enough to emblazon a worker's name on management's "must-keep" list. Workers sometimes must go out of their way to remind managers of their accomplishments.

Don't be a braggart, Becker advised, but be assertive in outlining what you have done for the company.

He said workers should keep diaries of accomplishments to pull out when it comes time for the annual performance review. But don't limit the recitation of accomplishments to once a year.

When asked for a progress report, provide details on what has been accomplished up to that point. Follow up any conversation on the topic with a written report. A little reinforcement never hurts, Becker said.

Whatever a worker does on the job should be part of a strategy to build a reputation as a person who gets things done, thrives on challenge, never whines about an assignment and rarely lets personal problems get in the way of work.

General Electric Chief Executive Jeffrey Immelt summed up the concept nicely during a recent speech to employees, Nelson said.

When asked what he was looking for in new hires, Immelt said: "We are looking for people who are givers rather than takers."

Nelson said that's all most employers are looking for. They will reward workers who go the extra mile, he said. And, when they get the chance, they will dump workers who are obstructionists and balk at every assignment.

"There's an attitude among a lot of people out there that they were just hired to do certain things. That they don't do windows — and that they're not about to do windows even if a manager asks them to," Nelson said.

"That's the attitude that undermines people. When managers sit around a table to decide who is going to be laid off, they already know the people who aren't doing enough to earn their salary. And those are the first people to go."

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