Look on the Bright Side

Large-scale layoffs. Record unemployment rates. Drops in the Dow Jones average. The headlines can consume even the most confident of job seekers. But before you consider failing finals just to stay in school another semester, consider these five reasons to stay positive while surviving your job search in a recession.

You’re Not Alone
The idea that most students have jobs by the time they graduate is a myth. This year, only about 19 percent of seniors who applied for a full-time job have obtained one, according to a survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. By comparison, 25 percent of seniors who applied for a job had secured one at the same time in 2008.

Realize it’s not unusual to be unemployed upon graduation. Take comfort in your numbers and keep your head high.

Become an Expert Networker
No doubt, in a growing economy, it’s easier for students to get a job offer. “That’s great, but these students miss out on the skills attached to a full job search, especially when it comes to professional networking,” says Lonnie Dunlap, director of Northwestern University’s career center. Job hunting during a recession forces you to expand your network. Attendance to networking events rises. Plus, those fortunate enough to be employed tend to go out of their way to help the unemployed. Identifying and solidifying career contacts early in your career will pay dividends in years to come.

Plan B, C, and D
If you can't land your ideal job right out of school, it can be liberating to chart a new course that veers from the traditional 9-to-5’er. There’s no better time to volunteer for a new cause, take on a part-time gig, or accept one more internship—these positions can enhance your resume during a prolonged job search. They might even shed light on career outlets you had never considered.

Fan Out
By doing some research and exploring alternative industries and locations, you'll ratchet up the odds of finding a job. “Some students are so self-directed during graduation—like advertising or consulting majors—that they have blinders on and don’t look around,” says Dunlap. “It’s healthy for students in any market to review all of their opportunities and do a check-in with what will meet their career satisfaction.” Consider a boutique firm rather than a large corporation, a government job rather than corporate finance, or Cincinnati rather than New York. If you’re flexible, you might actually end up in an industry or region that ultimately better suits you.

Reality Check
The bumps in life tend to teach you lessons about yourself and what you’re capable of. “There’s a term we use in career services called self efficacy—it means an ‘I can do it’ attitude,” says Dunlap. “When you do your own job search and experience small positive outcomes like making a network connection or landing an interview, it really builds your confidence. Not to mention, this persistence underlies more successful people.” Battling uphill now will make your next job search seem like a joyride.

Source: Liz Seasholtz (www.wetfeet.com)

Once You Land a Job
According to ACT research, employers are looking for workers who have that special something: the skills, tendencies and attributes that help keep productivity—and profits—up. Keep these in mind, because employers certainly are seeking:

- Carefulness
- Cooperation
- Creativity
- Discipline
- Drive
- Optimism
- Goodwill
- Savvy
- Safe work Behaviors
- Influence
- Order
- Sociability
- Stability
- Vigor

Source: Training Magazine courtesy of ACT www.trainingmag.com
Help for Laid Off Workers

1. Unemployment Insurance
For workers who lose a job through no fault of their own, unemployment insurance (UI) provides partial income support to replace their lost wages.
You should apply for UI benefits as soon as you lose your job. To apply for UI go Online — this is the fastest way to apply and the method recommended by EDD. Go to https://eapply4ui.edd.ca.gov/ to get the process started. The forms can also be filled out in Spanish at https://eapply4ui.edd.ca.gov/default_Sp.htm

2. Health Insurance
There are several resources available to help laid off workers keep health care coverage and pay for the cost of it. Most California workers have the right to continue their health care coverage through a program call COBRA. Normally, this program allows workers to keep their coverage only if they pay the full cost of it. You may be eligible for this program even if you've already declined COBRA coverage. For more information, go to http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/cobra.html

3. Keeping Your Home
Many families have fallen behind in their payments due to increases in an adjustable rate mortgage or job loss. The best thing to do is to call a housing counselor to see whether you can get help with a loan modification.
If you are falling behind in your payments and need advice, union members and their families can call the Union Privilege “Save My Home” Hotline to receive free, confidential advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with counselors from a nonprofit, HUD certified housing counseling agency: 1-866-490-5361. You can also look for a local HUD certified housing counselor in your own community at www.hud.gov.

4. Job Searches and Retraining Help
There are a number of resources available to help workers find new work or get training in a new field. Through the state’s one-stop career centers can help connect you with available jobs and improve your job search skills. Go to http://www.edd.ca.gov/About_ED/Economic_Slowdown.htm for a full list of resources.

   If you need to look for work in a new field because your skills are no longer in demand in California, there are programs available to help update your skills. For more information on retraining benefits, visit http://www.edd.cahwnet.gov/pdf_pub_ctr/de8714u.pdf.