

[youtube:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ah5XMyhbPJI w auto] **10 practical steps to a new career path. How to reinvent your future.**

How to stand out in job applications and stay focussed on what really matters. Losing a job can be really stressful. It could be the start of the most fulfilling chapter of your life.

***\* "How AI Will Change Your Life - A Futurist's Guide to a Super-Smart World" - Patrick Dixon's latest book on AI is published in September 2024 by Profile Books. □ It contains 38 chapters on the impact of AI across different industries, government and our wider world, including the impact of AI on workplace, jobs, employment, offices, team management and career opportunities. □ 10 Steps to future-proof your own life and career.***

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Take hold of your future - or the future will take hold of you. Article and video by Futurist Keynote Speaker Patrick Dixon, a global authority on a wide variety of workplace trends.

Over the years I have supported many friends through the process of finding a new job. In almost every case their life went in a new direction, and looking back, it was a positive thing. But at the time it was disorientating, stressful, and demoralising.

Losing a job through redundancy can be a deeply upsetting and traumatic experience. A loss of any kind can create feelings of bereavement, and a redundancy or enforced retirement can represent a series of major losses. Not just lost income but also maybe a loss of self-worth, loss of a team, of a work-place "family", of shared memories, of a career, of social status. Loss of routine, loss of a place to go on Monday mornings. Loss, even, of a boss to complain about.

Many people can feel very low at such a time, and if you have experienced other losses in the same year or two, then the impact of a job loss can be even greater – for example if you have

recently lost a relative, moved house, experienced a relationship break-up, children leaving home and so on.

## **Take care of yourself**

So the first thing is to take care of yourself. Be kind to yourself. It is okay to feel these things, and totally normal for loss of your job to affect you in all kinds of unexpected ways. Seek out, if you can, other people who have been through a similar redundancy experience, or are doing so now.

Remember you are in very good company. In a sharp economic downturn, there is no disgrace whatsoever in losing a job. Millions of people – many of who are exceptionally talented – are in the same situation.

Do think early about who you need to inform – which may include for example your mortgage company. You will usually find them much more understanding and willing to help if talked to early on following your redundancy, rather than when you are overdue on several monthly payments. It is easy to go into denial and just hope something works out, but this can create a much bigger crisis later on.

## **Look forward to the next chapter of your life**

Remember too, that many people say it was through the shock of redundancy, that they began a huge new adventure, into an area of life that they would never have got into unless pushed.

It is easy to lose focus after losing a job, to feel wiped out both physically and emotionally, for it all to catch up with you, and to lose heart. It is easy to feel defeated before you start, to be overwhelmed at the thought of applying for jobs, selling yourself, going for interviews, risking rejections.

Rejections will come if you are job hunting – even if you are hugely skilled and experienced, and have exactly the right attributes for the job. It is agonising when you are on the other side, faced with so many brilliant applicants, and only able to choose one.

## **Set yourself targets for each day**

So set yourself some targets. Treat finding a job as a project which needs a strategy: a clear plan, list of tasks to do each day. Remember that it will be time limited. You will find a job, even if not as fast as you might hope, or the job you hope.

So let us look now at steps you can take today in job hunting, and over the next few weeks, to make the best of the situation and help propel you into the next chapter of your life.

So let us assume you are already doing what most people do: looking out for job vacancies, generally asking around, applying for a few jobs that you think are worth going for. What else can you do? Here are a few thoughts to get you to a new level.

## **1) *RENEW YOUR NETWORKS***

Most people like employing people they know something about, which is why LinkedIn is now the number one recruitment tool for many small to medium sized businesses. Yes, jobs may be advertised in all the usual places, and yes, large corporations may have all kinds of policies to do with equal opportunities, but the fact is that relationship is really important.

It costs a huge amount to re-recruit, and mistakes are expensive in loss of productivity and damage to team morale. References are often worthless, with employers masking the truth to get rid of poor performers to their competitors.

Interviews are notoriously deceptive. So how do employers make a good choice about new appointments? A key way is to ask around of people you know, to see who they think might be suitable and available for a particular role.

That is why networking is so important. Make sure you are on people's radar screens – but not by shouting to everyone in an e-mail that you are out of a job. Sure, take a few good friends into confidence, but why promote information that may be seen as negative?

Networking means picking up the phone. It also means (probably) investing more time in

communities like Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo and Twitter. If you don't know how to set them up, ask a friend to help you.

Use your existing e-mail address books (hopefully large and up-to-date) to discover who is using these different communities. Use a tool like Plaxo to automatically build an address book out of people you have sent e-mails to.

Remember that the personal profiles on these sites are part of your image so pay very close attention and make every word count. Look at what other people have done.

Start posting status updates – not “what I am doing right now”, but interesting websites and observations, preferably relevant in some way to the kinds of jobs you are interested in. Listen to what others are posting to discover what people are interested in, and join in the conversations. Use Twollo and other tools to find people on Twitter that are interested in your area of work.

If you have a blog or other personal websites, check to make sure they communicate the right image. Delete them if they don't help in promoting who you are in an attractive way to possible employers. Do a quick check of your name on Google to make sure that nothing comes up that could be embarrassing – and if there is, deal with it if you possibly can (alter it, talk to others about removing it and so on). Your online brand is really important, and may be the first thing people read about you.

Think about people to invite out to lunch or go and have a cup of coffee with.

## 2) **REBRAND YOUR BIO**

I am amazed at how unimaginative most people are in the way they describe themselves. A bio is a vital marketing document. It should be full, accurate and attractive. Sometimes we need someone to hold up a mirror to us so we can understand what are major skills really are.

Yes, many jobs don't let you apply with a bio, but your bio document is a core of material that you can work and rework over and again, adapted to each opportunity, so you still need to do

the basic work.

If your previous job was – say – marketing consultant, don't just think of your bio as a pitch for another marketing job. By all means make a marketing version, but also think about ways to repackage your experience. For example, you may have been managing a team of ten people, and have experience of running call centres in a previous job.

You might have worked with a smaller company for a while when you gained all-round experience of business development. So make sure that all these skills and experiences are explained clearly, and repackaged in relevant ways for each application.

Rebranding your bio may also suggest all kinds of other avenues to go down.

If you apply for loads of jobs and are failing to get short-listed, then you need urgent help. There may be something very wrong with your bio / applications. Or you are applying for unsuitable jobs. It must be one or the other.

Get others to check it for you, and really listen to what they say. Too many people kick back at this stage, and find it hard to accept advice – “Yes but....” Trouble is that you only have one shot at a great job.

It is impossible to judge your own bio – you are just too close to yourself. Work hard to make sure every part of it really stands out. The reader will judge you probably on the first paragraph or two, so check and check again.

If they allow a photo, make sure it really is a good one. If in doubt, get some taken especially for the purpose, and get a friend or family member to choose the best shot.

Your covering letter, or reasons for application on the form, are really important. Take every opportunity to let yourself shine.

Stand back from the application and take another hard look the following day. Does it really capture all of who you are? Does it tell everything about you that is relevant to the job? Does it really do justice to all your talent, gifting, past experience and to the passions that you have?

### **3) REFRESH YOUR OUTLOOK**

Make sure you are learning new things and stay active.

For example, buy my new book.

[Order "How AI Will Change Your Life" NOW](#)

If you have time to spare, consider getting involved as a volunteer in a charity or non-profit foundation. Buy magazines you would not normally read. Get the Financial Times, or Economist regularly or similar publications to stretch your thinking and keep in touch with wider changes in society and industry.

Subscribe to interesting blogs, websites and other information sources that you know you will find challenging and thought-provoking.

Spend time with people who are in very different kinds of work than your own world, and be very hungry to learn about what they do, challenges they face, what is happening in their organisations.

Consider learning a new skill eg a computer course, or a language school.

All these things will enlarge your vision, keep your brain sharp, and may trigger new thoughts about jobs and career directions.

#### 4) **RETHINK YOUR FOCUS**

Why are you applying for this job? Transition from one job to another is a great opportunity to stop and think. What do you really want out of life? What are your longer term aspirations (apart from the pressures of just surviving until you get another job).

Take a day out and go for a long walk with a notepad. Find somewhere quiet and start jotting down all the things you liked and did not like about your previous job.

Next, write down all the things you enjoy in life, things you like doing, your personal passions and interests.

Next, list the kinds of jobs that might fit some of these things – don't censor the list too early with rational thoughts.

Just allow yourself to dream a little and you may be surprised where you end up. Too often we abandon such thinking with negatives like "would not pay enough" or "too late to change now".

You will be much more convincing at interview if people can see you have really thought about what next, and that you are passionate about the new direction you have decided to take. This could be a time to completely re-invent yourself.

The whole of the rest of your life is ahead.

#### 5) **REFRAME YOUR SKILLSET**

Now is a good time to make a big list of all the skills you possess. You have already begun thinking about this in **rebranding your bio** and in **rethinking your focus**. What we are interested in are transferable skills. Things you have learned to do in one setting that may be really useful in another. For example, you may be a highly innovative person and brilliant at problem solving.

You could be an excellent team builder or have strong communication ability. Maybe you are excellent at organising time-limited projects and running with tight budgets.

Every transferable skill is a potential ticket to a totally new industry. A friend of mine used to run a factory, and now provides consulting to the UK NHS, saving millions every year by making health care more efficient in hospitals. Massive jump, similar skills.

## **6) RESEARCH EACH OPPORTUNITY**

When you hear of a vacancy, make sure you are a world expert on the organisation before you make an approach – easy using Google. If you can, talk to someone who works in the company – maybe from your networks (see above).

Don't just look at the official website. Remember that you can get inside gossip from searching for blog comments, YouTube video clips, posts on bulletin boards and so on. So search for things like “working at xxxxxx”, or “xxxxx employment problems” or “xxxxxxx unfair dismissal” or “job benefits at xxxxx” and so on. Just go digging deep.

And go digging into their industry, as well as competitors if they are a business.

Make sure you really understand the exact nature of the job before you think about applying. It will shape what you write. If you are in doubt, you may need to phone the department, but be careful and be prepared, because their first informal interview of you will start the moment they answer the phone.

Make sure you are a really interesting person to interview. Have insightful questions to ask them. They should also be selling the organisation to you.

Get a friend to give you a touch mock interview.

Remember that you only have a choice at the moment when you are actually offered a job, so try not to get caught up in the emotionally exhausting speculation about what you will do if you get offered a particular job. Face that when you are actually offered it. Otherwise you will either not apply for many jobs at all, or be wrecked by the possibilities of each one.

Just use the time during the application process as an opportunity to learn about the organisation.

## **7) *RETARGET JOBS***

You may be applying at the moment for jobs that do not exist any more or are in long term decline. You may be aiming still for an industry where there is huge competition. Many people are so fixed on “more of the same” that they miss great opportunities.

So when you scan lists of vacancies, start with the thought – which ones could I definitely not do at all. Then knock out the ones you think you would hate to do – but take care here as many people have a bias against great jobs just because of a personal bad experience or some awful story. Have a look at all the ones that are left, and return to it the following day.

Don't ask yourself what you think you would manage to get offered, but just what you think you could have a go at (and probably manage to do quite well, albeit with some training.) It will stretch your personal vision.

## **8) *RETRAIN YOURSELF***

If you feel stuck or trapped, consider retraining. Most people have two or more careers in their lifetime – so how many have you had so far? Yes, retraining can be costly and time-consuming but it could be the very best decision you have ever taken in terms of job satisfaction, security and maybe even earning power.

Include things like an MBA as part of your thinking. If you are out of the job market anyway, and prospects right now are poor, it could be the ideal time to do that MBA or shorter executive training programme you have often thought about.

## **9) *RELOCATE WORKPLACE AND POSSIBLY HOME***

Relocation can be a tough option but does not always mean moving. Many people are blind to job location. They assume for example, that because they live in London and have always commuted into the city that they would not want to work in – say – Reading, or possibly even Swindon or Winchester or Luton or Cambridge. And flexible home-working can make such arrangements a lot easier.

For a bridging period of two or three years it may be very worth-while getting a job with a longer commute in an unusual direction, even with extra travel costs, just to keep in the job market until things settle down.

Relocation of home can be a real challenge if you have family living with you, especially if your children are older and at school, since they will almost certainly lose friends and could experience major disruption. Or if you have dependent older relatives nearby who require you to stay rooted.

And of course, in any two-career households, there are two paths to balance. But many people look back and say that a relocation was the best thing they ever did, for the whole family.

Once you are thinking about relocation, huge numbers of options open. Anywhere in the same country? What about another nation altogether?

## **10) *RETIRE* – maybe partly**

Many people who are over 50 have more pension options than they think. You may find that your pension plan will allow you to take early retirement on a limited amount, which you know you can easily top up with some extra earnings, which will be more than enough to keep you going and also to put extra away to build additional pension in future.

Circumstances vary, but many people find that their living costs fall rapidly when they are over the age of 55 – mortgage may be (mostly) paid off, children left home and so on. And if parents have died for some people there may be an inheritance that relieves a lot of pressure.

## **And finally.....*RELAX* – yes it can be very hard**

It is so easy when under pressure about the future to forget to live today. You can only live today once in your life, so take things one step at a time. Savour the moment. Enjoy friends and family. Remember that when every material thing fades away, relationships are really what matters. And they cost nothing – except your time which you probably have more of if you are out of work.

Many people find the sharp shock of losing a job to be very traumatic. Each day is a void without the daily routines. But it is also an opportunity for restoring balance. Spending time with people who matter to you.

Making up for years of being hyper-busy, and also taking advantage of a gap before you are swept up into another very demanding job.

Remember that the number of people in any recession who remain out of work for more than a year is small. Remember that the job that is designed for you (and waiting for you) may still be filled because the person doing it right now has yet to hand in their resignation.

**So be patient. Be kind to yourself. Believe in yourself.**

And remember that the most important things in the world can never be bought off the shelf: love, friendship, health, purpose and inner peace.

These comments are by no means exhaustive, but hopefully will point you in one or two new directions. It is all about opening additional doors.

**Take hold of your future – or the future will take hold of you.**

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