

career

BY RACHAEL RUSSELL

If the struggling economy is giving you the jitters at work, take action now and 'recession-proof' your role

BE INFORMED

You should always keep informed about the state of the industry you're working in, says Frances Harré, senior career consultant at findmyforté.co.nz. "The idea of recession-proofing your career isn't going away. There are always redundancies, restructures, closings, openings... and a recession turns the heat up." There are often warning signs that a company is under pressure, such as a tightening of expenses. "Instead of complaining about subtle or not-so-subtle cuts, be aware of where your industry is, where it's headed, and how it might be re-niching itself," Harré says.

GET ON BOARD

If the warning bells are ringing, then it's time to be proactive. Looking for solutions, instead of problems, will make a good impression on your employer. "Look for ways to save the company money," Harré says. "Think about how you can be more efficient and work more effectively, such as managing the use of paper. Try to get people on board. This way you will be seen to be more useful in that organisation." At the very least, don't start complaining. "Don't be a whiner, gossip, or make the company or the boss wrong. Don't even blame the economy."

BE A 'GENERATION G'

The new catchphrase in the workforce is 'Generation G'. That's G for generosity. "It's shifting your attitude from 'what can I get for me?' to 'how can I be useful?'" Harré says. "Complaining about the boss is just so last century. Ask yourself: 'How can I further help my boss to be successful?'" This means being willing to take on extra work outside your job description, even helping out in other departments. This will not only help out the company, it's also a great way to increase your skills and make contacts."

BE LIKEABLE

If you want to keep your job safe, have a think about how you behave at work. "Likeability and agreeability are bigger predictors of success than things like IQ," Harré says. That often comes down to communication skills. "Good old-fashioned manners, how you relate to people, how you respect people – it's so important." She adds that taking an interest in people is not only polite, it's a great way to learn. "There is so much learning to be had informally, just from what other people are doing. Curiosity is not something you either have or you haven't; you can develop it."

DUST OFF YOUR CV

Do you even know where your CV is? Don't wait until the writing's on the wall before hunting it down and updating it. Your CV is an important document and it deserves time and attention. Harré advises jotting down notes once a week of any feedback you have received at work, what you might have done differently, or how you have broadened your skills. Keep a file of this information to feed into your next resumé. As well as helping with future job applications, these notes will be a great resource for performance reviews at your current job.



MANAGE YOUR FEAR

There are two aspects to this, Harré says. The first is to have a clear idea of where you want your career to be headed, independent of your current job. This may include developing an interest outside of work – something you really love. "Quite often there comes a point in a person's career where this 'hobby' takes over and becomes their new career."

The second way to ease the terror of potential redundancy is to manage your finances. "How much a person earns is only half the picture," Harré says. "Living within your means will make the transition to a new job easier." □

HOW TO COPE WITH JOB LOSS

Harré has some words of encouragement for anyone who has lost their job: "Take heart. If you think you might be in the thick of this, there is always a way forward." She suggests thinking back to other times when you've come through a difficult spot, even if it wasn't work-related. "That helps people remember 'oh yeah, I did come through something else that was very tough'." Other useful tips:

- Keep to a routine.
- Reach out to other people for support.
- Make a list of five people you know through work, such as former colleagues, and arrange to meet. "You're not asking for work, but saying 'this is my situation, this is what I have to offer, who would you suggest I talk to as a next step?'" Harré says.
- Find a transitional job instead of holding out for the 'perfect' one. "Keep your hand in, take the pressure off and keep taking action."