



Shownotes – Annual Layoff Immunization

Blog Post

We received lots of comments and email regarding our show regarding the first rule of layoffs. While our recommendation struck some folks the wrong way - “finances rule??” - those who HAD been laid off told us we were dead solid perfect.

The fact is, we did not expect three years ago to get such positive responses to our casts and advice on careers and career management. We SHOULD have seen it, but we didn’t (and you’ll learn why in this week’s cast). But we are listening, and thus this week’s cast.

In the same way that “Finances Rule” when it comes to being laid off, PREPARATION makes the entire process so much easier. Both of these recommendations stem from a simple principle: decisions of import made under pressure are dangerous.

So, this week: our Annual Layoff Immunization Guidelines.

Cast

A: Time for a little medicine.

H: Good way to put it, yes.

A: But we never did this when we were employed by others, did we?

H: No we did not.

A: Okay, let’s stop here for a second. We do really well at eating our own dog food. We conduct one on ones, we embrace the feedback model, we coach, etc. But this one we didn’t do. What right do we have to suggest, do as we say, not as we did?

H: You always ask the right questions! Because good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment. We messed up, and luckily for us, there’s nothing so exhilarating as being shot at and missed.

A: I guess what I’m getting at is why should folks listen to us on this topic if we didn’t follow our own recommendation.

H: Again the right question. Do you need a partner? You’re smart. There are three reasons why, in this case, we have credibility – because that’s the crux of what you’re getting at. First, neither you nor I had normal careers. We regularly outperformed, and were both in accelerated career programs that had senior folks looking at our work, and contacting us regarding what we wanted and how to get there. You were young for the levels of responsibility that MCI (to say nothing of Bell Atlantic and Mobil and the Army) entrusted you with. I was the number one sales person in my division in my first year. Second, Manager Tools is NOT about what we alone have done. Frankly, our experience is by definition limited, and we’d be selling our listeners short if all we did was rely on first person experience. My consulting experiences could fill a book or two. And finally, we have data. We’ve seen everything we recommend WORK repeatedly, with many many managers. But of course, that’s not enough...we’ve also seen the absence of these tenets cause failure, as well.



A: Back to the medicine analogy. We're recommending here some basic steps that all Manager Tools managers engage in periodically to protect their careers. We're suggesting that with a little extra effort, maybe 15 minutes a day over a couple of weeks, we can reduce our career risk noticeably. We're talking about IMMUNIZATION against a layoff.

H: Yes. In much the same way that Finances Rule if you get laid off, preparation is so critical to handling a layoff. But we KNOW that thousands of managers basically shoot themselves in the foot for two reasons when they're laid off. First, they don't know how LITTLE work it takes to make a HUGE difference if the axe falls on them, and secondly they don't know WHAT to do even if they did schedule the time to do so. And that's what this cast is about: the professional part of the lay off preparation equation.

A: Let's use that to get right into it.

H: It's just the simplest of stuff. We have 5 key recommendations, with metrics to go with each.

1. **Printed Contacts List**
2. **Printed Recruiters List**
3. **Home Individual Email List**
4. **Home Delivery or Access to Business News**
5. **Current Resume**

A: Okay, so those are the 5 tenets of our Annual Layoff Immunization recommendations. Let's just march right through them all. First is **Printed Contacts List**.

H: Perhaps the most important word in this guidance is PRINTED. Your list being printed here is a bit like the difference between PASSIVE knowledge of a foreign language, and ACTIVE knowledge or active vocabulary. It's the difference between knowing what a word is when you see it, and being able to CALL UPON THAT WORD WHEN YOU NEED IT. And let me tell you something, folks, PASSIVE KNOWLEDGE IS IGNORANCE when it comes to the job search.

A: To translate, we see too many managers being lulled into a false sense of satisfaction by the contact information they have at the office. It's around, they take it for granted.

H: Sure! They think, LOOK! I am Sherman McCoy! I am a Master of the contact universe! I am SURROUNDED by contacts, and ALL of the information I could possibly want. I start typing, and the magic box completes my every thought. I ...HAVE... MADE... CONTACTS! I have told many folks that one of my favorite books about the business world is Disclosure, by Michael Crichton. It's the one that was made into the movie starring Michael Douglas and Demi Moore, and to a lesser degree, Donald Sutherland. The book really captures a lot of the subtleties of the business world that so many business thrillers just fail to do. It's worth reading, as long as you can see past the sexual harassment screed in the screenplay. Anyway, there's a part in there where once the scandal happens, he comes to work one day, gets an unusual or threatening email, from an anonymous source, and attempts to use his Sysadmin abilities to trace the actual sender...and then he discovers all of his privileges have been removed. What he TOOK FOR GRANTED YESTERDAY is now simply...yesterday's news. And it's a little bit more than disconcerting, to say the least.

A: Folks think things will be fine...until they lose access at work.



H: Until they lose access at work. So, it's time, folks, to start printing out your contact information. We don't care how easy it is to log in from home, we don't care what kind of access you have, or think you won't be denied...You WILL be.

A: The worst damage is done to those folks who work a LOT of hours, those dedicated folks, many of them loyalists to the company, who don't even bother keeping their contacts in any other place but the Outlook contacts folder at work.

H: YES! They get tired of using their cell phone to get friend's numbers, and they enter them right into the company's data stores...and heck, why bother maintaining TWO sets of data when keeping up with one is hard enough? When I got fired, my bosses denied me access to everything. I asked one of the owners to print out from the computer all the birth dates and dress sizes and anniversaries and book preferences of all of my brothers and sisters in law and nephews and nieces...and I was told that would be burdensome. And, not that my example is common, but I assumed that folks would be calling the office and they would be told how they could get a hold of me, but the owners started telling everyone that they didn't want to give out my contact information. I was later told that the owners didn't want to obligate me to have to return long distance phone calls, of all things. It was comical, and absolutely intentional.

A: Just more proof that even savvy folks need to be THINKING DIFFERENTLY about what might happen when a layoff or termination occurs. It pays to have engaged in some simple, basic actions NOW. Printing out your contacts NOW is one of them.

H: Let's also address a couple of other comments we hear. "hey Mark, I don't need to do that, I have LinkedIn, with all my network or contacts there."

A: Something tells me you don't agree with that line of reasoning.

H: Duh. I did a quick test of some folks recently that were talking about LinkedIn. I asked them how many of them had their boss and 50% of their co-workers in their LinkedIn or Plaxo or whatever database. NONE did....all because they said, "I see them everyday, why do I need to do that???" But it's easy for folks to think about the UNTHINKABLE possibility of a layoff and DISMISS contact information access with the thought, 'hey, lucky me, I have LinkedIn.'

A: Yeah, you do, but it really won't help.

H: Nope. But let's also engage in a little self-protection by saying, please don't send us a mail with the incredibly high number of contacts you have in LinkedIn. We're not impressed.

A: What about cell phones? Lots of folks store contact data there.

H: Yes, and some of those phones are from the company.

A: Okay, but we assume folks know better than THAT.

H: Bad assumption. Happens all the time.

A: O-Okay...but personal phones?

H: Technically a solution, sure, but a weak one, frankly. Knowing someone's cell number isn't all



that great as information about them. Do you remember their spouse's name? Kid's names? Title, office number, office address, home address...? I DOUBT IT.

A: And it just reinforces the whole "I got laid off and was neither expecting it nor prepared, so I have to ask a friend to give me all their contact information again. Not what you want to spend your time on the phone doing..

H: As a close friend of mine likes to say, UGH.

A: And now it's time for the METRIC here.

H: Yep. Let's make everybody angry by showing them how NOT READY they are for this inoculation step. The standard is.... **ONE HUNDRED contacts. Printed. At home. Names, physical and email addresses, phone numbers (one is required, two is the smart play), and family names as well: spouse and kids. Current within 180 days.**

A: Let's talk about the **Printed Recruiters List**. I know it's not overkill, because we're talking about it separately...but I think most folks would say, wait, you just recommended we print out our contacts...

H: Sure, that would work IF MANAGERS KEPT THEIR RECRUITING FIRM CONTACTS IN THEIR CONTACTS DATABASE. But in my experience they don't. You know, day to day, I get it. One manager whose contact list was pretty complete didn't have the recruiters in it, and he said, I don't need it, with a chuckle...they call here every damn day! I see a lot of recruiter numbers without names on them, and certainly without firms names on them, in manager's desk drawers. They are rarely if ever in Outlook at work, that's for sure. But for some reason – I think fear, mainly – recruiters don't get captured the RIGHT way...and then when we need them most, YIKES.

A: It both makes sense AND is counterproductive.

H: Bingo. And this gives me an opportunity to talk about something else. If we mention immunizing oneself from the pain of a layoff, we simply can't fail to mention one of the very best books on our recommended reading list.

A: John Lucht!

H: Exactly. John Lucht's book, *Rites of Passage at \$100,000+, Second Edition*. It is the single best specialty book on our list. It is the only book we ever recommend when it comes to career changing and job searching and interviewing. It is comprehensive, it is clear...it's the book we wish we were smart enough to write.

A: In fact, we like the book so much we're seriously considering making John our first ever interview on the show. We talked to him recently courtesy of a member.

H: And of course the problem with the book is that you don't want to be buying it and reading it after you've been laid off. **You want to KNOW it when you've been laid off.**

A: Buy the book now, basically, is what we're saying folks. I am sure we will have some traffic in the forums, and we encourage those who HAVE read it to share their opinions, to encourage the foot draggers to get in step.



H: And I have one other little gem of a recommendation here as well. It's not on our reading list, but I think it ought to be. It's the Kennedy book, *****, which lists in incredible detail, every recruiting firm in the US (most of whom have overseas offices), with industry specializations, contact information, geographic reach...everything. It's a big red book, I think it's 60 bucks, and if you don't have it when you get laid off, it would be easy to not buy it...but that would be a mistake. So, plop down the cash now, and you can thank us later. WELL WORTH IT AT TWICE THE PRICE.

A: And now it's METRIC TIME.

H: Easy. 3 or more recruiters names, firm names, phone numbers, email and physical addresses, with a history of your conversations with them. PRINTED OUT. AT HOME. Current within 3 months – meaning that you have spoken with each of them within the past 90 days, and you know the contact information is accurate.

A: Okay, what about number three: **Home Individual Email List**

H: In the same vein as above. Look, the ubiquity of email is really a bane here. It's so much a part of our work lives that I've heard of offices CLOSING, and in other places everyone going HOME because email is down. Stupid, but whatever. It's like air...you know it's there, you need it, and you don't see it, think about it, nor worry about its absence. And then it's gone...and pardon the word and the pun...but you're sucking.

A: All of this really falls into the whole "you've got to understand WHERE the stuff you need IS, and how much of it is "AT" work, or tied to work assets that you don't control, even though you probably feel like you do.

H: Yes. And you know, the whole blurring of work and home has made this MUCH more difficult for most managers and executives we know. Classic example is cell phones. If I were to ask anybody at Procter, or Intel, or AT&T, or Citibank, "Whose cell phone is that?" while pointing to the one that they USE, they would say, "It's mine."

A: But it's not. It's the company's. And it's got a lot of stuff in it...even if it's the wrong stuff, as we mentioned earlier.

H: So, managers, you need the email addresses of everyone you might contact printed out somewhere at home. **PRINTED. AT HOME.** Not in your briefcase or backpack that you leave on your desk, to be gone through by security. Not on a thumb drive, to be taken from your desk because it could have IP on it. Not in a zipped file somewhere, ready to be emailed.

A: So, PRINTED. AT HOME.

H: Nice. And look, if you have every email address of every contact you have in your printed list, well then, fine, you're there. But we find that that's not so in a lot of cases. (there is a flip side to this, by the way, for those of you who are younger...having ONLY email addresses is ALSO a problem. You need an ADDRESS BOOK, not an EMAIL address book.

A: And for all you techies out there, let me address you very directly. I know what you're thinking. NOBODY prints anything anymore. Why do they keep talking about printing things out? This is silly Digital Media ROCK! And you're right, so long as you have PROVENANCE over the hardware and access to the software where that digital media ARE. But too many of you don't, and you cry,



and we have to listen to you. So stop trumpeting that information wants to be free and digital is fine and who wants paper and it's hard to keep current. Just print the stuff out. You'll be good even in a power outage...which is kind of how you feel in a layoff anyway.

H: You rock, partner!

A: Okay, what are the metrics here?

H: Easy. Printed. On paper. At home.

A: Easy enough. Okay, our 4th bit of guidance is **Home Delivery or Access to Business news.**

H: This is another one of those areas that is adversely affected by the melding – some would say boundary blurring – of work and home. You have to ask yourself how DO you get your business, industry, and trade news? Who pays for it, where is it delivered, etc.? If you read the WSJ online at work, that may be a problem for you. If your copy of the WSJ – please tell us you're reading the Journal if you're in the US, or the Economist for parts of Europe is delivered to the office...that's nice...for when you still go to your office. If it does go to the office, and you have no interest in doubling up a subscription, fine... You can subscribe to the online edition for a great rate of 79 USD. If you've got industry or trade magazines – and we just KNOW that you DO, oh wise Manager Tools manager – ask yourself if you can get them delivered at home. One thing I know many folks do is give themselves a gift subscription leveraging the company's existing subscription. They pay for it themselves, but get a better rate than just doing it directly to the source.

A: Do we have any metrics in this area?

H: yes, we do, with three interesting twists. The metrics are these: **three sources of news, delivered to your home. One source for general business news, one source for industry or trade news, again delivered to your home, and finally a source for world and national political and economic news (essentially, a local or national paper).** But there are three twists here, and we're serious about both of them. First, if you choose to get your news online, that's fine....but you must have a recurring task to check it at least every 48 hours. Having a subscription to the WSJ that you never check defeats the purpose. Second, if you get your national news in the US from TV, you lose a point and have to supplement your news gathering in some other way. Lou Dobbs or Keith Olbermann or The Today Show Are NOT covering what you want to know. You're welcome to watch – though we'd like to be competing with you if you do – but let's not call that news. I would argue that CNBC and the financial channels ALSO fall into this category, unless you work in the markets, Wall Street or overseas. And finally, I know of several managers who use email alerts and RSS feeds provided by corporate subscriptions. I wouldn't bet the farm on these, but sometimes you can keep those coming to a personal email address or an RSS reader that you can get to from home. Just don't complain if it stops, and don't count that towards your metrics.

A: And we really are going to remind everyone about having a Current Resume.

H: All the rest of this stuff is just window dressing without it. Your resume is your core career capture document, and failure to have an updated one, as easy as it is, is painful medicine when you need to have it ready to go for someone.

A: I think what we ought to do here is refer everyone to the Your Resume Stinks cast, one of our most popular, rather than giving you a soapbox towards the end of the show. Perhaps you can just



give us the metrics.

H: I think that's a great idea.

Here they are, many reprised and well known:

- **One page**
- **Home email address that is PROFESSIONAL**
- **Personal Unshared Cell Phone with PROFESSIONAL voicemail used for phone number.**
- **Reverse Chronological format**
- **Responsibilities in prose and accomplishments as bullets for each job**
- **Accomplishments start usually with action verbs**
- **No qualifications or summary section at the top**
- **Current job entirely up to date within 48 hours of your job loss**

A: Oh, well, just that. That should be easy enough.

H: Unfortunately, as you and I know, apparently not.

A: A great overview of a necessary career management tactic, the Manager Tools Annual Layoff Immunization. Summing up, we had 5 key recommendations, and metrics for each.

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