

# Managing your career in a time of change

Unless you have been holidaying for a few months on a fantastic island with no contact to the 'real world' you will be aware that the world is currently going through a Global Economic Downturn. With headlines like "Credit Crunch", "Global Financial Crisis", "Economic Downturn", "Current Economic Climate" and "Job Losses" – the mood is relatively downbeat and understandably people are worried about their careers and financial future.

Changes in market conditions can necessitate a firm to change its structure – which can include downsizing and job losses at all levels. How your firm chooses to manage these changes may directly impact on your immediate and future career prospects. We have received various calls and emails on this subject and decided to share some ideas and approaches that could assist you with managing your career in times of change.

## Downsizing - roll up your sleeves

One strategy that a firm often takes during an economic downturn is to downsize its support team. Generally when this happens, the remaining staff have an automatic increase in responsibility and the 'to do' list expands to include different tasks. In cases like this, individuals with a broad skill set need to ensure all of their skills are readily available, because in most cases an 'all hands on deck' approach will be taken.

For senior managers or directors, this may mean undertaking work that you may not have done in several years. Rather than resisting this change or feeling like you are going backwards, try turning it into a positive experience. Let it confirm for yourself and your colleagues that you progressed to your current position based on the fact that you have a solid, well rounded skill set. Allow it to set a good example for your junior staff. Leading by example and showing that you are not afraid to roll up your sleeves and get the job done will reinforce your position within the firm, strengthen your credibility and build support among colleagues.

For those of you in specialist roles – like bid management or events – you should take this opportunity to broaden your skill set. Be proactive and ask to be included in projects that are taking place. Volunteer your time and speak up about wanting to learn new skills. It will show you are a good team player, that you understand the business' priorities and that your role is an important and useful one.

## Ask yourself:

- What skills do I have?
- Do the key stakeholders know who I am?
- How do I add value to the firm?
- Do the stakeholders know how I add value to their firm?

## Losing your job - the next steps

Unfortunately, when a firm downsizes, some of you may lose your job. This can be distressing for both sides of the party as often the employer will be reluctant to have made the decision and you may feel uncertain about your future. However, it is important to remain calm and professional during this time as it is an opportunity to remind your employer why they hired you in the first place.

During the process try to ask questions, but also try to offer solutions. Mention that you understand there is no longer room for your position, and ask if they have considered using you on a contract/project basis or volunteer to go part time. Flexibility is the key to job retention in a downturn market and half a job is better than no job at all. Regardless of what happens, you will leave knowing that you did what you could at the time and can refer to the experience more positively in future career searches.

When leaving a firm in this climate, it is a good opportunity to ask for written references explaining why your job is being made redundant. These can definitely help when you are looking for a new role. There is still a large taboo surrounding redundancies that firms 'get rid of the dead wood'. Whilst there is no doubt that some organisations capitalise on a downturn to push through restructures and redundancies (that would be more difficult to achieve in a boom market), the majority of redundancies we see are because the firm wants to slash costs and some marketing and HR services are seen as 'luxury items'.

So now you have to face the reality of preparing for your next role search. This can be confronting, but also liberating. It is a great time to ask yourself what you like doing, what you want to be doing in five/ten year's time and where you think you want to do it. Think of it as a 'career health check'.

Make a list of what is important to you, ask yourself the hard questions and put the wheels in motion. For example:

- Do I want to remain in professional services?
- Should I consider further education?
- Is now the time to make that overseas move?
- Is now the time to retrain?

We understand that these questions may not be easy to answer without researching further information and this is where Seldon Gill can help. Our website [www.seldongill.com](http://www.seldongill.com) is regularly updated about trends in professional services as well as information about further study, training and working overseas. You can also call any of our experienced consultants for more targeted enquiries.

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