Navigating the Turbulent Waters of Career Transitions:
What Every Leader and Manager Should Know

Lynn M. Joseph
DeVry University, USA

Nancy Kymn Harvin Rutigliano
State University of New York Empire State College, USA

Amy Frost
Getting Back to Work, USA

INTRODUCTION

Many authors have written about the changes in the modern workplace resulting from globalization and expanding technologies (Aggarwal, 2011; Diamandis & Kotler, 2012; Rifkin, 2011). Today, job transitions are especially challenging. Employees at every level, including senior leaders and managers, must develop new skills and competencies (Rojewski & Hill, 2014). According to Savickas et al. (2009), work-related demands increasingly require everyone to be "lifelong learners who can use sophisticated technologies, embrace flexibility rather than stability, maintain employability, and create their own opportunities" (p. 239). Rojewski and Hill (2014) painted the technological advances as a 'revolution' in this way:

The amazing technologies and products predicted for the near future are, quite simply, spectacular, representing a revolution in how we think about work, family, and society. Nanotechnology, 3-D printing, intelligent machines, robotics, medical engineering, and renewable energy sources are all poised to make exponential leaps in complexity and applications in the next several decades. (p. 142)

Such advances, among other factors which will be considered, are expected to increase job changes. Results from a U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) longitudinal survey of 9,964 men and women spanning more than three decades found that the average person held 11.7 jobs from age 18 to age 48 and nearly half of these jobs were held from ages 18 to 24. Further, "Although job duration tended to be longer the older a worker was when starting the job, these baby boomers continued to have large numbers of short-duration jobs. Among jobs started by 40 to 48 year olds, 32 percent ended in less than a year, and 69 percent ended in fewer than 5 years" (p. 1). With regard to the more educated, on average, men with a bachelor's degree born in the latter years of the baby boom (1957-1964), held 11.2 jobs from ages 18 to 48 and women with a bachelor's degree held 12.5 jobs between these ages (p. 1).

In addition, today's workforces are multi-generational, and many employees are not retiring at traditional ages but are staying in the workforce longer and competing for jobs. Given the rapidly changing labor market, where more skills are automated or outsourced, and with the common practice of restructuring and downsizing, leaders and managers often find themselves in the turbulent waters of career transition, unemployed, and facing challenges and obstacles for which they are unprepared.

According to the widely used Holmes-Rahe Social Adjustment Scale, losing one's job ranks among the top 10 of 43 stressful life events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Displaced job seekers face a number of issues, often including chronic stress, loss of control, job-loss grief (anger, fear, anxiety, depression), self-limiting beliefs, and resulting lowered resilience—the ability to bounce back after rejection—which is a vital element of successful job searches (Papa & Maitoza, 2013).

Moreover, Andreeva, Magnusson Hanson, Westerlund, Theorell, and Brenner (2015) found in the Swedish Longitudinal Occupational Survey of Health that "job loss consistently predicted subsequent major depression among men and women" (p. 1). Other researchers emphasize the loss of control and learned helplessness that unemployment can evoke (especially when the job loss was not the employee's choice), leading to motivational and performance deficits (Goldsmith & Darity, 1992; Waters, 2007). If not addressed, these issues can extend one's job search and resulting "landing time"—the time it takes to obtain a new position.

Displaced workers, no matter what their level in an organization, often take unresolved emotions and limiting beliefs, along with a resulting compromised immune system, into the next job, which can negatively impact health and both individual and organizational productivity. According to research results by Price, Choi, and Vinokur (2002), unemployment can start a vicious cycle of depression, loss of personal control, decreased emotional functioning, and poorer physical health. The researchers concluded this from interviewing 756 recently unemployed job seekers over two years. At the end of the two years, 71 percent were reemployed, working at least 20 hours or more per week, but still reported the negative effects of their job loss. Bosque-Prous et al. (2015) conducted a longitudinal study of 7,615 individuals aged 50–64 years from 11 European countries over a six-year period, with a goal to "estimate the incidence of hazardous drinking in middle-aged people during an economic recession" (p. 1). They concluded that "job loss among middle-aged individuals during the economic recession was positively associated with becoming a hazardous drinker" (p. 2).

Two programs, in particular, have been shown to promote reemployment: the JOBS program, a research-based initiative delivered in a group format and designed to increase coping skills and promote reemployment in job seekers, and the Job-Loss Recovery Program®, a research-based offering that includes use of recorded guided imagery designed to speed reemployment and restore a sense of career control in displaced executives, managers, and professionals. The use and benefits of guided imagery as a catalyst for shortening the time from job loss to reemployment will now be explored.

BACKGROUND

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (as cited in Clemmer, 2003, p. 84)

Stages and Symptoms of Job-Loss Grief

Whether for themselves personally or for those they work with, leaders and managers across organizations throughout the world benefit from understanding the impact of job loss, especially as this loss relates to grief. In a study examining the association of job loss with the experience of grief symptoms, Papa and Maitoza (2013) state:

Related Content

Creating Synergic Entrepreneurship as Support of Sustainability: Opportunities and Challenges

Fatma Ince (2021). *Handbook of Research on Management Techniques and Sustainability Strategies for Handling Disruptive Situations in Corporate Settings (pp. 464-486).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/creating-synergic-entrepreneurship-as-support-of-sustainability/285890

Refining Your Team

(2018). *Motivationally Intelligent Leadership: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 97-104).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/refining-your-team/187568

Factors That Influence Consumer Buying Behavior of Fresh Packaged Food in Tunisia

Chaima Derbali, Drakos Periklis, Mamalis Spyridon, Gert van Dijkand George Angelakis (2018). *International Journal of Food and Beverage Manufacturing and Business Models (pp. 1-15).*

www.irma-international.org/article/factors-that-influence-consumer-buying-behavior-of-fresh-packaged-food-in-tunisia/210634

Business Models of Sustainable Open Educational Resources (OER)

Shouhong Wang (2019). *International Journal of Applied Management Theory and Research (pp. 1-16).*

www.irma-international.org/article/business-models-of-sustainable-open-educational-resources-oer/232709

Organizational Issue for BI Success: Critical Success Factors for BI Implementations Within the Enterprise

Sanjiva Shankar Dubeyand Arunesh Sharan (2018). *Operations and Service Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 833-848).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/organizational-issue-for-bi-success/192510