

Three Rules of Career Management for 2012

The biggest difference between today's employment world and that of our fathers' is the rapid pace of corporate change. Expectations of company stability and long lasting employment are a thing of the past. If one isn't tuned into the signals of corporate change it can mean an unexpected layoff and months of unemployment and job searching. Do you have a career management plan to ensure your career growth in times of corporate chaos?

To prevent career disaster, live by these three rules of career management:

Expect Change

Adjust quickly to change

Build a strong professional network in good times

1. **Expect change**

Change in the work place is far less traumatic when it is expected as the norm. One of the most important career management skills is the ability to detect signs of corporate change. For instance:

- * Rumors of corporate merger or takeover
- * Corporate profit levels spiraling downward
- * No end-of-year bonuses given
- * Hints of layoffs to trim the budget
- * Upper management suddenly resigning
- * Your peers jumping ship to the competition

Don't get caught off guard by holding on to a false sense of security or displaced loyalty. Those who fear change trust corporate loyalty rather than face the reality of their precarious position in the corporate food chain. Expect change and keep your eyes and ears open—or you could be the last in line when it's time to find new career opportunities.

Don't wait for change to strike. While your job is secure and your work environment is stable, take steps to keep your skills highly desirable in the job market. For starters:

- * Stay current with technology trends of your industry
- * Get certified if appropriate
- * Keep your resume current at all times
- * Be ready to interview at a moment's notice

2. **Adjust quickly to change**

Your ability to keep your career momentum building in the midst of corporate chaos depends on your skill at adjusting quickly to change. First, don't over analyze your dilemma. Too often valuable time is wasted trying to figure out ways to make a bad situation work. Second rule, don't take it personally, or you won't be able to plan your exit strategy clearly. Third, take action as soon as possible.

If your resume is kept current at all times you will be ahead of the pack when others consider moving on as well. Your resume should be updated every six months. For quick updating keep an ongoing record of your accomplishments as you overcome work challenges.

Maintaining confidentiality during a job search while still employed is a challenge that requires discretion and level headedness. Ideally, no one in your company should even suspect that you are looking for other employment. Resist the urge to speak to coworkers about your decision for action. Not only do loose lips sink ships, but why put ideas in the minds of others who may become your interview competition? Keep your regular work hours and try to schedule interviews during off-work time. Avoid posting your resume online where your employer may find it.

3. Build a strong professional network in good times.

One thing that hasn't changed over the decades is the fact that a majority of people still get new positions faster through networking. What used to be called the "good ol' boy system" is as active in the job market as ever. Technology will never replace the need to be connected to a vast network of people who can help you find new career opportunities quickly.

The problem is that most people ignore their network until they need it. Bad idea. If you haven't kept in touch with former coworkers how will you know how to find them when you need them?

If your professional network is slim to none, get working on it right now. There are many great venues for building your network: professional associations, college alumni groups and former colleagues to name a few. Take time to meet with non-work people on a regular basis. Get to know them as friends and develop relationships built around mutual interests, friendship and trust. Make relationship building your lifelong habit and you'll never be without help when you need to make a career change.

More than ever, proactive career management is essential to professional growth. Keep these rules of surviving corporate change as the building blocks of your career management plan and you'll stay in control of your professional growth and income potential.

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Deborah Walker, Certified Career Management Coach

Read more career tips and see sample resumes at:

[www.AlphaAdvantage.com](http://www.AlphaAdvantage.com)

email: [Deb@Alphaadvantage.com](mailto:Deb@Alphaadvantage.com)