

CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

This past spring, we featured a cover story about non-traditional senior-level job titles within these pages. It's a trend we've been following here at ExecuNet for a long time; and the new titles that are created never cease to amaze me.



Some of the titles we have uncovered in recent years and months include: Chief Digital Officer, Chief Encouragement Officer, Chief People Officer, Click Quality Czar and, my personal favorite, Enthusiast Evangelist.

I think I may have found my new favorite. It's COR, which stands for Chief Obstacle Remover. It was created by Michael Thiel, who is president of IC Intracom US. Apparently his business card identifies him as the company's COR. While I certainly give Thiel points for uniqueness — this is definitely a new one for me — what I think really makes this title stand out is that it says so much about the leadership of the company.

It also sends a really strong branding message to everyone who is in contact with Thiel, on both the employee and customer sides of the business. Customers get the immediate sense of Thiel's willingness to help solve their problems. The title also illustrates to employees that he wants to do what he can to help them perform better, and in turn, provide better customer service.

I don't know exactly what Thiel's motives were for naming himself COR. But I do know one thing. He recognizes the fact that a title doesn't make a leader. Actions make a leader; actions that serve to help others succeed. Leaders sometimes forget that their success is gauged by the success of those closest to them. Perhaps Thiel has taught us a larger lesson than one of mere branding expertise, but one of overall leadership success.

Sincerely,

Dave

Dave Opton
ExecuNet Founder & CEO
www.execunet.com/davesblog

Weighing Your Sabbatical Options

By Marji McClure

Are you thinking about writing the next great American novel? Do your elderly parents need extra care right now? Do you just need some quiet time; an opportunity for reflection, away from your busy desk at the office? Or are you currently between jobs and just want a break while you hunt for new employment? If you've answered "yes" to any of these questions, you could be the perfect candidate for a sabbatical.

Previously reserved for the academic world, sabbaticals now fit into a segment of the corporate world, where work/life balance and any flexible incentives that can give companies an edge in the war for talent are garnering more attention. Many top companies are even including the offer of a sabbatical in their overall packages; and your company may be one of them. If not, the promise that a break will make you a more valuable worker upon your return could be incentive enough for your company to grant one.

But before you start making plans for your time away from the office, there are many things to consider. First, will taking a sabbatical bring the wrong kind of attention to you and your move up the career ladder? Second, will it really rejuvenate you and perhaps provide the jolt your career needs to continue in an upward direction?

Many experts caution that sabbaticals don't necessarily have a positive image in the corporate environment. "A sabbatical has now become an additional factor in increasing job uncertainty and has growingly fallen into disfavor as a perk in favor of other more recent trends such as job sharing, telecommuting and flex hours," says Dilip Saraf, an executive, career and life coach at Fremont, Calif.-based Career Transitions Unlimited. "Many fear that if they take off on a sabbatical, they may not have anything to come back to."

There is also the perception that individuals who want to take sabbaticals don't want to return to their company when they end, which is why Cali Williams Yost says that sabbaticals haven't gained popularity among workers. "There is a negative stigma attached to the concept — those who take sabbaticals are on their way out the door anyway," says Yost, president and founder of Madison, N.J.-based Work+Life Fit Inc.

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Your Career Advisor Going Beyond Diversity Training

By Ted Santos

The corporate environment is ripe for women and minorities to step into leadership roles. To maintain those roles, it will be important to develop skills to handle larger obstacles. When you aspire for higher accountability, you must be prepared for unfamiliar obstacles and constant changes.

While including women and minorities in senior management teams is important, global competition demands top talent. Therefore, diversity alone is not enough. Cultivating top talent, regardless of cultural background, is an effective means for success when companies seek to differentiate themselves.

Shifting the Focus

If you, as a manager, are going to build high-performing teams, you and your people will need constant growth and loftier career aspirations. However, you will have to become accustomed to operating outside of your comfort zone. To do so, you will be required to consistently increase your skills and competencies. And who is responsible for your professional development?

As companies continue to provide training on a regular basis, preparation for management positions, especially senior management, is left to the individual. If you are committed to securing a job with high accountability, you must be responsible for training and developing yourself. This may seem counter-intuitive at first. Yet, when you look at professional athletics, the top performers always work with someone who can advise or coach them to the next level. The athlete is responsible for creating those training structures and hiring the appropriate coaches.

In business, there is no difference. There is, however, a common expectation that your employer is responsible

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for your professional development; and to some extent that is true. However, corporate training may not be able to fulfill your unique training needs. For example, functioning within senior management requires you to have a greater comfort level with taking risks. To do so, you may have to get beyond many personal issues and create a new mindset for yourself. Your company may not have the training programs to accommodate you.

In fact, after extensive interviews with Fortune 100 companies, we found a major complaint was that people forgot most of what they learned in corporate training classrooms; much of the learning was static and not relevant to what they encountered day-to-day.

Preparing for Leadership

Many managers we interviewed requested training and development (coaching) in real-time. This medium better prepared them for the challenges of managing a dynamic environment as well as handling the complexities of a diverse team or department. Therefore, seeking such training structures outside of your place of employment would be in your best interest.

Without extensive leadership

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Your Career Advisor Continued from page 2

training, management's primary function — producing results through others — can be frustrating at best, especially when leading a team that has organized itself into silos. When managing silos or a diverse population of staff and managers, leaders must create a platform on which the entire team can stand. By doing so, there is less emphasis on the differences between the people on the team and a greater focus on what all members of the team are committed to achieving together. Once a common platform has been created, diverse groups of people will see how in reality, they all share similar values, ambitions and needs.

Leading Diversity

When teams share the same values and vision, they gel better as a group. However, with diverse thinkers, religions and so on, there must be effective management tools to keep people aligned. Below are four strategies organizations can implement to lead diverse teams and disperse silos. Additionally, these are important competencies for women and minorities to acquire before they take on the challenges of a leadership role.

1. Create a New Mindset

Outdated mindsets create outdated conversations. Outdated conversations can inaccurately predetermine what's possible as well as what's impossible. Part of the job of leadership is to engage people in new conversations for what's possible. In those conversations, people have a chance to identify untapped opportunities. In some cases, untapped opportunities can appear risky.

In the book *Risk Intelligence*, David Aparagar says that “the biggest problem people have when faced with risk is that they know too much...[about] themselves.” People tend to see themselves with presupposed limits and capabilities based on their knowledge and experience. A change in leadership mindset will support a change in staff and managerial mindsets.

One important conversation for

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leadership, as well as staff and management is: For what kind of company do I want to work? And in what ways will I be responsible for making sure it happens? From this perspective, everyone is responsible for the success of the enterprise.

2. Create a Problem

This requires a different perspective when viewing problems; and may appear counterintuitive. Yet, to create a platform on which people can stand together, leadership must create a problem for staff and management to solve. This is not to say leadership is looking for problems to solve. Instead, leadership must galvanize the entire organization or team around the invention of a new product, service or innovative productivity process. Because the project has never been done before and there is no blueprint, it can appear as a problem.

Creating problems is a powerful strategy for bringing purpose to teams. Everyone is focused on solving the problem. When people have a problem to solve, it breaks down barriers and dissolves silos. If the problem is larger than one person's knowledge and experience, the skills and competencies of colleagues, suppliers and clients will be leveraged. It is a way to create disruptive technology and move the enterprise beyond existing skills, competencies and know-how.

3. Create a Common Language

In addition to enhanced skills and competencies, a common language must be created to unify people. In John Hagel and John Seely Brown's *From Push to Pull — Emerging Models for Mobilizing Resources*, Brown, former chief scientist of Xerox said, “...the e-learning platform also fosters a shared vocabulary, set of methodologies and perspectives regarding technology architectures and evolution. This helps to set the stage for

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deepening trust and enhancing the ability to collaborate effectively. As a result, it also helps to increase the potential for business innovation.” Common language also synthesizes disparate teams and thought processes. Everyone's efforts on common goals and objectives are concentrated when new language is created.

4. Allow People to Fail

With new language and a problem to solve, an environment for accomplishment is fostered. Even though people will begin to galvanize themselves into action, they need to know that it is permissible to take actions outside of the box. Those new and seemingly irrational actions will require practice. In the beginning it will look like failure. However, yesterday's failures become tomorrow's breakthroughs. When organizations continuously innovate, staff and management will have to become comfortable with greater accountability and responsibility. For that reason, there may be a greater return on investment from training people in intrapersonal skills first — a clear understanding of the relationship with self, chaos, opportunity, the future, change, risk and colleagues — instead of teaching people to understand the differences between themselves and others. ■

Sabbatical Options

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Making the Decision

While perceptions of sabbaticals may not be completely positive, many do believe the benefits — both spiritual and career-wise — are worth the risk. But only an individual can determine if the risk is worthy. When considering a sabbatical, you have to honestly ask yourself what it is you want to accomplish during this break. Do you want to write that novel or take a career development course? Or do you need that sabbatical to handle personal issues — such as caring for an elderly parent or a young child? Whatever the reason, you have to closely examine whether your professional life — and even your personal life — can handle any affects an absence may cause.

“Employees who wish to take a sabbatical need to weigh the risk/reward of taking an extended period of time away from work,” says Janice Healy, global benefits manager of Lexington, Mass.-based VistaPrint, an online supplier of graphic design and custom print services that offers sabbaticals to long-term employees. “Depending on the stage of their career, the individual can either benefit their career in the future, or slow their ‘fast track’ up the corporate ladder.” It also depends on how the individual plans to spend his sabbatical; what particular goals he wants to accomplish during that time away. If done right, both the employee and employer can greatly benefit.

“A young executive taking time away from his job to attain an advanced degree or to gain a certification can greatly improve himself in the long run by taking a minor setback on the journey of his career path,” says Healy. “Taking a step like this, or any sabbatical for that matter, gives an employee a great insight into their employer. By allowing an employee to take an extended period away from the office, the employer takes a risk on the employee that they hope pays off.”

Individuals who take sabbaticals — regardless of the reason — typically find the experience valuable. To them, such

Sabbaticals a Key Part of Some Companies’ Benefits

Perhaps because of the mixed feelings about the value of sabbaticals, their presence in corporate America is not overwhelming. Only 22 companies in this year’s listing of *Fortune* magazine’s 100 Best Places to Work offer fully paid sabbaticals to employees. There were 25 a year ago. Still, that isn’t stopping some companies from creating new sabbatical programs, partly in an effort to attract and retain top talent.

VistaPrint officials decided to institute a new sabbatical program for employees earlier this year. “VistaBreak” is offered to employees once they have been with the company for five or more years, and they are eligible to take another VistaBreak five years after their previous one. Employees receive full pay and benefits, including full healthcare coverage, retirement savings benefits and credit for service, according to Janice Healy, global benefits manager for VistaPrint.

“A program like the VistaBreak is in the hiring package of all new employees,” says Healy. “This program is something that shows that we are committed to the new employee for the long haul. Showing a program that lies ahead five years down the road has typically excited new hires, showing them that there is a future within VistaPrint.”

The VistaBreak program enables qualified employees to take four consecutive weeks off in addition to their traditional paid time off. “Employees are encouraged to do whatever they would like during their break to recharge and rejuvenate themselves,” says Healy. “Employees have used their VistaBreak time for many reasons, from relaxing vacations to doing charitable work in places like Haiti.” Healy adds that every employee who has been eligible for the sabbatical so far has taken it.

Accenture offers employees a future leave option, which is a self-funded sabbatical. “It’s an opportunity for employees to pick a time in the future when they want to be gone; they may want to write a book or move their elderly father into a nursing home,” says Sharon Klun, director, Work/Life Initiatives for Accenture in Phoenix, Ariz. The company doesn’t need to know the reason, but Klun stresses that the opportunity to take such a break is a win-win situation for both the employee and the company.

Accenture’s sabbatical program has been in existence for the last 18 months, first on a pilot basis and then opened up to a larger part of Accenture. Employees can take up to three months at a time, and they can take a sabbatical once every three years.

How does the self-funded part work? Employees choose the amount of money taken out of each paycheck to fund their upcoming sabbatical. For instance, they could earmark 5 percent, 10 percent or 15 percent of their salary for this purpose. When they take their leave, they withdraw that money from their account. Klun says the program has been well-received thus far.

breaks make perfect sense on both personal and professional levels. “I don’t understand why people at all levels of organizations don’t take breaks between gigs,” says Anthony Citrano, a serial entrepreneur who started four companies and took one-year sabbaticals twice in between. “It’s like jumping from one relationship to another and everyone knows that’s not healthy. Everyone needs time to decompress, consider lessons learned, introspect, ask how the most recent experience has changed you — and once your head is clear, determine what is next in your life.”

Be realistic in what you want to achieve. “A sabbatical can help a professional if it is planned as part of a grand career road map. Strategically taken,

a sabbatical can help you get that book completed; it can help you get ready for that all-important examination or certification that can put you on a fast track,” says Saraf. “But, going on a sabbatical to seek the inspiration that has eluded you to get the idea for the book you always wanted to author is a misguided notion.”

The sabbatical can give you the quiet time you need to finish the project, but should not help you get started. “Do not take a sabbatical to search for a book idea,” cautions Saraf. “Invariably you are likely to come back empty-handed and frustrated that you did not use your sabbatical leave wisely.”

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Sabbatical Options

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If You've Decided to Go

You might be ready to pack your bags at any time, but it's important to remember the timing of your sabbatical has to be right for your company and your colleagues too. "An executive should first assess not the state of their own well-being before pursuing the option to go on their well-earned sabbatical, but rather, the state of the company and particularly, the state of their department," says Saraf. "They should first assess the situation to see if their superiors have set a precedent of taking extended times off to enjoy their sabbaticals, and then they should assess how hard their own staff is working. As a leader, you must set the tone for how this privilege is used to keep the morale in tune. Any actions that entail your taking off when your own staff has been denied the very benefit may look reckless and erode your moral leadership."

Experts agree that you need to give

your company's management notice that you want to take a sabbatical. Yost, the author of *Work+Life: Finding the Fit That's Right for You*, says to first understand your company's policy (such as length of service requirements). Then, give as much notice as possible. Also be prepared to plead your case. "The employee should arrange for a face-to-face meeting with their employer," says Healy. "They should be ready to offer the pros and cons of their proposed time away from work while also giving some solutions to how the workload will be handled during the absence from the office."

If you get the okay, keep in mind that not all companies will also offer their financial support. Some, but not all, companies offer full pay and benefits for employees who take sabbaticals. But that doesn't have to stop you. Healy suggests if an employee is taking a sabbatical to return to school, that he inquire if the company will subsidize any part of the tuition. If not, student loans are a possibility. "The employee can also plan ahead

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by putting a set amount of money away while working to support themselves while they are on their sabbatical," says Healy. "They can also speak with a financial advisor to invest funds so they will be able to stay afloat while they are not receiving a source of income."

What Happens When You Return

Executives who wonder how their job — and even their career overall — will be affected by a sabbatical have a legitimate concern, experts agree. The job you leave may not be the one you return to. "In today's high-velocity climate, anything longer than one month for being away is too long," says Saraf. "Sabbaticals can be as long as several months, and hoping to come back to the same job after such a long break can be misguided. If a major re-organization has taken place in your absence, you may not even be able to come back to a job."

If you don't come back to a job, and are instead faced with unemployment, or perhaps you decided not to return to the company, your next challenge is to account for the time spent away from your career. Some executives worry that an extended sabbatical won't be viewed favorably by future employers, that they will question such a gap on a résumé.

"If an employee was to quit their job because they felt burnt out, wanted to spend time with their family, or wanted to head back to school, there are a number of things that they can do with their résumé when looking to re-enter the work force," says Healy. "On interviews, the

An Opportunity to Recharge

Many individuals consider sabbaticals to work on their careers (by taking courses for advanced degrees) or their family issues. Another valuable reason to consider a break is the opportunity to work on themselves; to use a period of quiet time for reflection into their lives.

Lonnie Pacelli did just that about four years ago. Pacelli worked for a large Northwest high-tech company that offered sabbaticals for employees who met certain criteria (management level and years with the company). When he met that criteria, Pacelli, now author and president of LeadingonEdge.com, took a three-month sabbatical from his firm.

Without an office to go to everyday, Pacelli says that he did a lot of soul-searching during that time. He had never been unemployed before, and expected to return to his job energized and well-rested. "But I realized that it wasn't what I wanted to do," says Pacelli, noting that the company required that employees remain with the organization for one year following a sabbatical. "After a year, I left the company to focus on home-schooling my autistic son," he says.

Pacelli says he suggests that anyone considering a sabbatical to approach it as a time for self-exploration. "It's a time for reflection and learn what's important in your life, because many think work is the most important thing they can do. It's a great opportunity in a safe environment," says Pacelli.

But it has to be done right to be effective. Pacelli adds that it's important to be completely disengaged from your company when you take a sabbatical. "I set up a separate email account and didn't check my work email for three months," he says. "I didn't want to be reminded of work and they didn't expect it."

Pacelli says that he took his sabbatical when he was between assignments in his company, which made his departure rather smooth. He advises others to do what they can to ease their own transitions as well. "You need to schedule your sabbatical well. If you're in the middle of a hot project, it's not a very good time," says Pacelli. "Find some logical break. There will never be a good time. You have to look for the least worst time."

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Insider Insight

Getting People Back to Work After Organizational Earthquakes

By Anne Baber and
Lynne Waymon

Whether it's a Friday afternoon lay-off or a highly-touted acquisition, any change spurs employee worry about job security. With dramatic shifts in the business environment making front-page news across the U.S., employee fears escalate — even when it isn't their organization making the headlines. Their biggest concern: "Just what is the 'deal' I have with my employer?"

How do your employees feel? If they fit into one of these three scenarios, helping them become more change-resilient needs to start now:

1. They're anxious, but have no specific information. They may be seeing or sensing things that have shaken their faith in their job security. They may know that the organization is having financial problems or is in an acquisition mode or that there's a possibility of a merger.
2. They know that layoffs loom. The "L-word" has been mentioned — either internally or by the media. When the first newspaper story broke about IHOP buying Applebee's, the article implied that layoffs would be inevitable.
3. They've already been through a layoff. They know what to expect next.

Researchers agree that when organizational upheavals occur, 70 to 80 percent of employees are apathetic. They take a wait-and-see attitude. They're traumatized, frozen, shaken and disillusioned. After a series of layoffs, one employee said: "We're all temps here." Some may envy those who have been laid-off because, as one employee put it, "They are moving on; I'm stuck here doing the work of three people!" In addition, 10 to 15 percent are hostile and may actively

sabotage the change efforts, while 10 to 15 percent of the remaining employees are excited and seem ready to invest in the future.

What can you do to help employees accept the new reality; re-engage, re-commit, trust the leadership again; and get back to work? Here are five ways to make it happen:

1. Focus In

Pay more attention to the stayers. (Yes, let's call them "stayers," not "survivors." Think about it. If an employee "survives" one layoff, but is laid-off later, then what is he? You're setting him up to be not a survivor — i.e. dead. Let's not make continued employment with the organization a matter of life or death!)

Stayers are the leftovers after the lay-off. They'll need a lot of help to bounce back and stick with you. "Survivor guilt" is real. Nancy Rollins, principal of NRG HR Consulting, has been involved with both good and bad layoffs. "After a bad one, low morale and engagement continued for much longer than the normal 4 to 6 weeks," Rollins says. "You can expect 10 to 15 percent to jump ship, and those people typically are your middle to good performers. They're thinking, 'If this happens again, I won't be so lucky.'"

Typically, pre-downsizing efforts target the leavers, rather than those who will be needed to keep it all together. As much as 75 to 85 percent of the management team's efforts focus on those who are exiting. "Few companies do it well,"

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says Donna Miller, principal of Executive Resource Center, LLC. "Having a plan for getting people through the change is essential."

2. Be Respectful

Treat the leavers with respect. The stayers are watching! Their trust in management will be determined by how well they think you are treating those people who are going out the door. Tom Moore, director, human resources for Molex, Inc.'s commercial products division, has managed three major layoffs in the past seven years. He cautions: "Don't allow layoffs to destroy your reputation. Our turnover is less than 1 percent. Our good people aren't jumping ship. That says something about the way we've treated people."

In some companies, leavers are marched out of their offices by security or HR people. The expectation is that, if they aren't evicted, they'll harm the organization. This is criminalizing

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Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon are co-founders of [Contacts Count](#) and co-authors of *Make Your Contacts Count: Networking Know-How for Business and Career Success* (AMACOM, 2007). They also are co-creators of the [FireProof Your Career ToolKit](#), a downloadable multimedia career security planning and management product. Anne and Lynne can be reached at 301-589-8633 or [ContactsCount.com](#)

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people who formerly were valued members of the employee family! “The organization is judged on how harshly or benevolently they treat people as they exit,” says Rollins.

Ideally, companies should realize the value of their alumni and even provide yearbooks with contact information, so that employees are encouraged to stay in touch with those who have left. Companies can honor the contributions made by departing employees and publicly appreciate their work. “Those who leave are not the enemy. Help them continue to be part of the work family,” suggests Rollins.

3. Over-Communicate

Make sure you have the right mindset, says Miller, who has orchestrated many layoffs in her career. Leadership, she notes, has had weeks — maybe months — of time to get used to the idea of layoffs before they occur. They have already gone through the stages that all employees experience during such an event: 1) shock; 2) transition; and 3) re-vitalization. So when they begin communicating with employees, they are excited and committed — they have already reached stage 3. They don’t realize that employees are still struggling with stage 1 — the shock/grief stage.

Involve your internal communications staff to provide full-spectrum information. Even if you don’t have all the answers, talk to employees through all your media. Emphasize face-to-face communications. Convince people that “When we know something, we’ll tell you.” If there is a communication vacuum, employees will fill in the blanks, invent their own answers, and interpret silence as lack of leadership and concur: “They don’t know what they’re doing.” Make managers and supervisors accountable for passing information along. Provide scripts or talking points. Often, front-line managers aren’t sure what they are supposed to tell people.

“Promise chaos,” urges Miller. If you

A New ExecuNet Event!

Make Your Contacts Count

Make the most of your networking resources and have them start working for you. Attend this webinar to learn how to create, cultivate and capitalize on networking relationships and opportunities. Author Lynne Waymon will show how those skills can help you build strategic alliances, access inside information, expand your knowledge base and maintain a circle of professional peers to learn from.

This 90-minute program will help you create the most effective and productive network. Attend this program to learn:

- How to assess the strength of your internal network and see how it stacks up against “The Ideal Network”
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- What to do and say in advance through the six stages of relationship building
- To steer the conversation toward topics that lead to business opportunity.
- How the unconnected employee hurts your business
- The 10 things you can do now to increase networking competency and engagement of your employees

FREE BONUS

When you register to attend this program, you’ll also receive a FREE copy of Lynne Waymon’s book, *Make Your Contacts Count*, which is co-authored by Anne Baber. This FastTrack program will be presented on Wednesday, November 14, 2007, 1:00 to 2:30 PM ET. Registration information for this program can be found at www.execunet.com/fasttrack

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don’t, when you announce changes — no matter how small and inconsequential — people will think you have been lying to them. Make leaders visible. They must look backward: share the grief people feel when colleagues leave. Encourage leaders to acknowledge emotions — their own and those of the stayers. They must look forward: coach them to lay out the future and enlist the troops — re-recruit them — in marching into the future.

Rollins remembers that after that badly handled layoff, “Nobody felt secure. There was an all-employee meeting to inspire the workforce, but it didn’t work because the president couldn’t define the future and left people hanging with uncertainties and ambiguities,” Rollins recalls.

4. Rebuild Relationships

Layoffs destroy peoples’ networks. “Social networks put (employees) in the thick of information flows and are the best predictors of productivity,” writes Kathleen Melymuka in a February 2007 *Computerworld* article. The productivity of stayers depends on rebuilding relationships with superiors, subordinates, peers, people in other departments, suppliers, vendors and customers, as well as maintaining relationships with employees who are leaving.

Help employees remake their internal and external networks. They need your support because their natural tendency, in the aftermath of trauma, is to withdraw. University of Michigan Professor Wayne Baker says that after layoffs “enlightened leaders help their people learn new ways, new methods, and new networking skills, via massive education,

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Sabbatical Options

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HR professional or recruiter will ask about gaps in work history; and the best thing to do is to be honest. Telling the interviewer that an old career had left you burnt out or that you wanted to go back to school to enhance your career are something that they will respect. It can also lead to questions that can help you out in the interview and make you stand out more.”

Yost agrees that honesty is the best policy and to have a back story ready. Individuals on the other side of the desk won't likely be as concerned about the gap as you are. “As long as [the story] makes sense, no one cares,” says Yost. “Plus, in today's world, career breaks are not the red flags they used to be, especially if there is a logical story behind it.” Some employers may be impressed by what you accomplished during the break. “Open-minded employers realize

Expert Resources:

- Janice Healy, VistaPrint (VistaPrint.com)
- Sharon Klun, Accenture (Accenture.com)
- Dilip Saraf, Career Transitions Unlimited (7keys.org; Career-Transitions-unl.com)
- Cali Williams Yost, Work+Life Fit Inc. (WorkLifeFit.com)

the value of breaks between jobs and will understand the person is more centered, and thus more valuable, for their time off,” adds Citrano.

Is It Just a Vacation You Need?

So before you decide to take a sabbatical, be sure that you don't just need a vacation instead. “A sabbatical is a time afforded to you to improve your career and not to merely recharge your batteries by idling on a beach for the entire duration,” adds Saraf. “Vacations are designed for that purpose. A sabbatical must show an intent and an outcome that is commensurate with what you set out to achieve. Showing that on a résumé is a positive factor in your transitioning to another

job. It is quite comparable to being out of work and looking. If you show a long gap between jobs with no significant value-add to your skill set, despite being out of work, your prospects diminish and you lose your career momentum.”

You have to be confident that a sabbatical will truly meet your needs, both in the long term and short term. “Make sure you have investigated all of your other options before taking a sabbatical, especially if you're doing it because of burnout and stress,” says Yost. “We tend to use ‘all or nothing’ thinking when it comes to work, and walking away from your job for a period of time, no matter how strong the promise of employment when you return, has risks.” ■

Insider Insight

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training, and re-socialization efforts.”

Educate through all your available media. Provide articles on networking. Train people, so they can forge connections easily and quickly. Offering training signals to stayers that they are valuable to the organization and helps them move toward re-commitment.

Socialize. Personal ties bind employees to organizations. Set up a committee or task force to involve employees. Encourage volunteer activities that

bring people together. Have picnics. Start a softball team. Get departments together for lunch. Set up an alumni group to help remaining employees stay in touch with those who have left.

5. Provide Tools

Give employees who remain tools to take charge of their own careers. Help them regain that sense of control that is lost when layoffs happen. When they have these tools, they will know how to create a future of their own choosing, rather than feeling buffeted by the cyclones of change.

We propose a motto for the new workplace: “Be eager to stay and prepared to go.” It's tricky — it's almost an oxymoron. But that's the reality. That's the mindset of the “change-ready employee.” That's leveling with employees and treating them like adults. That's your job. That mindset will ensure greater productivity, no matter what change-state your workplace finds itself in.

What can you do to get people back to work? Spell it out for them. “Here's the deal: We can't guarantee your job is safe, but we can help you prepare to handle whatever comes.” ■

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