

Expert's seven tips help jobless Americans persevere

The numbers are staggering: The Labor Department just reported 598,000 job losses in January 2009, the worst one-month decline in 35 years, with the overall unemployment rate now at a whopping 7.6 percent - the highest since 1992. To date, a total of 3.6 million jobs have been lost during this recession.

"Add to that millions more who, out of desperation, are working part instead of full time or have fallen off the unemployment payroll completely, and the full extent of the crisis hits home," notes BusinessSuccessCoach.net CEO John M. McKee, among America's leading career coaches and author of "Career Wisdom - 101 Proven Ways to Ensure Workplace Success."

To help the throngs who now or will soon find themselves without a job to report to, McKee offers these seven tips to help the currently and impending unemployed persevere through - and even make the most of - this difficult time:

1. Consider going solo. Given the amount of dramatic changes affecting organizations and businesses across all sectors, it may be extremely difficult and perhaps impossible to replace your job when it's lost. Now is the time to think outside of the box. This might just be the turning point opportunity you need to follow a dormant dream to open your own business. Services are still required by organizations and individuals alike, and filling those needs as an entrepreneur may be more satisfying than re-entering the work force.

2. Understand the outsourcing threat. If you do choose the corporate route, determine whether or not a change of specialty will better satisfy both personally and professionally. However, now more than ever jobs that were rarely if ever contracted or outsourced have gone that route. If your particular job skills could be done by others via a computer, even overseas, it's time to rethink your career plan. Lawyers, journalists, accountants, radiologists, and other professionals are finding out that they're no longer "safe" amid organizations looking for ways to reduce labor expenses.

3. Do a self-SWOT analysis. For decades, SWOT analysis has been a basic, straightforward model providing strategic direction to organizations worldwide. By assessing a business entity's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, SWOT analysis serves to maximize a business' chance for success. In the same manner, unemployed individuals should perform a Self-SWOT analysis to identify intrinsic qualities (strengths and weaknesses) that may help or hinder them both in their quest to get back into the

workforce AND in the workplace, itself, as well as external issues (opportunities and threats) that may work for or against them in these same regards.

4. Update your skill set. With unemployment now at record highs, there is far more demand for jobs than supply. Not staying on par with others vying for the same job(s) will be a death knell. Take seminars, coursework or leverage other skill enhancement vehicles to get on the leading edge and, thus, maximize your personal value with prospective employers. Strive for your resume to show that you can do various types of work to improve the odds of a job offer.

5. Create a "Personal Action Plan." Even in difficult times, there are many who thrive despite economic downturns, business closures, and other tumultuous events solely because they have defined goals and strategies. One way to achieve this is with a "Personal Action Plan," which takes into account the three different facets of life: The professional self, who earns a living; the personal self, who does things for sheer satisfaction; and the financial self, who understands and manages money for both the short and long term. Addressing each of these life elements as a projection of what you want will better assure they manifest.

6. Network online. Now more than ever those in a hiring position are looking to social media to qualify suitable candidates and weed out those who may simply look good on paper. Join social networking sites like Linked In, Plaxo, Facebook and others that provide real opportunity to easily share information and network with peers and prospective employers near and far. Beyond just posting your resume, these sites allow you to express who you are and showcase what you have to offer with far more depth, whether through videos, blog posts or other Web 2.0 strategies that hiring managers and business contacts will appreciate.

7. Stay busy. Going from full speed in a full time job to complete stop at home can be demoralizing and counterproductive. It's true that the more we do, the more we can do. Invest some of your free time in your local community by volunteering. You'll be helping others less fortunate while keeping yourself motivated. You'll also establish new relationships and cultivate existing relationships while your out and about, which could result in an unexpected opportunity or inspired business idea.

