

A New Perspective: From Job Security to Career Security

Over the past decade, job security, especially with larger firms, has been on the decline. So, what's a professional to do? The answer: focus on *career* security by keeping yourself marketable.

I meet professionals on a regular basis who lack confidence in the marketability of their skills. Many firms that used to have entire departments dedicated to employee training now have very minimal training budgets. The result: keeping yourself marketable is *your* responsibility.

To prepare for the reality of a future job change, it is important that you maintain up-to-date career specific skills, develop relationships with your vendors, business partners, and even competitors, and gain an understanding of the job market on an ongoing basis.

Maintaining current skills is important regardless of the career that you have chosen. Most professions have certifications that allow individuals to demonstrate that they have reached a high degree of knowledge in their field. Not only should accountants, physicians, or attorneys keep themselves current to maintain their professional certification, but administrative professionals can earn their CPS certification, human resources professionals can earn their PHR or SPHR certification, computer support professionals can earn various Microsoft certifications—the list goes on and on. Take courses, whether at a cost or free, that allow you to keep your skills as current as possible. Many organizations provide adult skills training at very reasonable costs, or at no cost. My point is that regardless of whether the skills that you gain benefit you in your current position (though no doubt they will), these are the skills that give you *career security*.

As a recruiter, it would be attractive to say that most professionals locate their positions via a recruiting firm; however, the fact is that most professional level candidates land positions because of who they know (or who they know, knows...know what I mean?). Make friends with your vendors—they talk to others in your position at your competitors. Often vendors are knowledgeable about which firms are hiring or upcoming vacancies soon to be created by attrition. Additionally, join industry or trade associations. Friendly competition is good for all of us, and certainly may come in handy if you find yourself in the job market.

Lastly, keep your ear to the ground regarding trends in your industry. Read trade publications, scan the weekly classifieds or job boards, and talk to competitors. We have seen careers propelled forward or disintegrate quickly based on the individual's understanding of the direction that their industry is headed. For example, many textile industry professionals who were forward thinking enough to realize what is (unfortunately) happening to traditional textiles in the U.S., have moved into related nontraditional textile or other manufacturing arenas. Most industries evolve and change over time, and the employees that prepare themselves for those changes are those with career security.

The typical career over the next twenty years will look vastly different than that of our parents. Individuals will change jobs more often and/or work on contract assignments during their career. No longer can we count on our employer's internal training program to provide us with the skills that we need to have career security in today's marketplace. You, and only you, are responsible for keeping yourself marketable in the long run. There will always be opportunities available for professionals who keep their skills on the cutting edge, gain industry knowledge on an ongoing basis, and develop positive relationships with others in their industry.

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