



Practice Management Digest

News & Best Practices from the PM Knowledge Community

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Features

Letter from the Editor

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by Deborah Gilburg

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If There Was Ever a Time... Maximizing Your Marketing & BD ROI

by Richard Friedman

With many A/E/C and environmental consulting firms experiencing layoffs,

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salary freezes/reductions, benefit cuts, and other cost-cutting measures, it's more important than ever that firms invest their precious marketing and business development (BD) overhead dollars wisely. ...[Continue Reading](#).

Reclaiming Control in a Time When Control Seems Scarce

By Martha I. Finney, President & CEO, Engagement Journeys, LLC

These days it seems as though the only control we have in our lives and careers is how much time we spend watching or reading the news about how the recession is tanking our dreams. Each month surpasses the previous month in terms of bad news – especially around job losses and unemployment rates. ...[Continue Reading](#).

Getting Your Bearings Post-Lay-Off

by Joseph DiCenso

27 years ago my father was the general manager of a regional wholesale musical instrument company he'd worked for for 20 years. In his early 40s, with his two oldest in college, he was "let go." The company offered him a position in New York. Settled outside of Boston, my father refused to uproot and was turned loose. ...[Continue Reading](#).

Resources

Attending the AIA 2009 National Convention?

Join us for [these events](#) sponsored by the AIA Practice Management Knowledge Community. Visit the [AIA Convention Web site](#) for more information or to register.

Be a Mentor!

Friday, May 1, 2009, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Be a mentor for a day at the 2009 AIA National Convention to high school students from the San Francisco area, guiding them to the AIAS Lounge and onto the Expo Floor. And if you're a bit shy, don't worry! There will be at least 2 mentors per group. Don't miss this opportunity to engage with the next generation of up and coming architects. Not registering for convention but would still like to volunteer as a mentor for this event? Email ymorris@aia.org to submit your interest.

New in 2009—AIA members* can receive an additional 5-percent discount off their convention fees when they register using the promo code **MEMBER**. This offer is valid for a limited time only.

**AIA national members in good standing qualify for the 5-percent discount. National and local allied or affiliate members and Cornerstone Partners are not eligible*

Calls for Volunteers

Help guide your Knowledge Community's Future! [The AIA Practice Management Knowledge Community](#) (PMKC) is currently seeking for volunteers to serve on two of its subcommittees. View the [Call for Volunteers](#) to learn more.

-Upcoming Events-

Roots of Modernism

Boston | May 28 - 31, 2009

Changing Times | Time for Change: Practice, Productivity and Effectiveness

Chicago | September 24 - 26, 2009



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These are the most challenging times in several generations. According to the unemployment figures, job losses during the month of March topped 663,000, swelling the number of unemployed to over 5 million, almost 9 % of the national workforce, in the last 16 months. This number affects every aspect of our industry.

In this special issue of the PMKC digest we focus on the recession and future rebound and recovery.

Deborah Gilburg, a consultant with the Gilburg Leadership Institute, addresses the philosophical response to job loss for employers and employees. Her section features *Leading During Challenging Times*, a challenge for employers, and *Getting your Bearings*, a meditation for those recently laid-off.

Derek Parker, Roger Swanson, and Laurie Dreyer-Hadley, principals with Anshen and Allen, outline the steps a firm should take in *Surviving the Recession*.

Bob Perrin, AIA describes how he began to practice from home in Omaha, Nebraska, during the 1970's recession.

Richard Friedman, AIA describes how a firm can maximize business development and marketing return on investment during these uncertain times.

And finally, Martha Finney, author of the new book, *Rebound: A Proven Plan for Starting Over After Job Loss*, describes how to reclaim personal control during these chaotic times. Also included in her section are chapters six and twenty of her book.

Additionally, AIA State Chapters and Component across the nation offer employee resume posting and listings. There are numerous Web sites enhancing the [flow of conversation](#) about architecture and the economy. Some vendors are [offering free training](#) for their products. [Autodesk](#) and [Bentley](#) offer free downloads and registration of their software for unemployed individuals.

--PMKC Digest Editors

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Managing Economic Challenges in Changing Times

by Deborah Gilburg

Many believe that as a nation we are coming to the end of an era, only to arrive at the brink of another, its characteristics and direction still uncertain. The cycles of change that drive the cultural evolution of this country require, once again, that we clarify our purpose and priorities in an effort to integrate the reality we've created with the future we desire. History suggests that the choices we make during these transitional years—personal, communal, organizational and political—will collectively define the trajectory of the era to come.

Currently, the financial crisis is a significant piece of reality that is demanding immediate attention in most industries, including architecture and design. For some organizations, it may simply mean tightening the belt, but for others it seems to require more drastic action. Often this amounts to triage—how to stop the bleeding. But what comes next? Where are organizations headed? What will be required of them to thrive in a changing world? How can organizations and individuals effectively manage the crises of the times with an eye towards a better future?

Perhaps these questions appear too lofty for today's urgent circumstances, however I believe if we avoid such questions we risk limiting ourselves to shortsighted and predictable outcomes. The "mental models"—beliefs and assumptions about reality—that inform our thinking and the decisions we make are shaped by our experiences and perspectives. If we do not seek to enhance and broaden our mental models, their limitations will undermine the solutions we seek. To paraphrase Einstein, we can't solve problems with the same thinking that created them.

Therefore, it is in the spirit of expansive thinking and deep exploration that I introduce this edition of *The Digest*. These critical times call for fresh ideas, reflection and a deep assessment of what we truly want. While many of us may feel an instinctive urge to act abruptly and make quick decisions to protect what we have, it is precisely this reflex that we need to master. We must take the time to seriously consider the systemic and long-term implications of our actions and discover what opportunities may yet emerge from the ashes.

The articles that follow are not written by experts in architecture and design; rather, the authors are professionals who understand and work with the human potential within organizations. If you are faced with having to make lay-offs and cut programs, look to *Leading During Challenging Times* to consider the potential of engaging the best thinking of your people in pursuit of solutions—even those who may not be with the company when all is said and done. If you are one who has lost or is in fear of losing your job, you may find inspiration in the simple wisdom offered in *Getting Your Bearings*, or some practical advice for exploring your options in *Downsizing, Layoffs and New Opportunities*. These articles invite you to question the assumptions you've been making about your life; look more closely at the resources before and within you; enhance the relationships and networks that can support you; and as a leader, focus on the values shared by your people as a starting point for action.

Regardless of the level of urgency facing you and your organization, the act of stepping back, coupled with efforts to discover insights from others and make meaning of the information you have, will ultimately enhance your experience, expand your choices, and increase your capacity to thrive in these challenging, changing times.

Deborah Gilburg is a principal of Gilburg Leadership Institute, a consulting firm specializing in the development of facilitative leaders who can leverage the diversity in their workforce to create vital, collaborative organizations. She can

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Leading During Challenging Times: Engaging Your People to Address an Uncertain Future

by Jonathan Gilburg

I can only begin to imagine the gravity of the challenges facing leaders today. The economic climate is pushing many organizations, including those in the design industry, to make radical shifts in how they do business. At the same time people are afraid, trust is low, and the future is unpredictable.

If you are someone who has risen to a position of leadership due to technical and field expertise, and are faced with making difficult decisions to address grim economic realities, this article is for you. My intention is to share a perspective on how one might lead in this climate, with an understanding that many of the skills and attitudes I present may differ from those that propelled you to leadership in the first place. In essence, I believe the hard times that lie ahead call for a shift from the notion of leader-as-expert, to leader-as-facilitator. Due to the complexity of the problems facing so many organizations, resourceful leaders must be willing to ask the key questions of their people, and provide the framework that can allow them to explore and solve their problems together.

This may sound fanciful, but the rationale for this approach stems from basic brain physiology. When under high stress and exposed to survival-dependent stimuli, our brain function often impels us to take a defensive, guarded and protective posture—to go it alone and look out for oneself. As a result, behavior (including decision-making) can become shortsighted, survival-oriented, and secretive. This cycle can cause tremendous damage to workforce morale, amplifying underlying feelings of isolation and suspicion amongst employees. Paradoxically, staying afloat as a business today calls for cooperation to ensure efficient use of resources, lithe teamwork, and cross-discipline collaborations. Low morale, low trust and poor behavior are expensive to organizations, often resulting in declining productivity and an inability to capitalize on new opportunities. In short— traditional downsizing, lay-off and budget slashing practices frequently leave behind fearful employees determined to protect their own interests, stay within their stovepipes, and generally resist new initiatives foisted upon them. The books may balance, but vital opportunities will die on the vine for organizations where this environment prevails.

Fortunately, our brains also provide us with another survival strategy— the ability to bond and connect with others by seeking partnerships, alliances, friendships, and common purpose. Historically, it has been this aspect of human behavior that has allowed us to weather the powerful storms that shift our society. Accessing this higher potential however, requires intentional leadership intervention; not necessarily sweeping solutions, but a transparent willingness to engage the best thinking of the people who will be most acutely affected by the leader's decisions.

Every firm is unique, as are the people in it, but as human beings we share common desires and values. Leaders who tap into and expose these common values can harness them for the purposes at hand. Redefining a design firm to weather the current economic reality and be positioned for the next phase of growth is no small task, requiring the harmonized skills of many to make such a transition. I offer readers the following considerations as a starting point for this approach:

Be transparent about the current reality and what you care about:

People know the economy is bad, both "out there" and "in here." What they don't know is how you feel and think about it; what you and the organization value most. In the absence of this information, people create their own answers and usually assume the worst: "All they care about is money, bonuses, themselves," etc. Being transparent about what you value in relation to a crisis gives people information that helps them decide what they can

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expect and how much to invest. Key information to share includes:

- What do you value most?
- What are the key challenges you're grappling with?
- What are your intentions and the outcomes you seek?
- What are you willing to sacrifice?

The risk in this kind of transparency is that you will be held to those self-proclaimed values; the reward is that honesty and integrity are traits people rally around. Besides, classified decision-making rarely remains secret in this day and age.

Engage people in meaningful conversations about their future: Provide the space and structure for people to talk about what they value and want in response to the current reality. It is critical to use good listening methodologies, allowing people to hear and be heard in a safe forum. Listening to others talk about what they value helps us connect to our shared humanity, our common stake. It builds trust and engages higher brain function. Ask them to respond to questions similar to those you've considered and invite them to help define the collective values and priorities of the organization going forward.

Solicit ideas, dilemmas, and possible opportunities from your people: You are still the final decision maker, but you will benefit from the best thinking of those who will be most affected. Exploring themes together that both look to long-term success and short-term sacrifice help people appreciate the systemic concerns that exist. When actions are implemented, people will recognize their contribution to the outcomes, even with difficult decisions like job losses and cutbacks. Employees who lose hours or jobs are less likely to walk away actively disgruntled, and more apt to return when circumstances call for growth.

Despite the risks, leaders who strive for another kind of interaction between themselves and their employees will do more than balance the books. Embedded in this approach is the possibility that you and your people will find the collective resolve to do what is needed to weather the present conditions, while delivering the greatest benefit to as many as possible, and emerge poised to embrace what the future brings.

Jonathan Gilburg, a principal of [Gilburg Leadership Institute](#), brings his wide-ranging experience to help leaders develop collaborative and adaptive teams that function proficiently in uncertain and complex environments. He can be by email at jonathan@gilburgleadership.com.



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Surviving The Recession

by Derek Parker, Roger Swanson, and Laurie Dreyer-Hadley

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness."

-Charles Dickens

What have we learned from our experience in surviving the economic downturns of the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s and how do we intend to apply that experience to today's troublesome economic environment? A sense of optimism always helps. When we look back we see that our firm emerged from each of the downturns stronger than before and with more energy and focus as a result of decisions we made in response to the circumstances. Difficulty often forces us to do the things we should have done sooner, hence the quote from Dickens. It may be bad times, but from it comes great opportunity.

In the past we were not able to forecast and business plan far ahead, but now we can do this forecasting with considerable accuracy and plan for the good upswings, as well as the bad times. When the first signs of a downturn became apparent this time, Anshen + Allen principals and staff systematically reviewed the current practice using the following guidelines.

We start with the money - the item that may become in short supply.

Revenue. Attention to maximizing revenue from all sources is, obviously, essential. Have all projects been invoiced? Are clients still in a position to pay? Sometimes the downturn hits your clients as hard as or harder than you. What will we do if our clients are having difficulty? Have we documented and billed all additional services? Have we billed all reimbursable expenses? In really bad situations do we need liens? Although Anshen + Allen have never done this, some firms have used bill collectors.

Cash. Cash must be conserved. If we are to win in the battle for survival, then cash is ammunition. There are several simple practices a firm can consider and implement to maintain cash flow without taking drastic measures:

- Determine what cash expenses can be deferred. It is often prudent to have a staff committee review the expenses list and prioritize. More often than not, one department's priority may not equal the firm's priority. The prioritized list with staff buy-in helps mitigate dissent and fosters staff support and solidarity.
- Evaluate what kind of support you can expect from your bank.
- Determine what the cash infusion capabilities of the share holders are.
- Can they add more cash into the firm if needed? Can you expand shareholders and/or create a new stock vehicle for staff investors?
- Consider invoicing bi-weekly instead of monthly.
- Bill the largest invoices first.
- Know when clients cut checks and establish an invoice schedule that coincides with their timing.
- Consider whether or not your clients are willing and able to turn around invoices more expeditiously.
- Do you retain earnings rather than distributing bonuses or profit sharing?
- Demand "cash/revenue" accountability from staff/shareholders (in good times we tend to let this slide).

Expenses. The mantra during economic downturns should always be "Cut, Cut, Cut". If an expense is not absolutely essential to the firm's operations, it must be eliminated or deferred. Ensure that staff members are aware of and agree to the cuts. While it can be a painful exercise, the following areas are often a good place to start when reducing expenses:

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- Eliminate as many consultant expenses as possible.
- Limit overtime to Principal - approved activities only.
- Do not fall behind with payroll taxes.
- Rent. Review alternatives such as sublets. Consider allowing some staff to work from home.
- Temporarily suspend any extraneous allowances like auto allowances.
- Reduce travel to the bare minimum; limit to client related travel only.
- Eliminate extraneous conferences, seminars and associations. Put in gatekeepers for expenses - it works.
- Defer competitions and reduce printing costs whenever possible. (Not only does it conserve money, but it's ecologically sustainable as well.)
- Defer, (if possible), IT upgrades, licenses and improvements. Research outsourcing some services - evaluate whether or not in-house is more cost effective. Compare the costs.
- Use your staff as a resource for cost-saving ideas. They are very aware of waste and the younger generations, are very technologically savvy and can suggest ways to employ technology to cut waste.
- Allow staff to "play." It will provide a much needed relief that can produce more focus and drive.
- Demand expense accountability from everyone! If the leaders model responsibility and accountability others will follow.

Capital. A detailed review should be made of the capital requirements of the practice to assure an understanding of the minimum capital necessary to cover overhead. How much capital can be used to support non-revenue activities during the down turn in order to conserve the investment in and for the staff?

Staff. Sensitivity to staff's morale and well-being is an essential part of Anshen + Allen's culture. During financial crises, it becomes especially important to be aware of, and sympathetic to, staff members' economic hardships. These are difficult times for staff and their families.

We once had a group that discovered a co-worker had just bought a house and could literally not afford a reduction in schedule or pay so the others offered to make up the difference for the younger staff member. It is events such as these that remind one about the personal sacrifices made during a recession and it is events such as these that make the workplace environment worth being in.

Decisions have to be consistent, fair, and the impacts on families carefully considered. The burdens have to be borne by all. For example, if you intend to reduce the work week in order to conserve jobs, be aware this can be problematic as diligent workers may resent receiving the same treatment as "slackers." One alternative way to deal with this is to consider furloughs (but be sure to establish benefit plans to accommodate furloughs). Another option is to "loan" staff to other offices.

Other practices you can employ to increase staff morale and minimize the weight of their burdens, include:

- Advise that staff take vacations now, during the downturn, so when the impending upturn occurs, staff are rested, revitalized and ready to work.
- Encourage staff to teach. Seek appointments at local universities and colleges.

Communication and Transparency. Communication about decisions is essential.

Let staff know what was considered, what the factors were, how long it took to reach a decision. By doing this, you reaffirm that you value your staff and that every decision that affects their well-being was seriously considered; that decisions were not based on popularity or politics, and that the decisions were hard. Evaluations should be considered; let staff know you were trying to be fair. All Principals and staff deserve a consistent evaluation of performance.

Communicate often, via podcasts, staff meetings, blogs, and emails. In the absence of truth and frequent communication the rumor mill takes over. Communicate about the past and actions taken - but end every communication with the future - THE PLAN. Address rumors quickly and directly.

Ensure that the leadership follows the principles of detente. Arguments should happen only behind closed doors and once everyone leaves the room, there should be one clear vision and no whining. Public doubt and dissent by and

amongst firm leaders only destabilizes staff and makes it more enticing for core staff members (who you want to keep) to leave the firm.

Share the numbers with the staff. Engage them in the truth and the problem. They have enormous intellect that you can harvest to be directed collaboratively at the problems the firm faces. Engage all staff in the issues to get the best ideas, and get buy in for changing behaviors. Our youngest generation comes equipped with new insights into ways of working and technology. Engage them, and prepare to be impressed. Although it's counterintuitive, when firms are busy and financially secure, everyone tends to stick to the status quo. It's during the slow downturns that firms benefit from the lack of business to reflect, change course, and improve practices.

Use this opportunity to focus on important internal activities:

- Update brochures and project data for analysis for future marketing.
- Update personnel intake and exit standards.
- Archive and consider digital formats (which may save you money).
- Consider research. Get those research proposals out of the desk drawer and get them funded.
- Look at internal teaching and learning needs like 3D design essentials, marketing skills, BIM. Enhance the skills that we usually have no time to foster when we're so busy. In the off season great athletes keep training and they get stronger for the new season!
- This is a key opportunity of an economic downturn, but in order to truly reap the benefits, all the staff needs to be engaged in it. This is a job that is never done; it is always a work in progress.

Consider ALL Markets. Some of the best new ventures started during down times . . . out of necessity. So be aware of existing market trends and the direction they may take in the future. Ask yourself if you can attract new clients in the existing market. If not, are there new markets in which you can thrive? Can you leverage existing experience and skills to enter new markets that have current or longer term potential?

Ask staff to be involved. This is how Google keeps expanding market share - all levels of staff are openly and frequently engaged. Identify new needs for clients that you can address with existing staff. Redefine what a client is.

In every case, you cannot afford to just wait it out and be complacent. Be proactive in evolving the firm. Not only will staff recognize the strong leadership and stick it out, but the industry will take notice of your ingenuity and drive.

These are the best of times, and the worst of times. And it is essential to be forthcoming with that truth. Your staff may find the news disturbing but that's a perfectly appropriate response and its okay as long as they feel their leaders are being truthful, and that they continue to trust and respect them. When the downtime ends - your reputation remains.



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Home Based Practice

by Robert Perrin, AIA

Working as an architect in a firm is structured, and since good design ideas only come between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday, minus vacations and holidays, it works great. In addition, it makes it easy to separate work and family, we all know that is a necessity, except at company picnics and holiday parties. No wait; maybe family should stay out of the Holiday party.

Setting up a home based practice is a lifestyle choice.

Practicing from home is a whole different lifestyle that mixes family and practice. The recipe, with some relatives, pets, the open bar and neighbors thrown in, make it a spicy mix.

Working from home isn't work, it is a lifestyle.

Buildings don't seem to care where their plans are drawn or what time of day they are completed. Having a couch and TV dinners at the office means you don't have to go home. But, having your home an office works much better.

Balancing work and family is not a problem, combining them is an art. Quality parenting dictates you be available in the morning at breakfast before school and between 6 PM and bedtime for your children.

Children don't really want to come home to a snack and tell you about all the things that happened at school today, and they would prefer daycare when they are sick. Getting the kids off to school, and being there for them as they arrive home and helping on those sick days is precious. Mixing work and family is a great life.

Commuting in a home practice is sitting on the porch swing with a cup of coffee watching the neighbors drive away. The evening commute is even better by substituting martinis for the cold coffee the neighbors get. Maybe even a nap while they sit in evening traffic. Architects and physicians are very nearly identical professions, each requiring a depth of knowledge, while giving patients/ clients undivided attention house calls. Clients like the service, and you don't have to clean the family room/conference table. I gain as much knowledge about how to serve my clients by meeting at their home to design their new homes as a doctor does when he treats a patient at their home.

Architecture is one of the unique professions that can successfully be practiced from home.

Your home doesn't need to be a showplace. I look at mine as a lab for experimenting. Don't bother building a new "castle." Anything you build now to show off your work, will be dated and probably not reflect your practice in a few years.

What you build for yourself will be budget based, and what you are doing for your clients might be different.

Small jobs pay the bills, of which there are plenty of each. Get ready to dip into your savings, and wait up to six months before any "fees" come in for deposit.

Expect to receive bills for things that you didn't know you needed, like a business phone listing so you can be in the yellow pages, and then an assessment from the local AIA chapter to allow you the listing. NCARB is a must if you want to practice in any other state, and they charge to keep your records, then they charge you if you want them to find your records.

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The homeowners, health and auto insurance will need review to make sure they cover home business, and you will want extra errors & omissions policy and maybe Workmen's Comp if you plan on hiring anyone for anything. Bills will also come for tools, hardware, software, printers, ink, paper supplies, and of course snacks and "client" beverages.

Your silent partner, Uncle Sam will want regular payments to cover schools, roads, building code inspector salaries, fire and police protection. He will give you a place to live and a job making license plates if you miss paying him on time.

Probably some of your contracts will be verbal (but check your state's requirements – and remember that you're taking some very real chances every time you do work without a written contract), and clients are pretty good about paying, but only if you are good about billing. Keeping track of your time and sending statements is part of your workload, unpaid time of course. Now you have to figure out how much you can charge, so here is rule of thumb.

If you bill by the hour, the fees you receive will be on the hours you charge for, which will be about half of what you work, and then half of what you bring in will go for overhead items, insurance, equipment, conventions, utilities, taxes, memberships, subscriptions and maybe a psychiatrist to help you understand what you are doing in practice alone.

Charging \$100 per hour – just to use an even number – will give you \$25 to take home, well it all comes home in a home office, but the first \$75 will be earmarked for someone else.

Join organizations, clubs, and volunteer for everything you can find time for, as those are the places you will find clients and give you a social life outside of being alone in the messy office that no one will help you clean. This brings up the need for a clean image.

Smoking is a no-no as the smell attaches to paper and your non smoking clients will notice it while you are trying to sell your ideas. Pets; out if they bite, or have fleas. Some clients don't like pets, period, so they won't use you on their next project.

Pros:

- Flexible work schedule
- Combine work, family and play to make a life
- Tax deductions for housing & supplies
- No boss looking over your shoulder
- No dress code
- No time clock punching
- Self selectable projects
- Drinking on the job is allowed
- Sex in the office, but that risks the tax deductions, unless it is for research.
- Spread work over entire house for greater home office deductions

Cons:

- No peers to bounce ideas off of
- Minimal resource library
- Equipment purchase & maintenance is all yours
- Self-employment government reporting
- Health insurance is on your own
- Vacations are at your own cost & lost fees.
- Can't steal office pens for use at home
- Can't blame anyone for goof ups. But then if you are doing the work, it will be done perfectly the first time (right?)
- Starting a home base practice is difficult, it usually takes several years to build a client base, but the rewards are enormous, and the lifestyle is super.

J. Robert Perrin, AIA, Raised in a Mechanical Contractor family in the Nebraska sandhills. Bought a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Nebraska 1971, (This was work study program, I pay tuition and living expenses and work like hell.)

Served and apprenticeship in York, Pennsylvania. Moved to Omaha in 1975, and started my own practice since no one wanted to hire me. Currently on boards of Field Club homeowners, Midtown Business Association, Landmarks Inc, Rotary Dist 5650 and Boystown Hospital IACUC. Past boards include Unitarian Church, Douglas County Historical Society, Joslyn Castle, Chase School, Suburban Rotary and political campaigns. Awards have been from preservation organizations, Unitarians, and Rotary.

Personally built and renovated several buildings. And Fly a small plane for weekend getaways to learn about remote towns and projects.



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Practice Management Digest

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If There Was Ever a Time... Maximizing Your Marketing & BD ROI

by Richard Friedman

With many A/E/C and environmental consulting firms experiencing layoffs, salary freezes or reductions, benefit cuts, and other cost-cutting measures, it's more important than ever that firms invest their precious marketing and business development (BD) overhead dollars wisely.

Getting more staff involved in BD (especially project personnel), in ways commensurate with their role, career juncture, and skills is a no-brainer when compared with the alternative of relying on a few key rainmakers. But this approach also requires a commitment to training, coaching, and mentoring; a commitment that is lacking in many firms in good times and bad.

Complicating the return-on-investment (ROI) equation is the inherent challenge of measuring marketing and BD ROI, as the overall sales process for a professional services firm is non-linear, serendipitous, and circuitous. It can be a *black box* with multiple strategies and touches contributing to a new client or new project. That said, there are a number of marketing and BD metrics that industry firms should measure. These metrics typically fall into four different "buckets":

- Sales volume (segmented by client type, existing versus new clients, and potentially other parameters)
- Proposal dollars outstanding (weighted according to a realistic probability of winning)
- Competitive proposal performance (i.e., those short-listed and won)
- PR and positioning achievements (e.g., articles published, talks and workshops presented, project awards)

Maximizing BD ROI starts, of course, with selling additional services to existing clients. Two of the most effective strategies include:

- Treating the project delivery process as a BD opportunity by using open-ended questions to identify additional needs and other potential buyers and influencers within the client organization (and then cross-selling, if necessary).
- During a marketing and BD assessment I recently conducted, I learned of an instance in which the client lost a project to a competitor because the client did not know the firm offered the desired service. Unfortunately, based on my experience, this happens too often in our industry.
- Involving past and current clients in your marketing efforts (e.g., interviewing them for a newsletter article, co-presenting with them at a conference, and teaming on award submittals).

Now is NOT the time to cut back marketing and BD to minimize overhead expenses. Any benefit your firm may accrue in the short term will be wiped out in the long run when your competitors eat your lunch. It is, however, time to take a really hard look at marketing and BD budgets to ensure that yours is not on "auto-pilot" that is, investing time and money in strategies that may have made sense (or were less objectionable) when backlogs were hefty and work was flowing through the door. Examples of strategies that require further scrutiny include:

Advertising. As with many marketing strategies, it can be very difficult to measure ROI from advertising. In fact, one of the only ways to assess ROI is to include a separate phone number or e-mail address for each ad, and then track responses and inquiries on an ad-by-ad basis. Most firms don't do this, and among those that do, I have yet to hear instances in which ads have yielded inquiries or leads that have justified their typically expensive cost.

Many A/E/C and environmental consulting firms advertise because that's what

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they've done in the past and have never questioned this practice, and it's easy to simply renew an advertisement. Further, it has a "placebo effect" that makes companies feel like they are proactively building name recognition but at what opportunity cost with respect to more effective strategies? I've even heard stories from firm principals and marketing/BD directors that their clients will think they went out of business if they didn't see their ad. But since most ads do little to position a firm as an industry expert or thought leader, there are typically better uses for the money.

Conferences/Trade Shows. If your firm has not already done so, re-evaluate target venues and associated expenditures (e.g., booths/displays, marketing materials, and trinkets). Determine which areas can be cut back without sacrificing the value of the venue. If a venue does not attract the clients that you seek (or the individuals who can make or influence the decision to hire your firm), or does not allow opportunities to give talks or workshops or serve on committees, then attendance at that venue should be questioned due to the hefty costs associated with booth preparation, travel, lodging, and entertainment.

With respect to conferences and trade shows:

- The first priority should be to speak or serve on a panel discussion.
- The second priority should be to serve on a planning committee.
- The last priority should be to have a booth/attend, unless the firm is hosting a hospitality event in conjunction with the venue and has strategically invited key past, current, and/or target clients. I recognize that some firms view it as sacrilegious not to have a booth after doing so for 20 years in a row, but if your firm is experiencing desperate times, that calls for desperate measures.

Once you've made the decision to attend, take the following measures to maximize ROI:

- Limit the number of attendees at each venue. Attendance should be a privilege and a responsibility given to select individuals for the purposes of lead generation and/or professional development, not an expectation on the part of staff who are seeking an opportunity to get away, schmooze, and have fun.
- If someone in your firm is giving a talk and you've decided to have a booth, be sure to leverage the two by promoting the talk (and white papers and article placements) at your booth and encouraging workshop attendees to stop by your booth.
- Require attendees to prepare a brief report on the venue. Such reports could contain:
 - Market intelligence
 - A listing of current and prospective clients with whom that person met
 - Resulting leads
 - Potential new hires
 - Potential new teaming partners
 - Ideas for future abstract submittals
 - Recommendations for how your firm can maximize its ROI from that venue next year

From the standpoint of ROI maximization, your firm's goal should be to condense or "short-circuit" the BD process by hitting as many buyers and influencers at once in a manner that:

- Conveys the value of your firm's services (and in particular, hiring your firm over a competitor), in the context of the issues that keep your clients up at night.
- Positions your firm as a subject matter expert and thought leader.
- Differentiates your firm from its competitors.

A strategy that meets these conditions:

- Giving talks and workshops (assuming your content provides valuable information, tips, resources and/or case studies versus self-serving, boastful content). Some of the benefits include:
 - Typically, audience members with needs and questions approach you after a talk, yielding qualified leads.
 - The professional association helps promote your talk through their web site and direct marketing.
 - If approached intelligently, there is tremendous "repackaging" value in a talk or workshop. You can convert it into:

- An article to be pitched to a trade journal.
- A newsletter article in which several clients and prospects are interviewed.
- An in-house lunchtime workshop for a client or prospect.
- A talk or workshop for another target professional association by tweaking the title and content a bit.
- They make you a better consultant. Giving talks forces you to codify your consulting message and hone your listening skills, an essential component of Q&A (which should be allowed throughout your talk, when possible). Further, talks provide an ideal opportunity to gather market intelligence that will make you more effective in the BD process.

Public Relations (PR). The A/E/C industry's PR Achilles heel is the tendency to focus too much on "chest-beating" content such as employee promotions, new hires, and office growth. In their PR efforts, firms should focus less on company achievements and focus more on:

- Issues keeping specific target audiences up at night.
- Strategies, tips, and resources for addressing these issues.
- Project case studies that illustrate how the company has tackled these issues for clients and what the take-aways are for other client organizations (versus writing about projects won and project milestones).

Even press releases and story ideas in which firm leaders, senior technical staff, and client sector leaders are interviewed regarding key trends and challenges impacting a particular client type can be very effective. Press releases and story ideas focusing on such strategic content can:

- Help pre-position your firm for a particular project.
- Increase the likelihood that editors of key target publications will pick up these story ideas (because they're more likely to connect with readers).
- Help develop a stable of content that can be repackaged into articles for other publications and into talks for various professional association/conference venues.

Maximizing marketing and BD ROI requires an analytical mindset, a willingness to identify and track the appropriate marketing or BD accountability measures, a knowledge of how to leverage the firm's strategies to maximize ROI, and the confidence to stick to your guns in the face of skeptics. Feel free to call or e-mail me if you have questions or need additional information.

Rich Friedman, President of [Friedman & Partners](#), has extensive experience in strategic market planning, market research and analysis, PR and positioning strategy, and business development consulting and training for technical and marketing professionals. He has also assisted firms with implementation of growth strategies, including merger/acquisition searches for target firms and executive searches for key talent.



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Reclaiming Control in a Time When Control Seems Scarce

by Martha I. Finney, President & CEO, Engagement Journeys, LLC

These days it seems as though the only control we have in our lives and careers is how much time we spend watching or reading the news about how the recession is tanking our dreams. Each month surpasses the previous month in terms of bad news – especially around job losses and unemployment rates. (I would tell you what unemployment is this morning, but by the time you read this, that rate will have already gone up.) In the world of architecture, even projects that have been budgeted for – with cash on hand – are being frozen, with the allocated money set aside in “just in case” accounts. That spells additional job loss for you and your colleagues.

We all know that the problem is too big for any one sector and specialty to solve. Which makes us feel even more out of control. So what control can we hold onto these days? Plenty. Here's a quick list:

We can control what we expose our minds to: Our capacity for innovation will be our key to getting our collective selves out of this mess. But it's hard to be creative and innovative when we're in freak-out mode. For those of us who are especially sensitive to dread-scenario messages and images (do we really have to see Depression-era breadline photos and Dorothea Lange pictures of worried Depression-era mothers *all the time?*), it's especially draining to go down the path of worst-case scenario. I'm not suggesting for a moment that you resolve to stay uninformed, but don't saturate your mind and spirit with debilitating influences. It will siphon away your ability to invest your problem-solving talents in the enterprise of discovering significant solutions.

We can control our spending; we can also control our saving: This may be a little counter-intuitive here. We're surrounded by messages about cutting back to the bone on our lifestyles. And this is definitely an excellent time to review how money seeps out of our lives. And this is an excellent time to resolve to sock more of our cash away. (To paraphrase that wonderful Frank Sinatra song: That rainy day is here.) However, I'm also seeing signs of a national anorexia in which we're compelled to reduce our footprint on the planet in so many different ways that I'm afraid we're going to start feeling guilty for just being alive. Tighten your belts, if you need to, but be expansive in other ways as well. Maybe you won't be going out to restaurants as much, but don't stop going out at all. Maybe you won't be buying the latest release of the I-pod, but don't stop buying and listening to music. Maybe you won't be taking the family to the latest concerts or plays. But take them to museums instead. Take them to new cities and conduct walking tours so they discover new ways of looking at the world. Life costs money. You can still save without cutting out the joy of living altogether.

We can control the stories that our children will one day tell of these times. It has been said that the fundamental question we all must answer for ourselves is whether this universe is a hostile place or a loving place. I believe it's every parent's responsibility to teach their children to embrace the universe as a loving place – and then learn how to thrive in its ever-changing circumstances. One day your children will be adults facing uncertain times of their own. This recession we're going through now certainly isn't the first; nor will it be the last. They're going to look back on these months (hopefully it won't be years) from childhood and draw inspiration and strength from the examples you're setting now. Wouldn't it be great if they can look back and say, “We didn't have much money, but we still had a lot of fun.” Wouldn't it be great if they will be able to remember this time and the way you behaved in the face of real uncertainty and remind themselves that the love of family, friends, and life itself is not diminished even by the low ceiling of anxiety?

No one in their right minds would call this time a “gift.” But we've got it

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anyway. And since we've got it, let's use it as our opportunity to remember what we really do have control of. And how precious it is. And that's our ability to sustain the joy of life, regardless of what's going on around us.

If you are interested in reading more on this subject pdf versions of her book, *Rebound: A Proven Plan For Starting Over After Job Loss*, are available of [chapter six](#) and [chapter twenty](#).

Martha I. Finney, President & CEO, Engagement Journeys, LLC, and author, Rebound: A Proven Plan For Starting Over After Job Loss. Contact Martha: Martha@reboundyourcareer.com.





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Getting Your Bearings Post Layoff

by Joseph DiCenso

27 years ago my father was the general manager of a regional wholesale musical instrument company he'd worked for, for 20 years. In his early 40s, with his two oldest in college, he was "let go." The company offered him a position in New York. Settled outside of Boston, my father refused to uproot and was turned loose.

In the wake of the sub-prime fiasco and as the general recession intensifies, many of you in the design field—and across industry lines—may find yourselves staring into the same uncertain future my father did. My aim in this article is to give you some survival skills for managing such a major transition. Rather than address the tactical skills (such as re-training, resume writing, etc.), I will focus on deep, strategic skills, using three simple questions:

- What do I want?
- What do I have?
- What do I need?

Job loss can bring panic, insecurity, identity crisis, loss of direction, and can damage self esteem. These simple questions offer bearings and ballast; they can help you chart a course through what, for some, is a murky—if not a harrowing—passage.

What do I want?

Harrowing would describe my father's experience. Work had been his identity. When that was stripped away, he went into shock, anger, self-loathing, and depression. The loss of his job, and his false self, left him exposed, and disoriented. Eventually, with a lot of help and hard work, he began to uncover the self he'd buried in his years of working three jobs to support a family of five.

In his early teens my father began teaching drum lessons in his parents' basement (and he's been teaching ever since). He loved to teach but had never considered it a viable career option. Groping in the dark of his post-lay off passage, he stumbled onto that calling and felt its vibrancy in a new way. What he wanted more than anything was to teach. And he wanted to do it in his own retail drum shop, where he could offer private lessons, sales, and repairs.

"What do I want?" is a question that will take you as deep as you care to go and challenge you to be as honest as you're ready to get. In return, it offers peace: The quiet mind and pile-driven resolve of knowing what you are called to do. The deeper and more honest your answers, the more rooted and resilient you will likely feel.

Here are some tributaries of this question:

- What do I love?
- What is calling me?
- What fulfills and enlivens me?
- What life/lifestyle have I been envisioning for myself?
- What kind of a world do I want to foster and live in?

Your answers to these questions will become your guiding star. They will provide direction, courage and motivation—at a time when you may be lacking in all three.

One could argue that, a generation later, we don't lose ourselves in our jobs the way my dad did. We don't expect or grant the same loyalty or longevity we once did when it comes to employment. To which I respond, these questions can serve folks anywhere along the spectrum of the impact of job

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loss—from massive blow to blessed relief.

What do I have?

This is a question about resources—inner and outer, hard and soft (as in skills or –ware). Once you're clear about where you want to go, it's time to provision yourself for the journey. What do you already possess that could be assets, resources?

Take stock of your skills, education, personality traits, relationships, and experience; then ask, of these, what will serve your endeavor. For my dad, it was his teaching—both his love of it and the devoted following he'd earned over 25 years. He also had his experience as a wholesale provider to retail storeowners. I imagine him rubbing those two sticks together and creating the fire that warmed and fortified him as he prepared to take perhaps the boldest plunge of his life.

Especially in the wake of a lay-off, you may want to ask a trusted friend or colleague to help you answer this question. Even in our best moments we can be hard-pressed to list our personal assets and get a true accounting. Who do you know who can help you name the resources inside and around you that could help you get where you want to go?

What do I need?

Once you've taken stock of what you have, this question asks what's missing. To get what you want, what else do you need in the way of resources or support? Include things like information, training or education, money, encouragement, mentoring, practice, etc.

For my dad, it was a storefront and a loan. He tapped an old friend for a newly vacated retail rental and his brother, a tradesman, for the remodeling. His neighbor, a practicing accountant, helped him with the loan application process.

Asking this third question may help you to identify some other things you already have—especially *people you know* who can help you get what you need.

Alive, Focused & Grounded

Taken together, these three questions *quiet and focus* the mind, *ground* us in reality, and *remind* us of what enlivens us. Each question may require, or benefit from, outside help from friends, family, clergy or a professional helper—a coach, career counselor or therapist. The truer your answers, the deeper your roots and greater your resilience when weathering the winds of change.

My father sold his business in 2007 and still teaches 30-some students a week. He's glad to be free from the stresses of running a retail operation, especially in these tough economic times. Speaking to him in preparation for this piece, I learned that the last 25 years were the happiest, by far, of his career and that he looks back at that lay-off as a blessing in disguise.

Joseph DiCenso is a life and leadership coach in private practice. He has been helping individuals and groups bring more of themselves to life for over 20 years. Contact him via his web site joseph-dicenso.com or at josephd@crocker.com.

Set the Tone for How You Leave

You haven't been laid off yet, but the handwriting is definitely on the wall. Your department has been reduced one person at a time for weeks now; all those empty cubicles are reminders that you could be next. There's a room down the hall where behind the closed door your coworkers are transformed from confident people with jobs to stunned people without jobs. You know you're destined to take that walk down the hall. It's just a matter of time.

This may feel as though your career is coming to an end, but it's important to remember that it's only this one particular job that is closing down. Says Libby Gill, a Los Angeles-based executive coach who specializes in helping people in transition (as well as a former entertainment industry executive who has had to lay off people), this is not the *end* of your career—it's a *moment* in your career. And how you handle the layoff experience could make a huge difference to both your long-term future and your immediate prospects. She says that there are three distinct tasks ahead of you.

Accept the News Gracefully

Jobs may be short-lived. But careers are longer-lasting. And reputations will follow you forever. So, however much you want to scream, blame, or use words that would embarrass your mother, do yourself a favor and make it easy on these people to break the hard news to you. (If you're in complete charge of your emotions, you could actually muster up some pity for these people. They might be in the same boat you are, only they don't know

it yet. It's not unheard of for the head of a department—after laying off the entire team—to be told, “There's one more package for you to do.”)

However you react, just remember that this is just another short day in your long career, and you will be seeing these people in years to come in different companies, industry conferences, and so on. They may be your executioners today, but in a year from now, they could be your clients. Or they could be applicants to a job that you have posted now that you're securely settled in your next, better job. No matter how you will meet these people again, the chances are excellent that A) you will, and B) you will be really glad you didn't behave in a cringe-making way.

“Be as dignified as you can because then you'll be able to look back and be proud of yourself,” says Gill. “You'll be able to retain your self-respect well into the future. And these people will always remember your ability to handle a terribly tough personal moment with grace and propriety.”

Tears, shock, and sadness are all natural reactions, says Gill, and they are okay to show in such a horrible meeting. But lashing out in a personally insulting or an out-of-control way will make enemies of the very people you will want to have in your corner as you move forward in your career.

Mourn Authentically

Even though you should *control* your emotions, no one is expecting you to *deny* your emotions—even the extreme ones that can best be expressed using four-letter words. If you've been passionate about your work up to this point, and successful, the chances are excellent that there's a huge piece of your self-esteem and identity wrapped up in that job you just lost. And that just has to hurt. There's no amount of professionalism that you can call up that will excuse you completely from feeling the wrenching loss.

“Deal with your pain privately and in the company of your most supportive friends and family members,” says Gill. “Do what you need to do to get the rage out of your system. Write an angry, venomous letter to your boss—but don’t send it, of course. Howl at the moon, if you have to. Break something (making sure it’s something that’s cheap and meaningless to you). Vent to your friends—especially the ones who don’t mind sitting with you as you work the same story over and over and over again.”

Give yourself the time and chance to fully feel the shock and the pain of the layoff. Do it in a safe place among people who will patiently support you as you work to get the steam out of your system. And then get on with your life.

Regroup Strategically

Even as you’re mourning authentically, you will soon feel that you’re ready to take up the business of your future again. And when you’re ready to take this step, you will start to feel much better. Gill recommends that within a few days or a week after you’ve been laid off that you contact your boss and request an “exit interview” to review some of the details that you might not have heard during the meeting while your head was buzzing.

“You’re on your game now, your most positive, your most collected,” she says. “This is the time to review the details of your severance package and all the benefits that might be due you, including vacation time, retraining, outplacement counseling. If it’s only been a day or two since you were laid off, you might also want to talk about how the news will be communicated internally and externally. If you have a chance to control the way your termination is worded, take it! It could set the tone for your new job search in a very positive way.”

Gill also recommends that you write a positive letter about your experiences in the company, what you’ve learned and your appreciation for the experiences and friends you made during

your tenure there. Send that letter to the CEO, cc'ing your immediate supervisor, the head of your department, and the HR department.

And start requesting letters of your own. Ask your boss for a letter of recommendation, and reach out to all the immediate connections that you have within the company for letters and the promise of a positive referral. (Gill says you should also be prepared to write those letters yourself, and send them drafts for their editing and signature. That's actually a good thing, she says, because you're making it easier on people who are already feeling awkward, guilty, and maybe a little overwhelmed by all the extra work they've had to take on as the company continues to downsize. Additionally, you can control what is being said and how your strengths and gifts are positioned. Make sure they know that this is just a draft for their consideration, and that they're free to edit the material to best match their voice and opinions.)

"It's great to have these letters completed while your connections are fresh and sympathy for you is high," she says. "You'll probably find that more often than not your former coworkers will be thrilled to have the chance to help you find your next job. They were your work friends before, and your getting laid off hasn't changed that. Plus, some of them are probably thinking that maybe you'll help pave the way for them to move on to their next jobs as well."

By the way...about those former coworkers: Why don't they call? You're the one whose world has been rocked. You're the one who is grieving. You're the one who's bereft. So, it just follows that you're the one whose phone should be ringing off the proverbial hook. Your living room should be filled with flowers. Your mailbox stuffed with cards. Your email inbox (which is now embarrassingly dot yahoo, dot gmail, dot aol, or dot hot-mail, instead of dot big, fancy, high-prestige company) should be stuffed with introductions to potential new employers. You

shouldn't be able to close your refrigerator door with all the casseroles in there just waiting for you to emerge from your stupor, stagger from couch to microwave, and barely bring yourself to program a quick reheat.

But noooooo. Nothing. You could be abducted by aliens for all they would ever know. Or care.

This is where human nature trumps Emily Post. Your former coworkers just don't have a clue what to say to you. They feel terrible about what happened to you, and wonder if it might happen to them. And then they feel terrible that they're thinking about themselves when it really did already happen to you. And so they wait until the right thing to say comes to them. But then it never really does. And the longer they wait, they know, the worse it's going to be. Then, what do you know? Months have just flown right by. Surely they couldn't reach out to you now. What could they possibly say to earn your forgiveness and understanding?

Gill says that it's really up to you to be the bigger and better person and reach out to them first. Put on your authentic, positive, grounded happy voice and call them to tell them how much you've enjoyed working with them, "Yeah, it's a bummer what happened, but you know what? Good things will come of this." Tell *them* it was an honor to work with them. Tell *them* how much you enjoy their friendship. Tell *them* that in a month or so you'd love to get together with them for lunch or something. And put it in your calendar to make that date.

You might not have any control over the fact that you're no longer with the company. But you have every bit of control over the tone that you leave on. Depart on a high note, with head held high, and your network of supporters—both inside and outside the company—will be so glad to be on your team as you search for your next opportunity.

The best thing you can do:

Maintain your dignity so that you can keep your self-respect.

The worst thing you can do:

Lose your composure out of fear or anger.

The first thing you should do:

Think of your friends as your support squad and remember that they want to help you. Even if they don't quite know how.

Build Your “A” Player Status Even Though You Are Not Employed

You might be out of a job but don't think you're necessarily out of work. You can even be making money during this downtime. As a knowledge worker, your toolkit remains in your head—it's not like you had to turn it back into the company at your last punch-out. And, because almost all of us have some sort of computer access, you have everything you need to continue building your visibility and even prestige while you're waiting for the employment side of things to turn around for you.

In fact, ironically enough, now that you're a free agent, this is your chance to hit major professional goals for yourself. Your time is your own, and you don't need anyone's permission to step right up and reach up a little higher than you could when you were embedded inside a team that was bound by politics, egos, and layers of authority that you had to kowtow to.

When companies begin hiring again (in fact, someone could be considering you right now), they're going to wonder what you've been doing with your brain during these months when you've been on your own. The projects that you undertake right now, the thought leadership that you drive while you're on your own will far outweigh any old, outdated handicap that you might have felt that kept you from “A” player status before (like the pedigree of your college degree, for instance).

This is your chance to build new relationships and rack up the successful completion of projects. This is your chance to stand out from the crowd and have great stories to tell of your adventures as a free agent.

Be a Thought Leader

Keep up with your industry and keep your opinions coming. You have a lot to share, and the value of your perspective hasn't changed simply because your title has. Renew your professional memberships and create presentations that you can deliver to your local chapters (as well as the chapters in other regions where you might like to build awareness of who you are). Write articles for your chapter newsletters. Make yourself available to mentor newcomers to your profession.

Be Googlable

If you have a gmail.com or aol.com or yahoo.com address, I have only one question for you: *What are you thinking?* Domain names are so cheap these days—not to mention even Web design services—you should have your name as your domain name at the very least. I'm sorry if your name is John Smith—that name might be already taken. But surely there's something that you can figure out so that you can create an online identity for yourself that is yours and yours alone. Sure, the free email addresses are free, but they're costing you big in terms of your public image as someone who takes him- or herself seriously.

Be Expansive

Once you have your domain name, get a Web page and put it to good use. At the very least, have your resumé posted online as a Web page. And make sure your resumé is tagged with all the keywords any recruiter would use to search for someone just like you, with your talents, abilities, and background. But don't stop there. Start building out your Web site with professional events calendars, book reviews, commentaries on professional developments, white papers. Start a blog. (Blogs are free.) Make it smart and original. Maybe even make it a little controversial. Start a conversational bonfire (just a little one, and nothing actionable against your former employer, for instance) and invite your readers to get in on the action. Be nervy enough to

ask some especially prickly questions in your profession and stand back to watch the comments fly. Weigh in on other peoples' blogs as much as you can. And post a great, professional headshot of you wherever your professional persona appears—on your own site, as a regular on other peoples' sites, in online communities.

Be Opinionated

Be informed, certainly, but have a consistent point of view that people associate with you.

Be Generous with Your Connections

One of the advantages of being a free agent is that you have the freedom to build your network like you never have before. You're going to be meeting new people everywhere, and pretty soon you'll start thinking about how certain people would benefit from knowing certain other people. Start putting them together. There's a weird sense of power and satisfaction that comes from knowing that you're the one who introduced these people. That's a largesse that costs you absolutely nothing, and the ROI (return on introductions) is immeasurable.

Be Generous with Your Talents and Skills

It would be nice to actually get paid for what you do and know. But there are plenty of people and organizations who can't afford your professional services and desperately need you. Isn't it nice to feel needed? Not to mention appreciated—especially by causes you care deeply about. True, most nonprofits of any significant size have their own paid staff, and I'm not suggesting you take jobs away from these people. But you can certainly augment what they're doing with additional time and expertise. Or perhaps you can teach them the latest techniques that you picked up in the corporate world. Take on projects that you can lead from start to finish, and then publish reports on what the group accomplished on your Web site.

Be a Consultant

Even though you have absolutely no intention of starting your own business now that you're a free agent, some of your colleagues may be cultivating those dreams of independence. Good for them! They're going to need your expertise to get off the ground. They may or may not be able to actually pay you, but surely you have the time, interest, and bandwidth to lend these dreamers and help them achieve their next goals. It will help you remember your value and keep you away from the remote control and the refrigerator.

Remember That Your Former Employer Might Also Value Your Skills and Abilities

The work still has to get done, and they might be able to actually pay you more by the hour on a contract basis than they would have been able to when you were just overhead. You don't have to be a consultant forever. It's just for now.

Be Curious

If you're a knowledge professional, you're going to want to keep growing your knowledge. And you're going to want to make sure others know you're committed to growing your knowledge—and growing your profession's body of knowledge at the same time. What burning professional questions could you research the answers to and write white papers about? Which of these questions would be most likely to give you a good reason to contact your peers inside "A" player organizations as part of the research process? Which conferences would be thrilled to feature you as a presenter of your breakthrough findings?

Be Willing to Be a "B" Player

Many employers are discovering that some of the so-called "A" players aren't all they are cracked up to be. The superstars may be just meteoring through the workplace, not lasting long enough in any one position to really contribute significant value

on a lasting basis before blasting on to the next high-profile, better-paying job. Because employers are looking for some stability themselves (it's not like they've been enjoying these hair-trigger times, either, you know), they're going to want to hire people they can depend on. Recruiting and retaining is still expensive. So a modest, steady-Eddy posture could be the very thing that makes you stand out from the crowd of crowing preeners.

Be There

Get out of the house. By which I mean, go to professional meetings, conferences, and lectures. Going to the supermarket doesn't count (but, as long as you stay out of the candy and beer aisles, it couldn't hurt). Go to where the smart people are and hang out after the event is over. Mingle at receptions, talk about what you're doing. (Hedge trimming the poodle is off limits, though; try to keep it professional.) Get people's business cards; make sure they get yours.

The best thing you can do:

Assign yourself a research project, and then build up a list of all the people you would like to encourage to work with you on it.

The worst thing you can do:

Convince yourself that you're no one without a company title.

The first thing you should do:

Remind yourself that you may have lost your job, but you haven't lost your reason for being.