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Surviving and Thriving Through Unexpected Career Transitions

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Defining Unexpected Career Transition

Loss of your job through no fault or action of your own

You Are Not Alone

The Chronicle of Philanthropy

April 10, 2025

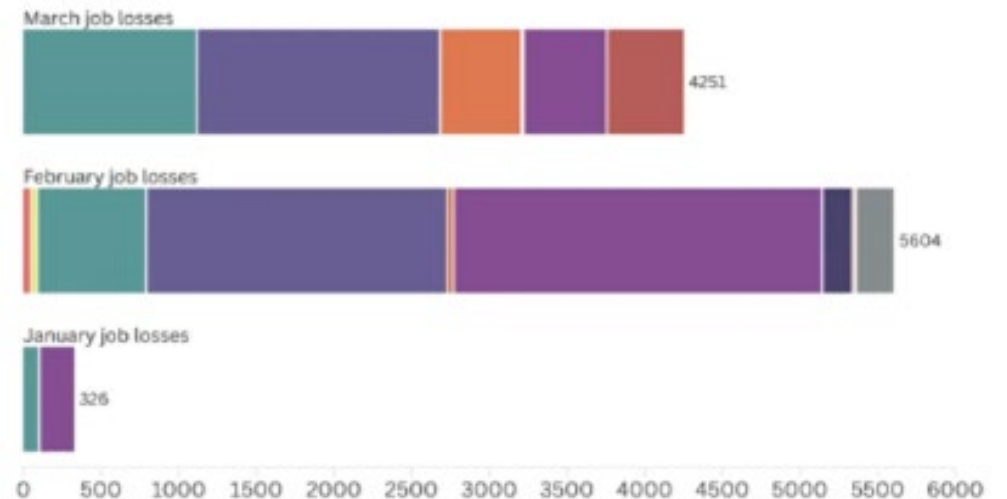
“As federal budget cuts ripple through an economy in which nonprofits already were struggling, the Chronicle of Philanthropy is assembling a monthly estimate of nonprofit job losses by sector.”

10,000 Job Cuts in 70 Days. Introducing the Nonprofit Layoff Tracker

As federal budget cuts ripple through an economy in which nonprofits already were struggling, the Chronicle of Philanthropy is assembling a monthly estimate of nonprofit job losses by sector.

Nonprofit Layoffs by Month (Jan. 20-March 31)

A 70-day estimate of layoffs at U.S. nonprofits by month.



Source: The months here capture when an organization announced its layoffs — either through a [WARN](#) filing or news report. Because layoffs often occur in waves, some layoffs may have taken place before or after the month reported. The subsectors are based on [IRS nonprofit activity codes](#).

Possible Causes of Unexpected Job Loss

- Budget cuts
- Organization closures or mergers
- Layoffs
- Reduction in force (RIF)
- Toxic workplace cultures
- Nepotism
- Changes in leadership
- Reorganizations
- Position eliminations
- Role reassignments



What to do when all is well

Do your preparatory maintenance:

- Check **job listings** frequently.
- Keep a list of **recruiting firms** that email you.
- Be mindful when dealing with **consultants**.
- Know your **transferable skills**.
- Keep a **list of jobs** you think would be fun.
- Have a personal **annual budget**.



What to do when all is well



Maintain good professional health:

- **Stay active** in the profession and with your network.
- Keep your **resume and LinkedIn profile** updated.
- Continuously broaden and sharpen your **skills**.
- Set aside weekly time to maintain your **professional portfolio**.
- Routinely **copy files** and send to a personal email address.



What to do when all is well

Build a strong presence:

- Create strong organization-wide **alliances**.
- Make sure people in your organization know **what you do and what your value is**.
- **Lead** wherever and however you can.
- Be the **signal**, not the noise.
- Be an astute **observer** and note **patterns**.



Check yourself

- ☐ I can name at least five industry recruiting firms.
- ☐ My resume and LinkedIn profile are updated.
- ☐ I know the skills I need to learn, brush up on or strengthen.
- ☐ I regularly set aside time to update my personal work portfolio.
- ☐ I know the first five people I would reach out to if I lost my job tomorrow.
- ☐ I have an annual budget and know where I could cut back.



RED FLAGS!!!

- Budgets are reduced, furloughs mandated.
- Professional development funding disappears.
- Hiring is frozen.
- Grants aren't renewed.
- Your organization's HR is a mess.



RED FLAGS!!!

- Colleagues disappear with no explanation.
- Your organization lacks transparency.
- Personality conflicts erupt.
- Cliquish organizational behavior emerges.
- You can identify patterns of elimination.



RED FLAGS!!!

- New leadership, at almost any level, seeks to establish a new regime.
- Your tasks and assignments get delegated to others.
- You become uninvited to meetings or meetings get canceled.
- Leadership avoids you and avoids eye contact.
- You are criticized in public.



What to do when things look dicey

- Fully understand how your organization will or can approach layoffs, reductions in force, incentives or position eliminations, and how any of those actions may impact severance.
- Do informational interviewing to figure out what you might want in your next role and to practice.
- Consider consulting with an employment attorney.
- Document everything.



What to do when things look dicey

- Remember that HR protects the organization, not you.
- Look at your personal budget and start cutting back where you can.
- Know what benefits are portable from your current job.
- Educate yourself about filing for unemployment.
- Start banking leave.
- Join recruiter talent networks.
- Create an adaptable resume.



Check yourself

- ☐ I am familiar with my organization's severance procedures and policies.
- ☐ I know how much leave I have and how much my organization will pay out if my job ends.
- ☐ I know what benefits from my current job are portable and how to maintain them if my job ends.
- ☐ My current resume is adaptable.
- ☐ I know how, where and when to file for unemployment.



What to do when your job ends

In the immediacy

- Stay calm and professional. Take a deep breath.
- Do not sign anything unless you fully understand its implications and impact.
- Find out how your organization will handle
 - severance payments
 - health and life insurance
 - leave payouts
 - future reference checks or employment confirmations.

**YOU MAY
NOT ALWAYS
END UP WHERE
YOU THOUGHT
YOU WERE GOING.
BUT YOU WILL
ALWAYS END UP
WHERE YOU ARE
MEANT TO BE.**

KUSHANDWIZDOM

What to do when your job ends

Next steps

- Know that you will need to advocate for yourself every step of the way to get everything you are entitled to.
- Fulfill any obligations your employer requires.
- Educate yourself about options.
- Pay careful attention to deadlines to file for unemployment.

Getting fired is
nature's way to telling
you that you had the
wrong job in the first
place.

Hal Lancaster

meetville.com

What to do when your job ends

Self care

- Reach out to your references for help and support.
- Give yourself time to process, heal and grieve.
- Know that your relationships with colleagues are yours to keep beyond your employment.
- Remember that this is an opportunity to hit the reset button in life.



Check yourself

- ☐ I have an adaptable reference bank.
- ☐ I know which colleagues I want to maintain relationships with outside my current employer.
- ☐ I know what benefits I receive through my job and what happens to those benefits if I lose my job.
- ☐ I know how severance or leave payouts will be taxed and what my options are for distribution of those payments.
- ☐ I have been living where I have always wanted to live and doing the work I have always wanted to do.



Onward and upward

- Based on your personal budget, figure out the minimum and maximum of your salary range.
- Create one email address exclusively for job searching, and keep that inbox clean and uncluttered.
- Use LinkedIn wisely – stay away from the doom and gloom and verify any job you find there.
- Check an organization's 990 if they have not disclosed salary information in a job posting.



Onward and upward

- Network, network, network!
- It's ok to take a break sometimes.
- Keep refining your resume and practicing your interview skills. Study for your interviews.
- Use every source of information and platform available.
- Schedule to stay busy in the days immediately following an interview.
- Clean out your job search files periodically.



Onward and upward



- Get used to being ghosted.
- Don't forget the gig economy.
- Be familiar with various interview response models (STAR, SOAR, SHARE) and what they mean.
- Remember: a job transition is an opportunity, not a setback.
- Rejection may not be about you. Some searches know who they're hiring before the search ever begins.
- Celebrate each positive step in the journey.

Resources

General

- Industry recruiters and job boards
- Alumni association platforms and events
- Local community library and employment offices
- Professional association local chapter networking events

Articles

Harvard Business Review

- “What Are Your Salary Expectations” - February 13, 2023
- “Why is it so hard to leave a bad job?” - September 21, 2023
- “10 Signs of a Toxic Boss and How to Protect Yourself” - February 6, 2025



Resources



Fast Company

- “What You Should and Shouldn’t Post on LinkedIn After Your Layoff” - March 21, 2024

Harvard Business School Working Knowledge

- “Breaking Through the Self-Doubt That Keeps Talented Women From Leading” - February 13, 2024

Websites

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ([eeoc.gov](https://www.eeoc.gov))

- Older Workers Benefit Protection Act

Resources

Podcasts

- How to be Awesome at Your Job
- Interview Boss
- Becoming You with Suzy Welch
- Happen to Your Career
- Work Life with Adam Grant
- Career Contessa



Questions?



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