



Bouncing back after a layoff

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Special to QMI Agency

The numbers are sobering: more than 17,000 employees across the country received pink slips in the aftermath of Target's decision to shut down its Canadian operations. Tim Hortons and Loblaw's have also announced mass layoffs in recent weeks.

Bouncing back after being cut loose is a very personal journey, advises Lotte Struwing of Lasting Solutions HR Consulting & Coaching and a certified career strategy coach in Barrie, Ont.

Some people may feel relief or elation, sometimes because they lacked the courage to look for a more satisfying job. Others may experience paralyzing fear about their ability to pick up the pieces, while others feel angry and betrayed because they gave so much to their employer, she notes.

The following are among the steps Struwing recommends:

Give yourself time to grieve the job loss.

"One day you may feel very relieved; another day you feel in control and another day you may not want to get out of bed

... If you're feeling stuck, angry or sad, you can't move on productively so get the help you need to get over that."

Take care of yourself, paying attention to proper nutrition and exercise.

Making time for fun or a neglected hobby is a great stress release and, with the assistance of programs and professionals, you may even be able to turn your passion into a career.

Create a schedule and stick to it.

"When you're not working, it's a full-time job to get work ... Create realistic and actionable goals that make sense," says Struwing. Don't despair that you haven't yet landed a job but celebrate successes, such as the connections you've made and the resumés you've sent out.

Take stock of where you've been and where you want to go.

"This is sometimes a good time to re-evaluate what you want to do for the rest of your life professionally," says Marie

Bountrogianni, dean of Ryerson University's G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education in Toronto.

Continuing education can help you reinvent yourself and also provides opportunities to upgrade outdated skills. She encourages job seekers to look carefully at the labour market and identify in-demand skills, which currently include project management.

And though it may be easier said than done, try not to panic and instead prepare for successful job search:

Resist the temptation to send out dozens of resumés right away.

Resumés have to be customized and targeted for specific jobs," says Struwing. If your resumé falls short, invest in professional help. At the same time, prepare for interviews, which are more strategic than ever. Again, seek professional help if your skills are rusty.

Don't rely on traditional job search strategies.

Certainly, you can apply to job boards but be will to seek opportunities in different ways, including social and professional networking.

Like your resumé, your LinkedIn profile should be polished before you reach out to contacts, says Melonie Dodaro, bestselling author of *The LinkedIn Code* and founder/CEO of Top Dog Social Media in B.C.

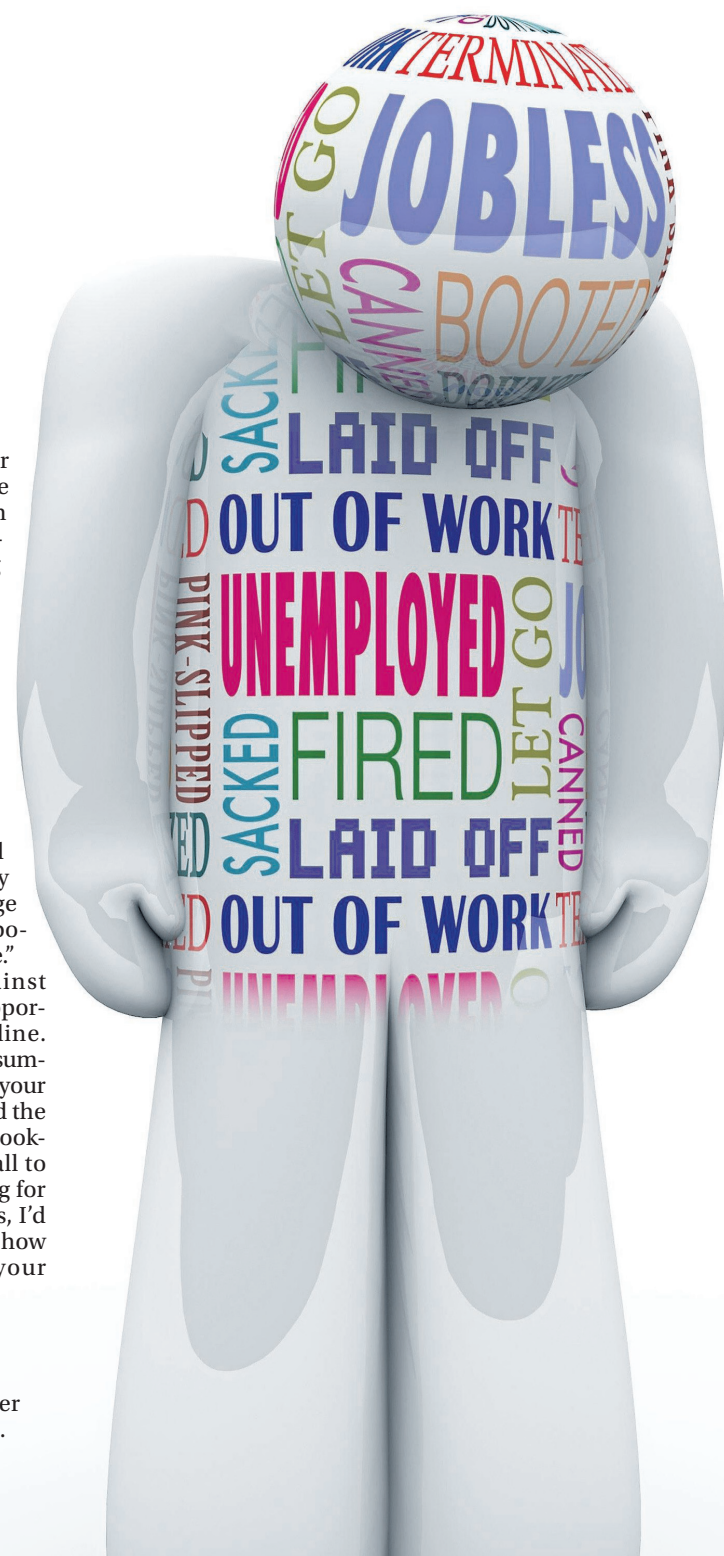
"Use the key words throughout your profile for the positions you're looking for," she says. "Look at job descriptions posted by companies similar to the kind you're looking for and pay attention to the language they're using and incorporate that into your profile."

Dodaro advises against putting "seeking new opportunities" in your headline. "You could put it in your summary section along with your background, skill set and the type of positions you're looking for and include a call to action: 'If you're looking for somebody with 'x' skills, I'd love to talk to you about how I could add value to your company.'"

Don't burn bridges.

Be professional and never badmouth a former employer or co-workers.

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PREPARE YOURSELF: Don't wait for the axe to drop

Layoffs can catch even the most seasoned professional off guard but don't wait for the axe to drop before getting your ducks in a row:

■ **Work your network.** "People tend to use their network more when they're

looking for work but the really wise people are always working with their network," says career strategy coach Lotte Struwing. Consider adding your voice to LinkedIn conversations and be a good professional friend by paying it forward

and giving back.

■ **Update your resumé regularly.** After all, it's a "strategic document" that should reflect your marketable skills and accomplishments so you're ready to pounce if a perfect opportunity arises and

ready to hit the ground running if laid off, Struwing says.

■ **Keep your skills up to date.** Take advantage of continuing education and professional development to ensure your skills are in demand.

■ **Have a backup plan.** That can include planning for an alternate means of generating some income as well as building a small nest egg so you can don't have to accept the first offer that comes your way and can choose the one best for your career.