

HELP NOTES

Beyond Redundancy



Losing a job through no fault of your own can be hard. But redundancy isn't the end, it's the start of the next stage in your life. These Help Notes give you some tips and advice on how to deal with redundancy and get to grips with the future. Whether you're looking for new employment or setting up on your own, you can quickly get back on your feet and take control.

www.creativetoolkit.org.uk

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1 Before you leave

So your job's being closed and you've got a letter from HR. If it's really come as a shock give yourself some time to come to terms with reality. You may feel angry or distressed or even wildly elated. You may be emotional for days or weeks. Once the initial reaction has subsided try to focus on the future and on the bigger picture.

Sometimes the temptation is to storm off and give the boss some choice words. But remember that your employer might be able to help in two important ways:

They have statutory duties to you as their employee.

There are laws about how redundancies are managed. You're due things like written confirmation, and should be entitled to redundancy pay if you've been with them for more than two years. You can double check these entitlements using gov.uk, and with your union if you're a member.

They might be open to persuasion around retraining or other support.

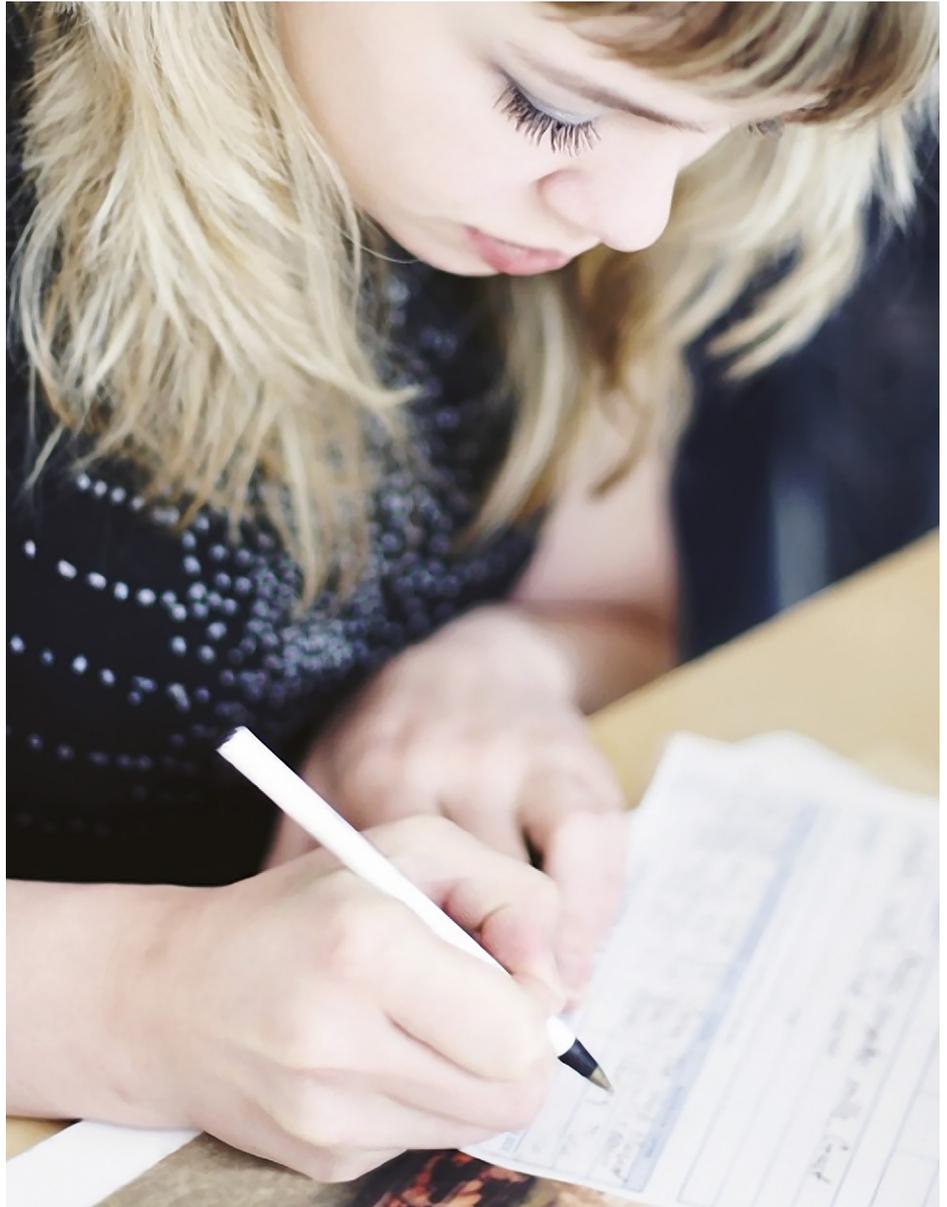
Even though it's not compulsory, some employers will have a training fund to help give you new skills and soften the blow of redundancy. Sometimes support costs nothing. For example you might shadow another department or job role as a way of learning something new.

Training might involve technical skills or it might be CV writing or job interview skills. It's always worth asking for this kind of support. Get this sorted as early as possible and certainly before you leave.

Other sources of support

Make sure your union rep knows what's going on. Their role is to help members get what they're owed and support them through the process.

Above all, don't sit around moaning. It won't help your stress levels. And apart from anything else, you may want to work for some of these people in the future. Grumpy and bitter is not a good look.



Useful resources:

www.gov.uk/redundant-your-rights

www.gov.uk/calculate-your-redundancy-pay

2 Rediscover your skills

Remember that it's the job that's closed, not you. You are a valuable bundle of skills, and all those skills go with you into your next job.

Many people define themselves through their employment. For example, if someone says "what do you do" the answer might be "I work at the BBC". This brings problems if your employment stops, as you don't know how to describe yourself to others.

It's much better to define yourself through your skills and expertise.

Those don't change and will give you a sense of continuity.

This may require you to re-engage with what your skills really are. Many people lose sight of their range of skills, particularly if they've been in a specific job role for years. And going through redundancy can make us question whether we have any skills. (Answer: Yes you have!)

Take some time to make a list of all your skills, not just the job roles. Think about what skills you've had to develop for each job or role you've ever had. Include the 'soft' skills, like working in a team or being highly organised.

Don't leave anything out. Even being able to drive a car or speak another

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language puts you ahead of others. This is hard to do on your own. A colleague who knows you well might be able to help. Even better, get advice from a CV specialist who can help you to see yourself in the round and highlight things you've missed.

Useful resources:

Creative Toolkit Help Note:
Essential tips for CV writing
www.creativetoolkit.org.uk/help-notes
Look out for free CV advice at events like the annual BECTU Freelancers' Fair
www.bectu.org.uk/training-development

3 Take control

Redundancy can feel like the world has just dumped on you. So it's important to get back in control quickly and avoid a victim mentality.

If you can, take a break the day after you leave the job. Clear your head, walk in the mountains, go for a swim, play music, immerse yourself in a great book – whatever helps you forget the job and engage with yourself.

Find ways of talking about yourself that are forward-looking and optimistic. If someone says "what are you up to these days" don't reply "I've been made redundant". Instead, put yourself in the driving seat. Think of active phrases like:

"I'm taking a break before my next job."

"I'm planning my new business."

"I'm retraining."

"I'm looking for a new role as a..."

Above all, help people to understand that you're actively shaping your own future. This will keep you feeling positive.

Your friends and family might be worried about you if they hear you're going through a redundancy process. Talk to them about your plans for finding another job. Reassure them. Ask their advice. But don't be put off by their reaction. Everyone handles this kind of situation differently.

4 It's your future – so don't rush it

A redundancy process can be a great opportunity to consider what direction your career might take. Many people talk about redundancy in retrospect as a 'kick up the backside' to get on with something they've been thinking about for a while.

Don't just rush into something that replicates what you've been doing in the previous job. Take time to think about other opportunities. These could include:

- a different job role
- moving to a different city
- retraining into another industry
- setting up as self-employed
- travelling the world.

It can feel like a lonely process, but it's good to talk through options with other people, particularly if they've been through redundancy in the past. Just listening to other people's stories can give you ideas and show you that there is not one single solution.

A word about self-employment

In production many people operate as sole traders. Setting up as self-employed doesn't suit everyone, but if you're thinking of taking this route BECTU runs courses specifically designed for people going through redundancy and setting up on their own. This covers everything from tax returns to invoicing and how to think like a business.

Useful resources:

www.bectu.org.uk/training-development

5 Plan your job searching

Looking for a job is a job in itself. Treat it like a military campaign!

Find a space at home that can be your campaign HQ. Organise your job applications into folders. Get your CVs and online profiles in order.

Don't forget to check your social media. If you apply for a job assume they'll Google you or look for you on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Delete anything that's contentious or embarrassing.

Allocate times of the day or week for job hunting and related activities such as research or re-training. Keep these separate from other parts of your life. Make sure you give yourself "time off" from job hunting.

Focus your search

It's important to have some focus when job hunting. Don't panic and take the first thing you stumble across. Think about your long term goals and look for things that support you in reaching them.

Think laterally

Always come back to your skills and interests when identifying jobs you might go for. Skills you may have developed in one job might be equally useful in a different area, even where the job appears to be very different.

For example...

A very experienced radio producer going through redundancy might consider themselves to be only suited to working for a radio station. But the skills of radio production are very suited to other audio work. Some radio production staff have gone on to work on audio descriptions for museums and art galleries where their story-telling and audio expertise are hugely valued.

Consider jobs you can grow into

When reading a job ad it's easy to convince yourself you haven't got the right skills. In fact people often get jobs where they've been able to demonstrate that they have some of the required skills already, and can grow into the others. Don't limit yourself unnecessarily.

Keep your eyes and ears open

Many jobs are never advertised, so make sure you get out and meet people who might tip you off about opportunities. These might be friends and acquaintances who work in the same industry as you. Or you might meet new contacts by going to festivals, conferences, events or training courses. Listen carefully to what people say about where the jobs are.

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Organisations that can help you keep in the loop include:

www.creativeskillset.org
www.wftv.org.uk
www.mediaparents.co.uk
www.bectu.org.uk
www.cultcymru.org
www.nujtrainingwales.org
www.nujscotland.org.uk
www.feustraining.org

5 Don't ignore the finances

For many it's the financial changes that bring the biggest concern. The best way to deal with money worries is to look them in the eye.

The first step is to examine your spending habits and be aware of where your money is going. A spending diary is a great way to grapple with this. Just jot down everything you spend for a few weeks so that you can spot areas where you might be wasting money.

It's helpful to work out what your personal life costs you on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. You can then look at all savings, redundancy pay and any other sources of income and work out how long you can cover costs before earning again.

If you get a redundancy payment, think carefully about what you do with it. It might be important to keep it in an account that you can access easily until you're earning again. If you're not sure, talk to a qualified financial advisor, particularly if your payment is large.

You'll also need to give yourself a job-hunting budget. It needn't be much, but it can cover travel to interviews, travel and drink money for networking, and maybe some training.

Don't ignore benefits

There may be some state benefits you are due because you've gone through redundancy. The most obvious one is jobseekers allowance (JSA). It's available if you've been working for a while (and therefore making National Insurance contributions), and are then made redundant. And it's usually not means tested in these circumstances. It's not a huge amount of money, but



it's certainly better than nothing. Remember that JSA can't be back-dated, so start sorting it out before your job closes.

If your income goes down as a result of losing your job you may be eligible for tax credits, particularly if you have children. Sites like entitledto.co.uk and Citizens Advice are there to help you find out what you're due.

In some parts of the UK you may also have local support to get back in to work. For example if you live in Wales the Welsh Assembly funds training and support for people going through redundancy

Useful resources:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits
www.entitledto.co.uk
www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement
www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance
www.careerswales.com/en/jobs-and-training/unemployment-and-redundancy/coping-with-redundancy/
www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk

6 Stay positive

It's rare that people are successful every time they apply for a job. Don't take it personally if you are unsuccessful at first. Try to find out why you weren't successful (don't make assumptions) and then quickly move on to focus on the next opportunity.

It's vital to keep your spirits up through this process. Change can be stressful, even when you're generally up for it. Here are some ways of boosting your morale:

- Regular sleep and regular meal times will help your body and mind feel strong.
- Set up a support group of friends, and meet regularly for a chat and a laugh.
- Put time aside to continue with hobbies and non-work related activities.
- Get physical! A bit of exercise goes a long way to improving your mood, whether it's swimming, cycling, running, jogging or walking.
- Consider volunteering for a local charity. It helps you keep to a routine, gets you out of the house and keeps you in touch with other people. It also looks good on a CV and LinkedIn.

If you're finding it's all getting you down, don't keep it bottled up. Talk to a friend or family-member. You'll also get a sympathetic ear from your GP.

Staying positive is perfectly possible with the support of friends and family, as well as the organisations we've listed here. Above all, keep focused on the future and the exciting opportunities that are out there waiting for you.

Written by David Thomas who has worked in production and training for more than 30 years and has been made redundant twice! David runs Beyond Redundancy courses for people starting out in self-employment. www.bectu.org.uk/training-development

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