



# Focus on PD in uncertain economy

Never stop networking, building your brand even when times are tough

The price of oil has fallen below \$30 a barrel and the Canadian dollar dipped below \$0.70 US. This is the lowest these two economic markers have been in more than 13 years. The Canadian economy is stagnant and job losses are mounting. The oil industry — and the safety professionals whose work was in support of it — has been hit hard. Employers in many indirect industries are also facing increased financial pressures.

Employed or not in uncertain times — and really in any economic situation — there are a number of things you can do to stay focused on your career and protect your job. According to Randall Hanson, founder of Quintessential Careers, the following four techniques are helpful hints for building your brand and overall employability.

## GET OUT THERE AND NETWORK

The grapevine is always transmitting information about jobs and prospects. When times are good, people turn down the volume on the grapevine or they tune it out altogether. Now is the time to turn up the volume. Networking is one of the fundamental rules of career development. You should never stop growing and expanding your network of contacts. Many folks think that networking is only for when you're actively job-hunting or about to be actively job-hunting. The truth is once you start networking, you should never stop.

During times when it's not "what you know" but "who you know," your network may be the main source of job opportunities. Now is the time to expand your association network reach and look for new ways to connect with allied professionals.

Besides keeping in regular touch with your network, you should also be looking for ways to build your network, such as by attending trade shows or conferences and mingling.

It is imperative these days to have an online professional network on LinkedIn. The time to do this is before you are looking for a job. Building a reasonable network that you will be able to make use of when job-hunting could take you a year. All too often people begin to reach out through LinkedIn when their job status has been changed to "Looking for a new career opportunity." The time is now for developing this network.

## KEEP YOUR RESUMÉS READY

This may sound obvious but at no time in your career — except for when

you are about to retire — should your resumés be out-of-date. That's right your resumés — plural. What you really need is a current framework for your resumé that lists all of your basic accomplishments such as university or college education, professional accreditations or certifications and work experience. Make sure you list specific skills and attributes using general industry language highlighting your transferrable skills.

This framework resumé can then be modified, just-in-time, to fit any situation, employer or opportunity. It may sound like more work to use this strategy but it will ensure your resumé gets customized to the opportunity — which may be just what you need to catch a prospective employer's eye.

If it's been a while since you've updated your resumé, get to it now.

## PRIORITIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In today's economy, lifelong learners have the greatest opportunities and their educational accomplishments are most up-to-date. Many of your educational accomplishments of yesterday have a "best before date." I don't mean an undergraduate or advanced university degree, rather many of the ongoing professional development courses you have taken.

A one-day course in business communication taken 10 years ago has little currency today. From universities and colleges to associations and industry bodies, there is a wide range of professional development opportunities available.

Continuing education is a basic requirement in an emerging field like safety, which is constantly changing. Professional development is truly vital to your professional growth and success — and not just for trying to save this job, but for future jobs as well.

## BUILD YOUR BRAND

Personal brand development may be a somewhat foreign concept to many. Your brand is your identifiable trademark and is a reflection of the impact you have had on your profession as defined by the professional community. Ideally, you have already been implementing a conscious brand development strategy well before you need a new job. A brand development strategy is needed to make you distinctive and hopefully indispensable. If the idea of brand development is new to you, it's time to take action.

Your goal in building a brand has two major objectives. You want to be seen as the go-to person for vital projects and you want to carefully (and tactfully) showcase your accomplishments

to ensure management and the rest of your profession understand your value to the organization. Be proactive in accepting work assignments rather than simply doing your job. Be ready to start the conversation about new and important projects with your boss. Be the first to volunteer when the organization seeks people for new assignments, task forces, cross-functional teams — especially for situations in which the result could be an increased revenue stream or substantial cost-savings for the organization. Don't be afraid to take on more work. Hard work is part of the brand-building process.

Brand development doesn't just happen at work. Seek out volunteer opportunities in the safety community around you. Action is noticed and rewarded. There are numerous volunteer opportunities to get involved, make a difference and have your name stand out in the crowd.

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