

Formula for Keeping Your Job While Others Are Losing Theirs

By Anne M. Obarski

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It's a plain fact. Many people you and I know have lost their jobs. In many cases it wasn't job performance but merely a result of a company restructuring. For some of those people it has been a devastating experience. For others, it has been a welcome relief from stress. And still for others, it has come as an early retirement option, a time to finally enjoy life.

But the media has recently shared with us that even the baby boomers are probably going to continue working, partially because of a desire to stay busy as well as to supplement finances! The formula for retaining your current position or finding a new one is all in how you package yourself.

Your Package!

The Bow! What attracts attention?

Silly as it may seem, most people are attracted to a beautiful package by the bow! Shiny, glittery, soft and satiny, bright or pastel, they all have the same thing in common, they grab attention. The same goes for your "image". You have less than 5 seconds to make the first impression. What is it that the other person sees?

Businesses have allowed casual dress to become the norm rather than the exception. Unfortunately, some employees have taken that to mean anything I would wear to wash my car in. Not only does it give the wrong message to the customer and fellow employees, it says I don't really have much respect for the job I do or the place I work. Want to be noticed and keep your job? The answer is to look neat, clean and professional.

The Wrapping Paper and the Box - The covering and the support!

Your voice is like the wrapping paper of a package. It is unique and it surrounds the person you are speaking with. What does your voice sound like? Is it deep or high pitched? Do you speak fast or slow? Is it pleasant to listen to?

Listen to your voice mail messages. Do you like the sound? Does it sound like the voice of someone you would like to call back? Does the message sound clear and make sense? Try the following techniques to improve your voice quality.

1. Use full chest breathing. Place your hands on your stomach, take in a deep breath and don't raise your shoulders. Now slowly blow that breathe out. Many of us use shallow breathing and don't support our voices. If you take in a deep breath before you start speaking your voice will have

a fuller tone and you will sound more expressive. Try that technique when you answer a phone. Take a deep breath first and then say "hello" with a positive sound in your voice. You should certainly hear the difference.

2. Use voice inflection. Try what I call, "news anchor" speaking. Work on creating "colorful" speech patterns. Monotone voices are very boring. Think about how you would read a child's bedtime story. You wouldn't read every word the same; you would give life to the story. This is critical in conversational speech.

Try it when you leave your next voice mail message. This is the easiest place to practice and the quickest way to listen to it and re-do it until you are satisfied.

The Gift - Valuable!

What is that you can do that is different than anyone else? How do you do that? Do others know that you do it? Are you invaluable? Are you always a resource of good information? Are you the one people come to for advice or counseling?

If so, you are probably invaluable to the company and those you work with. If not, how do you achieve that?

1. Always dress like the job you would like to have not the job you have. This shows attention to detail and pride in you. Invest in a good hair stylist and manicurist both men and women alike. Find a good tailor and always have your shoes polished, as they are one of the first things that people notice. Carry a good wallet or handbag as well as a good leather briefcase and a good pen or pencil. Facial hair can age you and who really wants to look older? Update your wardrobe even if it is just with a few new colors and stick to basics in suits, dresses and outerwear. If you haven't worn an item in over a year and it is still in your closet, get over it, and get rid of it.

2. Be well read. Read news magazines as well as unusual magazines. My current favorite is Business 2.0. But I also like travel magazines. Look for interesting articles you can refer to in a conversation that proves you are well-rounded in business but you also enjoy a life outside of work.

3. Learn how to network. Become involved in other organizations outside of work and offer to take on a position of leadership. This will open your eyes to the internal workings of other organizations. You will use skills you never knew you had and you will meet new and interesting people. Never go anywhere without a business card and don't forget to ask people for theirs. Memorize the book, "Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty" by Harvey Mackay, and give this book as a graduation gift to every college student you know. His principles are the foundation of how everyone needs to live their daily life to stay employed and to help others get employment.

4. Use good manners. Sounds like a cliché? I guarantee you that it will set you apart from others. Purchase unusual stationary and write "hand-written" notes to friends and clients on a regular basis. Thank people for the small things they have done for you or someone else. Just drop a note to say you were thinking of them or that you were concerned about something in their personal life and that you would be there for them. Send a bouquet of flowers or something homemade to an employee or co-worker. Make it personal and make it special. These ideas are not new, we have just gotten so far away from practicing them. If you do these on a consistent basis, people will remember you for your sincerity and thoughtfulness.

You now have the formula for creating the "gift" that when delivered is noticed, appreciated and

valued. This gift is one that employers will notice and not want to lose to their competition. It is one they would like to have more of and is certainly not one that is going to show up at the return desk!

Anne M. Obarski is the "Eye on Retail Performance". She is an author, professional speaker, retail consultant and Executive Director of Merchandise Concepts. Anne works with companies who are performance, profit and people focused and she helps leaders see their businesses through their customers' eyes. Anne's mystery shoppers have secretly "snooped" over 2000 stores searching for excellence in customer service. Reach Anne at <http://www.merchandiseconcepts.com> or <mailto:anne@merchandiseconcepts.com>

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