

Don't Ever Let Them Keep You Down: How to Survive and Thrive After a Layoff

Alexa K. Apallas, Senior Content Designer, Google



Why I'm Speaking

I'm here to offer a message of hope and resilience to anyone who has been laid off or fears being laid off in These Uncertain Times.

I'll share what to do right now, what to do immediately if you are laid off, and how to keep moving forward, even if you feel like your life will never be the same.

Welcome to the Worst 12 Months of My Life

I started at PayPal as a contractor in September 2016

In May 2017, I was hired as a full-time senior content designer

I was promoted from an individual contributor all the way to director of content design for merchant services

My annual reviews were always positive

And then, after 8 years, I was unceremoniously shown the door

It only got worse from there

I experienced debilitating anxiety and depression

A loss of self-worth

A lack of desire to even try anymore

And I was lucky—I found a new role after only 3 months

Feeling hopeless or like life has no purpose after being laid off is very common.

Here's what content strategist Rebecca Harper had to say about her layoff:



After being laid off in December 2024, I felt a sense of purposelessness. Despite my best efforts, I had come to define myself and my value to the world in terms of what I did for a living. Without a job, who was I?

How I Coped

From healthy habits to...less healthy habits

Strength training

Outdoor walks

Reading novels

Ativan (as prescribed by a doctor)

Wine

Look Out for the Signs

In hindsight, the signs were there

I should have known

I could have been more prepared

Sign #1

You get a new manager and a new VP

Sign #2

You're left out of key decisions

Sign #3

Your senior colleagues start disappearing

Sign #4

Your new manager stops responding to you

What I Wish I'd Known

Create a brag book of your work

Save it on your PERSONAL computer



Image created with Google's Nano Banana

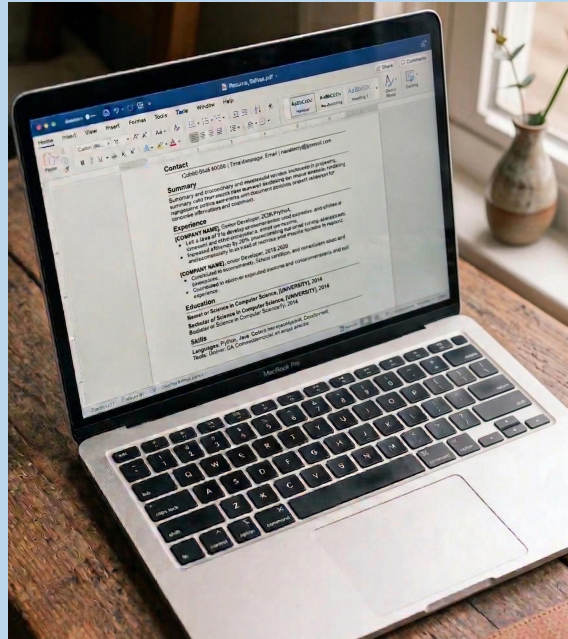
Connect with your colleagues on LinkedIn

**Be proactive about asking for
recommendations while you're still employed**

The LinkedIn logo, consisting of the word "LinkedIn" in a blue sans-serif font, with the "in" part enclosed in a blue square.

Keep your resume up to date

Refresh it after every major project completion and career accomplishment



Be prepared to be ghosted by your former colleagues...at least for a little while



Image created with Google's Nano Banana

Meanwhile...

A health issue for women of a certain age

I couldn't think. I couldn't make decisions. I felt like my brain was broken. I was either irritable or weepy almost all the time.

What was going on?

What to Do (And What Not to Do) After You're Laid Off

Don't feel pressured into signing any paperwork right away

You don't have to take any action on paperwork that day, or even the next day

Do file for unemployment benefits immediately

Yes, even if you got a severance package. You paid into the system...now get something back!

Don't surround yourself with energy vampires

Support groups can be helpful.

But be wary of falling into a pit of despair and self-pity.

Do be circumspect in what you say, and what you post

Severance packages often contain a non-disparagement clause.

If you don't have anything nice to say about your past employer, don't say anything at all...ESPECIALLY on social media.

Don't start your job search while you're still grieving

If you're feeling sad and angry, you won't interview well.

Ask me how I know.

Do put in some effort

Look good, feel better!



Images created with Google's Nano Banana

Don't spend ALL your time looking for a job

Pursue other skills and interests, or just go outside. Your mental health will thank you.



What Made Me Hireable

Adjusted expectations

I quickly realized that there weren't a lot of director-level or even manager-level roles available. So, I decided to pivot back to being an individual contributor.

Critical thinking skills

In my presentation to Google, I didn't just show what I had written. I explained my thought process.

Connections (and an open mind)

I saw that one of my former managers was hiring for a role at YouTube, and I reached out to her directly.

A positive and kind attitude

Being pleasant to work with can go a long way when it's backed up by talent.

A New Job Won't Fix Everything

Layoffs are traumatic

You might be numb for a while



Image created with Google's Nano Banana

The battery story (a glimmer of hope)



Image created with Google's Nano Banana

Thriving Once More



Thank you!

Alexa K. Apallas

alexa@alexakapallas.com

www.alexakapallas.com

www.linkedin.com/in/alexakapallas

