



CAREER VISION

Job Security Is Out -- Increasing Your Employability Is In

The unemployment rate was 6.1 percent in May, or 9 million unemployed persons. In addition, 1.4 million persons were marginally attached to the labor force. These are individuals who wanted and were available to work and had looked for a job sometime in the prior 12 months.
U.S. Department of Labor, May 2003

Historically, unemployment was often associated with performance issues. That is no longer true. How many people over the past year do you know who were looking for work because they were poor performers? Job loss today is more often the result of economic changes that impact an industry or a specific business rather than an individual's record of performance. Compounding the situation is the interdependency of so many companies and the startling speed at which such far-reaching employment changes occur. If we aren't focused, we may miss the signals of coming change. The days of taking employment for granted are gone. This sense of insecurity has added a new level of stress for many people. Job security in the 21st Century will depend on you and how you support and manage your career. For many people, it is a new responsibility to take steps to ensure their current and future employability.

Career Vision recommends three inter-related practices to manage your career. The first is an obvious, but underestimated one.

1. **Know yourself.** Being able to identify and talk about your abilities, what provides meaning for you, and what types of topics interest you are now critical skills. Knowing the answers to these questions and others offers an excellent baseline of information to confidently guide your career choices.

2. **Create your career vision.** We all know that organizations and businesses have mission and vision statements to keep them focused on what they want to achieve. The second Career Vision best practice supports the creation of your own career vision. Do you have a mental picture of what type of work you enjoy doing, what environments you prefer, and how you would like to make a meaningful contribution? Establishing an image and way of describing what you are looking for in your current or future role allows you to set clearer goals and to discover the work settings that will offer you the greatest satisfaction. Having a career vision makes it easier for you to communicate what you are looking for to others who can help you find it. This essential, evaluative process sets the stage to assess your level of fit for different work options. We are more successful moving toward defined goals. Revisiting your career vision annually and modifying it as situations or priorities change is an important strategy to keep it relevant.

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3. **Develop a career action plan.** The third Career Vision practice is learning how to anticipate and manage transitions or change. This is a skill set that once mastered, serves to support all future career transitions. Having a career action plan helps you see opportunities and prevent problems. It is a discipline that encourages you to monitor your needs in the context of your organization's and industry's trends, and identify what new knowledge and skills you will need to be an effective contributor in the future. The development of ongoing career management strategies is an important contributor to success, satisfaction and your own job security.

Knowing yourself, creating and communicating an evolving career vision, and adapting quickly to change are the key practices to maintaining employability in the 21st Century workplace.

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