

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

March 2010

This Month's Message:

The Health Risks of Layoff.

Paths Forward

- **Need Career Coaching?**
- **Tired of boring meetings??**

Resources

To subscribe a friend, colleague or family member to this free newsletter - email their address to drpaul@drpaulpowers.com with the subject line "send LifeMap"

NEWS: The 2010 edition of Powers & Co.'s Annual Retirement Planning / Retirement Living Survey will continue to be available on my website (www.drpaulpowers.com) through March. The results will be in the April edition of LifeMap. Thank you for the 404 responses thus far.

The Health Risks of Layoff.

Do you believe in coincidence? A 56-year-old millwright collapses at home and is pronounced dead at the hospital. A 42-year-old forklift operator starts having chest pains caused by a heart attack but is saved by surgeons inserting three stents. A few weeks later a 55 year old crane operator is found dead of a heart attack by his wife. What did these three have in common other than having heart attacks within weeks of each other? They were male, they were middle-aged, they were in relatively good health, they all

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worked at the same western New York steel mill - until they were all laid off three weeks before the first died.

My scientific training informs me that three anecdotal cases do not prove a thesis especially one as provocative as "layoffs cause heart attacks". But common sense and curiosity motivated me to look further into this topic and what I found is cause for alarm - and action.

Research has long indicated that the loss of a job is a major life stressor. It has also long been known that stress is a contributing factor in heart disease. But more recent research by epidemiologists at Yale University in 2006 found that layoffs more than doubled the risk of heart attack and stroke among older workers. Just last year a study at the State University of New York at Albany reported that those who lost a job faced a higher probability of developing stress-related problems such as diabetes, arthritis, or psychiatric issues - by 83%! There is even more grim news in a study conducted by a Columbia University economist and a director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago who evaluated earnings data and death records in Pennsylvania during the early 1980's recession. They found that death rates of high-seniority male workers increased 50% to an incredible 100% in the year after a job loss depending on the worker's age. So someone who lost his job at 40 shortened his life expectancy by 12-18 months. When these data were revisited 20 years later there was still an increased death rate of 10% to 15%.

I predict that we will see an increasing number of these kinds of studies that explore the relationship between job loss and major health problems. But, even at this stage, I feel comfortable saying that the trauma of losing a job can cause profound physical and emotional consequences. But organizational restructuring, plant relocations or closings and layoffs are facts of modern business life even in a boom economy. So what is there to do other than hope for the best or wring our hands in worry? Here are some ideas.

Paths Forward

Acknowledge This Reality. Corporate managers and especially those in human resources departments need to become familiar with and discuss the health risks inherent in layoffs as such events are being planned. Shareholders too share responsibility here and this issue can and should be raised at shareholder meetings. While offering outplacement / career coaching help is a most useful thing to do it does not offload the ultimate responsibility for events onto the OP firm. With this reality in mind there may be a stronger push for pay cuts, furloughs, job sharing, retraining, cross training and other measures that could reduce the size of a proposed layoff or even avoid the need for jobs to be eliminated. When offered the option of giving something up instead of losing colleagues, employees usually chose the altruistic option.

Own Your Own Health Care. If you are caught up in a layoff get to your physician immediately. Share this news as well as any concerns you may have about the toll it might

take on your health. Ask to be assessed for health risks. Ask for an appropriate exercise regimen. If you are still smoking get into a cessation program. Try to see this as an opportunity to turn a short-term negative into a long-term health positive. If you're unable to do this maybe get into some counseling. In the event of a layoff you are entitled to certain health care benefits by law (e.g. COBRA) be sure that you are completely aware of what those benefits are, for how long they are available and use them. Determine what other (e.g. state) health care programs are available after your COBRA period runs out.

Watch for Lifestyle Changes. Stress - in this case the stress caused by a job loss can cause unhealthy lifestyle changes. More TV watching can cause increased unhealthy snacking. Without a regular daily schedule exercise routines can be thrown off or avoided. Job loss has been tied to increased smoking as well as increased risk of relapse for former smokers. Getting down about the results of your job search can lead to depression. Cocktail hours that start at 5 PM on the dot, then 4:45, then 4:30 . . . well, you catch my drift. It is known that stress generates tiny biochemical responses in your body that trigger heart attacks. Unhealthy lifestyle changes and the stress they engender are your enemy and you need to be on the lookout for them.

Be a Good Friend. In modern business life it is almost a certainty that one day you will be laid off. Your family will help, your professional network will help, your career coach will help but the support of a true friend is like no other. He or she will let you vent, whine, grouse, complain, play the blame game and then, with a smile and a laugh, kick you in the pants to get you up and moving. This is a great antidote to the unhealthy aspects of a job loss. And the best way to have a good friend is to be a good friend. More than once I have sat at my dining room table with a just-laid off friend to do some career strategizing. Most have reciprocated during my tough times though some have not. As things go in this life, those are great odds. So let me reiterate - the time to build your friendships is now. (For more on this go to www.drpaulpowers.com, click on LifeMap Archive, open 1/13/09 *Helping A Laid Off Spouse or Friend.*)

Strive for Work / Life Balance. If you actively try to keep work and career in some kind of perspective or balance with the other parts of your life the odds are that in the event of a job loss you will have more resources to call upon in your distress. Long-time members of the LifeMap community know that striving toward a more enjoyable and rewarding work / life balance is one of the central themes of my life's work. As a psychologist who does executive and career coaching and writes career books I think its obvious how much I value the role that work plays in a meaningful life. But many of us are at risk of letting work over-shadow the other important and essential elements of a full life. They are: family, friends, physical, emotional and spiritual health, fiscal responsibility, social integration and saving some time just for yourself. This kind of balance only occurs in rare interludes or moments of self-actualization but as you notice in the heading of this section it is the striving towards

balance that matters. To get a better handle on this approach or to refresh your understanding of it go to www.drpaulpowers.com, click on LifeMap Archive, open 2/21/06 *LifeSpace Planning & Development*.

A personal note: For the last 30 years I have always been on the lookout for people who love their jobs. At first it was so I could learn the secrets of their success for myself. Later, it was to help me in my research for my book *Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding A Job You Love*. Since then it has been an ongoing interest (not only for a future edition of *Love Your Job!*) but also to share their joy of a meaningful vocation. Two weeks before her recent death I had the opportunity to meet and talk with veteran orca trainer Dawn Brancheau at SeaWorld in Orlando, Florida. It is hard to comprehend that such an expressive, committed, and intelligent young woman is gone. She truly loved her job and the creatures she worked with - and from my observation of her interaction with Tilikum - it appeared that the affection was mutual. I can only assume that what happened was a terrible, tragic accident. Reasonable people can disagree about the use of animals for entertainment even though it may raise the awareness of the need for conservation of the natural world in which we live. But, in any event, please join me in sending Dawn's family, friends and colleagues our condolences and our prayers.

LifeMap is about sharing the joy of the good days at work, acknowledging the pain of the bad days at work and being there with each other for both.

· Need Career Coaching?

The best investment you can make is in your career, your future and yourself.

email drpaul@drpaulpowers.com

· Tired of boring meetings??

Have Dr. Paul speak at your next off-site meeting or conference. Fast-moving, practical, motivating presentations from an acknowledged leader in the field of career and personal success.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/speakingschedule.html>

Resources

· ***Are you or someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?***

The best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. Revised Edition [Winning Job Interviews](#) by Dr. Paul Powers.

In this easy-to-follow, step-by-step book, Dr. Paul Powers demystifies job interviewing, explains why the process actually favors the job hunter, and shows how you can dramatically improve your interview skills.

Packed with solid, practical information and laced with both humor and "kick in the pants" motivation, *Winning Job Interviews* is the book you wished you had before your last

interview... and is mandatory preparation for your next one!

- Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? Order your copy of [Love Your Job!](#) *Loving the Job You Have, Finding A Job You Love* by Dr. Paul.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksarticles.html>

Have an issue or question you'd like Dr. Paul to address in a future edition? Send an email to the email address list below.

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Sincerely,

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