



FEATURE



Protecting Yourself From Day One At Work

[By Linda Lopeke]

For generations, parents have dedicated their lives, resources, and wages to raising and educating children who are expected to one day go forth and get jobs. And, for most of us, having a job is not just a major goal in life but an absolute economic necessity. In fact, many people are working at more than one job just to remain self-sufficient!

Accepting a job and entering the workforce is one of the most significant (and possibly life-enhancing) experiences you will ever have. For some men and women, the physical, intellectual, and emotional commitment made to working is even stronger than that made to partnering and/or parenting. Who doesn't know of someone who sacrificed health or personal and family relationships on the altar of an employer?

Job Loss-Are You at Risk?

Yet, everybody knows somebody who went to work in the morning thinking the day would be just like any other day, only to find out that it was all over. End of job. Just like that. If it hasn't happened to you yet, you may be one of thousands who report for work every day fearing it might actually happen someday. And in this day and age, you will experience it at some point in your career, and perhaps even more than once. You need to be mentally and physically prepared for that!

Unfortunately, no one is safe. People are losing jobs in droves. Faster than they are being created. There is a labor surplus for the most part. Sometimes, people don't even know why they lost their jobs. In the age of job insecurity, the only people who can count on paychecks are those who are self-employed and out there creating their own

work! Sad, perhaps, but true! That's why it's more important than ever that you take control of your career from that very first day on the job!

Every working person needs to set up a personal employment file day one on the job. Do not let your first day at work end without creating this critical file! This applies to employees, contractors, and consultants alike. And to every job you'll ever have.

In this file, you keep your employment offer (or contract if you are an independent), your job description, and copies of any forms you complete for Human Resources (e.g., benefits and tax elections, other employment records). You should also keep the information HR provides you with about the company and anything your boss shares about the department you'll be working in and the team you'll be working with (for example, organization charts, mission and values statements, project or assignment lists, etc.).

Over time, you will add other pieces of information to the file such as your annual performance plan, copies of your reviews, and copies of praise and testimonials you receive from others over the course of your employment. Also, put in it any communications from the employer describing changes to your job or changes

to your benefits plans and programs, as well as copies of any key correspondence you have with your boss. Forward any electronic documentation of the above to your personal email address.

Keep Your File at Home!

This file is critical to your future, whether or not you lose your job. Keep your employment file at home and NOT in your desk at the office. Here's why:

1. Your offer letter outlines the terms of your employment contract. Never leave its terms to memory.
2. Your job description explains what you have to do to live up to the terms of that employment contract. If you don't have a formal job description, send your boss an email with the key duties and responsibilities you believe you have and ask for confirmation. Then put both in your personal file.

(This also helps you keep your resume accurately updated. You should always have a current version that includes the job you are doing now on hand; you should never ever have to create a resume when you decide to look for another job. Updating your resume should always be something you make a priority after starting a new job-you



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never know when opportunity will present itself.)

3. Your job could end tomorrow morning without warning. Don't ever make the mistake of believing it couldn't happen to you! If you are escorted from the building the same day, as many people are, you will not be permitted to take your employment folder with you, nor will you be able to get your hands on the many critical documents you may need for future reference.

No one will ever care about your career more than you do. Do this for yourself and you will always have what you need to move forward

should your career come to an unexpected end one day. You'll never regret taking the time to create your own employment file.



About the Author

Internationally renowned business strategist, über-mentor, and MBA Professor Linda M. Lopeke is the creator of SmartStart virtual

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