



GETTING REAL ABOUT RETRENCHMENT

It's not the end of the world, although it might seem that way. Retrenchment is an unfortunate consequence of tough economic times, where companies are challenged to remain profitable, and where their survival into the future is under threat. "It's easy to take it personally", says **Colleen Taljaard, HR Manager at Glacier by Sanlam**, "but retrenchment is a reality faced by many, sometimes even more than once." She explains that although this process is painful and takes its toll on a person's emotional, psychological and financial well-being, it's important to keep moving forward. She presents her checklist of things to do to keep a cool head and that can help you pull through this difficult time.

1. Talk to your family.

While the retrenchment process is underway, you will find yourself having a series of difficult conversations, and one of the hardest would be with your family. You may have feelings of failure or that you have let them down but remember you didn't do anything wrong. Being retrenched is not your fault. The sooner you accept this, the sooner you can realise the new possibilities that await you. Your family will probably be the best support system during this stressful time. Trust them and be truthful. If the company you are currently working for has an Employee Assistance Programme, make use of the free services they offer to support you during this challenging time.

2. Don't overlook redeployment.

In the consultation stage you will be made aware of the retrenchment process, possible options and severance pay etc. Ensure that you understand these in detail and ask all the questions you may have up front. The Labour Relations Act guides in terms of the process and steps to be taken to ensure a fair process. In large companies or organisations, redeployment to another division is often a possibility. Speak to the HR practitioner

handling the retrenchment process for a list of the roles that are possibly available and that interest you. Be open to the possibility of taking a pay-cut or that the new role may not be exactly in line with your current or previous roles. Having a lower paying job is better than no job at all. Also, new responsibilities will add to your experience when entering the job market.

3. Get your CV ready to be shortlisted.

You don't need to consult a CV writer, but your CV does need to be polished and aligned with the jobs you are applying for. "Your profile is actually more important than your CV", says Colleen. At the age of 45, companies expect you to be experienced, but what are your special skills? What value do you add that will set you apart from the hundreds of other CVs that cross a recruiter's desk? Keep your CV short and highlight the relevant areas as it pertains to the job specification of the role you are applying for.

4. Join LinkedIn.

Recruiters scour the internet for online profiles that fit the roles they are trying to fill and LinkedIn is one of the key social media platforms that they use. Write a strong

profile that highlights your experience and talents. Be confident about your skills. You have them, now you need to sell them. Also, a good, professional head-and-shoulders profile photograph is essential.

5. Register on as many job sites as you possibly can.

You'd be amazed how many sites exist that advertise new jobs. Be careful of scams though, especially for jobs being offered abroad. Don't hand over any information like bank accounts and copies of your ID until you are absolutely sure that the job is real and the opportunity has been presented to you in the form of a signed contract from a real person working in a real company.

6. Attach yourself (digitally speaking) to the companies you would like to work for.

Often these companies post their vacancies online or offer an opportunity for their followers to register as prospective candidates and receive job alerts.

7. Keep busy.

Finding a job that's right for you, in the current labour market, is not a quick process. Sharpen your current skills or learn some new ones. Short online courses offered in your field are something to consider.

8. Create your own work.

While you're looking for something permanent, freelance work is definitely something to consider. This could happen either as a work-from-home situation, or two or three-month stints in office environments. Freelance or temporary work proves to a prospective

employer that you didn't spend an extended period doing nothing, and that you were prepared to do whatever was necessary to stay working and stay relevant.

9. Catch up on your admin.

You've put off renewing your car licence for a while or signing that important document at the bank. Now is the time to do just that. Once you start working full-time again, it will be difficult to spend three hours in a Home Affairs queue on a workday. As soon as you are able to, sign up with the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) if your employer contributed to the Fund. Now is also the time to appoint a financial planner if you don't have one. There may be decisions that you need to make regarding your pension fund, and you don't want to make any mistakes. Speak to your insurance provider, banker or creditor if you foresee that meeting your payment obligations is going to be difficult. Whatever you do, speak up.

10. Research, research, research.

Write your own dream job spec in the company that you wish to work for. Now research what it will take to make this a reality. Before an interview, get to know the company that's interviewing you. Do your homework. Arrive prepared. Your level of preparedness for the job interview or the aptitude assessment is directly proportionate to how badly you want the job. Your future, largely, really is in your hands.

Above all, believe in yourself, your purpose and stay connected - to your family, friends and community, in your personal and professional capacity.

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