

## Your #Career : Bulletproof Your Position: 10 Tips For Improving Job Security... The Key to Job Survival is to Find Ways to Make yourself a More Valuable Employee, So you Stand Out From the Crowd.

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Sometimes, coming to work each day and doing your job isn't enough to protect you from being let go due to **"downsizing."** The key to job survival is to find ways to make yourself a more valuable employee, so you stand out from the crowd.



**Question:** I've worked in the same job for several years, but there are rumors that our company will be laying off employees later this year to cut expenses. Is there anything I can start doing, right now, to help make sure I won't be one of the employees laid off?

**Answer:** Most employment in the U.S. is "at-will," which means an employee can be dismissed by their employer for any reason and without warning. That means the best way to decrease the odds of your employment being terminated is to create a strong relationship with your manager and to clearly demonstrate your value to the company (so your boss won't want to lose you). Here's how:

**Understand your manager's goals.** Find out his or her objectives and priorities. What keeps your boss up at night? Think about ways you can help achieve these department goals.

**Agree on your goals, objectives and projects.** Meet with your manager to ensure you fully understand and mutually agree on your goals and objectives for the quarter/year as well as all projects for which you'll be responsible. Then track and provide progress updates, asking for help or advice as needed.

**Create a "Goals and Objectives" document.** Take those goals you agreed on with your manager and put them into a simple document where you'll be able to track your progress. Use a simple format, like an Excel spreadsheet, and include column headers such as: ID#, Project Name, Description, Timing (due date), Goal/Objective (whatever it might be), Stretch Goal/Objective (a slightly more challenging goal or objective), and Progress (such as color coding to denote your progress). Use this document during your progress review meetings with your manager.

**Learn your manager's communication style and flex your style to his or hers.** Find out how your manager prefers to interact with you. Do they want weekly, bi-weekly or monthly progress review meetings? Do they want to meet in person or receive email updates and then follow up with you if they have any questions? Adapt *your* communication style to best fit your manager's style.

**Never miss a commitment.** Complete all your projects/assignments on time (and under budget). If you hit an obstacle, "go ugly early" as the old saying goes, by letting your boss know and asking for help.

**Do outstanding work.** You can't do mediocre work – your work needs to be exemplary if you want to stand out. Look for ways you can go above and beyond the daily requirements to demonstrate how you add value to the organization.

**Think of yourself as an "internal consultant."** Be more than just an employee. Consultants are hired to assess a current situation and then create action plans for improvement. They are paid for their expertise and their calm, professional demeanor, especially in times of difficulty. By thinking of yourself as an "internal consultant" you can use this same frame of reference to demonstrate how you add value to your department, to your company and even to your boss.

**Become an expert in something.** People turn to the experts when there are challenges and to solve problems. Look for areas in your business where you can put your skills to use and become an expert. Then, volunteer for projects that will allow you to use these skills and show them off.

**Offer to help coworkers.** Don't wait for someone to approach you. Offer your help to others when it appears they might need it. Don't expect any return favors – help others because you want to, not because you expect something in return. Always play nice with others and learn to flex your style so you can get along with any personality type.

**Improve your skills every year.** Become a more valuable asset by treating yourself like a product that you work on improving, year after year. Define your career aspirations, create a career development plan and then share this information with your boss and ask for his or her help and support.

*Lisa Quast is the author of **Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want. Every Time.***

