

10 Steps to Employment Security - and Securing Your Employment



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Leo A. Wrobel and Sharon M. Wrobel, of b4Ci Inc. and NaSPA, combine their insights with those of Jeff Snyder, president of SecurityRecruiter.com, presenting a "top 10" list of ideas to help you get hired and stay employed in difficult economic times.

It's not hard these days to find someone who has recently lost a job, or is concerned about losing a job. Perhaps that person is you. For many decades, professionals defined themselves by the employer that provided their paycheck. In the past, you may have proudly told someone that you work for AIG or Merrill Lynch Citigroup. As we've recently seen, the size of a company doesn't guarantee that it will survive a troubled economy; the world's largest organizations can crumble as quickly as a startup that isn't properly managed or strategically guided. When that happens, disaster recovery and security professionals take their licks right along with the rest.

Whether you're a contingency planner with concerns for your future employment prospects, or you're trying to sharpen your skills "just in case," you should find some useful insights here. Put to work these suggestions on how to make and keep yourself a marketable commodity, no matter what happens in the economy.

Developing a Portfolio of Value

For nearly 20 years, Jeff Snyder, president of [SecurityRecruiter.com](#) has been reviewing hundreds of technology resumes on a monthly basis first, with a focus on general IT, and more recently focusing on information security disaster recovery, and business continuity. Jeff believes that the companies for which you've worked are far less important in your resume than the personal "portfolio of value" that you can offer potential employer.

What makes you stand out from the crowd? Many elements can distinguish one person from another in the horde of job seekers, marking the difference between success and failure. Jeff suggests these top 10 differentiators that he looks for in choosing candidates:

1. Relationships with specialty recruiters
2. Resume
3. Verbal and written correspondence
4. Personal brand (knowing yourself)
5. Knowing how to present yourself
6. Business and social networks
7. Networking
8. Job boards
9. Ongoing training/certification
10. Saying "thanks"

In the following sections, we'll examine each of Jeff's differentiators and present a specific tip that you can use to help secure your own bottom line

Build a Relationship with a Specialty Recruiter

The best time to look for a job is when you already have a job. The best time to build a relationship with a recruiter is before you need the recruiter's help. If possible, you build relationships with doctors and dentists before you need them to provide emergency care. Don't wait for an employment emergency before locating and getting to know recruiters who specialize in placing professionals who possess your skills

TIP

Knowing the right recruiters could position you to hear about stellar career-buildg job opportunities. If you're gainfully employed at the time, you have the luxury of considering *a career move* rather than *a job change*.

Develop an Incisive RcsuM

A busy executive who receives your rcsuM very likely doesn't have time to read it in depth. Can your rcsuM be scanned quickly? Invest in your rcsuM, honing it to make you stand ou

TIP

Make sure that any recipient of your rcsuM can ascertain instantly who you are, wt you've done well, and how you've added value for your prior employers

Practice Good Skills in Your Verbal and Written Correspondence

Every email message you send and every voicemail message you leave gives its audiene an impression of who you are, how well you write or speak, and the overall quality of your work. This impreion can form long before a potentia employer ever considers your rcsuM. Whether in the body of an email message or the form of written correspondence, make sure that your rcsuM's cover letter uses bite-sized pieces, and it's written well enough to catch the reader's attention. Use your software's spell checker and grammar checke

TIP

A common pet peeve among rcsuM recipients is the use of text-message vernacular in business communications. Expressions such as CUL8R, OMG, and so on make a negative impression. When you're ying to catch the attention of potential employers, sharp communications skills are as important as technical powess. Polish your writing, and reserve text-message lingo for private communications to friends. To do otherwise is the verbal equivalent of wearing flip-flops to a wedding.

Develop a Personal Brand

You are responsible for managing your *personal brand*, which is what Jeff calls those characteristics, traits, and skill that make you unique. It's crucial to show up for an interview knowing who you are what you're passionate about doing, and what value you've created for previous employers. When you really know yurself, as you will when you have developed your personal brand, it wil *affect your future choices* as well as *reflect your former choices*.

TIP

You might think that you can't afford to be choosy when many people are interesten pursuing the same job. But if you land a job that doesn't make you passionate about showing up for work every da you'll be looking for a new job again in the not-too-distant-future. Land a job that energizes you because it aligns well with your passions, and your odds of being employed for a long period of time increase dramatically.

Know How To Present Yourself

Before you arrive for an interview, research that target employer. You won't find e financial figures online for smaller privately held companies. But you'll be able to learn about the company by way of website, press releases, and articles and by the industry company it keeps.

Don't arrive empty-handed. More important than knowing everything there is to know about your target company is your ability to articulate wh *you* are, what you do, and why you're interviewing there. Know what you want in a newb. Be able to articulate how your past accomplishments align well with the needs of ycr prospective new employer. Ask questions that focus on both business and technology

TIP

Employers need *business professionals who understand technology* more often than they need technologists who only understand technology. Show your business savvy by asking strong questions.

Take Advantage of Business and Social Networks

Online networks such as [LinkedIn](#), [Plaxo](#), [Spoke](#), [Facebook](#), and so on can be highly beneficial to a job seeker. Build and manage a network on LinkedIn, for instance, and you can connect yourself to approximately 35 million users worldwide. Build your profiles like keyword-loaded resumes. Get people who have worked with you to write endorsements of your work, for other network members to see.

TIP

Be very cautious when entering information into online networks, especially if you might like to retract it later. Some employers research social and business online networks as part of a background check. We've seen job seekers disqualified because of some online information that a prospective employer found detrimental.

Network Actively

Consider becoming part of industry groups and associations long before you're searching for a job. As previously mentioned, you can be part of virtual groups on LinkedIn or Facebook, for example. The key here is to approach your choice of groups strategically. Know your objective: What value are you looking for in the group? What value can you add to the group? The more you put into a group, and the more you network with its members, the more you'll get out of the group.

TIP

Give help when you can. Then, when you need help, you'll be remembered as a giver.

Don't do all of your networking electronically. Go to meetings, build relationships over the phone, and connect with people in person, so they'll remember you when you need help.

Professional memberships look good on a resume. More importantly, they help with the job search. Virtually all of the best jobs are found through networking with other professionals.

NOTE

The [Networking and Systems Professionals Association](#) (NaSPA) is a great resource to the job seeker. It's not free but at only \$45 a year is almost as good as free. The website contains places right on the front page to post a resume, advertise for positions, and search a database of thousands of jobs. Leo is NaSPA's president; Sharon is an executive editor for its renowned magazine [Technical Support](#); and Jeff is an active author for the organization.

Reconsider Posting on Job Boards

You can search postings on job boards, but think twice before posting your resume there for all to see, as it may not be in your best interest. Why? Jeff has recently encountered several employers who take this stance: *They will not accept a third-party recruiter's referral if the candidate's resume can be found in a major job board's resume database.* By posting your resume on a job board, you could preclude yourself from a recruiter's consideration if their hands are tied by such employers.

TIP

Remember, most of the choicest positions are found through personal networking with other professionals. Using the right recruiter can also foster such efforts, helping you to build a trust relationship with many companies and individuals.

Keep Up Your Training and/or Certifications

Certifications help employers to weed out those who have expertise from those who may not have reached the

appropriate level of professional accomplishment. Certifications alone don't guarantee that one person is more talented than another. However, when employers have a choice between certified and uncertified candidates, there's a psychological comfort in knowing that a job candidate has taken the extra step to become certified in specified areas of subject-matter expertise.

TIP

Technology professionals who want to one day rise above their hands-on technical skills to deal with strategy leadership, and management of others should choose training and certification that is business-oriented rather than technology-oriented. For example, consider project management training, take Dale Carnegie courses, or get involved with Toastmasters public speaking.

Put Your Thanks in Writing

Go out of your way to thank people who take the time to help you. In the past 10 years or so of recruiting, Jeff says that he can think of only a few times when a candidate sent him a handwritten note of thanks. Technology is great in many ways, but sometimes using this old-fashioned technique makes a bigger impression.

Summary

Sharon and Leo thank Jeff for sharing his thoughtful insights. If you like this kind of subject matter, check out [Technical Support](#) and [NaSPA](#), where Jeff will be a regular contributor. In the meantime, drop any of us an email message after you try some of our suggestions in this article. Tell us what worked well and what didn't. Better yet, if you land that choice security or disaster-recovery job, send Jeff a handwritten note of thanks!

NOTE

Portions of this article were adapted from Leo's book [Disaster Recovery for Communications and Critical Infrastructure](#) (Artech House Books, publishing in 2009)

Jeff Snyder is the president of [SecurityRecruiter.com](#), a search firm highly specialized in information security recruiting. Jeff's recruiting career started in 1990 in the general IT recruiting space. His first information security recruiting assignment landed on his desk around 1995. SecurityRecruiter.com provides recruiting services, job placement services, and professional resume-writing services, and is a gateway to various kinds of security certifications and training opportunities.

In addition to his work with his own two companies, [TellLawCom Labs Inc.](#) and [b4Ci, Inc.](#), Leo A. Wrobel is honored to have been [been](#) president of the [Networking and Systems Professionals Association](#) (NaSPA) a not-for-profit company concentrating on the needs of tens of thousands of members since 1986. NaSPA specializes in career development, employment, information technology, and disaster recovery. Contact Leo at 214-888-1300 or email leo@b4ci.com.

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