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## Four ways to safeguard your job in hard times

By Peter Vogt

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In a September 2008 Accenture survey of more than 300 middle managers across the US, 61 percent said their employees are concerned about being let go. Similarly, three out of four respondents in a VitalSmarts poll conducted at the same time said they believe their organizations are likely to go through layoffs in the next 12 months.

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It's no fun feeling like your neck is under a workplace guillotine. But there are some smart steps you can take now to prevent the ax from falling later.

### Do More Than What You're Told

Look around your workplace. What critical tasks are falling through the cracks because a key employee left, for example, or because there's no budget for them?

If you cover even a few of these activities without waiting to be asked, you'll be seen [<http://career-advice.monster.com/job-promotion/women/Four-Ways-to-Get-on-Your-Bosses-Rada/home.aspx>] "as one who takes the initiative and who wants to see the success of the team in hard economic times," says Dustin Weeks, author of *Lessons from a Recovering Worker Bee* [<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/asin/0977898008/monstercom>] and a former investment banking and corporate finance professional.

Communications consultant Jenny Schade remembers working with a corporate communications manager who helped the company's information technology department with its communications needs. "She escaped a massive employee reduction when her IT contacts created a special position for her within their department," she says.

### Show Your Company the Money

It's human nature for organizational leaders to focus more diligently on financial matters when the overall economy is floundering. You need to do the same.

For starters, figure out how you and your work contribute to your organization's bottom line. Have you saved the company money? If so, how much? Conversely, do you bring in money? Again, how much?

"Find a way to measure your value," stresses Schade. "If your contribution to the bottom line isn't obvious to you,

how will it be clear to the leaders determining who stays and who goes?”

Similarly, watch your company-related spending closely. You want to be viewed as someone who treats the firm's money as carefully as you do your own.

“Eat McDonald's on your business trip,” advises Armen Berjikly, CEO of ExperienceProject.com. “You can fine dine later.”

### **Become Your Own PR Rep**

“Dutifully slaving away in a dark corner, avoiding personal interaction in the name of productivity, may backfire when it comes time for management to hand out pink slips,” says publisher Kathryn Marion, founder and president of Real Solutions Press. “It's much easier to let go of the person who comes out of hiding every blue moon to hand in work.”

So while you may not necessarily like the idea, make peace with becoming more visible among your colleagues and tooting your own horn -- at least enough to let your bosses pinpoint you as a doer who gets results. Send your supervisor weekly or biweekly emails briefly summarizing your accomplishments. Or volunteer to lead a key multidepartment committee. In other words, do whatever it takes to be seen (and heard) as someone the organization can't afford to lose.

### **Be the Likeable, Professional Person Everyone Respects**

“Most employees would be shocked to overhear the conversations when managers and human resources are deciding who to lay off,” says etiquette consultant and trainer Jodi Smith.

For example, Smith recently led a four-hour seminar for a corporate client. Fifty of the client's employees participated. When the session was over, the client said to Smith: “I have to lay off five of these people. Can you guess who?” Smith correctly identified four of the five, based on their attire, behaviors, attitudes and participation during her session.

“It truly is the little things that count,” Smith stresses. “If a manager has two employees who both do their jobs well, the manager is going to keep the employee who is easier -- who comes to work on time, is pleasant and is dressed appropriately. It really isn't rocket science.”



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