



Being laid off gave Damon Timoldi an insider's look at a successful job search.

HR Professional Damon Timoldi Seeing The Five O'Clock Club from the Inside

I had been an HR professional for 17 years. As it happened, I ended up being part of a layoff, and I was given Five O'Clock Club outplacement. I'd attended the breakfasts that the Club does for HR people, but I never knew what it was like to attend its weekly meetings for job hunters. I had this notion that a bunch of people would be sitting around a circle, moping and I would have to say, "My name is Damon. I am out of work."

"The Club talks about having fun and a positive attitude."

But when I arrived at my first meeting, **I noticed that half the people had jobs**. I was also impressed that the Club wants you to focus not just on getting a job—to be able to claim that paycheck again—but also to **focus on career development**, which is a lot different than what I always thought. It must have been said a million times at these breakfasts, but it didn't sink in.

There are a few things about The Five O'Clock Club that were different, and that I found really valuable. One is the practicality of a number of things.

As HR professionals, we read résumés—well, in truth, we scan résumés. We have probably helped a lot of friends write their résumés. But when you're unemployed yourself, and start to put together your own résumé, there is an immediate brain freeze. I struggled with this, but I used The Five O'Clock Club book on résumés, and this transformed my approach. You

have to go beyond the job description concept, or just listing duties and responsibilities.

Use bolding and underlining at just the right places to highlight accomplishments. In a number of meetings the interviewer said to me, "I have never seen a résumé like this before. You really brought out what you did and what you have accomplished succinctly." All of the credit goes to the Club's methodology and approach. And there is a whole different approach to writing thank-you letters. Instead you need to **write influencing letters** to reinforce your skills and position yourself powerfully. That was very helpful.

"Even though I'm an HR person, The Five O'Clock Club book on résumés transformed my approach."

The Club also urges everyone to **keep six to ten things in the works at all times, because five of them will fall away through no fault of your own**. This is so important. You hear people say, "I have this one interview lined up. I feel good about it." I had three and four interviews lined up at the same time and they went nowhere. So keeping a lot going is a real practical piece of advice.

That means a lot of work, but **the Club also talks about having fun**. Change can be nerve racking. So there is a constant theme in the materials, the counseling, and the books to have fun. Even when you are going through a dif-

ficult time, it is important to have that positive attitude.

The Club also holds you accountable. You're expected to attend sessions every week, which means you're held accountable by the coach who leads your group. That was really helpful because you can always find excuses not to look for a job. It's winter, it's cold out, I'll wait till the spring. Spring comes, it's warm and I want to enjoy the weather. All of a sudden summer is here, then the holidays are coming—and before you know it, a year goes by and you didn't do anything.

I found that The Five O'Clock Club was extremely practical. It didn't just help me land a job. **I am doing a better job now of managing my career**. In the recession I got a job, and believe it or not, **I got higher pay** than was originally offered. That all had to do with the Club's negotiation tips.

The career management skills I learned I am using right now at my current employer. The Club showed me new insights and methods about job search and career development. I really learned what it's like to be on the employee side, and to utilize the Club's resources.

Damon's small group coach, Chip Conlin, added this: "Damon did not let his ego get in the way. A lot of HR people might say, 'I know about résumés, I know about salary negotiations, I don't need a group.' But Damon was willing to listen to our research-based techniques, and **he ended up a winner in the recession, and everybody loved working with Damon**. ●

When the Recession is Over: The Transition from “Human Resources” to “Talent Management”

by David Madison, Ph.D., Director,
The National Guild of Five O’Clock Club Career Coaches

The following article is based on a panel presentation at The HR Network Breakfast on January 23, 2009. The HR Network is sponsored by The Five O’Clock Club and is a vendor-free venue for HR professionals to meet informally, network with one another, and hear discussions of important issues of the day.

The panelists were Ken Goldstein, Labor Economist, The Conference Board; Jeff Summer, Principal, PriceWaterhouse-Coopers Human Capital practice; and Jennifer Suarez, Senior Vice President, Workforce Development, CBS.

“Whatever doesn’t kill you will make you stronger.” If only it were true.

There are countless stories of people who have survived horrific events, but do not emerge stronger. Damage can be per-

manent and crippling.

It is also true, however, that adversity can bring out the best in people, and if, in the midst of crisis, there can be enough foresight, courage and determination—the combination of which is commonly called “true grit”—the chances of emerging stronger are enhanced. One economist has voiced the opinion, referring to the economic meltdown that we witnessed with horror in 2008, that “this is the worst thing you will ever go through in your lifetime.” Considering other perils we face (nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists, global warming), that may be an overstatement. But in terms of how we keep our daily lives patched together, we have experienced a perfect storm: banks being dragged down in the wake of scandalous mortgage practices, record stock

market losses that decimated 401(k)s, the near collapse of the U.S. auto industry—and, oh yes, thefts on an unprecedented scale, Bernard Madoff ranking as perhaps the champion thief of all time.

The workplace in the 2010s will probably look a lot different than it did in the 2000s.

The American workplace has felt the brunt of the storm. For months since mid-2008, the headlines almost daily have been about layoffs, and HR officers have found themselves dealing with the consequences: helping the people to cope, both those who have been ushered out the door and those who remain behind to



It was standing room only for this sell-out crowd learning more about holding onto top talent in a difficult economy.



Kate fields many audience comments.

get the work done with fewer colleagues.

While 2008 and 2009 may be remembered by many HR professionals as nightmare years because of all the upheavals, some of the biggest headaches and challenges for HR may actually lie in the future. Yes, of course, things will get better. No recession lasts forever: government and private sector energies are being devoted to restoring normalcy and rebuilding economic infrastructures in a better way. The timing, however, for what may be considered a full recovery, is the enigma. There has been talk of a “lost decade” based on the experience of the Japanese economy and memories of the Great Depression. No doubt there will be a long climb back uphill, and no matter how long recovery may take, we all sense that the workplace in the 2010s will probably look a lot different than it did in the 2000s.

There are at least three ingredients that fuel uncertainty:

- All of the job slashing that has taken place (and will probably continue during 2009, though, hopefully, at a slower pace) might not have been done in the smartest way, from the standpoint of talent planning and retention.
- Some fields, such as finance, will probably never be the same again. We are

entering an era of restored regulation—this will surely depress some sectors of the workplace, but help to build others.

- Where will technology put us in the next few years? How will our methods for gathering and disseminating information affect the workplace and the ways of doing business? The economic meltdown has not slowed the innovators who are passionate about enhancing communications.

The economic meltdown has not slowed the innovators who are passionate about enhancing communication.

Were the Right Jobs Slashed?

Sometimes it is difficult, in the midst of cash flow urgencies, to maintain perspective about the longer term. Since maintaining solvency may be the big worry, executives might not be able to see or think longer term. When staying alive is the primary concern, it’s hard to maintain focus on what the company or industry will be like in three or five years. The edict may come down from on high to cut jobs—no matter what—and there’s been a lot in the news lately about poor executive decisions. We always have hope, however, that we may learn from our past, and there is some evidence that talent retention has played a larger role this time around in deciding who stays and who goes. One high level consultant commented: “There was an article in the *New York Times* late last year about the response of some organizations. During this recession, they are doing everything

they can to hold onto talent. I recall that, coming out of the 2001 recession, there was a lot of discussion around the regret that they didn’t get it right. They cut too far. They did not think about the talent.”

Who Will or Won’t Bounce Back?

Some industries get wiped out by circumstances. The great Chicago Stockyards were the marvel of the Midwest for decades, and a vital part of the local economy. All of that came to an end with advances in technology, such as refrigeration and the Interstate Highway System. And until the 1970s—this may be hard to remember and believe—the New York tri-state area was one of the leading manufacturing regions of the world. “With the downturn of the 1970s,” recalls one expert, “we lost our manufacturing base, and it has not come back. Clearly it is not going to come back.”

Although not facing anything as drastic as these examples, it likely that the FIRE industries—finance, insurance and real estate—will not come back at the same scale and with the same vigor. One economist speaks of the reality: “Already there has been decline in these sectors. Anything that is high-risk, high-reward usually turns out to be high-risk, high-problem.” Especially with the prospect of intense regulation, “They are not going to be able to build so much on leverage. The New York downtown financial capital is not going to play as big a role going forward as it has in the past. Finance is still going to be a big part of the New York metro economy, but not quite as much as before. So, not as many people will be earning \$200,000, which means not as



Because we meet in a recital hall, these people sitting towards the back had no trouble hearing every word.



**Ken Goldstein, Labor Economist,
The Conference Board**

than it already has—if it hopes to meet the challenges of the 2010s.

**By 2010 or 2011,
worldwide data may double
every 72 hours**

“Accounting,” this expert points out, “is very much a lagging-indicator discipline. Can you imagine an executive meeting that you walk into where finance isn’t getting more attention than accounting? Finance will have projections about current projected performance, profit and loss, and capital investments. Boudreaux argues that this is the template for HR. There was once a transition from Personnel to Human Resources. Right now we are seeing the discipline evolve from Human Resources to Talent Management.”

One HR specialist has stated the matter bluntly: “Human Resources is in charge of labor. Thus it should be one of the most important of the ‘C-suite’ play-



Jeff Summer, Principal, PriceWaterhouseCoopers Human Capital practice

ers. We have an overview—we should have the best overview—of all of the talent and how it is acquired. In that sense we are always on the business and finance side, and we should be giving guidance.”

**If an organization has the
right talent, it will probably
overcome the odds and do
well in a recession.**

**Functioning at the C-Suite Level:
Chief Talent Officer**

But the evolution from Personnel to Human Resources to Talent Management is, in fact, the end result of a lot of focus, hard work and determination. The fundamentals for playing at the C-Suite level include:

- Cultivate an understanding of your industry.

Says one senior level HR officer: “This truly is one of the prices of admission. If you don’t have a pretty solid grasp of what is happening in your industry—if you’re not reading a lot of the things that your CEO and CFO are reading—how can you take part in the discussion?” And you must know how others in the marketplace are competing for talent. What are the best practices and benchmarks?

“What are similar organizations offering, not just in terms of compensation—because that’s not usually at the top of the list these days—but in terms of career development and lifestyle balancing. You really need the facts in these areas, and you need to get this information in front of your executives.”

- Learn how things really get done in your organization.

“Of course, one major component of this,” attests one expert, “is knowing the company culture. Not only that—but you’ve got to identify the various subcultures and who the players and stakeholders are. They are not necessarily the people who are titled in a certain way. Such an understanding can almost be considered a starting point for HR professionals—which means that we can have a bet-



**Jennifer Suarez, Senior Vice President,
Workforce Development -- CBS**

ter grasp of what’s going on than some of the executives who are running the show.” One especially skilled HR strategist makes a point of spending as little time as possible in the HR department; he considers it much more vital to be listening to employees about how things are unfolding daily in their departments.

**We are seeing the discipline
evolve from Human
Resources to Talent
Management.**

- Be proactive in claiming a place at the table.

Of course, you’re more likely to get to the table if you have accomplished the first two points. Nothing makes you more credible than a sound understanding of what’s happening inside the organization and outside in the wider marketplace. Says one senior HR consultant: “When the discussions take place about bringing the business forward, you have to demonstrate what you know about the organization, its history, its stakeholders and how people navigate effectively in the workplace. When your knowledge becomes obvious, it is more likely that partnering will take place, that is, business leaders will partner with HR leaders for executing change.”

Specifically on the talent front:

- Build an understanding of the talent that is out there—and the competition.
- “When I am a part of new business



Richard Bayer, Ph.D., our COO, with long-time administrators Angie Cayo and Miguel Villarin.

strategies,” say another HR officer, “my task, of course, is to help implement it, commonly through recruiting new talent. I’d better already have some idea of how easy or difficult it will be to find people. It’s important to work proactively to understand the marketplace. You have to know who the right people are, and then you have to get them into the roles that clearly align with the business strategy and organizational design, in a way that is crisp and makes sense.”

A senior HR professional who has enjoyed C-Suite status for a few years emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the role of Chief Talent Officer: “One of the things I hear most consistently when I’m talking with CEOs and CFOs is this:

people with the right skills in the right jobs, and rewarding them for what we ask them to do.”

Generational Trends Impacting Talent

As indicated earlier, the workplace of the 2010s won’t be like it was pre-recession, and there are a couple of factors in the mix that work for and against stability. One economist reports that there will be more receptivity to older workers, because of the talent and the steadiness that they bring to their work. “We weren’t seeing this even a decade ago. But now companies are welcoming older workers because of their attitudes. Bosses can count on them to show up for work

every morning, five days a week.” Younger workers, on the other hand—who may have decent work ethics—have grown up not even knowing about corporate loyalty, which has evaporated in recent decades. Thus, this expert points out, “The younger workers say ‘I need to be loyal to my career. I need to make the choices and the moves to ensure that my résumé is relevant, because at any point I could get a pink slip that has nothing to do with my capabilities.’” Clearly, as a consequence of this attitude, talent retention will become more difficult as the percentage of younger people

strategy is actually pretty simple. You do your analysis and brainstorming and get it on paper, but execution is really the hard part. Execution comes down to having the right

in the workplace grows.

To get things done, identify the various subcultures and who the players and stakeholders are.

Meeting the Challenges of the 2010s

The call to action has been expressed well by two specialists:

- “HR is now obliged to maintain a fact-based, empirically oriented approach, so that, no matter what is happening in the organization, HR professionals can be at the table with a point of view about what the business is trying to get done. Although this is an extraordinarily difficult time, there is a real opportunity for the discipline. It is pretty fascinating what we can do and how we can impact our organizations.”
- “We are the key to executing whatever strategy our businesses want. We are the key to moving our businesses forward and pushing through the economic times we are now facing.”

Contact information for panelists

Mr. Kenneth Goldstein

Labor Economist
The Conference Board
845 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022-6600
212-339-0331
Ken.Goldstein@conference-board.org
www.conference-board.org

Ms. Jennifer Suarez

SVP, Workforce Development
CBS Corporation
51 West 52nd Street
New York, NY 10019
212-975-4366

Mr. Jeffrey Summer

Principal, People & Change
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP (pwc.com)
300 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017
Telephone: 646-471-8285
Mobile: 347-387-2525
jeff.summer@us.pwc.com



"You've been recognized as 'Employee of the Month,' Calhoun. Take the next 10 minutes off."