

Dealing with the F Word

(2011 Public Sector Job Cuts – post 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review)

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As a professional career consultant I know that what goes on inside people's heads tends to define the level of their success they achieve in making a career change, whether that is a move from sector to sector or public to private sector but most career change programmes take an entirely linear approach to career transition where it is evident that life is far more subtle and complex.

My focus in career coaching is on the person as an individual not just as a jobseeker because I passionately believe that self knowledge is power and stops you lurching off in directions that will bring no success in life and will only leave you tired and defeated. My mantra for life is "adapt and survive" so realistically whilst you are adapting there will be difficulties but inviting rejection by sending your C.V. to hundreds of jobs on the off chance you may get lucky is not the best plan. Recently I have read many articles intended to assist public sector employees in making the move from sector to sector and to be honest I find most of them frightening, uninspiring and predictable with their focus on writing a good C.V. or preparing for a scary private sector interview.

This is my advice to public sector employees who are feeling insecure in view of the imminent public sector cuts. I am sure there is one word that will be looming large in the heads of many public sector employees and this is the F word. No I don't mean that word the one that just jumped into your head, although you are allowed to say it privately, I am talking about "fear" and the sheer terror of being a new arrival in a foreign land-the land of the private sector. For too long there has been this suspicion between public and private sectors. Private sector bosses can come out with well worn phrases like "jobs for life" "no cutting edge skills" about public sector employees but this is based on perception and not reality. So how does a public sector job seeker make the transition to another job or career easily and with confidence?

These are my tips to ensuring the journey is as painless as possible.

1. **Face your fears-** before you rush to draft your C.V. or hit the job sites write down everything you fear about the situation you are in. You can only handle fears by dealing with them on paper or the computer screen put down all the feelings that you are experiencing at the moment. You might have a list saying, "too old", "too tired", "wrong skills" whatever you are

feeling put it down uncensored and let it go. This baggage will only hold you back and subconsciously sabotage all your efforts to move forward.

2. **List your Achievements**-Once you have faced and written down your fears you can file it under F for fear and I am not advising you to burn the document yet but you will know when you are ready to let go of those emotions. Now write down all the things you have achieved in your life and I mean life. Caring for children, parents, re-furbishing a house as well as the more job related achievements. Keep going until you run out of space believe me there will be a lot more achievements there than you ever realised. Too often we confine our skills and experience into tiny boxes marked e.g. job, family, relationships whereas our potential is huge and we get a sense of this potential sometimes more acutely in the activities we do outside work rather than inside. When you have done this try and put your achievements in a list according to the level of satisfaction they gave you. Which achievement are you proudest of and why and what skills did you need to make it happen?

3. **Make the career connection**-Now you have a real idea of what you might like to do try and you now have to join the dots and see the connection with the real world e.g. if number one achievement was raising your family you may say, "well that has no correlation to paid employment", but what did you particularly like was it using your nurturing skills if so that could make you a great foster carer? Alternatively was it teaching your family new skills like a particular sport or activity and would you like the chance of teaching those skills to others? If during this exercise you have come to the unsettling realisation that actually you have hated your previous job for the last few years don't worry we often fall into these comfort/avoidance traps where we stay with what's familiar not what we enjoy. If you loved your last job what did you achieve there that you are proud of and what skills did you use? You need to work with your feelings to find the right path. Try and tease out your top two or three achievements and the accompanying skills you needed to get the successful outcome.

4. **Understand the market**-Now you have defined two or three potential career opportunities you have to identify if the market has a need for those skills. The best way to do this is to visit job search portals like www.indeed.co.uk or in Google type in loads of keywords around what you want to do and see what comes up. Guess what? Loads of information may indicate a need for those skills, less information might mean there is little market demand or perhaps you are operating in a niche area with a specialist skill that you will need to market carefully to the right people. This will also give you ideas on whether you need to upgrade your skills as you can see what specific qualifications are required and you need to note these down for future reference. You will also see from this activity what key skills have value and that can give you great information for the preparation of your C.V. as you can use your skills and experience to show how you can add value to a new employer or client. We are not measuring "need" by how many jobs there are online, remember 70% of jobs are unadvertised, but by the number of articles, volume of information, number of sites mentioning the career opportunity and/or the skills required.

5. **Re-invent your career**- Madonna does this all the time so now it is your chance. You may have been Senior Grade Administrator so face the fear, mourn the loss and become a highly paid virtual assistant. This is your time to focus on the skills you enjoy and for which there is a

need in the marketplace. If you have accurately identified that need you can be confident that someone will pay you for using them and then the next step is to decide how best you can market those skills. Remember as well as the private sector there is the third sector including not for profit or social enterprises and there is the prospect of self employment or a portfolio career where you have e.g. a part time job plus some freelance work. One size does not fit all so rushing to get conventional job could be wrong for you. This stage is all about working smarter not harder.

Public or private sector you are a unique individual with talent, expertise and enormous potential never forget that. If you would like my tips on how to successfully market your skills read our next article.

See also: <http://partners4success.blogspot.com/>

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