

Picking Up the Pieces

Stay positive and honest, but don't go out of your way to volunteer information, when you interview for a new job after getting fired from the last

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In today's work force, it's not unusual to hear "You're fired." And the words are not coming from Donald Trump's mouth.

It means a job search is in your future, along with interviews with prospective employers who may ask uncomfortable questions about what happened.

Getting fired is a traumatic experience. "When you get fired, it's like everything dissipates," said Beverly Baskin, a career counselor and executive director of Baskin Business and Career Services in Marlboro. "You are in shock and you get depressed."

But it's important to remember that it doesn't mean the end of a career.

"Ninty-nine percent of the time, it is a blessing," Baskin said.

It may just mean your old job just wasn't a good fit for you.

"You don't have the skills . . . or the qualifications that that job wanted," Baskin said. "But certainly, you have skills and qualifications for other types of jobs and working with other types of people."

So what's next? Think about what type of job you want now. "You have to get out of your own way and say to yourself 'This is good. I know what I don't want. What do I want?'" Baskin said.

Think about your dream job. Among the questions to ask yourself, Baskin said: Is it a position that would entail short-term tasks with deadlines, or do you want to supervise projects? Do you want to work for a small or large company? Do you want to work close to home

or do you want to get a job in the city?

"Jobs are only a part of your life. It's not your whole life," she said.

You also should evaluate the reasons you were terminated, said Frankie R. Francese, managing partner of Fortis Consulting Group, a Tinton Falls recruiting firm. Look for ways to improve.

"It is important for them to understand what created this situation," Francese said. "The most important thing is to make sure it doesn't happen again."

A person should look to improve on whatever skills were found lacking, Francese said. Maybe it involves taking a course on computer skills or a refresher on accounting.

When it comes time to search for a new job, look for one that's attuned to your skills.

How do you handle the job interview? It's important to be prepared. First, experts said you should try to come to an agreement with your former employer about how to describe what happened.

"You need to get some agreement on the party line that your former employer and you can both live with as to why you left," said Victoria Fowler, owner of Spherion Staffing in Shrewsbury.

When it comes time to sit down at the interview, don't badmouth your old boss or company.

"The impression you can leave is 'Oh here is a troublemaker. Here is someone that doesn't fit in,'" Fowler said.

Let the interviewer ask what happened. If they don't ask, you don't have to tell, Francese said.

Sometimes, interviewers are only interested in your work experience. "All they want to know is what can you do for their company," Francese said. "They don't even

ask why did you leave the company?"

If it comes up, stay positive, but be honest.

Most companies only give bare-bones information about a former employee. That means dates of employment, last position held, and, if the worker agrees, the last salary attained, said lawyer Jay S. Becker, chairman of the labor and employment law department at Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla in Middletown.

"If I'm a former employer, and I say anything negative about a former employee, I could have a defamation lawsuit," Becker said.

But employers can find out what happened, so it's important not to lie.

There are ways to answer the "what happened" question.

Francese gave one possible answer: "I was enjoying what I was doing, but it came to a point where my skills were not as strong as they needed to be in order to perform that particular position," he said. "A very honest answer."

You can talk about how you have worked to improve your skills, Francese said.

Baskin gave another positive example: "I was hired for one type of function and it turned into something else, so it wasn't a good fit."

You can practice with a good friend or a job counselor, Baskin said. "You are constantly marketing yourself on an interview."

People can prepare early if they know they may lose their job, Baskin said. "Start preparing before your self-esteem goes down. When you get fired, you cannot help (it.) You just start to bargain with yourself."