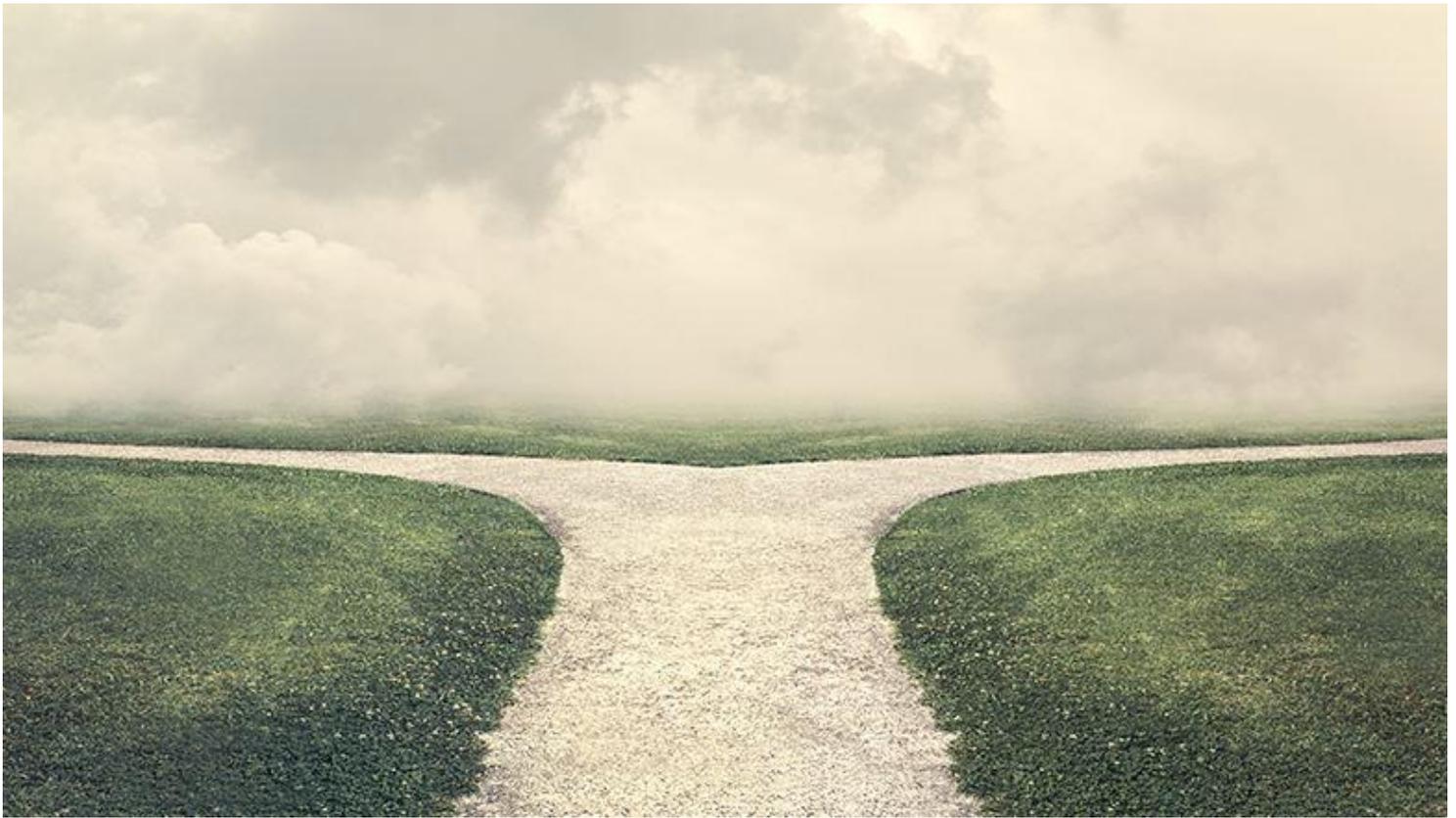


# 5 Tips for Navigating an Unplanned Career Transition



October 27, 2017

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**Sometimes your career takes an unexpected turn due to forces beyond your control. If you experience a layoff or other unplanned detour in your career, follow these tips to help pave the way to your**

## next role.

Imagine coming off of a big win—a legislative victory, surpassing fundraising goals, or landing a big-name keynote speaker for your annual conference. You feel like you are doing what you were born to do and making a difference for your organization.

Then, out of nowhere there is a global economic downturn, and it hits your industry and your members hard. Suddenly, revenue is declining, your budget is cut, and eventually so is your job.

If you are like most professionals, your initial reaction to a sudden and unplanned career transition will be a combination of shock, justifiable disappointment, and maybe a little anger—especially when you kept up your end of the bargain by consistently delivering on organizational goals and strategy.

It's OK to process those feelings and give yourself time to sit back and think about what's next. No matter what the reason is for your departure, there are several do's and don'ts to ensure a successful transition to your next professional chapter.

**React thoughtfully.** Although the news may take you by surprise, be thoughtful and respectful about the decision to let you go. Tell the person delivering this news that you understand that it was a difficult message to share, that you need to collect your thoughts, and that you will respond soon. Your response can include questions about the transition—asking who, what, and when—or asking about any options to remain in a different capacity or employment status, as well as requests for support to find a new position.

**Research exit provisions outlined in your employment agreement or employee manual.** Compare these documents with the information provided to you in your conversation with the person who delivered the news of your termination. Make sure you fulfill your commitments and have a good understanding of the organization's obligations to you. Don't be afraid to ask for a letter of recommendation, especially if you are laid off due to external forces. If you are in a leadership role with an employment agreement in place, you may want to reach out to an employment attorney to help you understand its provisions and any elements that might be negotiable.



**No matter what the reason is for your departure, there are several do's and don'ts to ensure a successful career transition to your next professional chapter.**

**Determine how your exit will be communicated.** Identify one person in the organization who will speak to others about your departure. Depending on your role, that communication might be directed by the CEO or a human resource representative. It's important to have a clear and consistent message from the organization, so that your own message isn't compromised or suspect. Wait to connect with the designated contact person to ensure that you have a mutual understanding of the message. Also, don't burn up time and goodwill with ongoing changes to that message.

**Take time to process.** If possible, don't rush into a new job. You need to organize your thoughts, messaging, and strategy for reentering the workforce. Do not reach out prematurely to your broader network or recruiting professionals. First, clarify your career goals and strategy. And make sure your resume is professionally written and updated to reflect your recent experience and accomplishments.

**Focus on the future.** During your job search, your message should be positive. When asked about why you left your previous position, your response should be something like "I had a wonderful experience, and we accomplished a great deal. Unfortunately, we had to make organizational changes in response to economic conditions. I'm looking forward to my next opportunity."

While this may feel like an ending, it's really a beginning. Think about the last time you were excited about getting to the office. If it has been a while, take advantage of this chance to find a new role you will love.

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