

BizSmarts

Calendar

This Week

● **Economic Outlook:** Cardinal Bank presents its 21st Annual Economic Conference, "Surviving Uncertainty Outlook for 2013 and Beyond." The event includes speakers from Fannie Mae, the Fairfax County, Arlington, Prince William and Prince George's economic development teams, George Mason University and the White House. McLean Hilton Tysons Corner. Jan. 11, 7:15 a.m. \$60. www.cardinalbank.com

● **Morning Fix:** The D.C. Chamber of Commerce's next Morning Fix program features Dr. Mohammad Akhter, chairman of the D.C. Health Benefit Exchange Authority, who will discuss guidelines for certification of qualified health plans under the Affordable Care Act. 506 Ninth St. NW. Jan. 16, 8:30 a.m. www.dccchamber.org

Jan. 21-27

● **Leadership Dinner:** The Tech Council of Maryland will host its annual Leadership Dinner, an opportunity for the region's technology and life sciences sectors to network and learn about important policy issues. Loews Annapolis Hotel, 126 West St., Annapolis. Jan. 31, 5:30 p.m. Members \$110, nonmembers \$220. www.techcouncilmd.com

● **Sales Secrets:** The Institute for Excellence in Sales presents Matt Dixon, author of "The Challenger Sale," who will discuss secrets to the sales success. 7950 Jones Branch Drive, McLean. Jan. 25, 7:30 a.m. \$79. www.4esbd.org

● **Business Gala:** The Arlington Chamber of Commerce holds its 89th Annual Arlington Business Gala, an evening of networking with Arlington business leaders. The Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City, Arlington. Jan. 26, 6:30 p.m. \$200. www.arlingtonchamber.org

Jan. 28-Feb. 3

● **Fresh Leads:** The Washington Business Journal holds a one-hour power lunch that shows you how to find more leads and minimize cold calling. Discover ways to use the newspaper and website for prospecting, lead generation and business opportunities. 1555 Wilson Blvd., Suite 400, Arlington. Jan. 29, 12 p.m. \$25. www.washingtonbusinessjournal.com

● **Contracting Luncheon:** The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce is hosting a luncheon that will provide insights on contracting, specifically the areas of subcontracting and teaming. 1736 Fountain Drive, Reston. Jan. 29, 11 a.m. www.restonchamber.org

● **Book of Lists:** Join the Washington Business Journal for our biggest and best networking event of the year, the Book of Lists party. National Building Museum, D.C. Jan. 31, 6:30 p.m. \$165. www.washingtonbusinessjournal.com

Post-holiday blues

Beginning the year unemployed? Use these tips to restart your career

By Emily Mekinc

It happens every year around the holidays. Amid the frenzy of gift-buying and holiday parties, companies try to cut expenses before the end of the fourth quarter and adjust for current and anticipated demand. All too often, those complex financial calculations end in something simple and joyless – layoffs.

This year, for example, only a week after Thanksgiving jobs were being shed. LivingSocial Inc. confirmed Nov. 29 that it was laying off some 400 employees, including roughly 160 in the District. A week later, McLean-based Science Applications International Corp. announced it was cutting 700 jobs, about half of them in the Washington area. SAIC had counted nearly 15,000 local employees, making it the Washington region's sixth-largest employer.

Workers laid off during the distracting holiday season are typically unprepared to begin a job hunt. And generally, getting hired in December is difficult, making January a key month for job seekers.

The first quarter, in particular, is when many companies begin to make hiring decisions again. So here are some tips from local experts in career consulting and outplacement to help laid-off workers get a step ahead in a painful process.

● **Keep any anger, frustration or negative feelings at home.** You have a right to these feelings, but you need to have a positive outlook at work, says Jason Levin, a career and outplacement coach at Ready, Set, Launch LLC. Be professional on the way out. That will help you get in another door more often than disparaging your former employer will.

● **Send handwritten notes thanking people you worked with.** Levin suggests writing one or two things you have learned from them. "They'll remember that," he says. Also, ask the same group of colleagues if they could serve as a references for any future offers you get.

● **Consider pursuing your "dream job" in addition to seeking positions similar to those you have held.** Perhaps this is the perfect chance to ditch the desk job you don't like and go for the career that's haunted the back of your mind. "Give yourself some time to reassess your career and determine what you want to do next," says David Miles, managing partner of OI Partners-The Miles LeHane Cos. "Conduct a thorough career checkup and develop an action plan."

● **Use holiday parties as a job-search networking opportunity.** Industry events are key, as are chamber of commerce holiday parties or annual meetings of various groups. Your partner's or spouse's holi-



day party is a great time to get out, shake hands with folks and hear what people are up to – and see what vacancies they might have.

● **Get out and volunteer while you're in transition.** "You should not be job-seeking eight hours a day," Levin says. "Get out and give to others that are in even more need than you. You'll find inspiration from that."

● **Reconnect with others by sending holiday cards.** Send quick personal notes to people you haven't spoken to in a while, wish them a "Happy New Year" and see if they would like to get together in 2013. Don't send a long, emotional note about being laid off. However, Levin says you can try something like: "After five great years, I've found myself in a transition in my career ..."

● **Be able to answer the question: What is your contribution to a company?** Most people don't know the answer, according to Miles. Employers will want to know the depth of your knowledge and education – not just your degree, but your passion. Practice interviewing in front of the mirror or with a video camera, Miles suggests.

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Swim with the Sharks

The streets are filled with ideas – use them

By Harvey Mackay



Sometimes the columns that get the biggest reaction are those that offer the simplest advice. I recently wrote about street-smart ideas and was inundated with requests for more. I truly believe in the importance of street smarts for success, so I'm continuing the list.

Next idea: There will always be a place in the world for anyone who says, "I'll take care of it." And then does it. Don't imply that a chore is beneath you or that you are too busy to handle the mundane.

Next idea: Circle the wagons. For the past

50 years, every time I want to persuade a person of power, I find a couple of friends who have influence to make approaches from different directions to get the result I want. These are people who know I will come to their aid in return.

Next idea: Take good care of yourself. It's difficult to find the best doctor or professional in a pinch. It is your job to determine who is world class before you have an emergency. The same concept applies to lawyers, accountants and so on. Build a strong network before a problem arises.

Next idea: Get your hands dirty. If you need to make a good impression on someone, discover the chores they hate and then help them out.

Next idea: Gatekeepers can open a lot of doors for you. Treat gatekeepers with dignity. Respect their power. And above all, acknowledge their help. Gatekeepers make

and predetermine more decisions than people ever realize.

Next idea: Be prepared for the worst. It's critical to ask yourself or your staff what can go wrong? Prime example: A couple of years ago when the Indianapolis Colts were playing the Chicago Bears in the Super Bowl and it rained during the entire game, then-Colts quarterback Peyton Manning was prepared. Every year, he practices a wet-ball drill with his center. He takes a bucket of water, dips the football in and takes repeated snaps. The Bears quarterback didn't prepare for the weather and fumbled the game away.

Mackay's Moral: The smarter I get, the more I realize I'm not finished learning.

Harvey Mackay, author of the best-selling "Swim with the Sharks without Being Eaten Alive," is a nationally syndicated columnist.