

Where are the jobs now for senior executives?

Is it challenging out there? Of course it is, but there are always options, it isn't all doom and gloom.

Firstly, a note to those who are still in jobs but would like to be somewhere else: stay where you are! Recruiters are still hearing from people who – almost incredibly in the current job market – feel that it is time for a change. It isn't! This is not a time for heroic moves, it is a time to be prudent. If you don't like your commute, or your boss, or your work, or your colleagues – or any combination of the above – bite your tongue and stay put. You can always look again when things are less uncertain.

OK, so you have recently been made redundant, where do you look? Isn't it impossible at the moment? The answer is..... very difficult yes, impossible no.

Firstly, not every sector is receding. We have all heard about the expansion of fast food for example, and while that may be a flippant example, the point is that any industry providing resilient, basic consumer services or goods is a good place to look. You might not want to flip burgers, but if burger and pizza chains are expanding they will also need help to expand their supply chains, properties, training, finance capabilities and so on. Burgers might not sound sexy, but the reality today (and in fact it was always the case) is that any business that is profitable and expansionary, is sexy (so to speak).

Other robust sectors are utilities, and green industries such as recycling, energy management and emerging businesses such as local solar and wind power.

Do you have to go back into a fulltime permanent position? Many people take this opportunity to think about a “portfolio” career. The last recession in the UK created a large group of people who will never go back to traditional employment. For example, you could combine some interim management or consulting work with part time lecturing or coaching. Increasingly struggling businesses are looking for ways to avoid permanent headcount, or to get specific skills at a point in time – for example to help them reduce costs, or to break into a new market.

You could also think about starting a business – a recession can be a great time to do this – history has shown that many of today's giants were started in a recession, out of adversity. Don't have money to invest? Can't think of anything? Why not start by teaming up with former colleagues, customers, suppliers, to think what you might do? Leverage your previous experience, or think about applying it to something different. You might be surprised what comes out of it. Do it like a rolling brainstorming session-meet weekly and see what comes of it.

Back to finding a role in a new organisation. Of course, it is true to say that there are more people seeking jobs than there are jobs. Finding one is going to be difficult, and mainly down to chance. Correct? Well, not really. Luck does play a role, but this is one

of those situations where the truism that you make your own luck really does apply. The key is flexibility. If you hold out for working in the same industry, in a similar role, at a similar level, and you still want your 30 minute commute from Clontarf – well then unfortunately you are going to struggle.

How you increase your chances of finding work – and decreasing the chance that you will be in the “unlucky” group in a year’s time – is by being *flexible*. Consider a different sector. Try a spell in not-for-profit if you come from technology. Private sector people can bring great things to public sector organisations – and vice versa. Don’t be concerned about dropping down a level. Yes, you need to be able to cope with the financial challenge, but a 20% drop is better than a 100% drop. Don’t be concerned about how it will look on your CV- when the time comes for you to move on, any recruiter or HR Director worth their salt will recognise an issue that was not yours, and that many people were facing. It will also be seen for what it really is – courageous, pragmatic and not ego-driven – all very positive character traits.

The toughest one is location. While adding half an hour onto your commute might be unpleasant, you will get over it. Having to move house to a different city is a different matter. Inevitably it means huge upheaval, probably affecting your family even more directly than you. What is also true though is that it usually, by far, the lesser of two evils. A chance to leave the financial worry behind and to make a new start. It’s not failure, it’s about what life itself is about. This is really a mindset issue. It won’t happen immediately, you can come to the realisation that a move will be difficult, but will also throw up many different kinds of opportunity and experience for you and your family. Very often people look back and realise that what they were dreading was in fact the best thing that ever happened.

So in summary, times are difficult for the job hunter, but for those who are realistic, flexible, resilient and who can throw themselves open to real change, the possibilities are there. Good hunting!