

From Our Perspective: In These Trying Times, YOU Really Are The Boss

Written by Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor
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Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor One of the most common emotions I encounter out in the workplace these days is fear—mostly fear of the unknown One of the most common emotions I encounter out in the workplace these days is fear—mostly fear of the unknown in an uncertain economic climate. When speaking with maintenance and reliability professionals, especially those not eligible for (or unable to afford) retirement, they often ask me what can be done to better prepare for the potential reality of job loss/job search occurrence.

I maintain that we are ALL self-employed to some degree. This means that you are in control of where you work, when you come to work and how hard you work. You have set up a mutually binding contract with an organization that has agreed to pay you a defined amount of compensation in return for carrying out a defined scope of work on a daily basis. Your employer is your #1 customer. As long as that customer feels he/ she/it is receiving value, and you, the supplier, feel you are receiving adequate compensation, the relationship will remain in balance. As soon as that balance changes on either side, however, YOU become vulnerable.

Ironically, there are many jobs available in downturn economies—and employers complain mightily about finding the right people to fill them. Because prospective employers are likely to be very selective in their hiring during times like these, you must start to think entrepreneurially and "reframe" yourself differently from other potential applicants. Once you have come to terms with the idea of possible job loss, open your mind, assess your current position and prepare for a life-changing event by following these five easy steps:

1. Take on the mindset that you are now self-employed and execute work as if you were being paid by a customer based on your performance. Develop a sense of customer relations and make an effort to understand your customers' needs and how they like to be served. If the people around you like and respect you, they will forgive small errors and be willing to furnish a reference if and when needed.
2. Establish a difference between you and other employees in your workplace by developing

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a unique and innovative approach to work. Potential employers are more interested in "how YOU personally made a difference," rather than "what you did" in your last position. Document any of your past suggestions that benefited the company. Meanwhile, keep a diary of work performed and record any innovative approach or suggestion for improvement that you make.

3. Enhance your professional development by subscribing to industry publications and learning about new technologies, philosophies and tools. Try to attend events like our upcoming information-packed Maintenance & Reliability Technology Summit (MARTS). Build a case for your participation by noting how this type of educational experience could facilitate improvements within your plant. Sometimes, you may want to self-invest by offering to donate some vacation time for the event or to cover some of your expenses—not unlike a self-employed person.

4. Build up your credentials through respected certifications, such as that of a CMRP (Certified Maintenance and Reliability Professional) or CLS (Certified Lubrication Specialist).

5. Keep an updated resume handy. It should focus on what makes you different and more hireable than others looking for that elusive new job.

With your newfound confidence and approach to work, you may choose to use this downturn to find a new, more satisfying job. After all, YOU really are the boss. Good luck! **LMT**

Ken Bannister is lead partner & principal consultant for Engtech Industries, Inc. Phone: (519) 469-9273; e-mail: kbannister@engtechindustries.com