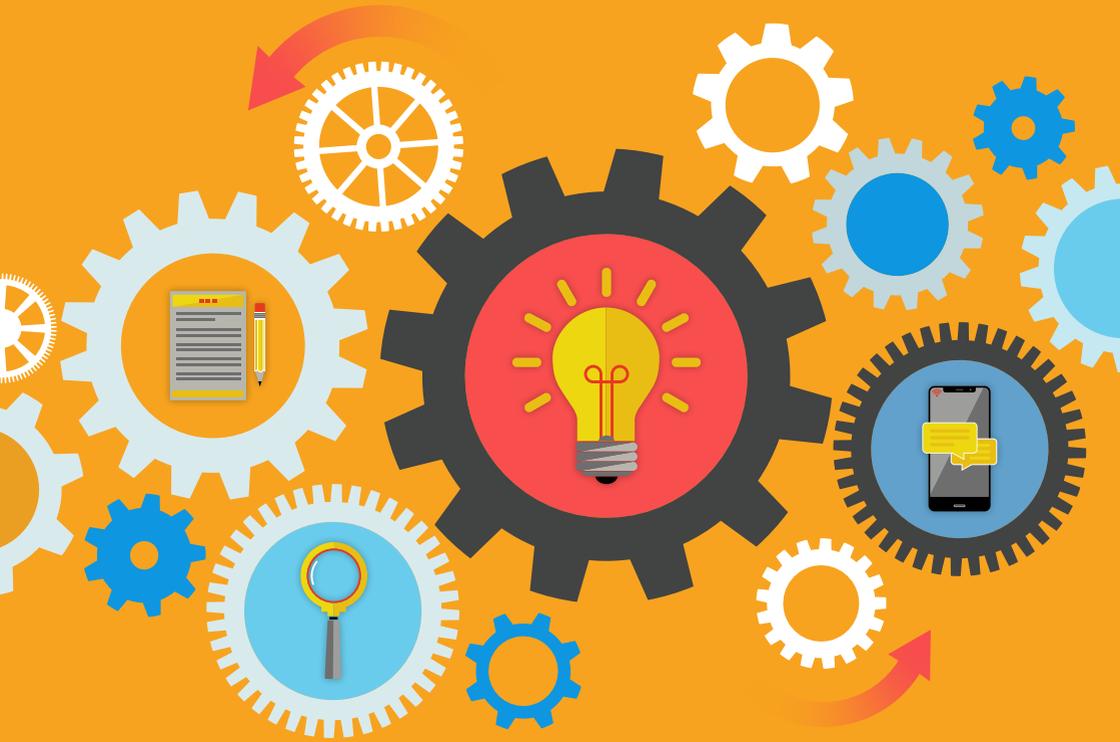


Surviving Redundancy

Your 10-point Guide



www.nujtrainingwales.org

By David Thomas

Introduction

Losing a job through no fault of your own can be hard. But redundancy, far from being the end of something, marks the beginning of the next stage of your life.

This guide will help you deal with the process, find help and focus on shaping your own future. It will also point you towards some support which is specifically aimed at people who live and work in Wales.

I'll be drawing on my own experience of being made redundant (twice!) and the experiences of people I've met during my 15 years of running Beyond Redundancy and freelancer training courses for creative people.

1. Before you leave

People react in many different ways when they hear that their job's being closed. Some are angry or hurt. Others are relieved.

Whether you welcome it or not, the process is nearly always stressful, as the levers of redundancy are in someone else's hands. Your boss has decided it, and HR is processing it.

But remember that your employer might be able to help in two important ways:

1. They have statutory duties towards you

There are laws about how redundancies are managed. You're due things like written confirmation, and should be entitled to redundancy pay if you've been with them for more than two years. You can double check these entitlements using the links below and with your union.

2. Ask them about retraining or other support

Even though it's not compulsory, some employers will have a training fund to help give you new skills and soften the blow of redundancy. Sometimes support costs nothing. For example you might shadow another department or job role as a way of learning something new before you leave. A sympathetic boss may be able to facilitate this.

Ask about this sort of support as early as possible, and certainly before you leave.

Above all, don't sit around moaning. It won't help your stress levels, but it's also not particularly attractive. You may want to work for some of these people in the future, perhaps in a freelance capacity. Don't burn those bridges.

Find out more:

www.acas.org.uk/your-rights-during-redundancy
www.gov.uk/calculate-your-redundancy-pay

2. Sources of support and training

Living in Wales you'll be able to access redundancy support funded by the Welsh government under the Careers Wales Working Wales banner. This includes:

- careers advice
- help with CVs and job applications
- funding for re-skilling under the ReAct programme

The first step to access most of this support will be to contact a careers adviser via Careers Wales. The ReAct programme is particularly useful if you're missing some skills. It can provide £1,500 for relevant training courses, plus extra support for travel if required.

Another option might be to get specific skills and qualifications with a Personal Learning Account. This enables you to take part-time courses through colleges across Wales.

There's also a wealth of tips and information on the [Careers Wales](#) and [Working Wales](#) websites.

Don't forget to use the resources provided by NUJ Training Wales and other unions. Their role is to support their members and they regularly run training and networking opportunities.

Find out more:

www.careerswales.gov.wales/getting-a-job

www.careerswales.gov.wales/plan-your-career/options-after-redundancy

www.careerswales.gov.wales/courses-and-training/funding-your-studies/react-funding

www.workingwales.gov.wales/how-we-can-help/work-advice

www.workingwales.gov.wales/personal-learning-account

www.nujtrainingwales.org

3. Rediscover your skills

Remember that it's the job that's closed, not you. You are a valuable bundle of skills, and all those skills go with you into your next job.

Many people define themselves through their employment. For example, the answer to the question "what do you do" might be "I work at the BBC". This brings problems if your employment stops, as you don't know how to describe yourself to others.

It's much better to define yourself through your skills and expertise. Those don't change and will give you a sense of continuity.

This may require you to re-engage with what your skills really are. Many people lose sight of their range of skills.

Take some time to make a list of all your skills, not just the job roles. Think about what skills you've had to develop for each job or role you've ever had. Include the 'soft' (or 'transferable') skills, like working in a team or being highly organised.

Don't leave anything out. Even being able to drive a car or speak another language can put you ahead of others.

This is hard to do on your own. A colleague who knows you well might be able to help. Even better, get advice from a CV specialist who can help you to see yourself in the

round and highlight things you've missed.

4. Look for things you can control

It's important to get back in control quickly and avoid a victim mentality.

If you can, take a break the day after you leave the job. Clear your head, walk in the park, swim in the sea, play music, immerse yourself in a great book - whatever helps you take your mind off the job and engage with other parts of your life.

This helps you find perspective.

Find ways of talking about yourself that are forward-looking and optimistic. If someone says "what are you up to these days" don't reply "I've been made redundant". Instead, put yourself in the driving seat. Use active phrases like

"I'm taking a break before my next job."

"I'm planning my new business."

"I'm retraining."

"I'm looking for a new role as a..."

Above all, help people to understand that you're actively shaping your own future. This will keep you feeling positive.

Your friends and family might be worried about you if they hear you're going through a redundancy process. Talk to them about your plans. Reassure them. Ask their advice. But don't be put off by their reaction. Everyone handles this kind of situation differently.

Find out more:

www.careerswales.gov.wales/plan-your-career/options-after-redundancy

5. It's your future - so take your time

A redundancy process can be a great opportunity to consider what direction your career might take. Many people talk about redundancy in retrospect as a 'kick up the backside' to get on with something they've been thinking about for a while.

Don't just rush into something that simply replicates what you've been doing in the previous job. Take time to think about other opportunities. These could include:

1. a different job role
2. moving to a different town
3. retraining into another industry
4. setting up as self-employed
5. travelling the world (when we're allowed to)

It can feel like a lonely process, but it's good to talk through options with other people, particularly if they've been through redundancy in the past. Just listening to other people's stories can give you ideas and show you that there is not one single solution.

6. Plan your job hunting like a military campaign

Looking for a job is a job in itself.

Find a space at home that can be your campaign HQ. Organise your job

applications into folders. Get your CVs and online profiles in order.

Don't forget to check your social media. If you apply for a job assume they'll Google you or look for you on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Delete anything that's contentious or embarrassing.

Allocate times of the day or week for job hunting and related activities such as research or re-training. Keep these separate from other parts of your life. Make sure you give yourself "time off" from job hunting.

Some other useful tips:

- Keep your personal social media separate from your professional online persona.
- Use a professional-looking email address for work-related contacts and CVs. Use your old hotmail just for family and friends

These practical tips are particularly important if you're setting up as self-employed.

Focus your search

It's important to have some focus when job hunting. Don't panic and take the first thing you stumble across. Think about your long-term goals and look for things that support you in reaching them. Don't forget what you enjoy about working.

Find out more:

www.careerswales.gov.wales/courses-and-training/funding-your-studies/react-funding
www.workingwales.gov.wales/personal-learning-account

Think laterally

Always come back to your skills and interests when identifying jobs you might go for. Skills you may have developed in one job might be equally useful in a different area, even where the job appears to be very different.

For example...

An experienced TV journalist going through redundancy might consider themselves to be only suited to working in TV. But the skills of TV journalism are very suited to other writing work.

Copywriting, proof reading, editing, PR and communications are all areas the need a constant supply of good writers.

Consider jobs you can grow into

When reading a job ad it's easy to convince yourself you haven't got the right skills. In fact people often get jobs where they've been able to demonstrate that they have some of the required skills already, and can grow into the others. Don't limit yourself unnecessarily.

Keep your eyes and ears open

Very many jobs are never advertised, so make sure you meet people who might tip you off about opportunities. These might be friends and acquaintances who work in the same industry as you. Or you might meet new contacts by going to events or training courses.

These have continued online through the pandemic and are a great source of support for people who might otherwise feel isolated.

7. Self-employment works well for many

In journalism and copywriting many people operate as sole traders. Setting up as self-employed doesn't suit everyone, but if you're thinking of taking this route look for courses specifically designed for people going through redundancy and setting up on their own.

This will help you with things like tax returns and invoicing which may be new to you. It will also help you to think like a business.

Find out more:

www.nujtrainingwales.org/events

www.businesswales.gov.wales/starting-up

8. Look your finances in the eye

For many it's the financial changes that bring the biggest concern. The best way to deal with money worries is to look them squarely in the eye.

The first step is to examine your spending habits and be aware of where your money is going. A spending diary is a great way to grapple with this. Just jot down everything you spend for a few weeks so that you can spot areas where you might be wasting money.

It's helpful to work out what your personal life costs you on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. You can then look at all savings, redundancy pay and any other sources of income and work out how long you can cover costs before earning again.

This is particularly important if you're going to be self-employed, as you'll need to set a target of how much you need to earn to cover monthly outgoings. It stops you working too hard!

Once the pandemic has passed, give yourself a job-hunting budget. It needn't be much, but it can cover travel to interviews, money for attending events where you can network, and maybe some training if needed.

A word about redundancy payments

If you get a redundancy payment, think carefully about what you do with it. It might be important to keep it in an account that you can access easily until you're earning again. If you're not sure, talk to a qualified financial advisor, particularly if your payment is large. And remember that anything over £30,000 will probably be taxed before you get it, but you may be due a rebate from HMRC.

9. Don't ignore state support

There may be some state benefits you are due because you've gone through redundancy.

During the pandemic many people have become more aware of benefits like Universal Credit. But it's not the only one.

Jobseekers allowance (JSA) might be available if you've been working for a while (and therefore making National Insurance contributions), and are then made redundant. And it's usually not means tested in these circumstances. It's not a huge amount of money, but it's certainly better than nothing. JSA can't be back-dated, so check it out before your job closes.

If your income goes down as a result of losing your job you may be eligible for tax credits, particularly if you have children. Sites like entitledto.co.uk and Citizens Advice are there to help you find out what you're due.

10. Stay positive

It's rare that people are successful every time they apply for a job. Don't take it personally if you are unsuccessful at first. Try to find out why you weren't successful - don't make assumptions - and then quickly move on to focus on the next opportunity.

It's vital to keep your spirits up through this process. Change can be stressful, even when you're looking forward to a new challenge.

Here are some ways of boosting your morale:

- Regular sleep and regular meal times will help your body and mind feel strong.
- Set up a support group of friends, and meet regularly for a chat and a laugh.
- Put time aside to continue with hobbies and non-work-related activities.
- Get physical! A bit of exercise goes a long way to improving your mood, whether it's swimming, cycling, running, jogging or walking.
- Consider volunteering for a local charity. It helps you keep to a routine, and keeps you in touch with other people. It also looks good on a CV and LinkedIn profile.

If you're finding it's all getting you down, don't keep it bottled up. Talk to a friend or family-member. You'll also get a sympathetic ear from your GP.

Staying positive is perfectly possible with the support of friends and family, as well as the organisations we've listed in this guide. Above all, keep focused on the future and the exciting opportunities that are out there waiting for you.

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Find out more:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits

www.entitledto.co.uk

www.turn2us.org.uk

www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement

www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance

www.careerswales.com/en/jobs-and-training/unemployment-and-redundancy/coping-with-redundancy