

WHY JOB SEARCH SUPPORT IS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE SEVERANCE PACKAGE

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My career in the coaching field began in 1987 and since then I have worked with thousands of individuals at all levels and from a variety of industries, to coach them through the transition to a new career. While we receive consistently positive feedback from the people who participate in our Career Transition programs, employers providing these services don't always hear about the many longer-term benefits of what they are providing. I'd like to share with you just how valuable these services are to individuals who participate in our programs.

Our first introduction to a released employee is usually immediately after they have been notified of the termination of their employment. While many managers comment that they are relieved to have us onsite to prepare them for the meeting and to deal with the employee after the message has been communicated, in many cases the released employee may not fully understand why The Eisen Consulting Group is present. The reasons are more important that the organization or the employee may realize.

It is not uncommon for released employees to experience an immediate range of emotions as a result of job loss. Although a very few feel relief, it is more likely that they experience shock, embarrassment, anger, disbelief, or even fright about what is ahead of them. We are onsite to help them understand and manage their emotions and to ensure not only that they exit the workplace with their dignity intact, but also to help them prepare for the next few days when the impact of job loss is the greatest. This is our opportunity to build rapport with the released employee so that they are open to our support and advice in the days, weeks and months to come.

Many employees do not initially realize the value of our support until they have met with us on one or more occasions. Employees have often told us that without our initial coaching and advice, they might have done something drastic, ranging from taking their anger out on their boss or coworkers to drinking or sleeping the days away.

In fact, we worked with someone who was very afraid to tell her ill and abusive spouse about her job loss. Although the company realized that the spouse was ill, they had no idea that he was also abusive. Another candidate told me that he was planning on calling all of his potential job search contacts to tell them how mad he was about being released. Can you imagine anyone wanting to refer this individual on to other contacts or potential employers? We stopped the dysfunctional behaviour before it became a major barrier in the search; we coached him on how to deal with his anger more constructively.

Our goal is to encourage exiting employees to deal with obstacles or concerns in the initial stages of the transition. One of the major concerns for many is money (the severance package) and that is why we provide financial planning advice within the first week. Financial planning helps exiting employees deal with and their financial concerns so that they can focus on preparing for the search sooner and without worry.

Once individuals begin to adjust to and accept the new reality, we work through various assessment exercises to help them identify their strengths and address their opportunities for development. In our work, we encounter many individuals who have experienced behavioural or performance obstacles/issues in their career. The assessment process helps us to deal sensitively but directly with their issues to ensure that their transition is not only timely but also provides a good fit in their next position.

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Just recently, I had someone tell me that although she was initially sceptical about participating in the assessment portion of the process, it turned out to be a real revelation for her. The results confirmed some things she already knew about herself, but more importantly it answered some questions she had never thought to ask of herself. As a result, she felt armed with self-knowledge and was more confident about marketing herself. She gained a better idea of what she was looking for and why she was not productive or happy in her previous positions.

The assessment process has also been directly responsible for assisting candidates in declining or competitive industries with limited opportunities. It helps them to gain a better understanding of their interests and transferable or marketable skills, increasing their options and opportunities. Recent graduates of our program have shifted from: senior programmer in IT to construction consulting, machine operator in printing to starting a business as a personal chef and caterer, and anchorperson to a politician.

The most valued aspect of the services we provide is probably the ongoing support, advice and motivation that we provide. We encourage people to think “outside of the box” and explore all of their options. We challenge them when opportunities present themselves to evaluate the fit before accepting a new position. In fact, one graduate of our program accepted an opportunity against our advice only to learn one week into the job that the fit was terrible for her. She accepted the first opportunity that came along because she was nervous about being unemployed for too long. She learned a valuable lesson and later secured her dream job, a position that allowed her to incorporate her personal interests into her career.

My experience over the years has demonstrated that the services we provide are just as important, if not more important, than the financial aspects of the severance package. We help people move forward in a positive and timely manner, focusing their energies on what they can control rather than on what they cannot.

When exiting employees realize a successful transition to an alternate career, it reflects very positively on the organization that provided our support. Everyone wins!