

The following excerpts are from my conversation with [Jackie Haywood](#), Program and Property Manager at [Barkan Management Co., Inc.](#) The interview is part of the ongoing series: [Models of Living In the Current](#).

How It Happened

GINNY: How would you summarize your experience of the layoff when it first occurred? How did you feel about it?

JACKIE: I had a long corporate career with the same company. Through a series of organizational restructures over a period of eight months, I sensed a layoff was imminent. It felt humiliating and shocking even though I anticipated it. It was unnerving for a Type A who was always in control of things. I didn't feel like I was controlling my destiny. **It was a continuum of feelings and different stages:** from shock to settling in, to realizing what had to be next, to knowing that I had to take back control of my destiny, to using it as a learning experience.



Jackie Haywood

GINNY: How did you do that — take back control?

JACKIE: I feel like I **divided my layoff life into four segments: spiritual, physical, family, and friends.** Notice none of those is work-related. So that I wouldn't get overwhelmed, I picked one thing in of each of those areas to know that I was using this time to gain back control and make a difference — in my own life. I now look back on those months with gratitude.

Job Search

GINNY: How long did it take you to find a job?

JACKIE: Ten months, of which six were what I call hard months of searching, meaning that during the first four months I was not actively seeking employment. I was preparing for re-entry by taking outplacement classes, redoing my resume, and surveying my network. I wasn't ready to put my foot into the job market. **I had to mentally prepare myself to get in front of people.**

GINNY: Did you stay in the same role, same industry?

JACKIE: No. **I successfully repurposed the best of my skills.** I went from one customer service industry to another segment of a different customer service industry.

GINNY: What were the factors you considered including any trade-offs or compromises?

JACKIE: I had to have the willingness to change the environment in which I was successful. I went from a large corporate environment to a more locally-focused, mid-sized setting. I compromised on salary but being open tipped the scales to be a great move. I have more work-life balance, more time, and the ability to keep my newly established workout routine. I have a shortened commute and less overnight travel. **Plus, I have the knowledge that I'm in a position where I'm impacting people's lives, which was high on my priority list.** Two equally lucrative offers came in at the same time I had this offer. I thought it was going to be a bigger deal than it really was. While I was interviewing, I thought I'd have a lot of angst if multiple offers came in at the same time but when it happened, the decision was clear.

GINNY: How did you get the job?

JACKIE: I made the introduction through a network connection and by stepping outside my comfort zone. When my contact asked me to be on the board of a non-profit organization, I sent him my resume even though I wasn't asked to do that.

GINNY: What was instrumental to your success?

JACKIE: Being organized about my search, stepping outside my comfort zone, and forcing myself into an asking mode instead of a directing mode, which was what I was used to: being in charge as director. I forced myself to do more listening after having been in a role of talking.

GINNY: What did you do to keep your spirits up?

JACKIE: Spending time with family, friends, and a great coach. And I hope that makes it into the article.

GINNY: Aside from What you did (all the action you took), Who did you have to be, meaning what inner characteristics did you call upon?

JACKIE: **A good listener. Someone who stepped out of her comfort zone. Open to unknown possibilities. Kind of fearless. Willing to bare your soul.** When you are sitting in an interview you are exposing a part of yourself and being vulnerable in a way I hadn't had to do in 35 years. **I had to be brave**, and answer tough questions. I had to be articulate and professional saying what I was uncomfortable saying. **I was also diligent and tenacious**; those are traits that I was known to have.

New Perspectives

GINNY: What is your satisfaction level with your new job?

JACKIE: I've been in my new position for seven months and my satisfaction level is high.

GINNY: What do you find challenging?

JACKIE: The learning curve in a new field, forming a new network of colleagues, and learning a new culture.

GINNY: What do you find rewarding?

JACKIE: **The environment of the customer being at the center of everything I do.** I like a customer-driven organization. The people —with whom I work, whom I serve, my supervisors, and the board of directors— are thankful, appreciative, and recognize that I want the best for them, and I like that. Individual contributions are recognized in a smaller environment. **It's personally rewarding to see that my decisions have such an impact on other people's lives.**

GINNY: What is the most significant thing you learned from the whole experience?

JACKIE: **I will try to never be as unprepared for dealing with a significant life change.** Having a resume ready. Having a network of support people. Asking for help. I have integrated these things into my life now. Be prepared for a life change because it could come at a moment's notice. I did a resume-writing class for my team and told my staff to be prepared and ready during performance appraisals. I never listened to my own advice.

GINNY: Is there anything you wish you knew when you were going through it?

JACKIE: I had a low three weeks before the offers came in and then within the same 10 days –from a Monday of one week to a Wednesday of the next– three offers came in. I wish I could have believed what all the professionals said: **to keep at it and something good will come**. I wish I had listened to it, but I didn't believe it in my heart. I got frustrated and despondent.

Advice for Career Changers

GINNY: What is your advice for someone who is going through a layoff?

JACKIE: Be thoughtful and organized about establishing a plan for yourself. Ask for help.

Special thanks to Jackie for sharing her experience. Previously appearing as "Genevieve" in three prior articles, Jackie is paying it forward by proactively offering to help those who are now in job search mode.

For more on how Jackie owned her power to create a successful outcome, read the article [Life After Layoff](#), found [here](#);

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