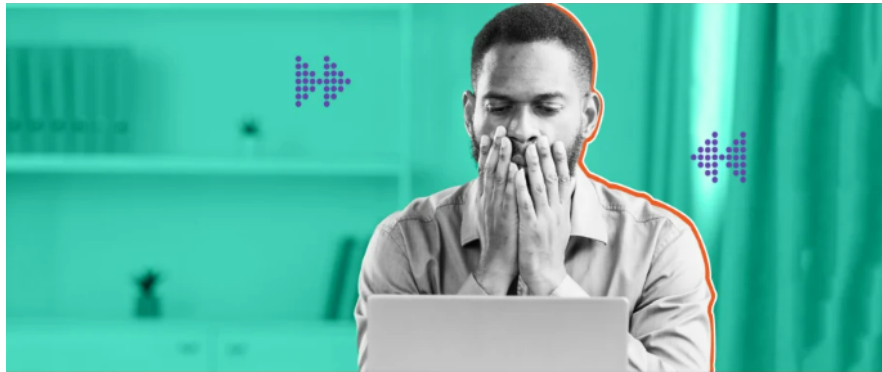


FAST COMPANY

20 ways to handle professional loss in an uncertain marketplace

Now is the time to reflect and pivot boldly toward your continued career growth and success.

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It's natural to be anxious or overwhelmed about a recent setback that you or your company may be experiencing in today's fluctuating economy. At some point in their career, everyone faces some type of hardship—whether it's overcoming a job loss or failing to make a deal stick with a highly regarded potential client.

However, once you assess where things went wrong, you must dust yourself off and make any necessary improvements that will help you stay on track and set you up to be ready for brighter days ahead. In times like these, it's even more important to stay connected with trusted mentors and colleagues as you reflect on ways to improve both your personal and professional brand. We asked 20 [Fast Company Executive Board](#) members to each share ways to encourage business professionals not to panic or give up on their short- and long-term goals no matter what happens.

1. REVISIT IDEAS AND UNPACK WHAT WENT WRONG.

Businesses are brimming with a graveyard of great initiatives that were abandoned as pressure loomed for immediate success. Before throwing the “baby out with the bathwater,” revisit these ideas

to examine your previous efforts. It's more efficient and cost-effective to uncover lessons from previously low-performing programs before you jump into the next new project or hop on the latest trend. – [Stephanie Harris, PartnerCentric](#)

2. TAKE TIME TO PROCESS AND DETERMINE NON-NEGOTIABLES.

Give yourself time to process your response, and explore why certain emotions wash over you. That will give you clues about your non-negotiables and no-thank-yous as you evaluate new opportunities. Take time to write down what you're looking for in your next role, and revisit it often as you get swept up in the search process. You can grieve the loss but move forward knowing growth lies ahead. – [Karen Budell, Totango](#)

3. FOCUS ON YOUR STRENGTHS.

Figure out what your strengths are—and I don't just mean hard skills. What are your soft skills that will translate across industries, jobs, and organizations? Ask your colleagues, bosses, clients, friends, and family members what they think you do best. You'll learn a lot about yourself this way, which will help you better "sell" yourself when you're looking for that next big opportunity. – [Emily Howard, Cheetah Strategy](#)

4. ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS AND STAY CONNECTED.

In my experience, during job loss or a failed business deal, it's easy to panic and feel defeated. Instead, I reevaluate my priorities, update my resume or portfolio, and expand my network by attending industry events or connecting with mentors. Seeking advice and upskilling helps me stay positive and embrace the opportunity for growth and new opportunities. – [Robert Nikic, Why Unified](#)

5. IDENTIFY YOUR OWN VALUE TO COMPANIES IN YOUR INDUSTRY.

Focus on the value you bring to the table. Companies create and reduce jobs based on market conditions. As long as you can create value that companies are interested in, that value proposition will enable you to get hired and promoted. So pay attention to the market since the value proposition needs to be maintained as markets keep changing. – [Sandeep Shilawat, ADI Infocon](#)

6. ATTEND INDUSTRY EVENTS AND LEARN TO COMMUNICATE BETTER.

Setbacks are a part of any successful career. Take the time to refocus on your efforts and develop new skill sets. Take courses or attend industry events, learn new strategies, develop better communication skills, and gain valuable insights. Taking actionable steps toward enhancing your expertise and knowledge base will help strengthen your professional portfolio over time. – [Brandon Pena, BrandON Media Group](#)

7. LEAN INTO YOUR OWN GRIT AND ENGAGE IN OPPORTUNITY.

Resilience is critical to long-term success. Setbacks are not uncommon and are inevitably part of a rich career journey. Lean into your community and your mentors for support and to network, but also lean into your own grit. Our own personal brand will carry us through when least expected. Keep your brand strong and cultivate your network at every opportunity. – [Glo Gordon, MATRIXX Software](#)

8. CONFIDENTLY REIMAGINE YOUR JOURNEY.

Going through a job loss is hard. Hang in there, stay positive, and believe that sometimes life's greatest setbacks will reveal life's biggest opportunities. Use this as an opportunity to reimagine your journey by doing the things you've wanted to do but haven't yet found the time for. For example, you could learn a new skill, network, or explore a new industry. Most of all, keep your head up and your confidence high. – [Kim Salem-Jackson, Akamai](#)

9. OFFER PRO-BONO SERVICES TO BUILD CLIENT TRUST.

At the start of COVID, active client projects and deals were suddenly put on hold. Our future seemed bleak. We invested our sudden free time in digital marketing efforts and engaged in pro-bono work for long-term clients. Ultimately, these efforts paid off. We were top-of-mind when clients were ready to engage, and new clients could better find us. These efforts have still paid off two years later. – [John Bernero, M3 Design](#)

10. FLIP YOUR FAILURE AS A PATH TO SUCCESS.

We all fail—and no one enjoys talking about it. We cannot stand failure. However, the top industry leaders do something different and it's a path to success. They see failure as a growth opportunity waiting to be harnessed because it teaches you how to pivot. They take enough time to talk about it, swiftly adapt, and even learn to fail faster. Finally, they identify what to change and how to be more impactful. – [Karl Giuseffi, Talent Plus Inc.](#)

11. FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCTS.

I remember the “dot-bomb” in 2000 when the first internet bubble burst and there were massive layoffs in which I was included. There was a lot of uncertainty about tech's future. However, I followed my instincts. I figured the internet wasn't going anywhere and it would be smart to stick with it until things improved. Your intuition is the smartest part of your brain, so follow your gut! – [Cheryl Contee, The Impact Seat Foundation](#)

12. WORK ON BEING WELL PREPARED.

Job loss can affect confidence, and the experience of job hunting in a tough environment is daunting. It is best to focus on the process and worry less about the outcome. Following a process with a resume, networking, and interview preparation is key. Interviewing is a skill in and of itself. Having knowledge and experience helps in the interview, but deliberate efforts must be taken to prepare well. – [Harish Srigiriraju, Verizon](#)

13. REFLECT, RESET, AND STRATEGIZE YOUR NEXT STEPS.

Experiencing a loss or disappointment can result in personal and professional growth if you allow yourself to lean into it. I advise people to treat a professional loss as a teacher and reflect on what they have learned about themselves and the business. One upside to losing a job is that you have more time to think, network, and reset so that you can move forward in the right direction. – [Tracy Lawrence, The Lawrence Advisory](#)

14. BE ADAPTIVE, CREATIVE, AND CURIOUS.

An adaptive mindset allows you to course correct and persevere in the face of job loss and other economic challenges because there is always another way. Be creative about other ways to reach your goals rather than staying fixed on the one path you thought you had to take. I expect setbacks and, when they come, my adaptive mindset allows me to get curious, not furious. – [Liza Streiff, Knopman Marks Financial Training](#)

15. LEAD WITH GRATITUDE ON YOUR BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS GAINED.

Although it's sometimes easier said than done, lead with gratitude for skills developed, experience gained, and colleagues you learned from—you get the picture. From there, it's easier to brush yourself off and more clearly see those takeaways as the key to securing future possibilities. Shifting your mindset in this way enables you to leverage the positives, even in a tough or uncertain time. – [Nicole Marra, Fixer Advisory](#)

16. MAKE INDIVIDUAL (AND TEAM) IMPROVEMENTS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS.

When faced with a job loss or lost business deal during a financial downturn, remember that economies are cyclical. History has taught us that the best way to get through it is to streamline operations while also investing in technologies that position you for success when the economy cycles upward again. Improve individual productivity to save now and position your staff to take on more when things improve. – [Christina Robbins, Digitech Systems](#)

17. STAY FOCUSED AND GOAL-ORIENTED.

Tough times may feel all-consuming in the moment, but they are temporary. As difficult as it is to face a setback or uncertainty, it's important to stay focused on your goals and take consistent, incremental

steps toward achieving them. That may be as simple as meeting a mentor for coffee, updating your resume, or reading the latest articles about your industry. Every step counts. – [Kermit Randa](#), [Symphony Talent](#)

18. STRIVE TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES.

It's only a loss if you don't learn from it. Ask yourself, why did it fall through? How could I have avoided it? Was it a good fit for me in the first place? Once you identify these things, you can make a plan going forward to make sure you don't repeat the same disappointments. This way you can reframe every loss as a win. Never let a loss get you down—it's part of the growing process! – [Ryan Crownholm](#), [Crown Capital Adventures Inc.](#)

19. CELEBRATE YOUR EFFORT AND THE EXPERIENCE.

It can be challenging to remain positive when you've poured your heart and resources into getting a contract or business deal you felt so confident about getting. Celebrate your effort and ask yourself what you learned from the experience. Keep in perspective that even though you didn't win the business, you were a solid contender at that level. Losing deals is a part of the business. – [Ginni Saraswati](#), [Ginni Media](#)

20. EMBRACE FAILURE AND EXUDE BOLDNESS.

Failures and rejections are master teachers in life. After two great ventures, I faced a massive failure in my third and nearly went bankrupt. An experience like that shakes the ground under your feet, and when you start seeing "life" in a different view, it changes everything. Life is all about 1. learning, 2. impact creation, 3. embracing failure, and 4. experiencing the journey. Success teaches us to be cautious; failure teaches us to be bold. – [Bharath Yadla](#), [Workato](#)