

## 6 IMPORTANT BEHAVIORS AFTER YOU SURVIVE THE LAYOFF

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When I answered the phone, I heard Jeff's deep sigh of both relief and concern. Amidst record unemployment, during the 2020 pandemic, Jeff had survived his company's first round of layoffs. His emotions were mixed. On one hand, he was relieved to still have a job, but he was also sad for his co-workers who didn't, his company's leaders who are making difficult decisions and the impact on the culture of an organization he loves.

Many times, we are given advice on what to do if we are laid off from a job, but little advice is offered to the ones who continue on in the company after a layoff. What should you do to support your organization, its leaders and protect your own job? Jeff was unsure what to do next, so this is what we discussed:

1. **Grieve privately.** At least, don't grieve at work. Your leaders have just made the most difficult decision of their careers. They need your support and positivity, not your sadness and criticism. Limit your feedback about the situation until they are ready to discuss it.

2. **Work twice as hard as you ordinarily do.** Likely, the work is still as much, just with fewer people. You will probably be asked to take on more responsibility. However, that is more opportunity for you to both keep your job and grow within the organization.
3. **Be positive and optimistic about the future.** Have a “can do” attitude, instead of “the sky is falling.” For the company to get back on its feet, they will need people who believe they can, regardless of external circumstances.
4. **Help your friends who were laid off.** Who do you know that is hiring? Who can you introduce them to in your network that might help them?
5. **Do your part to strengthen the culture.** Even the best workplace cultures suffer when people are laid off. While the company would like to avoid layoffs, sometimes they are unavoidable. However, a layoff often diminishes trust between employees and leadership. Keep communication open and honest and remind others of the purpose, mission and values of the organization that need to be preserved and strengthened.
6. **Don’t be naive.** These are difficult days and while you may have survived round one of layoffs, if the situation does not improve, eventually, there could be more. Work hard where you are to make the greatest contribution you can. Save money and keep your network healthy in the event of a future layoff.

The lay-off was a reality check and a wake-up call for Jeff. His natural optimism led him to believe his company would make it without the drastic measure of a layoff. In these unprecedented times, it is likely many organizations will experience layoffs. If you are like Jeff and are retained, think about your role in helping the company both survive and thrive for the future. Your actions could either derail or boost your career. Choose your responses wisely. Remember, if you were retained, your organization is counting on you to help them return to success.