

Mission: Career (Checklist)
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A military mission does not take place without prior planning, training, and current intelligence. Everyone should treat their career as a mission – with prior planning, needed training, and updated intelligence. Using this premise of a career as a personal mission, several years ago I started a checklist of advice for federal civilians whose jobs were threatened by downsizing. When I came across the checklist recently, I noticed that the advice could easily fit anyone who may face a job loss or change (that’s basically everyone). Below is an updated version to help you take on ownership of your career mission.

1. Assume responsibility for your own career development.
 - a. Update official personnel records before any reductions in force, outsourcing, transfers, PCS, or other actions take place.
 - b. Write/update your own resume and have it reviewed by the closest military family center.
 - c. Become informed of choices or benefits that you have if your position is cut/outsourced or if you qualify for unemployment when PCSing.

2. Examine your financial situation.
 - a. Work with the military family center staff to develop a financial plan to address transitional adjustments to your finances.
 - b. Concentrate on reducing debt levels.
 - c. Become informed of any retirement or separation benefits and how they fit in with the TSP, Social Security, and/or your other retirement sources.

3. Increase your knowledge and skills in marketable areas.
 - a. Expand your computer knowledge and skills.
 - b. Become familiar with the current labor market and learn what skills are in demand..
 - c. Broaden your knowledge base outside of your own specialty. (Generalists are actually “multi-specialists.”)

4. Consider taking college courses or training to update or add credentials. Try to acquire national certification or licensure in at least one area.
 - a. Explore local community offerings.
 - b. Ask your education center for advice.
 - c. Consider distance learning or courses over the Internet.

5. Start or increase professional networking.

- a. Join appropriate professional organizations.
 - b. Network with others at conferences or through e-mail.
 - c. Renew former associations that were previously helpful.
6. Don't burn bridges.
- a. Make an effort to avoid clashes with co-workers and other staff.
 - b. Maintain your own integrity. Let silence speak for you, if necessary.
 - c. Realize that you may end up working with or for that person you currently don't like.
7. Explore other careers or jobs.
- a. Assess what you truly love to spend time doing. Can you find a job doing that?
 - b. Try your hand at something new – but only volunteer or work part-time to start and with proper approval.
 - c. Learn the pros and cons of becoming an independent contractor.
8. Be as helpful as you can when others need your help.
- a. Supervisors should try to accommodate career-broadening and exploration efforts of staff.
 - b. Be willing to devote your own expertise and time to help others involved in career changes or job searches.
 - c. Share what you learn with others.
9. Take care of yourself, physically and emotionally.
- a. Develop your own stress reduction plan and use it.
 - b. Take time each day to enjoy simple pleasures.
 - c. Watch your diet and get plenty of exercise and rest.
10. Review this checklist at least annually.
- a. Never assume that your current job will always be there.
 - b. Have a minimum of six months of income saved to ensure that you can financially withstand an expected job loss.
 - c. Keep everything current – your resume, your work records, your skills, your networking contacts.

The Military Spouse Corporate Career Network (MSCCN – www.msccn.org) is a nonprofit corporate direct connect program dedicated to providing career opportunities for military spouses.