

Self-employment—Success for Downsized Workers?

by Donna Messer

According to a study done by DBM and The Thomson Corporation, 42% of the 7,400 Canadian workers surveyed, lost jobs in the technology sector last year compared to a global average of 25%. Almost half (41%) of the unemployed technology workers lost jobs in Canada's telecommunications industry compared with just 5% globally.

What does this mean to those workers who have been downsized? It means that they need to re-evaluate their skills and consider alternative career opportunities that will support those talents and skills. Many of these workers have not had the chance to consider their options because of the need to generate an ongoing income.

Literally thousands attracted to the telecommunications sector during the tech boom are now looking for meaningful employment. Many have advanced technology skills needed by other sectors of the Canadian economy.

One option for these downsized skilled individuals is self-employment. Being self-employed is a scary situation for many who have only experienced the team atmosphere of large corporations. With self-employment comes the worry of being responsible for everything from finances to marketing—however, there is a light at the end of the tunnel!

Self-employment means that you are never unemployed, that you are responsible for your own success or failure, and that you can determine just how you want your business to grow. With self-employment comes the ability to say that you own a small company that provides the following services... and they can be all of those services that you provided when you were employed in the telecommunications field!

Other small business owners outside your field would welcome your strengths and be willing to trade off on the skills you might lack when it comes to building that new business. Perhaps you are not great when it comes to administration—I guarantee there is a talented administrator out there who has also chosen self-employment. If you work together, share talents

and form strategic alliances—which aren't just for large corporations by the way—you will succeed. Remember, **TEAM** is the acronym for **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore!

As the owner of a small business begun years ago because of my inability to find a job—I can't recommend strongly enough the opportunity to consider self-employment, entrepreneurship, and owning your own business.

While there are many options to consider, and quoting DBM, you should consider all of them, they include non-traditional career paths like joining the competitor, courting customers and vendors, considering contracting or self-employment, embracing entrepreneurship, simplifying lifestyle and shifting down, trying temporary employment or combining two jobs into one full-time opportunity.

According to DBM, "networking was the source of new employment for 68% of Canadians in the recent survey." It was suggested that Canadian firms provide opportunities for their employees to learn the effective art of networking before companies need to downsize, offering immediate and appropriate training to handle the challenges they might face in the future.

If you have been downsized and haven't investigated the potential of small business ownership, I encourage you to consider combining your talents with others in similar situations and form a Business Solutions Team (BST).

At ConnectUs, we work with many of the training programs offered through HRDC. These programs include Self-Employment Benefits, Consulting as a Career, and many other very valuable courses that will assist you in obtaining the help you need. These courses are intended to provide you with the additional skills you need to re-enter the workforce. In our opinion, there is no reason for anyone to be unemployed—in today's economy, we need to be creative and if the job isn't there, find a way to start a business that needs that product or service.

Thinking outside the box, becoming a lateral thinker is something that we of-

fer at ConnectUs—we can help you form a team, create a synergy, and build a profitable business—not alone, but with the help of others who have been in similar circumstances.

We begin the process with an event called "Network to Get Work"—this isn't a job find club—it is the opportunity to meet with like-minded individuals who are willing to share their resources. At ConnectUs, there has to be a win on both sides of every introduction, so no one leaves feeling abused. Once you have determined that you like our style of business development, you can sign on for a Solutions Team evaluation—this is a one-day workshop to determine your skills and your fit with a potential team.

If you think that self-employment might be the answer for you—consider what we know to be the secret to our success. Build the team, use your combined strengths, and target a market that needs those skills.

For details on self-employment benefits programs contact your local HRDC office. For more information on joining a Business Solutions Team or attending a Network to Get Work event, check the website at www.connectuscanada.com

DBM is one of the worlds largest providers of strategic human resource solutions and Thomson Corporation a \$7.8 billion global leader providing integrated information solutions to business and professional customers. For more information on DBM: www.dbmcanada.com. **SBCM**

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