



Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

CAREER STRATEGIES | MARCH 10, 2009

Windows Into Lives After a Layoff

BY ALINA DIZIK

Rachel Levy had 10 years of marketing experience and an M.B.A. from a top business school when she was laid off in July. Rather than keep her feelings about the situation private, Ms. Levy started a blog to chronicle her life post-layoff. Her first post was about her best new job opportunity: baby sitting.

The former marketing director at the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston shared with readers that she had earned \$102 from six hours of caring for three young children. It was a far cry from her old salary. "But -- end of the day -- I just have to look at it as cash in my hand," wrote Ms. Levy, 37, on her eponymous blog.

As layoffs increase, some job seekers are coping by sharing the woes of their searches electronically. For many, it's therapeutic and a way to connect with others in the same situation. And for some, it's turned into a way to garner job leads.

The economy has shifted so quickly, experts say, that blogging your way through a layoff has become one way to make sense of the fallout. "People are just trying to get some grounding on what's happening," says Jennifer Chatman, professor of organizational behavior at University of California-Berkeley's Haas School of Business. "It seems only natural [to] look for opportunities to vent."

Ms. Levy says blogging has helped her find a sense of community, as well as show potential employers that she's keeping up with online marketing trends (a recent post discussed how to use Twitter applications). "It gives me something to talk about in my interviews," says Ms. Levy. She's had several networking meetings as a result of strangers perusing her blog. During interviews and meetings, Ms. Levy brings up marketing strategies that she's kept up with and blogged about as a way to show she is on top of her game.

For some, blogging about a layoff helps with staying focused and on track in the search. Sawa Horibe, 37, started tryoutforlife.blogspot.com because she wanted to figure out the next step in her career and chronicle her thoughts.

"It's difficult to see your own progress, and that alone can discourage you," says Ms. Horibe, who was downsized in November after more than six years of managing Web analytics at Florida Power & Light Co. in Juno Beach. Since starting her blog, Ms. Horibe has examined her own career path and decided to pursue environment-related positions.

What's more, the community of onlookers has rallied around many bloggers. Rachel Steinberg, 27, a former public relations account executive in San Francisco, says a blog reader who found her site, recentlylaidoff.com, has helped connect her with contract work during her search. "I had never met him before, but we're acquaintances now and he still checks in and asks how I'm doing," says Ms. Steinberg, who was laid off in January.

The blogs of the unemployed also draw the interest of other job-seeking readers, which can be a benefit to those who feel alienated after a job loss. Norm Elrod, who started Joblessandless.com after he was laid off for the fourth time in eight years, says his blog makes him feel less isolated. He's found the community of readers keeps him engaged and

integrated.

Many of the blogs also act as a repository for résumés and work samples, making them an easy-to-find spot for résumé materials. Many let users download the blogger's résumé and access portfolios. Ms. Steinberg's blog directs readers to her LinkedIn profile and uses the posts to showcase her writing. "I try to keep it professional and I try not to get overly explicit," she says.

But not all people follow that protocol and some bloggers have angered former employers with their candid writing. After Luke Kilpatrick, of Half Moon Bay, Calif., wrote on [lukek.ca](#) that he "wanted to find a really great job that didn't give layoffs as a Christmas bonus" his former employer got angry, he says, and demanded that the pricey Macbook Pro that he was allowed to keep in lieu of severance be returned. Still he says he wasn't deterred. "The more you try to hide stuff, the more people are going to dig," says Mr. Kilpatrick, who landed a Web developer job three weeks after the incident.

While many laid off bloggers find leads and camaraderie, experts question whether being so open will help land a job. Even a mostly upbeat blog can have dangerous slipups, say recruiters. And one wrong post can hurt a candidate's chance of getting a valuable interview.

Berkeley professor Ms. Chatman warns that having too many personal details available online can be "easily misinterpreted by a potential employer who is interested in hiring the professional you." Employers might use the information to weed out applicants before conducting an interview.

What's more, Susan Strayer, a career counselor based in Washington, D.C., warns that keeping a blog can turn into a significant time commitment with unknown rewards. "Blogging is addictive," she says. If you spend too much time writing entries, "it takes away from the search," says Ms. Strayer, who is also a human-resources executive for a major hotel company.

Dan Kaplan, a partner at CTPartners, a New York executive search firm, says sometimes the information can be useful to recruiters. He says he can skim a personal blog and quickly figure out "whether the person is strategic in how they view the world or [if they're] suffering a bit from victim's syndrome." Carefully written blogs can make candidates stand out, Mr. Kaplan says. "If it somehow extends your personal brand, there's nothing wrong with sharing your view," he adds.

Reading posts by job-hunting bloggers can be an effective recruiting tool. Taylor Marie Baker, human-resources manager at SHN Consulting Engineers & Geologists in Eureka, Calif., says skimming blogs is one tool she can use to reach out to more candidates rather than simply relying on online job boards. "We're located in a very rural, isolated environment," she says. "The more people I find outside the area, the better."

Write to Alina Dizik at alina.dizik@dowjones.com

Copyright 2008 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law.

For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit

www.djreprints.com