



The bizarre world of unemployment

Reported by Colleen Brzowski, CIS

On Tuesday, November 10th, SITE Chicago members joined a Zoom call for the Spark & Speak session focusing on “The Bizarre World of Unemployment” moderated by Rick Hud.

As Rick began the call, he shared that several of us have been through something like this before, when the overall economy caused furloughs and layoffs much like what we saw during the global financial crisis of 2008/2009. However, what makes this so different now is that there are simply *so many* affected in the industry and that the devastation was so deep. We are dealing with something that no one has ever seen before, and because of that, it’s ok to feel like you don’t have the answers, because no one does.

The key is to stay positive, and have confidence that we will come out of this; there are better days ahead. In fact, we were energized that day with some positive news about the Pfizer vaccine that brings us one step closer to recovery. With a distinct ebb and flow of feelings that this pandemic has created, it can be challenging. Several agreed that before, and somewhat unconsciously, having a job made them feel like they had a purpose and now, if they are furloughed or laid off, there are mornings when they struggle to find what their purpose is for that day or week. Others described a feeling of “FOMO” (the fear of missing out) when they hear of things taking place that they aren’t involved with for the first time in many years. Yet others spoke to the survivor’s guilt of being the ones whom kept their jobs while their friends

and colleagues didn't, and, the stress that goes along with that. Again, it's understanding these are natural feelings and it's ok to feel them. The success comes from *how* you deal with them.

The conversation focused a lot around being grateful for what we have and what we can do, as well as being grateful to opportunities made available to us. It was echoed throughout the entire group that no matter how frustrated or challenging things have been through the pandemic, there are definitely silver linings to celebrate. Everyone was extremely appreciative that the unrequested downtime was a benefit that has allowed them time to do things that they were just too busy to make a priority before. Things like cooking, gardening (and being there to see the results), golfing, painting, volunteering, tackling special projects, continuing their education and simply relaxing have now become part of the routine and not a rare exception. And, for a couple individuals, they finally realized that their health was paramount and took this time to get surgeries that they kept putting off until they were less busy. And, they were truly following Doctor's orders on a slow & steady recovery. When do we ever do that?

People were very appreciative of their involvement with SITE because it has been providing them with relationships that are real, with connections to people who are compassionate about the situation we are in. They may not have answers, but they understand and are a great sounding board. As one individual expressed, it's great to have opportunities like these Spark & Speak sessions to see everyone, even if on a screen, or to be able to pick up the phone and call someone just to say hello.

As talk turned to those looking for employment, everyone agreed that relationships are going to be key to getting back to work. We know that competition is intense as there are so many people looking for jobs right now. The lack of response from Hiring Managers can be frustrating, but it's important to understand that they also don't have an easy job right now with the flood of applications that are being sent in. Again, this is where those relationships that you have formed over the years, especially through SITE, are so important. Many felt that companies already have people in mind for coveted positions and will hire someone they know or someone who comes highly recommended from in their network before they blindly hire from an application that was submitted online. This is also why it is important to have an up to date and strong profile on LinkedIn to help connect those dots. It was also noted that companies are still in the business of being successful and are using this time to evaluate their operation which may mean restructuring roles, responsibilities and team members. It's unfortunate, but if you were a business owner, you would likely do the same. The pandemic has created an extremely rare opportunity where the cream of the crop is available, so it's wise to do to consider changes that take advantage of this unique situation. And for companies that are interested in these individuals, it was suggested to connect now to start informal conversations so that when things come back, you aren't scrambling to try to evaluate who would be a good fit for your team.

It's also important to keep yourself top of mind by staying in touch – not just when you are going after a job – but all the time. In a city like Chicago where the supplier market is well populated, there will be times when friends are competing for the same job. Regardless of this, it's important to support each other and help each other out however we can. We are seeing job posts being tagged for the SITE chapter in the geographic location of where the job is, along with #SITEstrong to help make people aware. It's also being encouraged that hospitality/incentive jobs be posted on the Events Industry Council job board <https://cmpjobs.eventscouncil.org/jobs/> to provide a more focused approach for job seekers and those hiring.

We are also hearing that some people are reinventing themselves and looking at moving to other industries. We have many skills that are so transferrable, but the challenge lies in getting your foot in the door if all you've known is our industry. People are realizing that they need to use their networks to expand their connections beyond who they already know to help get that "in" with a new industry. Overall, you need to make sure that that you are fit for the company and culture and that you are valued for what you bring to the table. Leaving an industry that you've known for so long can be challenging, but it's important to be open to new opportunities that can parlay your passions.

One of the biggest takeaways was that if you lose faith, remember it's only temporary and you have a huge network of supporters who are there to listen and help lift you back up, especially with your SITE family.

Rick ended the call with an amazing quote he saw in a newsletter from Robert Stevenson, a professional speaker and best-selling author, and in closing, we wanted to share that with you here for some inspiration.

No one starts off GREAT.
Every teacher was once a pupil.
Every doctor was once an intern.
Every superstar was once a rookie.
Every boss was once a new employee.

So, quit doubting yourself.

Confidence is like a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it gets. The most beautiful thing you can wear is confidence. Always remember, self-confidence is the foundation for success and achievement.

Doubt kills more dreams than failure will.
If you are going to doubt something, doubt your limits.
Don't let a bad day make you feel like you have a bad life.
Your belief can move mountains, but your doubt can create them.
When you doubt your power, you give power to your doubt.

A self-fulfilling prophecy is any positive or negative expectation about circumstances, events, or people that may affect a person's behavior so those expectations come true. In the case of DOUBT ... self-doubt is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you think you can't ... you won't.

BUT ... If you think it is impossible ... it is.

If you second guess a decision, then you take energy and resources away from making the decision succeed.

There will always be people who doubt you;
Don't you be one of them.

I don't care how "LOW YOU ARE" ... YOUR BEST is yet to come!!!