

May 8, 2020

I have given a great deal of thought to the consequences and issues surrounding the drastic shift in working life. In an instant, I went from being office-centric to what amounts to being under house arrest. Like most of us, I am relieved and grateful to be healthy. Like many others I have experienced a fair amount of anxiety. The loss of life, reduction in productivity, decreases in capital markets and inability to go out and enjoy many of my stress-relievers has taken a toll. It has also prompted a great deal of deeper-than-usual thinking.

I have had a huge reduction in the time that my commute, dressing for an office and planning for my workday life usually requires. The questions of insight and accomplishment have been dogging me for weeks. I have accomplished more in a shorter period of time each day - GENERALLY - not always. But, what have I learned?

Have my skills expanded or regressed? How has this COVID-19 experience changed my professional skills and outlook? And, what do I do to communicate the new outlook and inventory of changed skills?

As an honest person, I also had to admit many of these changes did not immediately translate into much that seemed positive. How do I address and answer for the problems I encountered? How do I sum up my time working from home?

Employers will ask about how everyone handled the sudden changes of 2020. Whether it is my current or future employer, I need to be able to answer the basic question about my time as a remote worker - Did I meet my goals? What else did I do to demonstrate value or prepare to expand my responsibilities? What did I do? We will all have to answer some version of this question someday.

We begin this piece by addressing the lucky employees - those who are returning to an intact job without interruption of salary or benefits.

Next, we move on to employees who are facing reductions in salary and hours. Followed by people who will be looking for a job. The purpose of the questions that we suggest are to help begin that crucial conversation that we all have with ourselves - what just happened? And, how do I re-tell a story that will help me with my employment challenges?

Our next section is a series of questions. In a somewhat timid manner, we begin by trying to identify anything that is positive. We also ask about tangible skills that have been developed, deployed or expanded resulting from the changes in working conditions. We encourage the reader to question their perspective - how has it developed or expanded with the changes we are experiencing?

Next comes the hard question. How do I frame the negative outcomes so that my current and/or future employer will be able to hear them in a way that will enhance and not diminish their perception of me? We have tried to offer some thought-provoking tips for framing the negative situation and viewing it from the solution that was ultimately found.

*The final step in this process is to update resumes and LinkedIn profiles, **whether looking for a job or not.** We have provided a sample of how to simply update a resume without living through that soul-wrenching process that may be needed to address a changed employment landscape.*

Lastly, we have an accompanying piece with a couple of stories to share with you about how other people are trying to frame their COVID—19 time at home. These are human stories designed to illustrate how a few people have addressed their challenges and moved on in a more productive manner than they had expected.

We hope that all of our TMASF Connects members, their teams and families healthy and safe.

Kimberly B. Martinson, CAE
CEO, TMASF Connects

Resuming Employment: Going Back or Looking Forward

Returning to Your Office & Job – All Essentially Intact

If you are one of the fortunate people who will return to your company and office and need only to navigate new ways of socially distancing TOGETHER rather than apart – congratulations to you! With an estimated 20,000,000 people out of work (92,000 in the Bay Area and 500,000 in California alone, respectively), this is great time to be gracious and generous.

If you haven't [mentored](#), [volunteered](#) or helped anyone with their career – never has the need been greater. Check out a [sampling](#) of the services that could probably use your help. Also, if you are a member of a professional or trade group – now may be the time to give back more than ever and see what they need.

At some point, a supervisor is bound to ask what did you accomplish during the year? Specifically, during your time away from the normal office routine. Now is a good time to start making an assessment, polish a response and be ready to share as needed. Even if your story about being at home is just for you – reframing situations you've faced during Q1 and Q2 2020 is bound to be helpful.

Returning to Work but with Changed or Reduced Hours

Again, the key word here is RETURNING. As bad as reductions can be, you are still one of the fortunate ones who have a place of employment to go.

Although reductions in hours and pay are stressful, hopefully these changes will only be temporary and will continue to include benefits or other forms of compensation. If so, perhaps negotiating with your employer to [work from home](#) a couple days per week can alleviate commute, lunch and other costs associated with working away from your home. After all, you may have been working remotely during the shelter-in-place order already and demonstrated that your team is able to continue to work efficiently and effectively when outside a standard work routine.

If these options are not available to you, then looking for additional work may prompt a job search. The SF Office of Economic and Workforce Development is currently hosting hour-long, bi-weekly [Rapid Response Layoff Assistance](#) webinars on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Regardless, you will need to frame the situation in the best possible light. Resources for those changing careers or seeking a new career often intersect, so continue reading to find out more.

It's gone and time to start over

There is no way to make this OK if you are now looking for a job. Almost everyone, at some point, has faced the issue of needing to find work. With predicted 18% unemployment rate in California by the Newsom Administration, this is a hard time and there isn't much to comfort the job seeker.

Since we are in San Francisco and there are an abundance of services and resources to help job seekers – we are in a better position than many others. Still, now is the time to dig deep and find your own future. Everyone will understand losing a job at this time. But, if you can differentiate yourself with a good story of accomplishment and with a skill or experience expansion at this time, you will be in a stronger position than most.

For all of us, it's time to ask some questions, perhaps reframe our [LinkedIn](#) profiles, take a moment and reach out to colleagues and associates to begin the art of social and professional networking in our vastly changed society.

We all pepper ourselves with questions and sometimes it is better to just write out the answers. Below are a few ideas of what might help you frame your story of COVID-19. Remember, truth must come first with all answers. How you choose to frame them to yourself and communicate it out to others should try to focus on the positive.

Everyone can gripe – it takes no talent or special training. Finding the palatable, the retrievable and the bearable and creating them to help form a stronger version of you takes talent and reflects what is special about you.

Me, Myself, and I

There are so many possible stories that can arise from the shelter-in-place. Depending upon how long you are sheltered, the stories will undoubtedly develop and change. This piece is designed to get a conversation started by you, with you and for you.

Here are a few questions that I ask myself and urge my staff to contemplate on occasion:

What was the positive that I managed to create or learn? In addition to fulfilling my responsibilities, what else did I do?

- Learned new technology like video and screen sharing
- Enhanced communication skills via phone and video
- Learned to work independently
- Found new ways to collaborate creatively
- Became more patient and polite
- Developed better listening skills
- Took “multi-tasking” to a new level
- Begun or completed online coursework
- Volunteered for extra projects
- Developed a new appreciation for correct *feng shui* or home workspace tranquility

What improved me or changed my perspective as I continue to develop my career?

- I am able to work independently (not in isolation) and be productive
- I learned to trust my gut and confidently communicate my thoughts
- I took the initiative to study news, follow stories and trends that I had not previously pursued, thus rounding out and expanding my view of the world
- Through the sadness and death of COVID-19, I reaffirmed my commitment to living each day fully and participating at my highest level

Framed or Framer?

How do I frame the less than desirable outcomes?

Remember, you should be telling the truth, but your words and tone matter—see our accompanying [Satellite Stories](#) for some inspiration!

I Experienced...

Loss of purpose or direction

Framed and Explained as...

Learned coping skills that led to regaining sense of purpose

Expanded purpose/direction after critical reflection

Shared thoughts with other team members or supervisors and began a conversation that led to increased understanding and providing empathy

Felt adrift and floundering

Made a conscious effort to reach out to others in the organization and keep social skills intact or expand network

Added value to my part of the work through creating additional services, programs, and features

Difficulty concentrating

Found coping skills to integrate with my business life – exercise, setting boundaries within my workspace and adhering to them

Developed new ways of listening and responding with increased immediacy and accuracy

Ready for a new challenge with freshly honed skills

Irritation with changes in routine

Reinvented my daily schedule while working within a remote team framework

Ventured beyond my comfort zone and substituted what was available for what might have been wanted

Telling Your Story

Once your questions have been asked and the issues addressed, what next?

In a world of technology and social distancing, your [LinkedIn](#) profile is a great way to update your skills and share your professional experience with others even when not actively looking a job. Or, if needing a job is the issue – LinkedIn is a great place to post a fresh and recently polished resume. While you're there, join and connect with other professionals on TMASF Connects [Career Network](#) and participate in online discussions presented by our [Career Program](#).

I will forever argue that the “soft” skills developed while in confinement should be added to a resume. We should address the impacts of COVID-19 on our business lives and the changes that resulted to our personal being. Also, whether returning to your place of employment or not, a performance review is somewhere on the horizon. Sharing your story of how you coped and ultimately contributed to your professional or personal environment may inspire others. Being able to inventory strengths and weaknesses is a significant skill for anyone in the workforce.

If your resume does not have a “Highlight” or “Summary of Professional Responsibilities” type of paragraph, consider adding one. I always put a brief statement followed by my employment, education and volunteer history. The rule about a succinct one-page resume made more sense when we lived in a paper world.

Get the important information about you out. Keep it concise, but don't leave out this important moment. Remember, every single one of us who sheltered in place and is still working or looking for work through no fault of their own has developed a new set of skills. Tell your story while it's fresh!

On the following pages, we have included a resume template and compiled some resources that can help you enhance and build a stronger resume.

Whatever is happening, we wish you well. Please [visit](#) us and check our ever-expanding [Career](#) section. Good luck!

Your Name

Cell Phone Number | Email Address | LinkedIn

Professional Summary

Your professional summary should be a concise statement of three to four lines to provide a broad overview of your professional background. This is the area where you should emphasize your skills, experience, and knowledge that you can offer to your potential employer. Here is an example:

My career has been highlighted with professional, academic and political appointments and successes. For 15 years, I have served ABC Company in progressively increasing positions of responsibility. I currently hold the position of XYZ Director and successfully negotiated shelter-in-place requirements while expanding client services amenable to electronic and remote work. Permanent changes will benefit future productivity and boost morale while strengthening the relationship between our services and our clients.

Skills/Highlights

List 6-8 technical and soft skills, especially those most relevant to the employers using short, brief phrases

Professional History/Work Experience

List most recent positions first

Company Name and Location

Title of your position, Dates of Employment

Summary of Responsibilities

List your job responsibilities in an engaging way by using strong action verbs like "Operated", "Developed", "Managed", "Enhanced" and in past tense if you are no longer employed there

Education

Institution Attended, Dates of Attendance

Degree/Diploma/Certificate/Credential

If education is not applicable, list relevant coursework, professional associations, conference, or on-the-job training

Other

Keep it relevant, short and descriptive – *why does this matter?*

Resume Template Builders

Starting off from scratch may be difficult, but the following resume builders can help you customize your resume that best fits your need:

- [Livecareer.com](https://www.livecareer.com)
- [Myperfectresume.com](https://www.myperfectresume.com)
- [Novoresume.com](https://www.novoresume.com)
- [Resume.com](https://www.resume.com)

Strengthen Your Own Resume

What if you already had a resume and just need to update it? Let's make sure your resume is a strong piece that stands out from the crowd with some of the following resources:

- The Muse has developed a [list](#) of strong, eye-catching action verbs that can help you show off your accomplishments
- [Creddle](https://www.creddle.com) can sync your resume information directly from LinkedIn to help you stay organized.
- [Canva](https://www.canva.com) is a great graphic designing tool that can help you customize your resume with a number of aesthetic, colorful templates.