

# INTRODUCTION

During tough economic times, the most important asset you have isn't your house or your savings. It's your job.

Like a lot of businesspeople, I have been influenced by Sun Tzu's classic *The Art of War*. I keep it on my desk at all times as a reminder that business is war, a sometimes brutal competition to succeed that you take seriously or not at all. Similarly, what goes on in the workplace is just one long season of *The Apprentice*, where each employee competes with the other to keep his job. Nasty stuff, eh? Well, work isn't a democracy. We don't get to vote for the way things should be, and nothing's very fair about how work works, either.

You're all pumped up with qualifications and experience? Great. Got a swanky Ivy League degree? How nice. Here's the cold hard truth: If you don't click with your boss, all that merit and pedigree won't get you anywhere when your job is on the line. People make this mistake all the time, thinking it's their good work and fine resume that matters. What really matters is what your boss thinks about you. That's it, in a nutshell. So ask yourself this simple question: Does my boss like me? If your answer is "No" or "I don't know," you're in trouble. Sounds unfair, but that's the way it is.

As a workplace and careers specialist and executive headhunter, I've observed a familiar pattern when it comes to people and their jobs. When the economy is robust, people spend an inordinate amount of time scheming to get a better job or wondering whether they should change careers or rethink entirely what they're doing with their lives. It's the luxury of plenty—you have a secure job, so you're free to indulge in change and transformation.

When the economy is stressed or a particular industry is in crisis, however, I am asked over and over again, "How can I protect my job?" Gone are the daydreamy questions about the colors of parachutes. In their place are questions about job cutbacks and layoffs, and the need to feel secure is paramount. My answer to this question is always simple: If you really care about your job and career, you can start protecting it *right now*. If all you care about is your paycheck, there's almost nothing that will protect you from eventually being deselected in favor of another employee who's truly committed to his job. That's survival of the fittest at work in the workplace.

**You must understand that your job is your most valuable asset, and your primary objective is to protect it.**

So if your only worry is how to pay your rent, trying a few of the tactics in this book in order to stave off a pink slip might help you dodge a bullet today—maybe even tomorrow—but a casual observance isn't going to save your job in the long-term. That's because you can't fake bulletproofing your job. It requires a genuine commitment to a strategy to secure your job and career for the short *and* the long term. In for a penny, in for a pound.

Bulletproofing your job requires that you quit crying about merit and fairness and start improving your chemistry with your boss. Work is war, and if someone is going to get fired, let it be

the guy your boss doesn't like, not you. If you don't have the stomach for this approach, hand this book to someone who does and watch *him* keep his job.

My no-nonsense strategy for bulletproofing your job is built on four simple precepts that will maximize your value and prospects for today *and* tomorrow:

Be visible. Be easy. Be useful. Be ready.

That's it. Easy to understand and supported by fifty straightforward, action-oriented tactics based on the way work *really* works that can help you start bulletproofing your job *right now*. The caveat is that you can't choose just one or two areas to work on and ignore the others. Being visible won't help you if you're not also being easy. And being useful won't do you any good if you're not ready for what might come next. They work only in tandem. But they do work.

Each of the fifty tactics in this book is meant to raise your consciousness and change your behavior. You don't do them once and check them off your list; you learn them and practice them and make them permanent habits. Some are easier than others to incorporate into your life; some can take a while to master. But together, they set you on a path of self-improvement, confidence, and security, the best place to be if you want to keep the job you have—and, when the time is right, to get the job you want.

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