

Telling It Like It Is—“I Was Fired”

By Lancelot Larsen

Some people say you get jobs faster if you've already got one. Some people say that if you got fired, forget it, you'll never work a day in this town again. Maybe they're right and maybe they're wrong. Maybe there are aliens looking down on us too. So, what are you going to do? Maybe you screwed up. Maybe it was clash of the titans with you and your supervisor. Experts say that more than 250,000 are fired unlawfully or without proper cause every year. Getting fired is no big deal. Remember that. It happens to everyone. There's even a movie out about it called "Fired" which discusses how getting terminated could be the best thing that could happen to you. Keep in mind, whatever happens, however it happened, it can always be addressed in a positive light, or at least a neutral one. Up to ten years ago, you'd likely have to implement a case strategy on why you got canned, because they would assume it was your fault. But in these free-wheeling downsizing days, this reasoning doesn't hold water. Chances are the interviewers themselves were once downsized and may perceive you as they do themselves. Maybe they share the same thought you do, that it is not you but your employer who is the failure. While there is no way to know that you will be so lucky as to interview with someone who can sympathize with your plight, it is imperative that you keep positive and causal and be prepared when discussing why you are looking for work.

Shortly after making introductions, immediately volunteer that you were fired before they ask why you left your last job. This way it will show you are honest and mean business and that it was no big deal. But keep it brief, on the up and up, and move on. Be nonchalant and don't give them time to dwell on it if you sense it brewing. If they persist, give simple answers about why you were fired. Just remember to rehearse beforehand on how you will explain the situation and answer probable questions. You need to do this to secure confidence in your delivery. You must not hesitate or sound like you are hiding anything. Always take a negative and turn it into a positive. For example, if you got fired because of downsizing, let them know that it was not your fault, but you learned a valuable lesson about corporate America from it. Never assume it was your fault when you get fired. But be honest with yourself. If it was your fault, take responsibility and correct the error you made that lead to the termination before looking for work—whether you need more technical training, classes on international etiquette, or anger management. It is important to make a frank judgment about why the termination occurred because it will make a difference in how you carry yourself during the interview. Was it justified or just plain mean? Do not put on an act, do not lie, and do not contradict yourself. More often than not, the interviewer or someone else handling human resources will check your background. Just tell one story all the time every time, the truth. If there are several people involved in the process, they may compare notes on you.

There are a lot of supervisors out there who are not equipped to manage difficult tasks or talented employees. Still, if this sounds something like why you were terminated, don't hold on to it. Let it go. Never speak negatively about your former supervisor. Those who interview you might assume you will speak the same of them. If you still feel angry about the interview, leave it at home. What you must take with you is the feeling that you are a stellar candidate with extraordinary skills to offer. You must move on and gain back your confidence. Focusing on the skills you intend to sell will be more effective than dwelling on having been fired. Spend your interview time displaying your credentials and don't apologize for what some employer thought incorrectly of you.

Furthermore, when redrafting your resume and cover letter after being let go, never mention that you were fired. Stick to the basics, highlight your attributes, and stay positive. There is no point in bringing up the circumstances

of your leaving until you have to. When you submit an application, never be negative, but don't lie because chances are you will be found out. When asked why you left your previous job, use alternative language that is truthful, like "job ended" or just "terminated." If you are asked if you were fired, answer yes. You can get fired for that if you are accepted and found out later and will cost you unemployment benefits.

Are unemployment benefits in your future? If the termination was not certainly justified, the unemployment office will favor you over your former employer when making a decision on unemployment benefits.

ON THE NET

You're Fired

jobsearch.about.com/od/salary/a/fired.htm

Getting Fired Is a State of Mind

www.asktheheadhunter.com/hagettingfired.htm