

In-Transition Checklist: Steps to Take After Termination

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What can you do after losing your in-house job? Below are tips for managing this difficult situation. It also includes steps to help you transition to a new role.

➤ IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Hire an attorney** before you do anything else. You may have grounds to file a discrimination claim with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). At the very least you will want an attorney to review any documents before signing.
- Gather information** on why you are being terminated (fired for cause, layoff, etc.). This can impact all other discussions and negotiations (severance, references, etc.).
- Ask HR about benefits** (health, life insurance, retirement) to see if they are portable.
- Ask about severance.** Do not be pressured into signing a severance agreement. You will want your attorney to review it.
- Get your last paycheck** (some states require it to be immediately provided at time of termination). **Confirm it is accurate** – some employers have a policy to pay out sick time and some states require payout of accrued vacation time.
- Conduct exit interview** – try to leave on good terms (this may not be possible based on why you are leaving). If an exit interview isn't offered **request one** (again, depending on why the termination has occurred).
- Request a copy of your personnel file.**
- If you have a good relationship, consider **asking if there are other open opportunities** at the organization.
- Collect your personal property** from the company.
- Return company property promptly.** If you have personal files on the computer, ask about the process for removing these files and returning them to you.
- Do not take documents/property that does not belong to you.**
- Gather co-workers contact information.**
- File for unemployment.** Be sure to obtain any unemployment forms that are necessary to file; your employer should provide these to you.

➤ FIRST WEEK

- Have another lawyer** review the proposed severance package.
- Health coverage** – ask the HR department for COBRA paperwork right away if you have any planned/regular medical visits coming up. You have [60 days](#) from the date your benefits end to sign up for COBRA and it is retroactive to the day your benefits end. Take that time to explore other options, such as the Affordable Care Act Marketplace or health insurance offered through the American Bar Association or your state/local bar association.

- Update your LinkedIn profile and resume.** It may be worth having a professional review your resume to ensure it contains phrases that will pass the filters used by automated screening software. ACC offers [resources](#) on updating your resume and LinkedIn Profile.
- Reach out to recruiters** that you know. They can also review your resume and LinkedIn profile to suggest updates.
- Reach out to temp/project/staffing firms** (such as Latitude, Axiom, MLA Interim, Robert Half Legal, or others) to let them know you are available for temp/project/contract work.
- With your attorney, **evaluate whether you were wrongfully terminated** and have a potential EEOC claim or legal cause of action. Yes, you are an attorney, but you are too close to the situation to evaluate it objectively. If you are not a labor and employment attorney, you may overlook something critical.
- Reach out to potential references**, both to ask if you can list them and to see if they have any leads.
- Start searching for new jobs** – [ACC Jobline](#), LinkedIn, Indeed, Monster, etc.
- Establish a routine** for your weekdays. You need structure. Treat looking for a new position as a job.
- Evaluate your expenses and savings.** You may be out of work for a while; what can be cut? what can be consolidated? Cancel any unnecessary expenses and stop spending on non-essential items.

➤ FIRST MONTH

- Create a routine** for your job search – spend x hours on y task daily/weekly.
- Create a realistic budget** – plan to be out of work longer than you think you will be. COVID taught us to expect the unexpected.
- Create a self-care and mental health support routine** – go to lunch with friends, workout, watch your favorite show (do not binge watch excessively), read.
- Consider a therapist.** Being terminated, for any reason, is a blow to the ego. It also brings thoughts of self-doubt and can damage self-worth.
- Stick to your routines** established above.
- With a financial advisor, **review your retirement plan(s)** to see if they need to be moved or if you can take a loan if necessary (last resort but it’s good to know it’s there if you need it).
- Search for ways to **improve your hard and soft skills** freely or cheaply. LinkedIn has great resources, as does ACC and bar associations. Many local community colleges have courses for those in transition.
- Practice your interview skills.** A recruiter can help with this.
- Prepare to talk about the circumstances surrounding the termination** to place yourself in the best light possible.
- Search for common interview questions** and practice your answers.
- Plan to Network** as much as possible:
 - Join relevant ACC Networks and attend their free legal updates, social events, and career development events.
 - Network with others in transition, schedule regular catchups to share tips, opportunities, encouragement, etc.
- Find an accountability partner** that you can meet with on a regular basis to keep you “honest” about your efforts.
- Join clubs/groups** to expand your network – alumni organization, ACC Chapter, local bar organization, volunteer interests.

➤ SECOND MONTH AND BEYOND

- Evaluate your routine** and tweak based on your current needs:
 - Add fitness to your routine if haven’t already done so.

- Add weekly or bi-weekly lunches/coffees with friends to your routine.
- Do not start binge-watching shows on streaming services!
- Do not overdo it on activities not related to helping you secure your next position; for example, spending a couple of hours per day on pro bono legal work may make sense, but working on a fulltime basis at a pro bono endeavor will leave you little time to pursue your job search.
- Update your LinkedIn** profile based on what you see in your job search.
- Make changes to your main resume** based on feedback from network and job interviews.
- Create a pre-interview checklist.**
- Create a post-interview self-assessment.**

Check Out More Resources on Career Development:

- [ACC Career Development](#)
- [How to Transition Careers in an Era of Disruptive Tech](#)
- [Resume Refresher: Avoid These Overused Terms \(United States\)](#)
- [Networking 101](#)

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