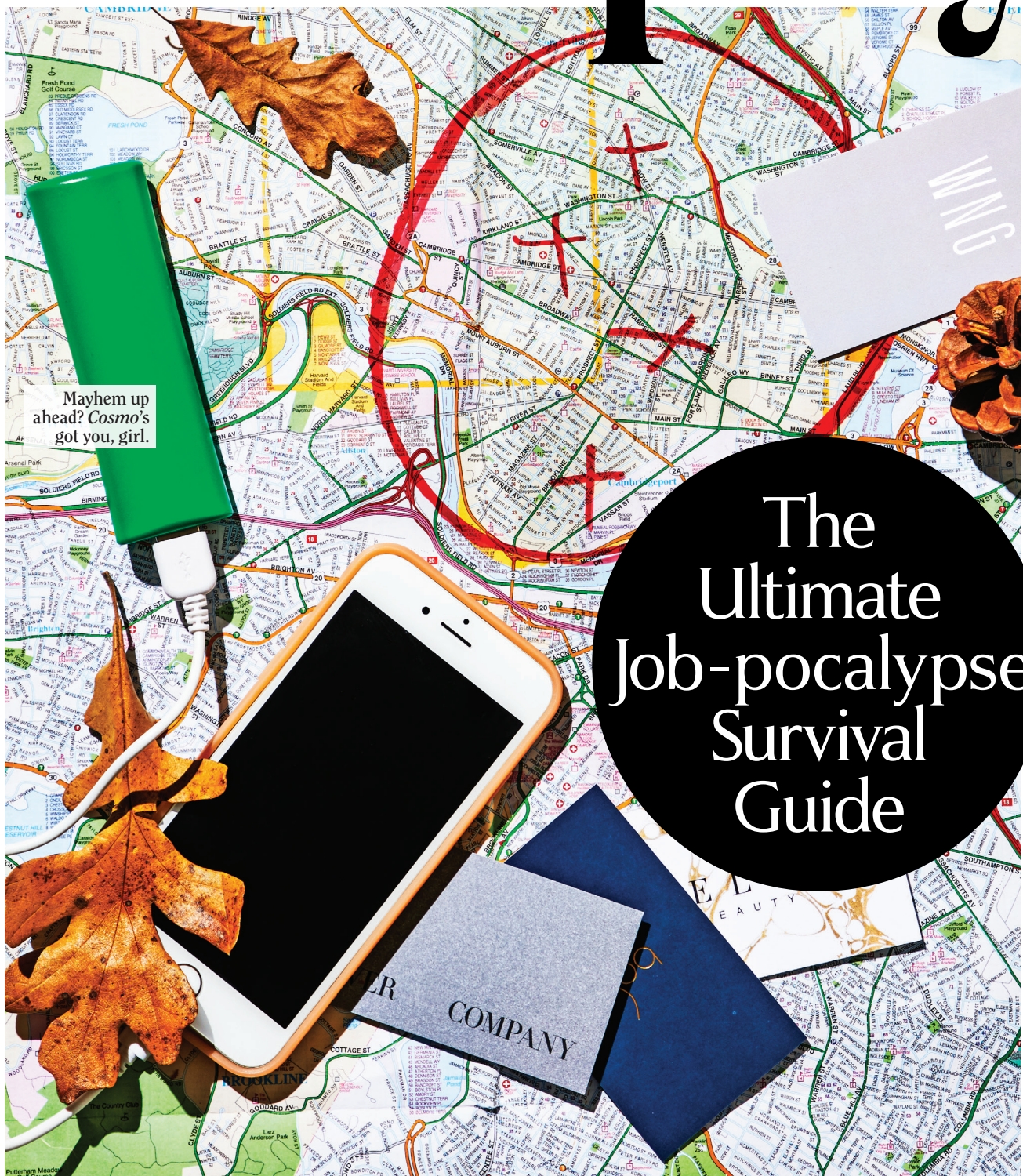


# workplay



Mayhem up ahead? *Cosmo's* got you, girl.

The  
Ultimate  
Job-pocalypse  
Survival  
Guide

ALLIE HOLLOWAY/STUDIO D. PROP STYLIST: WENDY SCHELAH FOR HALLEY RESOURCES.

# Beware of Warning Signs

Layoffs don't typically arrive by sneak attack. Tune in to these job-threatening signals.

**○** If you work for a large biz, like a retail or food chain, pay attention to headlines. "If your company has a bad earnings report, you'll hear about it in the news," says Courtney Kenney, author of *Layoff Reboot*. Set up a Google alert to be the first to find out if your employer is in trouble. You'll learn if your big bosses are closing storefronts or imposing hiring freezes (never good signs).

**○** Regardless of your company's size, watch the resources at your workplace. Have basic supplies, like printer paper, gone missing? Did you once get free java but now the coffee machine is MIA?

**○** Pay attention to staffing and workload. Every time someone quits, does their seat go unfilled? Have you been picking up lots of extra shifts?

## Plan an Evac Route

Hardcore disaster preppers keep go-bags full of emergency supplies and provisions at the ready. Your version: everything you'll need to make a speedy exit—the leaner your workplace footprint, the easier it'll be for you to walk out gracefully if you get let go.



Planning for the end never felt so Zen.

**Start to weed through the personal items you've hoarded at work.** Toss what you can. (That beer Koozie hiding in your locker? Buh-bye.) If anyone asks, you're just spring-cleaning.

**Download your professional life**—archived e-mails, examples of your work, past performance reviews, sales commissions, etc.—onto an external hard drive or into a personal digital cloud account, says Sarah Robb O'Hagan, CEO of Flywheel Sports and author of the

life manual *Extreme You*. Then dump all your contacts into an Excel spreadsheet or Google doc so you won't be scrambling to find valuable e-mail addresses later on. (Just check your employee handbook first to make sure you're not illegally nabbing company property, which at some places may include contacts stored on work computers.)

**Spruce up your LinkedIn profile now.** Add details on your current role, a recent profile pic, and any new skills you've acquired

since your last refresh. This will save you time later and make it easier for recruiters to find you, says Blair Decembrele, career expert at LinkedIn.

**Do the same with your résumé, and order new business cards** with your personal e-mail address, phone number, and social handles. (You can purchase 100 for as little as \$16 on vistaprint.com.) It may seem old-school, but you'll need these bad boys to network like a survivalist if you're suddenly jobless.

The work terrain feels kinda treacherous these days. Yes, the U.S. unemployment rate is at a decade-long low, but that doesn't mean all jobs are safe. Far from it: More than 6,000 retail stores have shuttered in the past year, cable companies and banks have closed hundreds of call-center jobs, scores of entry-level gigs are at risk of becoming automated, and a slew of industries seem to be downsizing. All of which could spell one thing for countless employees: layoffs.

No doubt, it sucks to get the proverbial pink slip—and in many cases, being shown the door is out of your control. But the right prep and skills can mean the difference between surviving and thriving or being paralyzed by despair. Here's how to be ready.

## Perform Triage

*Nooo!* It happened. You're out of a job. You may be tempted to rant or bawl. Instead, take a deep breath and follow these three steps.

**Do your best to leave on a positive note.**

"Your reputation is sacred, and you never want to burn a bridge," says Decembrele. "People in your company could play a vital role in your next job hunt." Thank them, and pledge to keep in touch.

**Log in to your work e-mail one last time, and send a brief note to all your contacts.**

"Be factual," says O'Hagan. Write, "Effective today, I'm moving on from my role. You can now reach me at [home info]."

**Don't post a lengthy farewell on social media as you pack up, says Kenney.**

"Doing a mass post when you're emotional is a bad idea." You may not choose words carefully, and trashing your employer online is a red flag to potential hirers.

## Tend to Your Wounds

Break open the mint chip and the sauv blanc. You're now allowed to wallow for up to a week. "Use these days as a cooling-off period," says O'Hagan. "Let what's happened sink in. It's okay to grieve a lost job."

After that, though, you gotta leave your bunker. The sooner you bounce back, the better, since landing a new gig takes an average of about six weeks, according to a survey by software and recruiting firm Jobvite. While looking, try to enjoy your freedom. "I wish I'd made more use of my time when I lost a job, instead of stressing out," says O'Hagan. "Know that you are going to get another position, even if it seems impossible. And ask yourself what you'd love to do with these free moments."

## Ration Your Resources

Unless you scored a severance package, money is gonna be tight for a while. "First, file for unemployment," says financial expert Bobbi Rebell, author of *How to Be a Financial Grown-Up*. Look up your state's unemployment office and follow online instructions. Benefits vary, but you could receive several hundred dollars a week for up to six months.

Take a close look at your bank accounts. Make a list of everything you spent in the last three months, says Rebell. Add in anything coming up, like a friend's wedding, then cut out superfluous extras. To survive financial famine, you need to afford your main priorities: rent, food, transportation, and health care.



### Send Up a Flare

It's time to hunt. Follow this path to new employment.

▶ Update the end date of your position on LinkedIn and use the Open Candidates tool to signal to recruiters that you're now available for hire.

▶ Using your contacts list, start sending personalized e-mails to people in your industry. Explain that you are looking for a new gig and would love to catch up over coffee. "This can lead to them saying, 'We're hiring. I'll put in a good word for you,'" says Kenney.

▶ Be direct when you're asked why you're out of work. Chances are, people you know may have been laid off in their own careers.

▶ Go ahead—post on social. Keep it light, short, and fun: "Personal news alert! I am on the job market, looking for positions in [your career field]. If you need someone with excellent [industry-related] skills and a love of Fiona the hippo, DM me."

▶ Stick with honesty during interviews. When asked about your last job, respond with the truth. If your company downsized, say that. Explain that you're ready to move on and find a great new opportunity. ■



If your BFF gets canned, offer to bring "supplies" over stat.