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How to avoid layoffs

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CHARLOTTE, NC (WBTV) - Lay-offs are up and more are coming, but you don't need to feel hopeless.

There are ways you can protect yourself at work. You might be stuck in a cubicle, but you can get proactive. Remember these three steps: assess, act and conceal. Long-time business consultant Mary Bruce explains.

Step One:

Long-time business consultant Mary Bruce explains how to make yourself a more valuable employee.

Assess your risk. "If you work for a big business, read the newspaper," Bruce says.

"Read the financial section and see what's going on in different industries. If you work for a publicly-held company, you can track it that way."

If your company is on the smaller side, though, you'll need to be more perceptive.

"If you've got the executive committee behind closed doors a lot [and] if the HR department is huddling," Bruce adds, "Those are all signs that something may be in the works."

Step two:

Act. When you know where your job stands, you can judge how far to go to save it.

"If you can put out more work per hour than the person sitting next to you, you are going to be the last one they want to let go," Bruce says.

So work hard and work smart because lay-off proof people have "a broad array of skills," she adds.

"Sometimes, when people are cutting back they'll say 'You know, I need you to wear three hats.'"

While that may be stressful, whatever you do, don't show it.

Step three:

Conceal. One of Bruce's clients just came in to discuss which employee they should fire.

"They said, you know, there's already this person who had a little bit of a negative attitude and actually I feel like the tenor of our office is going to get more pleasant when that person leaves."

In other words, be a smiling face. Not a squeaky wheel.

"It's going to endear you to your boss as an employee."