



circumstances is a disaster waiting to happen.

Ask yourself what you really like and what makes you comfortable. If the decision won't add to your feeling of comfort, it probably would prove to be a bad decision.

**4 Consider all the good things your decision can bring.** Decision making is, for many people, an exercise in disaster avoidance.

Instead of making the decision that might cause something wonderful to happen, we often make the decision we hope will hurt us the least.

**Reality check:** There's nothing wrong with running through possible negative outcomes when making a decision. It would be foolish to make decisions on the assumption that nothing could go wrong. But decisions turn sour when you fail to examine positive scenarios as well.

The decision-making process must be fueled by the possibility that your decision will lead to something wonderful—a new career, a stronger marriage, etc.

Keep reworking the decision until you see it leading to something wonderful. If you rework the decision and nothing wonderful emerges, you risk making the wrong decision.

**5 Get what you need to make your decision a success.** Especially in business, this rule gets broken again and again. A meeting ends with the decision to do such-and-such, but no plans are made to implement the decision.

**Example:** Many dot-coms recently went under because they had no plans for obtaining all the capital they would need to feed the beast.

If there is no passion to implement the decision—or if you know in advance that the resources you need won't be available—you haven't decided anything. It is window dressing meant to satisfy someone's ego or to be included in a report to show your department is on the ball.

Start with how you're going to implement your decision and work backward.

**6 Keep things as simple as possible.** Even smart people break this law. Because they see the big picture, they want the decision to cover every issue that might arise. They draft plans so that no possibility is overlooked.

**Reality:** The more things that can

go wrong, the more things that probably will go wrong.

Keep the number of things that must go right for the decision to succeed to an absolute minimum.

Venture capitalists are justifiably wary of overly complicated plans for a new business. Business plans that are easy to grasp are the ones that are most likely to get funding.

**7 Consider all your options.** I have never met a decision maker—good or bad—who had checked out *all* possible options. Invariably, I come up with options never considered.

**Example:** Think back to when you mislaid your keys or your wallet. You convinced yourself that you had looked everywhere. But when you found them, chances are they were someplace you hadn't looked.

Don't assume you know everything there is to know to make a good decision. Talk to people who are more experienced about the subject than you are. Ask what they would consider when making the same decision. Not only will they present you with new options, their insights could completely change the way you think about the decision. ■

### Help a friend



**Steven Mitchell Sack, Esq.**  
**Growing Job Dangers???**  
**Bottom Line to the Rescue**

**Y**ou can't fire me—I quit! Such an outburst often works in movies. In real life, however, it is foolhardy.

Whatever pressures you feel, don't resign. You'll lose unemployment benefits and may forfeit pension, severance and other valuable benefits.

Quitting weakens your negotiating position and lessens your legal options.

#### HEED WARNING SIGNS

Be vigilant if your job may be in danger. Common red flags...

- You are excluded from important meetings.



*Bottom Line/Personal* interviewed Steven Mitchell Sack, Esq., employment law specialist, 135 E. 57 St., 12th fl., New York City 10022.

He is author of 19 books, including *Getting Fired: What to Do If You're Fired, Downsized, Laid Off, Restructured, Discharged, Terminated, or Forced to Resign* and *The Employee Rights Handbook* (both from Warner).

- Your manager doesn't look you in the eye.

- You sense people are whispering behind your back.

- You're approaching age 50 or are about to become vested in a pension plan.

- You are anticipating a big bonus, stock options or a major commission.

- You've reported a major medical problem to the company's insurer.

#### ARM YOURSELF

Safeguard pertinent documents at your home. These include your contract, employee reviews, memos in your personnel file, explanations of what you've done for the company—whatever might strengthen your case.

Collect these *before* you are fired. After being fired, someone may watch you while you clean out your desk.

If the job loss was unexpected, take a deep breath and maintain your composure. Being obnoxious or behaving improperly will just reinforce your employer's decision to fire you.

If you're instructed to leave the premises immediately, do so quietly and quickly. In the new world of computers, it is important to protect yourself from being accused of mischief.

#### NEGOTIATING SEVERANCE

Write down the details of whatever severance package you are offered. Then ask for *more*—you have nothing to lose.

Do not commit to any package. Say, *I need more time to consider my options.* Take-it-or-leave-it threats seldom stand.

Exude confidence in your negotiations. A company's costs to fight wrongful termination charges are great.

#### REMEMBER YOUR GOALS

You certainly want to maximize your benefits. But you must also worry about protecting your reputation...finding a satisfying new position...and paying your bills.

It's time to make the best of a bad situation, rather than wallow in shame. Do something—action conquers fear.

Tell friends and loved ones immediately. Some may know of positions that match your skills.

If you were fired at year-end, review your situation carefully. If you were deprived of expected bonuses or end-of-year benefits, you may have legal recourse. Consult an employment attorney. ■