

# Weathering the recession storm

The smartest way to survive is to be patient and flexible and mould yourself to face any difficulties, says **VENKATESH NAGANATHAN**

**T**HE world economy is shrinking. Many companies are retrenching a distressingly high number of employees.

At this point in time we need to take a deep breath and get a balanced view of the situation so that we are able to face the challenges ahead.

When do we need to take risks during these troubled times? Should we consider a job that might have been seen as "beneath us" a year ago?

These decisions are tough for anyone to make, and especially so for students who have yet to graduate. I believe that many of us often forget to look at opportunities during hard times. Instead, we worry about the risks and dangers facing us. This can cause great stress as well as personal de-motivation.

The job market today is tougher than it has been for years, so how are students going to face this reality. Are they prepared? Will they be able to succeed in the future? Today's students are pondering these issues while they are studying for exams.

Here is some good news. You can indeed find the greatest opportunities, but in order to do so, you must explore possibilities that didn't even exist when you started school.

In the past, you might have thought there was only one pathway available to achieve our goals. Now, as you finish the safe path, you need to rethink your strategy in order to adapt yourself to the future challenges. This may involve taking a path that you had not considered before.

For example, if you graduate with a higher diploma in computing (specialising in networking), do not think that the only job available is that of network engineer. If offered a desktop support role, take it first and explore the possibilities of what can be achieved in that area.

Work there for a while until the market improves. Don't be choosy at this moment. Rather than sitting idle, it is better to hold a job. This is the key to weather these hard times. Don't worry if you have made the right or wrong decision at this point.

Just make sure you can comfortably adapt to your new work environment and learn something from it. Don't be afraid to learn new things which you might not have studied in your course.

For those that have not yet graduated, think ahead. In case you need any guidance, you can always talk to your academic adviser who knows your situation well and can give you better direction. The final decision, however, is yours. Remember, during this recession you must be patient and flexible to mould yourself so that you are prepared to face any difficulties ahead – that is the smartest way to survive. And you become a stronger person because of it.

Here are some tips that you can follow to get started on the right foot.

First, be both realistic and optimistic. Well-meaning people will give you differing pieces of advice and this may confuse you. Be focused on selecting your courses, and on ways to improve yourself.

Do your homework. Do you really know what jobs are available? Remember, many of the most popular



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jobs today weren't even invented five years ago. You need to start investigating the future.

Start looking at websites and books that list the "hot-test" jobs in the near future. When you select courses, you should focus both on what you like, and on the courses that you think will reflect future market demand.

Don't forget that optimists are most likely to take a chance while pessimists will rarely take any chances. Continue to do your best and keep learning new things. Always look to expand your horizons.

Second, focus on your communication skills. This is important in today's market. When applying for a job, the first hurdle you need to clear is the interview. Candidates with good communication skills will stand a better chance to clinch that job. Work hard to im-

prove your command of English.

Third, time is precious. Don't waste it by watching TV and movies. Spend at least two to three hours a day to prepare yourself for your interviews and other challenges that will present themselves to you.

If you learn new skills or strengthen the ones you already have, then you will have more career options from which to choose. Each new skill learnt will open up a new window of opportunities.

Fourth, a positive attitude is the key to success. Try to be with people whose thoughts are positive and whose views are to succeed in life. Develop a positive mindset, which is one of the most powerful techniques you can learn. Thinking positively will lead to success in all of your fields of endeavour.

If you let negativity defeat you, you will soon find yourself in a negative feedback loop which can adversely affect your chance of reaching your career goals.

Fifth, work out a plan; always have a back-up option. As the saying goes: "If one door closes, another one opens for you." So never lose hope and never give up. At the end of the day, remember that you are still a student. Focus on your studies, for now is not the time for you to worry about the job market or recession.

Try to take heed of a few of the tips above and be prepared to face the real world later. With the proper attitude, you will be prepared to face any difficult situation that you may come across.

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