

Laid off and loving it Sunday, August 9, 2009 3:40 AM

Some workers find a pink slip is the encouragement they need to create new and, in many cases, more-rewarding careers

By [Steve Wartenberg](#) THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH



Neal C. Lauron | DISPATCH photos

After losing her executive sales position, **Barb Girson** decided to open her own business doing what she loves -- training people in sales. Her company, **My Sales Tactics**, is doing well, and Girson has more time to spend with her family. She's even taking a 10-day European vacation.

Former truck driver Martin Daner, left, created Marsal Marketing Group, which helps local high-end food producers such as David Kilpatrick of Columbus Cheesecake Co. sell their products.

It was a question **Barb Girson** often asked trainees during her years as a successful saleswoman and business executive: "What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?"

The New Albany resident had to ask herself this question after she was laid off in June 2008 and joined the growing ranks of people in the midst of this traumatic, life-altering situation.



But a layoff doesn't have to be the end of the line for your career or life.

Many people, including **Girson**, have found that a layoff can lead to a new and more rewarding chapter of their lives, according to a survey conducted by SnagAJob.com, an hourly-job Web site.

About 39 percent of the people hit by layoffs now say it was a blessing in disguise, while 26 percent more say their layoff has not yet turned out for the better but believe it eventually will, according to the survey. I think this (survey) gives you hope from the perspective that any one of us is at risk of a layoff and so many have said it turned out for the better," said Cathy McCarthy, SnagAJob senior vice president, marketing.

Barb Girson, owner of *My Sales Tactics™*, is an International Direct Sales Expert, Trainer & Coach who specializes in designing & delivering creative sales strategies & tactics that stick. www.MySalesTactics.com 614.855.0446 1

It also shows, she said, that a lot of people were unhappy with their jobs.

"They always had the desire to take a leap, but it's difficult to turn down a weekly paycheck to pursue something riskier," McCarthy said.

When **Girson**, 53, had to ask herself what she wanted to do, the answer to this no-longer hypothetical question was simple: "What I decided is, I love to train and help others grow and succeed."

She created a company -- **My Sales Tactics** -- that allows her to do that, even though there are no guarantees against failure in real life.

"The thought of being an entrepreneur was exciting, and my heart was beating fast, and then the next moment it was terrifying," she said of her decision.

A year later, **My Sales Tactics** is doing well and **Girson** has a growing list of clients. She has more time to spend with her family and recently went on a 10-day European vacation, something she never had time for in the past.

"I didn't ask for this, but I am in a great place now and I'm happier," said **Girson**, who is married and has two adult children.

"And I'm even happier when I read about how it's raining pink slips. That's not a worry of mine."

After she was laid off, **Girson** sought help from the Columbus office of Jewish Family Services, which conducts a Strategic Utilization of Career Centered Support Services -- **SUCCESS** -- program for professionals who have lost their jobs.

"I can't say it's ever a good thing to get laid off," said Karen Hughes, coordinator of the program.

"But it does provide people with a new perspective and a growth experience, an opportunity to reconnect with family, former colleagues, re-evaluate what their values are and what (they're) looking for in their next position."

A nest egg makes this quest easier and less stressful.

"Someone who was making a higher income, is educated and got a severance package has more time to assess than someone living paycheck-to-paycheck and is now living on only a \$300 a week unemployment check," Hughes said.

Many of the 350 people who have gone through SUCCESS decided to follow their dreams and become entrepreneurs.

This is a common trend during economic downturns, as workers are forced to turn from traditional to untraditional jobs and create their own opportunities.

"I looked around at what was going on and I believe more companies are going to look to outsource and freelance solutions for the kind of work I do: training, coaching, sales teams," **Girson** said.

"I thought I could leverage the skills I've acquired over the years and be valuable to companies."

Martin Daner looked to his experiences and skills to create his future after he was laid off from his job as a truck driver.

"My background was in the food business in New Jersey," said the 67-year-old Pickerington resident, who sought help and contacts from SUCCESS and the Scioto Ridge Networking Group.

He created Marsal Marketing Group and represents local gourmet pastry, ice cream and candy makers and other high-end food and tea producers. He sells their products to restaurants, hotels, caterers and banquet facilities and receives a percentage of the sales.

"I've created a niche," said Daner, a people person who enjoys networking and marketing himself and his company.

David Kilpatrick was looking for that type of niche when Daner walked into his shop in January and started telling him about his new company.

"I'm just a small guy, looking for a creative way to get the word out there without hiring someone full time on my staff," said the owner of Columbus Cheesecake Co., a bakery on Grandview Avenue not to be confused with the Cheesecake Factory chain of restaurants.

"It sounded like a good idea to me," Kilpatrick said of Daner's marketing service, and he signed on as his first client. "It takes time, but he's putting in a lot of time and effort for me."

Daner said it will take him another year to get his business to where he wants it to be and relishes the challenge.

"The advice I would give other people who are laid off is simple," he said. "Find out what you really like to do, either from past jobs or your hobbies, and then see if it is feasible to create something from this."

Daner and **Girson** said they like being their own bosses. They are doing what they love, control their own destinies and say they are confident about the future of their companies even in uncertain economic times.

"At first, there were nights where I woke up and asked myself, 'Can I really do this?' " **Girson** said. "But I find that each day as I commit myself in the direction I want to go, the fear diminishes."

To view online:

http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/content/business/stories/2009/08/09/Laidoff_and_Loving_It.ART_ART_08-09-09_D1_HLEMHMN.html?sid=101

By the numbers *Source: SnagAJob.com*

Silver-lining views from those who've been laid off, based on the SnagAJob.com survey:

- 39%** View layoff as a blessing in disguise
- 26%** Think they'll eventually see it as a blessing
- 27%** Say they've found a better job
- 21%** Have gone back to school
- 16%** Are pursuing a career they've always wished for
- 28%** Think layoff has left them better prepared for future obstacles