



FROM JOB SECURITY TO CAREER SECURITY

By Kimo Look

Yesterday's Definition

Job security used to mean finding a position in a good company, showing up on time, performing your job reasonably well, and having fairly predictable advancement up the ranks. We all know that is no longer true.

Job Security is transformed into Career Security

So today, job security has changed. We have moved from a position of seniority to one of promoting performance, from one of security to one of adaptability. Though we can no longer rely on security from one's employer, we still can have it. Today we must focus on career security.

Career security is not a continued reliance on a company or position, but a new way of approaching your job and your career. It is a method that will give you the ability to continue to earn a living no matter what happens to your job or the company.

With employers and managers collectively saying that security is not their responsibility, the secret to security is to maintain and enhance your efforts in three areas:

- **Employability:** the portable set of in-demand skills and experiences
- **Network:** the professional network that makes your skills and experience known
- **Adaptability:** the ability to adapt and effectively position yourself for changes that will inevitably occur.

Maintain Employability

Portable competencies and experience in critical projects are always in demand, regardless of who your employer is. Gathering and maintaining this experience is the key to employability rather than mere employment.

To maintain and increase employability, gather skills in these areas:

Experience on "hot" projects in your area of practice, particularly if you believe this experience will be in demand in the future. For example, as a water engineer, if you believe Southern California will continue to be concerned about water shortages, experience on reclaimed water or desalinization projects will go a long way in helping position yourself for a prosperous career.

But don't focus exclusively on technical experience. People and project management skills are highly valued in today's team-based multi-agency projects. Gain experience in working with diverse groups, from fellow engineers, to regulators, to permit agencies, to the public. Learn and expand project management skills in handling project schedules, management, and financial accountability.



Build your skills and reputation as a problem solver, as someone who adds value to an organization.

Develop Your Network - Make your skills and experience known

Competence is necessary but not sufficient for career security. While it is important to be good at your job, your security also lies in others knowing that. Make sure you are visible by choice, not by chance. Do this by developing and maintaining a professional network. These are the people who know your value in the marketplace and will often help you find (or be a reference for) your next career move. These people should not only be key decision makers within the organizations, but also clients, co-workers, suppliers, and industry leaders outside the organization. Your best security comes from recognition and appreciation by others in your engineering community.

Keep updating your resume, at least on a yearly basis. Your resume is your passport that lets people know the skills you have and experience you hold. More importantly, it demonstrates the value you can add to an organization.

Adapt to today's market reality

Today's organizations need employees who have the capability to do several tasks or be deployed to work on a variety of projects. It is important not to be too specialized, or pigeon-holed into a narrow field. Broaden your career options. Develop multiple ways you can go. Be flexible and nimble.

Also be adaptable to our constantly changing technology. Eagerly embrace new technologies that improve your efficiency and increase the value added to organizations. Adapt to a company's organizational changes. With department re-organizations happening constantly, understand the value you add and the way you can continue to be a positive productive contributor for whatever organizational structure develops.

Career security can be yours if you maintain your employability, market your skills, and adapt to changes as they occur.