

ARE YOU UNFIRABLE?

Last week I asked [are you employable?](#) But if you have a job already, you already know the answer to that question.



But if you're employed, in this economy, you can't rest on your laurels. Ask yourself -- are you "unfirable?" (I know, it's not a real word.) There are things you can do to lower the chance that, when your firm lets people go, you'll be leading the procession: **Save the company money.** If you can think of a way to save money, don't keep it to yourself. Suggest it. Even if it's just a one-time savings, your employers will remember the favor -- and they may count the savings toward the cost of your salary. **Be irreplaceable.** The easiest way to do this is to be great at your job. Also, having an irreplaceable skill set helps -- this is easy for IT people, who can set up a computer network that only they will understand, guaranteeing permanent job security. But if you're the only person at the company who understands the filing system, or who knows all the vendors, or who knows how to put the orders into the computer, then your job is just a bit safer. **Be a member of the family.** This won't save you if the firm absolutely has to cut jobs, but it can only help. Befriend your co-workers. Be pleasant and sociable with your bosses, even the difficult ones. Pitch in for birthday and wedding gifts. Go to Happy Hour every once in a while. You will (1) make new friends, possibly lifelong ones; (2) develop contacts that can help your career in the future, (3) make your workplace function better, and your job more enjoyable; and (4) make it that much harder to lay you off when the time comes. **Be reliable.** This can be very hard -- after all, there are genuinely unreliable people, but they never last long at any company. What's hard is when a reliable person encounters unavoidable personal issues -- family, health, economic -- that while perfectly sympathetic and understandable, still mean *you're* the one who is late to work, or leaves early, or misses days, or can't work beyond normal hours. And when it comes time to lay people off, that's what employers remember. So what can you do if life interferes with your job? I don't know. In this economy, if the life issues are *relatively* minor -- school issues for your kids, marital problems, general economic stresses -- then do everything in your power to insulate your work from these, even if it upsets your family. If the issues are major -- divorce, a death, a long-term illness -- then maybe there is nothing you can do, except face the fact that your job is in danger and do whatever you can to prepare for that. **Have an affair with the boss.** Just kidding. Seriously, that's a bad idea. Know of other ways to become "unfirable?" Let us know in the [comments!](#)