



## Choosing to Be Ready

By Mike Cook

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At least twice a month, I stand in front of groups of managers and supervisors and ask this question: “What is your personal economic disaster recovery plan?” The looks I get when asking about individual readiness range from glazed bemusement from long-term employees to knowing nods from those who have joined the company within the last 12 to 36 months.

Unfortunately, the knowing nods are most often in the minority and the glazed looks predominate. As the conversation continues, I might ask, “When was the last time you interviewed outside your company or even perused local classified advertisements for alternative employment opportunities?” Now the faces of the glazed and bemused take on a *look of concern*. It’s not unusual for someone to raise a hand and say the conversation is uncomfortable.

This response comes more often than not from a place of fear. Those with the *look of concern* often **do** know what is going on outside their companies. But they are simply **choosing** to ignore modern reality and hope that they are somehow immune to global trends simply because their company is “doing well.” That attitude needs to change. Allow me to offer some of my own perspective on the importance of individual readiness in today’s global economy.

### Ignoring Reality Is No Longer Affordable

**“...everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” — Viktor Frankl**

Today, many Americans are experiencing the prospect of a future filled with economic and employment uncertainty. But if Victor Frankl, a man facing the immediately terrible uncertainty of life in a Nazi prison camp, could see his way to choosing his own attitude, how much easier should it be for us?



Most of us have a limited ability to see that global economic changes have any relevance to our own situation. We need to get crystal clear on the fact that the global economy can indeed impact us directly. This knowledge, while not happy, will be easier to swallow if we **choose** an attitude that places us in charge of the changes rather than victimized by them. Having the sense of authorship that goes with this shift in attitude is more likely to foster personal confidence than any training program you may attend.

### **Choose to Take Authorship**

So, what then is there for us to do in the face of global trends wrapped in uncertainty? I can offer a few guidelines you may find helpful. They may not relieve your anxiety completely, but a little anxiety is probably healthy in that it keeps us awake.

- **Declare full responsibility for your own economic future.** It's time to give up the flawed belief that if you just do a good job everything will work out. That was never true. Only fluky global circumstances made it seem so.
- **Commit to a personal financial plan that can carry you at least six months in the event of an unanticipated loss of employment.** Yes, this means you are going to have to make some tough choices. You might have to switch from double lattes to grande drip coffee at your local coffee shop. You might have to stop eating out regularly and instead reserve restaurants for special occasions. Given the alternative, these seem small prices to pay. Our lengthy period of economic stability in this country has given many of us permission to be financially irresponsible. It's time to get responsible.
- **Interview for alternative employment opportunities at least once a year if not every six months.** The way the world is changing now it is impossible for either you or your employer to predict with any certainty just how stable your position is. Believe it or not, knowing your market value will make you a better employee as well. Once you are realistically confident that all will work out for you, there is a greater chance that you will do the right thing. This might mean taking an unpopular course of action such as leaving the company, or forcing tough conversations with your employer about workplace satisfaction and your roles and responsibilities.
- **Know what you are like to work with.** Interview those around you—managers, peers, direct reports if you have them. Find out if people are getting what they need from you. Find out what they count on you for. Find out whether you have habits that some find difficult to deal with and commit to making adjustments where it makes good sense.



- **Understand your talents as well as your skills.** Skills are transient in a world where new knowledge is being created daily. Talents are much more important in the long term than skills. It's your talents that enable the level of skill you've attained.

This is by no means a complete list of actions you can take to develop a personal financial disaster plan. The most important takeaway is that you can **choose** to not be victimized by circumstances. This awareness alone will launch you onto a more secure path. Realizing that you can **choose** to be the author of your own future will make more difference than all the tips I can offer.

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We welcome your inquiries about Vitalwork. Please contact us at 585.387.9222 or through our web site at [www.vitalwork.com](http://www.vitalwork.com)

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