Odyseek

The Layoff Survival Guide

Find your footing. Prove your value.

A practical playbook with scripts, examples, and tracking tools for the first 90 days after a layoff, and for as long as the search takes.

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What's Inside...

Start with the section that matches where you are today, not where you think you should be. Your search may move faster in some areas and slower in others. *Use the timeline as a guide, not a deadline.*

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Not sure? Read The CARE Method first — every section of this guide maps back to it.

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A QUICK NOTE

Why We Built Odyseek

It shouldn't be this hard to talk about our work.

Most career tools start with the task. We built Odyseek to start ***with you***.

After years of hiring, managing and developing people, we saw how often talented people struggle to articulate their own value. And when your story is unclear, it's diluted everywhere it shows up: on your resume or CV, in interviews, in networking, even with your manager.

Odyseek helps uncover your story, then uses that context to support the tactical work too. From role matching, resume tailoring, interview prep, job searching, and tracking wins for promotions, we analyze the full picture of you.

Unlike general-purpose AI, Odyseek is built around your career story (as it unfolds), so you're not starting over with every prompt.

Tell your story. Prove your value.

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BEFORE YOU START

There's No Playbook. So We Made One.

A layoff doesn't come with instructions, and there's a lot of conflicting advice. This guide isn't meant to be read cover to cover in one sitting. Every section gives you a script you can actually use, a way to regulate yourself when the process gets to you, and a way to evaluate your progress honestly. Whatever day you're on right now, start there.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

I. Find Your Place

Find the section that matches where you are today, not where you think you "should" be. Every stage is valid.

II. Three Tools Per Week

Every week has a ***Script*** box (copy it, then make it sound like you), a ***Regulation*** box (a practice for when it's hard), and an ***Evaluation*** box (what to track).

III. Take What's Useful

If a day's advice doesn't fit your situation, take what's useful and leave the rest.

IV. Three-Phase Structure

This guide runs in three phases:
Month 1 - prepares you for the search
Month 2 - how to run your search
Month 3 - when to adapt your search to help you decide what's next.

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THE FRAMEWORK BEHIND THIS GUIDE

The CARE Method

Every section maps back to four things: **Clarity**, **Access**, **Regulation**, and **Evaluation**. Most advice only covers the first two—know your value, get in front of people. This guide treats Regulation and Evaluation as equally load-bearing, because a search you can't sustain, or can't honestly measure, falls apart no matter how good your resume is.

C — Clarity

Most job seekers aren't rejected for lack of experience. They're rejected because they can't articulate their value fast enough.

→A value story: what problem you solve, for whom, what makes you great and in what environment.
Be clear about what you're looking for, not just that you're available.

OUTCOME *You can answer "why you, why this role, why now" without sounding vague.*

A — Access

The market isn't competitive. It's absolutely congested. Access to decision makers beats volume every time.

→Targeted outreach to hiring managers and team leads, not just recruiters.
→Warm intros over cold applications.

OUTCOME *Fewer blind applications, more real conversations.*

R — Regulation

Rejection dysregulates people, and dysregulated people make bad decisions.

→Treating outcomes as data, not identity.
→Naming real causes behind a "no": timing, headcount freezes, visibility bias.

OUTCOME *You stop spiraling after a single rejection.*

E — Evaluation

High performers don't quit. They iterate. "I'm failing" becomes "this version isn't converting yet."

→Looking at what's getting responses and which stories resonate.
→Adjusting positioning based on the pattern, not one data point.

OUTCOME *Progress without burnout, and confidence without denial.*

CARE is a loop, not a checklist: Clarity improves Access, Access tests Clarity, Regulation keeps you steady enough to see clearly, and Evaluation sharpens all three. You'll cycle through it more than once in the next 90 days—that's the process working, not failing.

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MONTH 1

Prepare for the Search

Days 1–30 · Start by getting clear on what you want, where your experience fits best, and what kind of opportunities are worth your energy.



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The First Few Days

This week isn't about strategy. It's about processing what happened so you can get clear on the value you bring and the roles you want to target.

DAYS 1–3

Give Yourself the Day

The first 24 to 72 hours are not the moment to prove you're fine. Whatever you feel (numb, relieved, furious, embarrassed) is a personalized and absolutely normal response to a sudden loss of structure and identity. It doesn't mean you're handling it wrong.

This is not the time to update your resume, message your network, or decide what's next. It's the time to let the news land.

→Tell only the people who need to know today: your household, not your industry.

→Log off LinkedIn for a day or two if watching everyone else's careers stings right now.

→Do one small, ordinary thing today. A walk, a meal you actually cook. Find proof that your day still has shape.

DAYS 4–5

The Pull to Start Applying

By day 4 or 5, panic usually kicks in. Every day without an application can start to feel like a day you're falling behind. The instinct is understandable, but applying from panic (or fear) almost always produces worse applications than applying from clarity.

→Build a target list or roles that catch your eye, not applications. Companies you respect, people you'd want to reconnect with.

→Reread your own work, not job postings. Old performance reviews, project recaps, all the praise you (hopefully) saved somewhere.

→Save interesting roles in your **Odyseek Job Tracker.** Think of it as a parking lot, not an application quota.

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DAYS 6–7

The End of Week One Check-In

One week in, take a quick check-in: Am I getting some basic structure back into my day? Have I told the people who need to know in a way that feels right to me? Do I feel even a little more settled than I did on day one?

If you're behind where you thought you'd be by now, you're not. Ultimately, there's no real timeline here. That's why this process feels so difficult.

SCRIPT TO USE

What to Say in the First Week

You don't need a polished story yet, just something short enough to say without rehearsing it. Two versions, for two different audiences.

TEXT TO A CLOSE FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER

"Hey, wanted you to hear it from me directly. I was laid off yesterday as part of a company-wide restructuring. I'm okay, just taking a few days to process it. I'll fill you in more soon, but didn't want you to hear it secondhand."

IF SOMEONE ASKS IN PERSON, RIGHT AWAY

"It happened as part of a broader restructuring. A lot of people were affected, not just me. I'm still processing it, honestly. I'll have more of a plan to talk about soon."

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REGULATION · STAY STEADY

Give Your Day Edges

A layoff can erase the structure of your day. For the first week, create a simple temporary rhythm:

Set a career window. Choose a block of time for paperwork, this guide, notes, or anything related to what comes next.

Set a stopping point. Decide when you are done for the day. Avoid letting LinkedIn, email, or job boards follow you into every spare moment.

Choose one thing that makes the day complete. Not a full to-do list. One meaningful thing you can finish and feel good about.

The goal is not to be productive all day. It is to give your day enough structure that the layoff does not consume all of it.

EVALUATION · TRACK THIS

A Self-Check, Not a Job-Search Metric

This week, the only honest measurement is how you're doing.

✓Rate 1–5: sleep, appetite, and moments today you felt like yourself.

✓Note who you told, and whether it felt like your decision or reactive.

✓This isn't a score to hit. It's a baseline to notice movement from.

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WEEK TWO · DAYS 8–10

Telling Your Network

This week is when those around you start asking questions, and time to check in with what you're working with, financially and professionally.

DAYS 8–9

Telling People Without 'Over' or 'Under' Explaining

You don't owe anyone a full account of what happened. You also don't need to hide it. A simple, repeatable version of the story protects you from having to relive it every time someone asks.

→ Write one version, once, and reuse it verbatim: "My role was part of a broader layoff at [Company]; I'm currently exploring [target role/field]." Same line every time, no need to embellish.

Note: Check out the last page of this guide on how to explain your layoff

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DAYS 10–11

The Money Conversation

This section is general guidance, not financial advice. For anything specific to your situation, a financial professional is worth the conversation.

→Reread your severance terms closely. Understand exactly when pay and benefits end, and whether the offer is negotiable.

→Compare your insurance options. COBRA, a spouse's plan, or the marketplace can vary widely in cost.

→Do one honest budget pass. Separate fixed costs from flexible ones.

→Avoid big financial decisions in month one.

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DAYS 12–14

Panic, Confidence, and the Stories You Tell Yourself

A scattered job search often creates a scattered story. A layoff can make even very capable people sound unsure of themselves: "I just helped with..." That language says more about what the layoff did to your confidence than about your actual value.

→Before applying to a batch of jobs, ask: where am I most credible?

→Notice when you downplay your work (we all do it) by adding words like “just,” “kind of,” or “helped with” to your work. Try saying what you actually did instead.

Prime Your Network

These are outreach tips before you apply. The goal is to get as many warm leads as possible and create as many connections.

Outreach Tips To Help You

Your network can help more when they know exactly what to listen for and who to think of.

- ***Ask for people, not jobs***. “Who do you know in X?” is easier to act on than “Do you know of any openings?”
- ***Be specific.*** Name the exact role, function, and/or industry you’re targeting.
- ***Start warm.*** Begin with former colleagues, managers, clients, vendors, and alumni & friends.
- ***Make intros easy.*** Give them a short blurb they can forward without rewriting.
- ***Lead with curiosity when it’s a cold intro.*** Ask about their team or experience before asking for help.
- ***Go beyond recruiters.*** Hiring managers and people close to the work often know where the real needs are.

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SCRIPT TO USE

Telling Your Network (the Message That Actually Works)

This structure works in a DM or a short LinkedIn post: What happened + exact role you want + value you bring + who you want to meet. *Be specific enough on what you want and your value that someone can immediately think of a person, not just wish you luck.*

PRIVATE MESSAGE TO A PROFESSIONAL CONTACT YOU KNOW

Hi Maria, wanted to reach out personally. My role at [Company] was eliminated as part of a company-wide restructuring last week. I'm looking at operations or program management roles in healthcare or logistics next. Is there anyone at your company that you think would be valuable to meet? I'd really appreciate an intro. I can send a short blurb to make it easy to forward.

BLURB YOU CAN PROVIDE FOR YOUR CONTACT

I'd love to introduce you to [Your Name]. They've spent the last [X] years leading complex, cross-functional programs and are now looking at Senior Program Manager roles in healthcare or logistics. I thought you'd be a great person for them to connect with.

SHORT LINKEDIN POST (WHEN YOU'RE READY, NO RUSH)

A quick career update: my role at [Company] was recently eliminated as part of a broader restructuring.

I'm now focused on Senior Program Manager roles in healthcare or logistics, especially where I can lead complex, cross-functional initiatives from planning through execution. The thread across my work has been [e.g. getting teams aligned around complicated work and building the systems that help them execute more effectively].

If you know someone leading program management or operations in either space, I'd really appreciate an introduction.

And if we haven't talked in a while, I'd love to reconnect.

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REGULATION · STAY STEADY

Fact, Not Story

After a layoff, your mind can fill in the blanks quickly. Try separating what actually happened from stories you build in your head.

Make two columns on a piece of paper: STORY vs FACT.

Story: “I’m too old to be hireable.”
Fact: “I have 10+ years of deep experience and skills companies still need.”

The goal isn’t to force yourself to be positive. It’s to come back to what you actually know to be true about you.

EVALUATION · UNDERSTAND BEFORE YOU APPLY

Get Specific Before You Apply

When you need a job badly, the instinct is to widen everything. That usually makes the search harder. You can be flexible without being vague. Get clear on:
✓ Your target: the 1–2 roles you’re most credible for
✓ And also write down on a piece of paper 3 columns covering your: needs, wants and tradeoffs.

Needs | Wants | Tradeoffs

Needs: What has to be true for this job to work for me?
Wants: What makes this offer meaningfully better?
Tradeoffs: What am I willing to compromise on if the bigger priorities are met?

If your runway is tight, your criteria may widen. That’s different from having no criteria at all. Specificity helps you move faster because you know what to pursue, how to position yourself, and what to say “no” to.

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Rebuilding Your Story

This week is about building the story you'll actually use in conversations, on your resume, and in your own head.

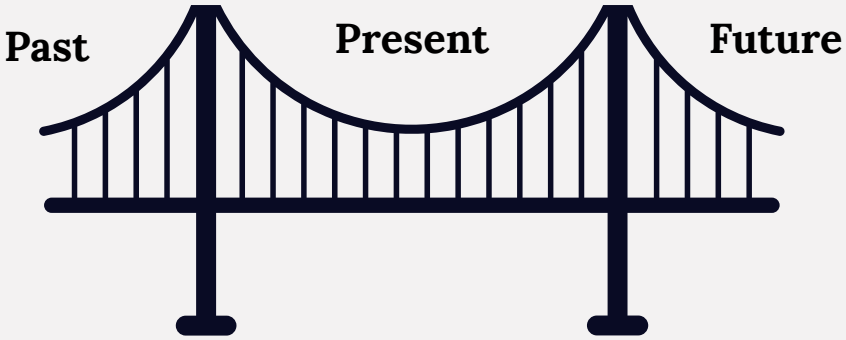
You don't need a better pitch. You need a clearer story. First, make sense of where you've been and where you're going. Then identify the value that connects it all. Put the two together, and you have a career story you can actually use from networking to interviews. This is what Odyseek's ***Value Story Tool*** *was built for.*

DAY 15

The Bridge: Past, Present, Future

One of the most useful things you can rebuild after a layoff is the story of where you've been and where you're going.

Your Bridge connects your experience to what you want next. It helps someone understand your career path in three simple parts:



Where you've been: Briefly describe the kind of work you've been doing or the experience that brought you here.

What you know now: What you learned about the work you do best, what you want more of.

Where you want to go next: Use that clarity to describe the kind of role, team, or environment you're looking for.

Your Bridge tells the story of your career journey and where you want to go next.

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DAY 15

The Bridge: Past, Present, Future

examples:

→**Past**: **Where have you been?**

Briefly describe the kind of work you've been doing or the experience that brought you here.

"*I've spent the last eight years leading operations for growing companies.*"

→**Present: What do you know now?**

What have you learned about the work you do best, what you want more of, or what matters to you in your next role?

"*I've realized I do my best work when I have real ownership and can solve problems that cut across teams.*"

→**Future: Where do you want to go next?**

Use that clarity to describe the kind of role, team, or environment you're looking for.

"Now I'm looking for a smaller company where I can own the function end to end."

Now read all three out loud, back to back. They should feel like one story: what you've done, what you know now, and where that points you next.

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DAYS 16–17

Create Your Value Story Statement

Now you have your Bridge Statement which tells the journey: where you've been, where you are now, and where you're headed. Your Impact Value Story connects the dots across that journey by showing the value you *consistently* create, no matter the role or title.

To put is simply: The Bridge explains your path. The Impact Value Story explains the thread that ties it all together. Both are important to help you understand the value you bring and your next move.

VALUE STORY FORMULA =
Who you are + what you improve + how you do it + why it matters

e.g. Brand and experiential marketing leader who turns business priorities into experiences people actually connect with. Uses storytelling, executive engagement, and thoughtful programming to build trust, visibility, and stronger relationships with the brand.



Need help creating your Value Story?
Odyseek helps you quickly turn your experience into a clear Value Story that keeps evolving as your career evolves. It's not a one-time prompt. It's a story that grows with you.

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SCRIPT TO USE

Ugh, Tell Me About Yourself...

Now, let's put your *Bridge* and *Value Story* together and practice saying them as one short answer to: "Tell me about yourself." This is your 30 second career story.

Where you've been → What you know now → Where you're going → The value you bring

Keep it conversational and not scripted. Practice makes perfect.

For example:
"I've spent the last eight years leading operations for growing companies. I've realized I do my best work when I have real ownership and can solve problems that cut across teams, so I'm looking for a smaller company where I can own the function end to end. The throughline in my work is spotting what's slowing a team down and building better ways of working that improve execution as the company grows.

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REGULATION · STAY STEADY

Let Your Story Do the Work

Before you practice your story, remind yourself:
“I’m connecting the dots, not making a case for my worth.”

Then say your Bridge + Value Story once without adding qualifiers like “just”, “kind of”, “helped”, or “I guess”.

The goal is to be concise. Your story only needs to open the door; the examples can come later. Your goal is to set the stage, not unload everything. Build the tension of your worth, like a juicy headline that someone wants to learn more about.

EVALUATION · THE “DO THEY GET ME?” TEST

Do They Get Me?

Tell your Bridge + Value Story to someone who knows your work. Then ask them:

“*Based on that, what do you think I’m good at—and what do you think I’m looking for next?*”

✓If they can clearly tell you both, your story is working.
✓If they understand where you’re going but not what you bring, strengthen the Value Story.
✓If they understand your value but not what you want next, strengthen the Bridge.

Bridge = Do they understand my direction?
Value Story = Do they understand my value?

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Applying With Intention

The goal isn't more applications. It's better-fit roles where your experience clearly matches what they need, and more than one path into the opportunity. ***Before you apply, check out the Resume Playbook in Appendix A of this guide or let Odyseek optimize your resume for you.***

Before you apply, run the role through this quick filter through these 4 questions:

1. *Is this actually a match?*
2. *Is the role worth my time?*
3. *What actually needs tailoring?*
4. *Who is the human path?*

1. Is this actually a match?
Can you clearly explain why your experience connects to the work they need done? You don't need to meet every requirement, but the core of the role should make sense for you. As you add each job, Odyseek will tell you how you match to the position.

2. Is the role worth my time?
Prioritize roles posted in the last 7 days and confirm they are still live on the company's careers page. If the role is older but a strong fit, still apply, but add outreach to improve your chances. Move quickly on the right roles, not on every role you see.

3. What actually needs tailoring?
Don't rewrite your entire resume every time. There's a psychological tax in doing this. Adjust the parts that affect relevance most:

- Impact summary
- Skills
- Most relevant experience bullets



Don't rely on ChatGPT for your resume
All resumes now look the same. Use Odyseek to help you refine your resume based on your actual proof, not AI slop.

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4. Who is the human path?
For the opportunities that are worth your time, don't give yourself only one way to be evaluated.

Don’t make blind applications your only channel:

- Do I (or anyone I know) work at this company?
- Can I identify the likely hiring manager or team lead?
- Is there someone doing adjacent work who could give me context?

For every high-priority role, identify one human to reach out to. ‘A’ stands for Application + Access in the process. The application gets you into the company’s system. The human path can help you get an interview.

Lastly, track the opportunity, not just the application.
Record the role, date applied, contact(s), outreach, follow-up, conversations, and result. That lets you see which channels are actually creating movement.



Make the job search easier to manage.
Odyseek helps you understand your match for each role, tailor your resume with intention, and keep every opportunity organized in one place.

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SCRIPT TO USE

The Human Path Message

After applying to a strong-fit role, identify and send a short note to someone close to the team if possible and appropriate.
“Hi [Name], I just applied for the [Role] position at [Company]. I’ve spent the last [X years] doing [relevant work], including [one relevant outcome], so the role really stood out to me. I wanted to introduce myself directly and would love to learn more about what the team is looking for.”

IF YOU HAVE A WARM CONNECTION

“Hi [Name], I’m looking at the [Role] opening at [Company] and noticed you’re connected to [Person/Team]. It looks closely aligned with my background in [relevant area]. Would you be comfortable making an introduction?”

Keep it short. Lead with relevance. Make the ask easy to answer.

REGULATION · STAY STEADY

More Applications is Not Always Progress

If your runway is tight, you may need to apply more broadly and that’s ok. The goal isn't fewer applications. it's knowing *why* you're applying.

Before you hit Apply, ask one question:
"Would I take this job if it were offered to me?"

Two things to weigh as you answer:

1.***Could I do this job?*** (do I possess the required skills?)
2.***Do I want this job?*** This is what most people skip, but it’s just as crucial.
Yes → apply, even if it's not your dream role.
No → spend that time on a stronger-fit application, outreach, or another path instead.

Urgency can widen your search. It doesn't have to make it random.

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EVALUATION · START TRACKING

Your 30-Day Baseline

At the end of the week, review the roles you applied to and ask:
By the end of your first month, you may have applications, outreach, conversations, or interviews in motion.

You do not need to judge the results yet.

Start building your baseline:
Applications sent: __
Outreach messages sent: __
Conversations started: __
First-round interviews: __
Next-round interviews: __
Offers: __

Then ask:
Where am I seeing movement?
Where do I simply not have enough information yet?

For now, collect the data. You'll learn how to read it in Month 2.
Don't diagnose from one result. Look for repetition.

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MONTH 2

Run the Search

Days 31–60 · There's no week-by-week breakdown here, on purpose. This month isn't a sequence of new topics, it's one system you run consistently for 30 days straight and using the CARE framework to guide you. The skill isn't learning something new each week. It's mastering the same process until it's automatic.

You do not need to do everything every day. You need a rhythm you can sustain, more than one path into an opportunity, and enough signal to know what and when to adjust.

This is also when your search may turn into interviews or offers. Check out our Appendices that goes over Resume Optimization, Interviewing & Negotiation.

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The System

A good search strategy or system is not just a list of jobs to apply to. This is the process you master this month—the same cycle, every week, no new topic to learn as the weeks go by.

If the process stalls, don't just apply to more jobs, figure out where the breakdown is. We won't have weekly breakouts here, but we'll go deep into how you can operate across the most important actions.

1. *Set your office hours.*
Decide when you'll search, apply, follow up, network, and prepare. A job search can consume the entire day if you let it. You do not need equal time in every category, find what works. Your week should be structured with clear motions:

Search → Apply → Access → Follow Up → Review

A simple weekly rhythm might look like:
Monday (Search): Find and evaluate strong-fit opportunities
Tuesday (Apply): Submit targeted applications
Wednesday (Access): Reach out, ask for introductions, have conversations
Thursday (Follow up): Revisit active opportunities
Friday (Review): Look at what is actually creating movement

The exact days don't matter, the rhythm does.

2. Balance applications with access (see next section for more details).
Don't let all of your activity live on job boards. Each week should include some combination of applications, outreach, introductions, conversations, and interview preparation. Some weeks will lean more heavily toward one than another. That is normal. The goal is to have more than one way for an opportunity to reach you.

3. Follow up once post application, then move on.
After you apply online and when appropriate:
* 1-3 days after a warm referral
*5-7 days for cold outeach
No response? Move on.
Don't let one opportunity absorb disproportionate energy.

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4. Track the signal/funnel, not just the volume.
At the end of each week, look at:
Applications → Responses → Conversations → Interviews → Next rounds→ Offers

Then find the drop off:
If applications aren't getting responses, revisit targeting or resume relevance.

If outreach isn't getting replies, revisit the message or audience.

If conversations aren't becoming interviews, revisit how you're communicating your value.

If interviews aren't progressing, revisit your stories and interview strategy.

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SCRIPT TO USE

The Follow-Up (When You've Heard Nothing)

AFTER APPLYING & NO RESPONSE (TO AN IDENTIFIED RECRUITER)

Hi [Name], I applied for the [Role] position and wanted to reach out directly. You're looking for someone who can [priority/problem from job description]. In my last role, I [relevant action/result], including [brief impact].

Would you be open to a 15-minute conversation about what the team needs most from this hire?

AFTER APPLYING & NO RESPONSE (TO HIRING MANAGER)

Hi [Name], I applied for the [Role] position and wanted to introduce myself directly. The role's focus on [specific priority] caught my attention because I've done very similar work, including [specific result].

Would you be open to a brief conversation to see if my background could be useful for what you're building?

AFTER CONVERSATION, NO RESPONSE (TO HIRING MANAGER)

Hi [Name], thanks again for the conversation. Your point about [specific challenge] stuck with me. I've dealt with something very similar at [Company], where I [action] and [impact]. The more I understand the role, the more clearly I see the connection between what your team needs and the work I do best.

Would it make sense to continue the conversation with [the hiring manager / someone else on the team / the next step in the process]?

AFTER CONVERSATION, NO RESPONSE (TO HIRING MANAGER)

Hi [Name], thanks again for the conversation today. Your point about [specific challenge/priority] was something I'd love to explore with you further. I've tackled something very similar at [Company], where I [action] and [impact].

The conversation reinforced how closely this role aligns with the work I do best. I'm excited to continue the process. What would be the best next step?

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REGULATION · STAY STEADY

Send, Then Stop

A job search can easily expand to fill every available hour. Staying busy is not the same as moving forward, you need to *close the loop*. There is always another role to check, another message to send, another inbox to refresh.

Build two boundaries into your search:

1.After outreach:
Send → track → follow up once if appropriate → release.

You can measure if a message is responded to. Do not use response time as a measure of whether the message was good or whether someone liked you. Once you've sent it, the next move is theirs.

2.At the end of your search time block:
Write down the next action for anything unfinished. Close your job-search tabs.

When you catch yourself checking for replies or reopening LinkedIn, incessantly, remember: "Check on a schedule, not on impulse."

The goal is not to care less. It is to keep the search from consuming every minute of your entire day.

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EVALUATION · TRACK THIS

The Friday Signal Check

Where the funnel is low	What it may mean	What to adjust first
Applications → responses	The role may not be a strong enough fit, or your relevance is not clear on paper	Recheck targeting, then strengthen the impact summary and most relevant resume bullets
Outreach → replies	The message may feel generic, unclear, or too focused on you	Make the relevance specific to their team, problem, or role, and end with a clear ask
Conversations → interviews	People may understand your background but not why you fit this opportunity	Tighten your Bridge and Value Story so your direction and relevance are easy to understand
Interviews → next round	Your examples may describe what you did without proving impact or connection to their needs	Strengthen your top stories around action, impact, and relevance. See Appendix B

*Don't change everything at once. Find the narrowest point in your funnel and test one meaningful adjustment first.

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The Application Is Only One Door

Unpopular opinion: Applying blindly to jobs is no longer the best strategy. Of course in the age of AI, you can't rely on a bot (especially since most resumes are now written by bots). You need a human. The goal is not to "network harder." It's to create another path for the company to understand your relevance, your value, and why you may be worth a conversation.

For every high-fit role, work through this path:

1. Do I know someone at the company?
→ **YES:** *Start here. Ask for insight or an introduction.*
↓ **NO**

2. Does someone I know have a connection there?
→ **YES:** *Ask for a warm introduction.*
↓ **NO**

3. **Can I identify someone close to the decision?**
→ **YES**: *Reach out directly to the hiring manager, recruiter, or someone on the team.*
↓ **NO**

4. Apply anyway.
→ *Then keep looking for a human path after you apply.*

1st-degree connection → 2nd-degree introduction → targeted cold outreach

Match a simple ask to the person.
Someone you know → "Can you give me context (on the job)?"
Someone with a connection → "Would you introduce us?"
Someone on the team → "Can I learn more about the need?"
Hiring manager → "Can we talk about how my experience could help?"

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SCRIPT TO USE

Three Access Messages

Keep every version short. Long messages get skimmed or not answered.

WARM INTRO

Hi [Name], I saw you're connected to [Person] at [Company]. I'm exploring the [Role] opening there, which lines up closely with my background in [area]. If you know them well enough to feel comfortable, would you be open to introducing us? I'm happy to send a two-line blurb you can forward.

PERSON CLOSE TO THE WORK

Hi [Name], I'm exploring the [Role] opening at [Company] and noticed you work closely with [team/function]. My background is in [relevant work], and I'd love to understand what the team is actually trying to solve with this hire. If you have 15 minutes sometime, I'd really value your perspective.

OUTREACH TO MANAGER

Hi [Name], I applied for the [Role] position and wanted to reach out directly. I saw that [specific priority/problem] is a key part of the role. At [Company], I [what you did], resulting in [impact].
Would you have 15 minutes next week to talk about what you need from this hire and how my experience might fit?



How to search for a manager or team member on LinkedIn:
Search the company name + likely title
(e.g. Vanta, Sales Operations Manager)

Check the job posting for team structure clues, and look for anyone currently doing the role. They're often the most generous with real information.

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REGULATION · STAY STEADY

Don’t Overcorrect

By Month 2, every rejection can start to feel like evidence that something is wrong with your search.

Before you rewrite your resume, change your target, or overhaul your interview strategy, look for the same signal to show up more than once.

Change the strategy when the evidence repeats, not when the disappointment is fresh.

EVALUATION · TRACK THIS

Access Quality, Not Just Reply Rate

Instead of only messages → replies → calls, track:

Contacts identified: __
Warm introductions requested: __
Replies: __
Conversations: __
Opportunities influenced by a human connection: __

Then ask:
Which people are actually creating access?
What type of messaging is landing?



Got An Interview?
Go to the Interview Playbook appendix to know what matters. Then let Odyseek do the prep with you: company and role research, story selection, and a voice-based mock interview, all in one place.

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WEEK EIGHT · DAYS 52–60

The Midpoint Reset

Two months in is a real milestone, whatever the calendar says about it. There aren't any scripts but only a regulation check in on the process and your mindset.

REGULATION · STAY STEADY

Anchor to What's True

Name:

→3 things that are true about your value that have nothing to do with this week's results.

→2 things outside the job search that still matter to you.

→1 thing you need today to keep going sustainably.

The search is something you are going through. It is not a definition of who you are.

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MONTH 3

Decide What's Next

Days 61–90+. Whether that's an offer, a diagnosis, a pivot, or a longer runway—this month starts by figuring out which one you're actually facing, so you're not reading advice that doesn't apply yet.

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Find Your Stage

Find where you are in this table. Read the one stage that matches, not all four. You may move between stages as your situation changes.

Your Stage	Go To
You have an offer	A. Evaluate & Negotiate
Interviews, but not offers	B. Diagnose the Gap
Applications and outreach are flat	C. Adjust the Search
Past 90 days, still open	D. Reset Without Starting Over

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YOU HAVE AN OFFER

A: Evaluate & Negotiate

Congratulations, you have an offer! For more guidance, see Appendix C: Negotiation Playbook.

After a layoff, an offer can bring relief and pressure at the same time. You may need this job, want this job, or both. If the offer meets your needs and you feel good about it, it is completely okay to accept it as-is. But do not let fear stop you from clarifying something important or making a reasonable ask before you say yes.

Before you accept...
Does the offer work for your life right now?

Look at the full picture: compensation, benefits, manager, scope, expectations, flexibility, commute, growth, and the work itself. Not every job needs to be the perfect next move. It does need to make sense for what you need now.

What do you still need to understand?
If something could materially affect your experience, ask before you join. That might include bonus structure, hybrid expectations, reporting line, travel, title, benefits timing, equity, or start date.

What matters enough to ask for?
You do not have to negotiate everything. Focus on the one or two things that matter most to you and make a thoughtful ask. Compensation is only one lever.

What would make you comfortable saying yes?
Your answer may be simple: the offer works as is. Or there may be one thing you want to clarify or improve first. Either is valid.

Remember:
You do not need a perfect offer. You do want to understand what you are accepting and give yourself the chance to advocate for what matters most.

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SCRIPT TO USE

Give Yourself Room to Decide

Understand the offer and ask for what matters.

TO GET MORE TIME

"Thank you. I'm really excited about the opportunity. I'd like a little time to review the full package thoughtfully. Would it be possible for me to get back to you by [day]?"

WANT TO NEGOTIATE

"I'm very excited about the role and would love to make this work. Before I accept, I wanted to ask about [compensation/title/flexibility]. Given the scope of the role and my experience in [relevant area], is there flexibility to get closer to [specific ask]?"

REGULATION · STAY STEADY

An offer can make the whole search suddenly feel urgent. Before you respond, give yourself enough space to understand the offer clearly.

Go back to the criteria you set earlier. You do not need a perfect job. You do want to know what you are saying yes to, what matters most right now, and whether there is anything you want to clarify or ask for before you accept.

EVALUATION · TRACK THIS

Assessing The Offer

Ask yourself:

- Does this offer work for what I need right now?
- Do I understand the manager, expectations, scope, and compensation?
- What feels strong about the opportunity?
- Is there anything important I still need to clarify?
- Is there one thing I want to advocate for before I accept?

Get clear on what you need to know, ask for what matters, and make the decision that works for your life.

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YOU'RE INTERVIEWING, BUT NOT CONVERTING

B. Diagnose the Gap

Find where the breakdown is occuring. If you are getting interviews, your background is creating interest. For more, check out Appendix B: Interview Playbook.

The question is no longer, "Am I qualified?" The better question is:
"At what point am I losing confidence with the interviewer, and why?"

Do not treat every rejection the same. Look for the pattern.

1. *You're not getting past the* RECRUITER SCREEN:
This is often a **positioning** problem.
The recruiter is usually trying to answer:
Do they clearly fit what we are hiring for?
Can I confidently move them forward?

Look at your last few screens and ask:

- Was your answer to "Tell me about yourself" clear and relevant, or did it become a career chronology?
- Could you explain why this role makes sense for you in under a minute?
- Did you connect your experience to what they are hiring for?
- Were compensation, level, location or timing misaligned?
- Did you sound interested in this specific opportunity, or simply open to anything?

YOUR NEXT MOVE:
Sharpen your opening story.

Use:
Where I've been + what I'm strongest at + why this role makes sense now.

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1. You're not getting past the HIRING MANAGER:

This is often a ***proof*** problem.
Your resume may say you can do the work, but the hiring manager needs to believe you can solve their problems.

Go back to the job description and identify the 3 things they seem to care about most.

Then ask:
Did I tell stories that actually proved those three things?

A common mistake is answering the question accurately but using the wrong story.

For every major requirement, prepare one example that shows:
The problem → what you specifically did → what changed because of you.

Then pressure-test it:

- Is the story specific?
- Is your role clear?
- Is there a decision, tension or obstacle?
- Can they tell what you are good at?
- Does the outcome matter?

If the interviewer has to infer your value, the story is not finished.

YOUR NEXT MOVE:
Build your interview around proof, not just answers. Use measurable results or clear outcomes, but choose the ones that matter most for this role. The goal is not to show everything you have done. It is to prove you can do what they need.

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3. You keep getting to final rounds, but no offer

This usually goes beyond a proof problem. this is usually due to a **differentiation** problem. *Do not immediately assume you are interviewing badly.*
If you are repeatedly reaching final rounds, the company already sees significant fit.

At this stage, diagnose differentiation and confidence.
Ask:

- *Did I make it easy to understand why I am uniquely suited for this role?*
- *Were my stories memorable, or merely competent?*
- *Did I demonstrate how I think, not just what I have done?*
- *Did I show enough curiosity about their specific problems?*
- *Did I leave any concerns unresolved?*
- *Did I close strongly enough for them to understand my interest and fit?*

Final-round decisions can also come down to factors you cannot see or control: an internal candidate, a different mix of experience, compensation, team chemistry, or changing business needs.

YOUR NEXT MOVE:
Do not rebuild your whole strategy. Go back through your final-round interviews and identify the one thing they may still have needed more confidence in.
Look for patterns in:

- *what they kept asking about*
- *where your answers felt generic or less specific*
- *whether your strongest stories actually matched the role's biggest need*
- *whether you showed how you think, make decisions, and handle tradeoffs*

Then sharpen the next interview around that gap aligned with the #1 priority the role is set to solve.

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SCRIPT TO USE

Getting Interview Feedback (if you were passed on)

When feedback is appropriate to request:
"Thank you again for the opportunity. I enjoyed getting to know the team and learning more about the role. As I continue refining how I position my experience, if there is any feedback you're able to share about what would have made my candidacy stronger, I'd genuinely value it."

And before your next interview, finish this sentence:
"By the end of this interview, they need to believe that I can _____."

Select the stories that prove it.

REGULATION · STAY STEADY

After a rejection, your brain will want to explain it immediately.

I talked too much.
They didn't like me.
I'm terrible at interviewing.
That is interpretation, not evidence.

Ask instead:
What pattern is emerging across multiple interviews?
What, if anything, can I learn from this that should change my next interview?

The goal is to move away from self-judgement to minor adjustment.
Do not redesign your interview strategy from one disappointing outcome.

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EVALUATION · TRACK THIS

See the Exit Signs

Use the stage where you are consistently exiting as your clue:

Recruiter screen → clarify your positioning.
Hiring manager → strengthen your proof.
Final rounds → sharpen differentiation and address lingering concerns.
No consistent pattern → gather more evidence before changing anything.

Do not ask:
"How do I interview better?"
Ask:
"Where might they still need more proof?"

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NOT HEARING BACK

C. ADJUST THE SEARCH

If you are applying, reaching out, and getting very little response back, the answer is usually not more activity. First figure out which part of the search is failing.

1. *You're applying, but getting almost no responses.*

This is usually a targeting or positioning problem.

Ask:

- Am I applying to roles where my background is an obvious match?
- Am I stretching across too many titles, levels, or functions?
- Does my resume make the match easy to see in the first 10 seconds?
- Am I tailoring the top third of my resume to the role that is actually open?
- Am I applying early enough, or mostly entering crowded applicant pools late?

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Take your last 20 applications and sort them into three buckets:

Strong match

Possible match

Stretch

Then look at where the responses came from.

If almost all traction came from one type of role, level, or industry, that is useful market feedback. Narrow toward the places where your value is already resonating.

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2. Your applications are strong, but you're relying on only the front door.

Even a strong resume can get buried. For roles you genuinely want, add a second path in.

Look for:

- *Former colleagues*
- *Alumni*
- *Second-degree connections*
- *People on the hiring team*
- *Recruiters covering the function*
- *People who recently joined the company in a similar role*

3. Your outreach is ignored.

This is often a messaging problem, not a networking problem.

Most outreach fails because it is:

- *Too generic*
- *Too long*
- *Too focused on the sender*
- *Too big of an ask*
- *Unclear about why that specific person was contacted*

4. You're getting conversations but they aren't turning into opportunities

This is often a clarity and or specificity problem.

People may like you and still not know how to help you.

At the end of a networking conversation, could they answer:

What kind of role is this person looking for?

What are they unusually good at?

Who should I introduce them to?

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SCRIPT TO USE

Specificity With A Reasonable Ask

Leverage the scripts provided earlier in the guide, similar to the following:

"I'm focusing my search on product leadership roles in healthcare technology, and your move from [Company A] to [Company B] caught my attention. I'm trying to understand how companies in the space are thinking about [specific issue]. If you had 15 minutes, I'd value your perspective."

REGULATION · STAY STEADY

No Responses Can Create a Dangerous Loop

More applications → more silence → more panic → even more applications. Do not let anxiety choose your strategy.

Ask:
Is this activity increasing my odds, or only making me feel productive?
Set a smaller number of high-quality targets each week and track what actually creates movement.

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EVALUATION · TRACK THIS

Find the Pattern

Use the pattern to decide what to change:

No response from strong-match roles → positioning problem
Responses only from certain roles → targeting signal
Applications get ignored but warm intros move → access problem
Outreach gets ignored → message problem
Networking happens but leads nowhere → clarity problem

Do not ask:
“How do I get more applications out?”
Ask:
“Where is the signal breaking down?”

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STILL SEARCHING & LOSING HOPE

D: Reset Without Starting Over

At this point, the temptation is to assume you need a completely new strategy. Usually, you don't. You have something now that you did not have on Day 1: data. Data is feedback.

You know which roles respond. Which messages get replies. Which interviews move forward. And no responses is also feedsback on what's not working.

Month 3 is not about starting over.
It's about using what you have learned to make the search a bit sharper.

1. ***Separate what isn't working from what just hasn't worked yet.***

A long search can make everything feel like it's not working. Do not evaluate the entire search as one thing.

Look at each part separately:
Targeting: Are the roles you are pursuing producing any traction?
Positioning: Do employers quickly understand where you fit and what you bring?
Access: Are you getting in front of people, or mostly submitting applications?
Interviewing: When you get into a process, how far are you advancing?
Consistency: Are you still executing a focused strategy, or has the search become reactive?

YOUR NEXT MOVE:
Find that one part of the system needs attention and start there.
Do not throw away the parts that are already working.

2. ***Look for your strongest signal***
Go back through the last 30 to 60 days.
Ask:

- Which roles generated the most responses?
- Which companies/interviewers seemed most interested in my background?
- What did people consistently respond positively to?

If one part of your background keeps creating interest, move it closer to the center of your positioning.
If one category of role consistently responds, consider narrowing toward it.
If warm introductions outperform cold applications, invest more energy there.
YOUR NEXT MOVE:
Follow the strongest signal instead of continuously creating new strategies.

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3.. ***Decide what to stop***

This guide is focused on a lot things to do, but it's just as important to consider what to stop. We should remove what is consuming energy without producing meaningful movement.

Ask:

What have I done consistently for several weeks with almost no return?
Maybe it is:

- Applying broadly to roles where you are a weak match
- Writing highly customized cover letters no one appears to be reading
- Sending generic networking messages
- Spending hours tweaking a resume that is already generating interviews
- Checking job boards throughout the day
- Pursuing a type of role that repeatedly shows little market interest

Stopping something is not giving up. It is reallocating your energy & effort.

SCRIPT TO USE

Reconnecting With Your Network at 90 Days

Do not be embarssed you haven't found a job yet. Consider a useful update for your outreach:

"Quick update since we last spoke. My search has helped me get much clearer about where my experience is resonating most. I'm now focusing specifically on [ROLE/AREA], particularly with companies dealing with [PROBLEM]. Is there anyone that comes to mind? I'd really appreciate an introduction."

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REGULATION · STAY STEADY

Stop Making Every Opp "The One"

By Month 3, it is easy to load too much meaning onto each interview or application. That can make you over-prepare, overthink, and feel crushed by every outcome.

Before an interview, remind yourself:
This is one opportunity, not my only opportunity.

Prepare seriously. Show up fully. But keep enough perspective that one company does not get to define how you feel about the entire search.

EVALUATION · TRACK THIS

90 Days (Start / Stop / Continue)

You do not need to start over, you need to figure out what's working and what isn't. This is one of the most effective look back exercises.

START
What are the outcomes showing what you should try next?
STOP
What is taking time or energy without creating traction that I need to stop?
CONTINUE
What is already generating responses, conversations, or progress?

Make one clear and strategic adjustment based on facts, not a complete overhaul.

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ONE LAST THING...

Before You Go

A layoff can shake more than your job. It can change how you see yourself, how confident you feel, and how much uncertainty you think you can handle.
This guide was never meant to give you a perfect formula. It was meant to help you make sense of what is happening, stay connected to your value, and make better decisions as you move through the search.

A job search will give you a lot of information, but not all of it deserves the same weight. One rejection is not a pattern. One slow week is not a verdict. Learn from the signals that are useful, adjust when you need to, and do not let every setback redefine what you know to be true about yourself.

Because a layoff is a moment in your career. It is not the sum of your career. It does not erase the work you have done, the people you have helped, the problems you have solved, or everything you have learned along the way.

You know more now than you did when this started. About the market, about what you want, and maybe even about yourself.

Take that with you. And keep going.

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APPENDIX A

Resume Playbook

Your resume/CV is not your whole career. It is the version of your story that helps a recruiter or hiring manager quickly understand where you fit, what you bring, and why your experience matters. Use this section whenever you need to build, strengthen, or tailor your resume so your value is easier to see, for both the technology screening it and the human reading it.

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Resume, Reframed

Your resume should make your value easy to see. Odyseek.com can help you turn your Value Story into a resume that connects the dots. We'll automatically generate a resume in a top performing template and guide you through optimizing.

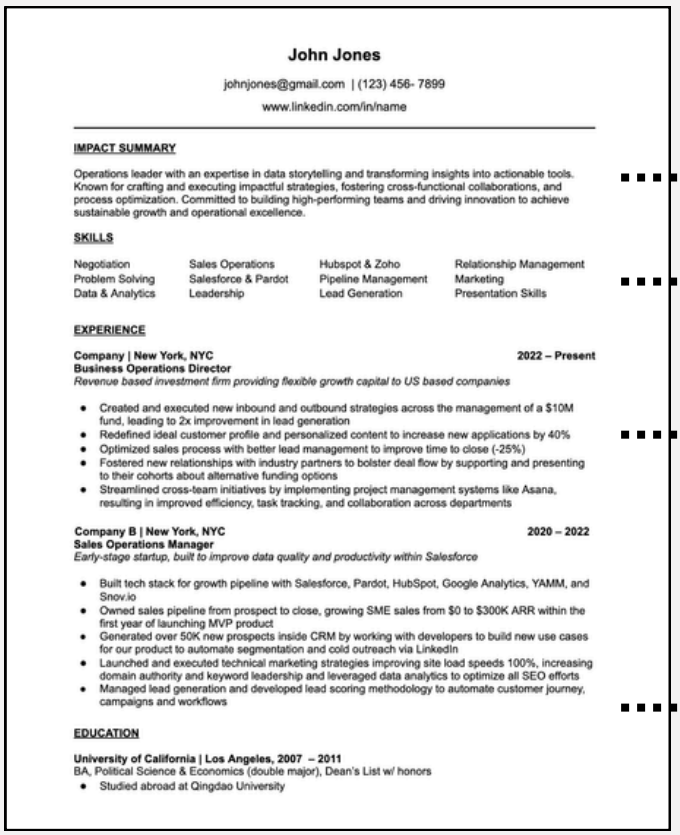
Below is what we use in our backend to create compelling resumes.

Here are the 3 things a resume should do well:

a) be easy to skim (for both ATS and human reader, read below on what an ATS is)
b) show growth and progression (not just promotions, new skills, new responsibilities)
c) prove your impact (through metrics or outcomes)

Anatomy of a Great Resume

A great resume can be a great storyteller and needs to be skimmable, show growth & progression and your impact.



John Jones

johnjones@gmail.com | (123) 456- 7899

www.linkedin.com/in/name

IMPACT SUMMARY

Operations leader with an expertise in data storytelling and transforming insights into actionable tools. Known for crafting and executing impactful strategies, fostering cross-functional collaborations, and process optimization. Committed to building high-performing teams and driving innovation to achieve sustainable growth and operational excellence.

SKILLS

Negotiation	Sales Operations	Hubspot & Zoho	Relationship Management
Problem Solving	Salesforce & Pardot	Pipeline Management	Marketing
Data & Analytics	Leadership	Lead Generation	Presentation Skills

EXPERIENCE

Company | New York, NYC **2022 – Present**
Business Operations Director
Revenue based investment firm providing flexible growth capital to US based companies

- Created and executed new inbound and outbound strategies across the management of a $10M fund, leading to 2x improvement in lead generation
- Redefined ideal customer profile and personalized content to increase new applications by 40%
- Optimized sales process with better lead management to improve time to close (-25%)
- Fostered new relationships with industry partners to bolster deal flow by supporting and presenting to their cohorts about alternative funding options
- Streamlined cross-team initiatives by implementing project management systems like Asana, resulting in improved efficiency, task tracking, and collaboration across departments

Company B | New York, NYC **2020 – 2022**
Sales Operations Manager
Early-stage startup, built to improve data quality and productivity within Salesforce

- Built tech stack for growth pipeline with Salesforce, Pardot, HubSpot, Google Analytics, YAMM, and Snov.io
- Owned sales pipeline from prospect to close, growing SME sales from $0 to $300K ARR within the first year of launching MVP product
- Generated over 50K new prospects inside CRM by working with developers to build new use cases for our product to automate segmentation and cold outreach via LinkedIn
- Launched and executed technical marketing strategies improving site load speeds 100%, increasing domain authority and keyword leadership and leveraged data analytics to optimize all SEO efforts
- Managed lead generation and developed lead scoring methodology to automate customer journey, campaigns and workflows

EDUCATION

University of California | Los Angeles, 2007 – 2011
BA, Political Science & Economics (double major), Dean's List w/ honors

- Studied abroad at Qingdao University

1 impact summary
headline, connects dots for reader

2 skills section
relevant skils possessed tailored to the role

3 experience
validated proof, showing impact & growth that proves the skills you possess and support your impact summary

4 education, certifications, etc.
**for students, teachers, education can go to the top*

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Make Your Resume Easy To Read

A strong resume should work for both people and systems. Make it easy for a human to skim and straightforward for an ATS to parse. Use a clean format, standard section headings, concise bullets, and tailor your summary, skills, and most relevant experience to the role. We'll tackle the dreaded ATS in its own section.



Resume Do's

- Make it skimmable, your highlight reel
- Tailor for job (revise summary, skills & bullets)
- Show impact through measurable results or outcomes
- Concise bullet points:
  - 5-7 for relevant
  - 1-3 for non relevant or older roles
- Total length matters:
  - 2 pages 10+ years
  - 1 page for recent grads, early professionals
- Show growth & progression (skills, promotions, etc.)
- Action keywords



Resume Dont's

- Large blocks of text
- Keyword stuffing
- Non-traditional fonts (Arial & Calibri are best)
- Section headers that aren't standard
- Bolding/underlining other than section headers
- Bullet points that read like job descriptions
- Passive keywords
- Avoid jargon, cliches (hard worker, ninja)
- Typos, Pronouns
- Graphics, logos, pictures



Tailor With Context

Odyseek's Resume Editor tailors your resume to the role without losing your real experience or voice.

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SCRIPT TO USE FOR IMPACT BULLET POINTS

Turn Your Bullet Into Impact

When a bullet sounds like a job description, ask:

What was the problem?
What did I actually do?
What changed because of it?

Instead of:
"Responsible for managing cross-functional product launches."

Try:
"Led cross-functional launch planning across product, sales, and marketing, helping bring a new offering to market on schedule."

See the difference? Use action keywords to show impact alongside measurable results. Don't have any metrics? No problem, focus on the outcomes.

YEGULATION · STAY STEADY

Your Resume Is a Draft, Not a Verdict

You are going to change it as you learn what gets traction. You should be monitoring changes like your credit score.

That does not mean you got it wrong. It means your search is giving you information.

The goal is not to create the perfect resume before you apply.
The goal is to create a clear, credible version of your story, put it into the market, and keep refining from there.

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EVALUATION · THE “SO WHAT?” TEST

So What?

Read each bullet and ask that question, would it matter to a hiring manager. If the bullet only tells someone what you were responsible for, keep going.

What changed because I did this?
Why did it matter?
What was better, faster, easier, bigger, or more effective because of my work?

That answer is usually where the impact lives.
Example:
“Managed onboarding for new hires.”

So what?
“Redesigned onboarding for new hires, helping managers get people productive faster and creating a more consistent first-week experience.”

If you can answer the “so what?” clearly, you’re probably getting closer to a bullet that proves your value.

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APPENDIX B

Interview Playbook

This is not the interview guide that tells you how to research the company, use the STAR method, or maintain eye contact. You already know most of that. And don't even get us started on the STAR method, answers usually sound overly rehearsed or awkward.

There is something far more important: making your value clear and giving the interviewer confidence that you can do the job.

We do not believe in memorizing answers. We believe in memorializing your value.

Know your stories and the proof behind them. Then learn how to tell them in a way that feels natural, relevant, and easy to remember.

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Stories That Tell Your Value

Interviews are not about having the perfect answer to every possible question.

Your job is to help the company see these three things quickly:

1. *What you are good at*
2. *Why it matters for this role*
3. *Why they can trust you to create that value here*

We'll walk you through how to do this. Also, check out Odyseek's Interview Prep tool where we do all the prep work for you so you can focus on your stories through our interactive mock tool.

Translate the Job Description

Do not read the job description as a checklist. Translate what the team needs.

Look for three things:

1. What shows up more than once? Repeated themes usually point to what matters most.
2. What problems seem to need the most attention?
3. What does this role appear responsible for changing, improving, or owning?

Then translate the description into:

"They need someone who can..."

For example:

"Partner cross-functionally" becomes

They need someone who can influence people across teams.

"Build scalable processes" becomes

They need someone who can create structure as the company grows.

"Own strategy and execution" becomes

They need someone who can decide what to do and actually make it happen.



Need help translating?

Let Odyseek connect the job description to your experience and identify the strongest proof points for you and how you should position your value.

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Build Your Story Bank

You have a sense of what the team needs. Now start filling in the blanks with 4–6 career moments that show you at your best in those areas.
Example stories that demonstrate different kinds of value include:

- meaningful win
- hard problem solved
- time you influenced/aligned people
- moment you took ownership
- setback, mistake, or change you learned from
- time you improved something that was not working

A story should capture these 3 things:

The Situation

What was happening?
Keep this short. Give only enough context for the listener to understand.

The Action

What did you specifically do?
Be precise about your contribution. Avoid hiding behind “we” when your role mattered.

Your Impact

“How” you did, the outcomes.
The things that changed because of your work The outcones, the measurable results.

For example:
The team was struggling with an inconsistent onboarding process across departments. I rebuilt the workflow, clarified manager ownership, and created a more repeatable first-week experience. That reduced confusion and helped new hires ramp faster (we noticed that reps were able to start closing orders a month faster).

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Make Your Stories Memorable

A strong story is not necessarily the most impressive story.

It is one that is:
→ easy to follow
→ specific enough to believe
→ clear about your contribution
→ connected to what they need

Here are some other top tips to stand out:

1. Keep the setup short
Most candidates ramble and give much detail, this is there the interviewer generally loses interest

2. Answer the question first.
One of the easiest ways to weaken an answer is to take too long getting to it.
For example, “Have you managed a team through crisis?”
Start with your answer and then go into the detail, “Yes. The most relevant example of this is…”
***Use this formula*: ANSWER → EXAMPLE→IMPACT**.

3. Own your contribution
It’s so easy to default to “we” language to show you’re a humble, but your interview is not your time to be humble, it’s time to brag boldly.

4. Make your impact stand out
Measurable results help, but not required. You can also showcase outcomes. If you can’t easily answer “What changed?”, the story probably needs more work.

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Make Your Stories Memorable (cont)

5. Your best story is not always your biggest win
Candidates often reach for the most impressive project they have ever worked on. But where's the fun in that?

The best story is the one that most clearly proves the capability the interviewer is evaluating.

A smaller example where your ownership is obvious can be stronger than a massive company win where your contribution is hard to isolate.

Before each interview, ask:
What does this question actually test?
"Tell me about a conflict" may be testing judgment.
"Tell me about a failure" may be testing accountability.
"Tell me about a time you influenced without authority" may be testing how you build alignment.

Have those stories ready too.

6. Connect the dots for the hiring team
Do not assume the hiring manager will read between the lines.
Use language like:
"The reason I think that example is relevant here is…"
"That experience connects closely to what you mentioned about…"
"I've solved a very similar problem before…"

The strongest candidates do not simply tell good stories.
They help the interviewer understand why those stories matter to them for this role.

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Make Your Stories Memorable (cont)

7. Pay attention to repeated questions.
Repeated questions are data. If three interviewers keep asking about the same gap, transition, or area of experience, they may be trying to resolve a concern.

Get curious. You can ask:
"I've noticed a few people have asked about my experience with [area]. Is there something specific about that part of the role that you are hoping to understand?"
That can surface the real concern while you still have time to address it.

8. Explain the layoff briefly, then bridge back to your value and the role.

Most people don't lose interviews because of the layoff itself. But lose them because of how they explain it when asked.

Here are common responses and how to strengthen the narrative on why you're the right fit:

⭕ "It was just a reorg."
✅ "My role was impacted during a reorg. I was leading X and driving Y, and I'm excited to bring that same focus into this role."

⭕ "A lot of people were impacted."
✅ "Several teams were affected. In my role, I owned X and consistently delivered Y... which is why this role stood out to me."

⭕ "The company wasn't aligned."
✅ "Priorities shifted, but what stayed consistent was my strength in X and my interest in building Y here."

⭕"I'm just looking for something stable now."
✅ "I'm excited about this role because it lets me keep doing X and deepen my impact on Y."

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Make Your Stories Memorable (cont)

9. Ask questions to *understand* and to *connect*.

Do not ask questions just because they sound strategic.
Ask questions that help you understand the real job: what is hard, what needs to change, and what success looks like. You're interviewing the company as much as they're interviewing you.

Then use what you hear to connect back to your experience.

For example:
"What is the biggest challenge you need this person to solve in the first six months?"
If they say the team is struggling with alignment, you can respond:
"That is helpful context. I dealt with something similar in my last role when three teams were operating with different priorities. I ended up creating a shared planning process that helped us get everyone moving in the same direction."

Other example questions that actually create that opportunity to understand & connect:

- "What is hardest to get right in this role?"
- "What would you want this person to improve first?"
- "Where does the team need the most help right now?"
- "What would make you say six months from now that this hire was a great decision?"

10. Do not leave the interview without a powerful close.

Ask for the job! Well, sort of. You do not need to end with, "So, did I get it?"
And some advice says to surface any concern. We're going to go a step further. Our tip is to CLOSE THE LOOP.

Such as:
"From everything I've heard today, it sounds like the biggest needs are [X] and [Y]. Those are both areas where I've done some of my strongest work, especially [brief proof point]. I'm very interested in the role. Before we wrap, is there anything you'd still need to see from me to feel confident moving forward?"

Or even bolder...

"Based on our conversation, I'm even more interested in the role and can see where my experience would add value. Before we wrap, is there anything you'd still want more clarity on from me?"

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SCRIPT TO USE FOR INTERVIEW FOLLOW UP

Send the 'Thank You'

Your follow-up should do more than say thanks. Use it to reiterate your interest and remind them of the value you bring and reinforce why you're a strong fit.

Hi [Name],
Thank you again for the conversation today. I really appreciated hearing more about [specific priority/challenge]. It reinforced my interest in the role, especially given my experience with [brief relevant value or proof point].
I'd be excited to continue the conversation.
Thank you,
[Name]

Pro tip: If the interview surfaced a clear priority, send a short 30/60/90-day plan, work sample, or mini-deck to make your thinking and value more tangible. This should only be for the roles you really want since it is extra work...and is a great way to stand out.

REGULATION · STAY STEAD

Do Not Grade Yourself Too Fast

The first few minutes after an interview are usually a terrible time to decide how it went.

You will replay the awkward answer, the question you wish you handled differently, or the pause that felt longer than it was.

Give yourself a short buffer like 15-30 min before you start analyzing.

A good rule:
The question to ask isn't, "Did I get it?" It's: **"What did I learn?"**
That keeps you out of the spiral and puts you back into something useful...capturing data.

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EVALUATION · AFTER THE INTERVIEW

The 5-Minute Debrief

Before the details fade (after 15-30 minutes as the adrenaline wears off), write down:

- What did they seem to care about most?
- Which story or example landed best?
- Where did I feel unclear, too long, or underprepared?
- Did they repeat any question or concern?
- What will I do differently in the next interview?

Then stop overthinking. The goal is not to replay the interview. It is to capture the signal while it is fresh.

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APPENDIX C

Negotiation Playbook

Getting an offer can bring two feelings at once: ***Relief. And pressure.***

Especially after a layoff, you may be thinking, I do not want to do anything that could jeopardize this.

Negotiating does not have to mean being aggressive, demanding, or turning the offer into a standoff. At its best, negotiation is simply a professional conversation about whether there is ***flexibility*** in the offer.

And you do not have to negotiate everything. Your goal is to understand what you are being offered, what matters to you most, advocate for yourself where it makes sense, and preserve the relationship you are about to begin.

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Start Here: What You're Negotiating For

If you're on the fence on the offer, put the actual offer details individually in front of you and note whether it's a Need, Want or Tradeoff next to the item. Now go back to the exercise from Page 12 and compare the terms to your original list.

Offer Detail	What They're Offering	Need / Want / Tradeoff	Notes
Base salary	$155K	Need	Meets my minimum
Bonus	10%	Want	Nice, but not essential
Health benefits	Starts Day 1	Need	Important for family coverage
Hybrid schedule	3 days in office	Tradeoff	More than I wanted, but manageable
PTO	15 days	Want	Would prefer 20
Title	Director	Want	Works for me
Start date	Oct. 15	Need	Fits timing

Knowing all these details, you should ask yourself:

Are my needs met?
What matters enough to negotiate?
Are the tradeoffs ones I can genuinely live with?

FINAL CHECK
If nothing else changed, would this offer still work for me?

If the offer already meets your needs, feels fair in context, and you are genuinely happy with it, there is nothing inherently wrong with accepting it as-is. *Negotiation is a tool, not a rule.*

But if you feel you'd like to understand if there is room to negotiate, continue to the next section and we'll give you some tips on what to look for.

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Step 1: Understand the Market

You've probably heard the terrible advice, "Always ask for 20% more". Placing an arbitrary number is not a strategy. Instead, build a reasonable case using actual market information.

Find at least three sources

Whenever possible, triangulate compensation data instead of relying on one website. Useful sources include:

1. The company's own salary range

If the job posting included a range, start there, most relevant info you have.

2. Comparable job postings

Look at similar roles at companies of comparable size, industry, geography, and level.

3. Compensation databases

Depending on your industry, sources may include Levels.fyi, Glassdoor, Indeed, Salary.com or Payscale.

4. Recruiters & Peers

A recruiter working in your field or trusted peers with recent market experience can provide useful context that databases may miss.

Now compare apples to apples:

A salary for a VP at a 50-person startup is not automatically comparable to the same title at a Fortune 500 company.

Primary Factors for Salary:

Role + Level + Geography + Company Size + Industry + Scope

Other compensation factors:

Base + Bonus + Equity + Benefits + Other Compensation

A lower base salary with meaningful equity or a large annual bonus may tell a very different story than base salary alone.

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Step 1: Understand the Market (cont)

You're probably wondering if you can use AI to do this research. Yes you can, but with one important rule.

USE AI TO ANALYZE DATA. DO NOT ASK IT TO INVENT THE DATA.

AI can be extremely useful for helping you:

- Compare multiple salary sources
- Understand an offer structure
- Identify negotiable components
- Calculate total compensation
- Develop a reasonable ask
- Prepare for the conversation
- Practice what you are going to say

But compensation information can change quickly, and AI-generated salary estimates may be outdated, overly broad, or based on roles that are not actually comparable. Give AI the evidence you found and ask it to help you interpret it.

TRY THIS PROMPT:

I received an offer for a [TITLE] role at a [COMPANY SIZE/TYPE] company in [LOCATION].
The offer includes:
Base: [$]
Bonus: [$ or %]
Equity: [details]
Other compensation: [details]
The company's posted salary range is [range].
I also found the following compensation data from comparable roles:
[PASTE SOURCES]
Help me assess where this offer sits within the market and identify a reasonable negotiation range. Do not invent compensation data. Separate what is supported by the information I provided from your judgment.

Then pressure-test the recommendation yourself.

AI should help you think, but should not make the decision for you.

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Step 2: Know 'Why You'

Market data tells you what the role may be worth. Your experience helps explain why you may deserve a particular position within that range.

WHY ME?
What makes you especially relevant to this job?

Know what you bring

Maybe you have:

- Direct industry experience
- Rare technical expertise
- Experience solving the exact problem they hired you to solve
- Leadership experience beyond the minimum requirements
- A strong track record in a priority area
- Specialized relationships, knowledge, certifications, or skills

Pick one or two reasons that directly connect your background to the role and then connect it to their need.

Example: "*Given my experience building this function from the ground up and leading teams at a similar stage of growth, I was hoping we could get closer to* $X."

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Step 3: Make the Ask

You do not need elaborate negotiation tactics. Use this simple formula:

ENTHUSIASM + REASON + ASK
Start by making it clear that you want the job.
Then explain the basis for your request.
Then ask whether there is flexibility.

Know what you bring
Maybe you have:

- Direct industry experience
- Rare technical expertise
- Experience solving the exact problem they hired you to solve
- Leadership experience beyond the minimum requirements
- A strong track record in a priority area
- Specialized relationships, knowledge, certifications, or skills

Pick one or two reasons that directly connect your background to the role and then connect it to their need.
Example: "*Given my experience building this function from the ground up and leading teams at a similar stage of growth, I was hoping we could get closer to* $X."

What else can you negotiate?
Salary gets most of the attention, but it may not be the only thing that matters.
Depending on the company and role, you may be able to discuss:

- *Base salary*
- *Signing bonus*
- *Annual bonus*
- *Equity*
- *Title*
- *PTO*
- *Start date*
- *Remote or hybrid expectations*
- *Work schedule*
- *Professional development*
- *Relocation support*
- *Early salary review*

Important: do not make everything an ask. Prioritize what matters most

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SCRIPTS FOR NEGOTIATING

Negotiation Scripts Based on Situation

SCRIPT FOR SALARY

"I'm really excited about the opportunity and would love to join the team. After reviewing the offer and looking at market ranges for comparable roles, I wanted to ask about the base salary. Given my experience in [RELEVANT AREA], I was hoping we could get closer to [$X]. Is there flexibility there?"

IF YOU DON"T WANT TO NAME A NUMBER

"I'm very excited about the role. Before I accept, I wanted to ask whether there is any flexibility in the compensation package, particularly around base salary"

IF YOU WANT TO NEGOTIATE OTHER TERMS

"I understand. If there isn't flexibility on base, are there other areas of the package where there may be room, such as a <e.g. signing bonus, equity, PTO or an earlier compensation review>?"

IF YOU NEED MORE TIME

"Thank you. I'm really excited about the opportunity and appreciate the offer. I'd like to review the full package thoughtfully. Would it be possible for me to get back to you by [DAY]?"

REGULATION · STAY STEAD

You're Afraid To Negotiate

After a long search, it is normal to worry that asking for more could put the offer at risk. You do not have to negotiate just because people say you should. But do not let fear make the decision for you either.

Before you respond, ask:
Is this genuinely good enough for me, something am I afraid to ask?
A thoughtful question is not the same as an ultimatum.
And if the offer already works for you, it is completely okay to accept it as-is.

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EVALUATION · NEGOTIATING

Aligning With Your Priorities

Go back to the priorities you set earlier in the search and compare them to the offer in front of you.

Ask:
Does this offer meet what I need most right now?
What, if anything, is worth clarifying or negotiating?
If nothing changed, would I still feel comfortable saying yes?

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If They Say No...

A no does not mean the negotiation went badly. Sometimes companies genuinely cannot move.

Respond professionally:
"Thank you for checking. I appreciate the transparency, and I'm still very excited about the opportunity."

Then evaluate the offer based on what is actually available.
Do not negotiate just to prove you can negotiate.

The goal is not to win or get something additional in return. The goal is to advocate for yourself professionally, understand your options, and make the strongest decision you can for your life.

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