

Daily Bulletin

SUNDAY
June 12
1994

LIFE AFTER LAYOFFS

Looking beyond aerospace

By J. Herrera Gomez
Daily Bulletin

UPLAND — After working for 15 to 20 years for one company, most workers don't expect to find themselves out of a job — and having to compete in an extremely tight job market.

Yet that's what has happened to thousands of defense and aerospace workers as dwindling government contracts force many companies to cut their work forces by as much as 40 percent.

The problem is particularly pronounced in California, where about 20 percent of all U.S. aerospace companies are located, said Marie Hayashi Reichelt, an Upland outplacement and human resources consultant.

To assist job seekers in the hard-hit aerospace and defense industries, Reichelt recently wrote a book, "Yes, There Is Life After Aerospace."

She acknowledges that job seekers can find many "how-to-find-a-job" books in libraries and bookstores. But "this one is different because it was written specifically for aerospace employees," Reichelt said.

Reichelt writes from experience: After a long career as a personnel manager, she was laid off by Sargent-Fletcher in 1990. That gives her a common bond with laid-off aerospace employees, she said.

After losing her job, Reichelt started a company that counsels displaced workers. She also serves as a senior adjunct consultant for Right Associates, a large U.S. outplacement organization.

In addition, she teaches a variety of supervisory workshops on such subjects as sexual harassment and multicultural diversity training.

Reichelt's book deals with the various aspects of the job hunt, from dealing with the trauma of being laid off to accepting a new job.

Defense and aerospace workers have a particularly tough time seeking new work because they're so out of practice, the author noted.

"Aerospace workers haven't had the chance to look for a job because they worked for most of their lives for one company," she said.

Reichelt advises former aerospace workers to de-emphasize their aerospace expertise as much as possible. Instead, she says they should dwell on more general aspects of their job experience, such as gaining problem-solving skills. She also advises them to avoid technical lingo.

Stating the obvious won't help the worker in his or her job search, Reichelt noted. She said she worked with one candidate who played his 40 years of experience in aerospace at the top of his resume.

"Most headhunters won't even look twice at that resume," she said.



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Marie Hayashi Reichelt, an Upland outplacement and human resources consultant, has authored and published

a book specifically for people laid off from aerospace and defense positions.



Reichelt's book, "Yes, There Is Life After Aerospace," offers ex-aerospace and defense workers tips on finding a new job.

As for the best way to find job openings, Reichelt suggests networking. "Seventy percent to 80 percent of all jobs are found through networking," she said.

Reichelt admits that job hunting is a time-consuming task. "It's been said that for every \$10,000 you earned, it could take one month of job searching" before landing a new position during normal economic conditions — and longer during recessionary periods.

"I've known people who spent one to two years looking for a job," she said.

Staying focused and trying to keep a positive mental attitude should minimize the time spent searching for a new job, Reichelt said.