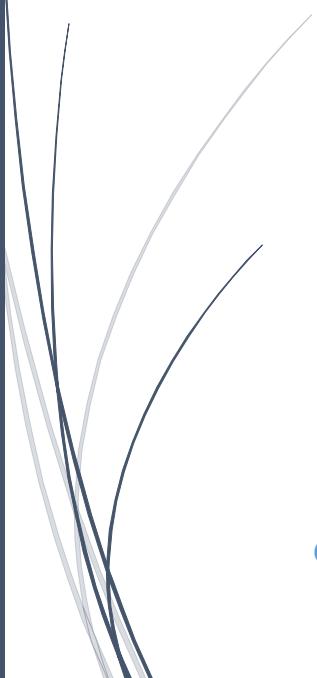




# Career Shift

Follow Joe as he adjusts  
to job loss



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Richard Fontanie, MSW, FCMC

## Career Shift # 1 - Joe Crashes

It's Wednesday morning at eight o'clock. Joe is meeting with his team to review today's work schedule. The phone rings. He answers. His boss wants to see him in his office. Joe isn't sure why but probably another crisis he has to fix. He excuses himself, asks Joan to take over the meeting and heads upstairs.

In the office Joe notices his boss is somewhat uncomfortable and has a letter with an envelope addressed to him.

Joe's boss tells him that the organization is having difficulty and needs to re-structure. Unfortunately for Joe his position is a casualty and he no longer has employment with the company. His boss hands him the envelop and explains in general terms what it contains. Joe is to pick up his things and leave the premise. He is told that a career transition coach is waiting for him in the board room to work through his next steps. Joe's boss gives him a handshake and wishes him good luck. That's it.

Joe is stunned. He didn't see this coming. He is dumbfounded and a bundle of emotions. He didn't even have time to say "goodbye" to his team. The meeting was brief, less than 15 minutes, and after 20 years with the company, Joe is no longer employed.

Joe just experienced a sudden and unexpected loss of employment. It will have a disruptive effect on him and his family. In the coming days, he may experience extensive mood swings which may include feelings of anger, denial, anxiety, relief, depression, grief,

helplessness, hopelessness, fear, sadness, blame, doubt or shame. Right now, Joe is in a state of shock and disbelief.

If Joe identified closely with his work, it probably had given him focus and structure; it may have even influenced his sense of identity and how he measured his self-worth. If he had approached his work in this way he may begin to lose confidence in himself or feel everything that was meaningful to him has just been wiped away.

In the next few days Joe may also experience behavioral changes such as insomnia, poor concentration and perhaps substance abuse. He may also experience stress related disorders such as headaches, upset stomach, swings in appetite, outbursts of anger or tearfulness and periods of talkativeness or withdrawal into silence.

It is seldom people will experience these mood swings and behavioral changes, however they should be aware that they may occur.

If you have ever ridden on a roller coaster, then you have a sense of what it might be like to be hit with sudden and unexpected job loss. Some days' people like Joe will be high on the top of the roller coaster and feel somewhat relieved about what has happened to them; and then just as quickly as the car flies down the rails, they begin to feel the weight of what hit them and a rush of negative emotions envelopes them.

Sudden and unexpected job loss not only affects individuals who lose their jobs but also those around them.

If Joe has a family, his loss of work may also have a disruptive affect on them. Family routines may be interrupted, budgets may become restricted and planned

vacations or outings may need to be curtailed. Joe's children may not understand why he isn't going to work, or why he seems so cranky in his dealings with them.

It affects his friends. Joe has changed. They may begin to say things like: "Joe isn't himself these days," or "I want to help him, but I don't know how." Often their sense of helpless reflects their own feelings of anxiety about losing their own jobs. "It happened to Joe, it could happen to me too," they say.

Joe has crashed into a career disabling wall.

What Joe, and people like him need to understand is that all these mood swings, behavioral changes and familial and friend reactions are *normal*. More importantly they are *resolvable*.

As disruptive as job loss is to individuals it also provides them with real opportunities for change. It can:

- provide a time for reflection and a re-examination of career choices
- strengthen family ties and clarify personal values
- open prospects for doing something exciting and different
- stimulate thinking about new possibilities rather than living with old realities

I have helped many people through career transitions during my work as a coach and organizational change agent. And, as painful as sudden job loss is for some, many have told me that in the end it was the best thing that could have happened to them. They:

- went on to more challenging and exciting careers
- became more energized
- contributed to new and more meaningful work

- faced one of life's significant challenges and have triumphed
- have taken ownership of their own careers and now drive it rather than depend on others to drive it for them
- started their own successful business

If you are in the throes of a job crash here are some immediate things for you to do:

- If you have received a package from your employer discuss it with your lawyer
- If you have received a severance package review it with a financial advisor for tax implications
- If you foresee a lapse before your next job opportunity prepare a personal and family budget
- If you require assistance to deal with the impact of job loss, see a career transition coach.

**Lessons Learned.** Sudden and unexpected job loss may deeply affect you and those close to you. However, it is not the end of your life's work. New opportunities and prospects are on the horizon if you take ownership of your future. One of the things you don't want to do immediately after receiving a notice of job loss is to make hasty decisions. You have time to think through your next steps. Before jumping ahead take time to work through your feelings. Consider [our Eleven Steps to Recovery from Job Loss](#)

## Career Shift #2 - Joe Gets Back into The Driver's Seat

In Career Shift #1 Joe lost his job. He experienced a tsunami of emotions and behavioral changes affecting not only him but also his family and friends. It's a couple of weeks since that awful moment and he is slowly regaining control of his life and career. He now faces challenges that come directly from within himself.

**The shift of control:** One of the biggest challenges for Joe is to realize that the locus of control regarding his career has shifted. Joe, like many of his colleagues, feel that their career paths are straight forward. They are employed by a company - and let's say it's an excellent one which is concerned about its employees' welfare and career. A company, none the less, that must look out for its own future and at times is required to make hard decisions about letting people go to preserve that future.

I know of many employers and managers who spent countless sleepless nights pondering these decisions. They realize that the decisions are necessary for the long-term viability of the company but they are also concerned about the impact on their employees. These are no easy decisions.

Joe felt secure in his position. He liked his work, dedicated himself to doing his best, got along with his team members and took pride in what he could accomplish. Still he lost his job. Joe depended on his company to take care of him and his career. The locus of control was in the hands of the company's decision-makers.

Joe now must get back in control. He needs to shift his thinking from "my career is in the hands of others" to "my career is in my hands and I have to drive it." Or to put it

another way, "I'm employed by others" to "I'm self-employed and I'm going to look after my own career."

As we move along with Joe's story he will be faced with a couple of options: finding another job and work for others or becoming self-employed by opening his own business. In either case Joe, will no longer hand over his career to others to manage. He will be in control of his own destiny. If he chooses to become self-employed, he will have no choice but to manage his new-found career

**Self Branding:** Many people who have experienced job loss feel that the first thing they need to do is quickly write a resume without thinking about where they want to be - they think only about what they should do. A better approach is to work on where they would like "to be" in life and then the "doing" will fall into place.

Once Joe realizes he is in control of his own career, he can move forward. One thing he must learn is how to package or brand himself as a viable product. Just as a company needs to brand itself and its products in line with its mission and values, Joe must come to grips with his own mission and values. His first task is to clarify his purpose in life and how his future work fits within that purpose. His second task is to sort out what he can bring to any new opportunity that awaits him.

**Self-Awareness and KSAE'VA:** Before Joe can start marketing himself though he needs to take stock of his KSAE'VAs as well as his strengths and weaknesses. KSAE'VA is an acronym for Joe's knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, values and attitudes.

Often when people lose their jobs they immediately think of their technical skills. Technical skills are learned on the job, or through college or a technical institute. An office manager's technical skills may include: bookkeeping and

operating equipment; a plumber's technical skills may include pipe fitting, welding and design of pipe systems. A manager's technical skills may include the ability to use a computer, understand various software packages or plan projects on a planning board. But there is a whole set of other skills that all these people have, they are called knowledge skills.

Knowledge skills are those *unseen* skills people use to get the job done. They include planning, organizing, communicating, controlling, time management, self-leadership, decision making, problem solving, and rational thinking to name a few. There are over 20 core knowledge skills people use during their work. Knowing what they are and how well one uses them will help them clarify their personal profile.

Joe will need to take an inventory of all those technical and knowledge skills he has learned throughout his career. He will also need to identify his experience on the job especially the experience where he moved a situation or people to attain results. Finally, he will need to clarify his values and attitudes - those elusive but important elements that give him meaning and shape his behaviours. In fact, we find that most employers are more concerned about a potential employee's attitude and values than they are about their skills. Don't get me wrong, technical and knowledge skills are important but if a person's attitude and values are not consistent with what the employer wants, then the person will unlikely be hired or will be let go during the probation period.

What all this means for Joe is that he will need to go deep within himself and be honest about all those factors that made him a good employee. He will need to tease out his KSAE'VAs, strengths, weaknesses and experiences. Joe should also take time to explore his behavioral and motivational style by completing self-assessment

instruments. These factors will help him assess his next move.

**Self - discipline and setting the boundaries.** While Joe is working on understanding his employment history, his contribution towards his previous company, and his KSAE'VAs he must set personal boundaries around his activities. His routine has been upset. He no longer needs to get up to go to work at an appointed hour. He doesn't have any constraints to his daily activities. He can sit around have coffee, watch TV or go down to the mall and fill in time. No one gives him deadlines, projects, hours of work, or times to have coffee. Joe must now take ownership of his own boundaries. He must get himself into shape for his next career step. The best thing for Joe is to set a routine for himself.

Joe's routine could include setting times to:

*Rise up in the morning:* I suggest the same time he normally got up when he was employed. He should keep the same morning ritual for breakfast. Perhaps he didn't eat a healthy breakfast in the past, if that was the case and maybe that's the case for you too, then now is a good time to change this habit.

*Exercise:* Exercise is a wonderful way for Joe to get into physical shape and to get rid of pent up steam. It will also help him clear his mind, boost his energy, improve his mood and his sleep.

*Meditate:* The benefits of meditation are well known. If Joe spent 20 minutes a day meditating, he will find his mind chatter and stress will be reduced. Meditation will also help him improve his emotional balance and come in closer contact with a higher spiritual source.

*Work on employment readiness:* Joe's project is now to get ready for new employment or to become self-employed. This becomes his primary focus.

Joe is not unemployed. He is employed in preparing himself for another stage in his career. His work now entails the elements mentioned above - shifting control, branding self, developing his KSAE'VAs and his strengths and weaknesses, and moving on to developing a resume, strengthening his contacts, preparing for job interviews, marketing himself and developing new employment strategies. There is lots of work to do for Joe in the coming weeks. (*Note: In this booklet I am focusing on employment and not self-employment. Self-employment is an option to consider, and if this is something you wish to pursue than consider reading my articles on Business Start-up.*

*Family and social activities:* Joe's day should also make room for completing family chores, strengthening family ties, finishing projects around the house that he has put off and setting times to maintain his and his family's social ties with friends. He could also contribute an hour or two a week volunteering to a worthy community or religious cause.

**Lessons Learned:** If you have recently lost a job you can see by this chapter there is much to do to get ready for your next venture. Like Joe, get back in control, think about who you are and where you would like to be, identify your KSAE'VAs, complete self-assessment instruments such as a DiSC Profile, map out how you would brand and market yourself and establish boundaries to ensure you balance your new-found freedom.

If you have difficulty getting your stress under control,  
consider articles under stress found on  
[www.fontaniemagazine.com](http://www.fontaniemagazine.com)

## Career Shift #3 - Joe Steps on The Gas

Joe is well on the way to taking his next step towards establishing a new direction for himself. He has a comfortable routine, clarified his sense of purpose and motivation and how he might brand himself, and sorted out his KSAEVAs (Remember KSAEVA's relate to knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, values and attitudes). Now he is prepared to write his resume and do what it takes to find new employment.

**The Resume:** Joe could write several types of resumes. He could prepare a:

- Chronological resume which historically identifies the positions he held and the accomplishments he achieved.
- Functional resume which describes the results he achieved according to various areas of responsibility he held such as administration, management, information technology solutions, finance, marketing, sales and personnel.
- Results-oriented resume, one that doesn't identify results in any chronological order or under any functional area, but rather lists several key results he achieved while employed.

All resumes begin with a short summary or profile of the individual's skill sets, attributes, values and strengths. Resumes also include a section on education and continuous learning, affiliations and professional memberships, and when applicable an identification of awards or special recognitions received.

Since Joe was in the same company for 20 years he decided to write a functional resume which highlighted the results he achieved within each function. If Joe had advanced steadily within his company he could have

prepared a chronological resume. Joe's chronological resume would show a potential employer that he was regarded as an upward mobile employee who progressively advanced within his company.

The important thing for Joe (and anyone writing a resume) is to ensure he identifies specific results or accomplishments during his employment and not just generalizations about his responsibilities or role. Prospective employers look for result oriented individuals who don't wait for problems to be solved but actively engage themselves solving problems.

Joe wants his resume to be pleasing to the eye, free of spelling mistakes, and grammatically correct. He will keep it to two pages in length and will spend a considerable amount of time editing it. Before he sends his resume to a potential employer, he will give it to someone who will give him honest feedback about its content.

**The Network:** While Joe prepares his resume, he will actively work his network. He calls his friends to ask them to keep an eye out for employment opportunities. He knows they can be an excellent source for referrals, but he needs to ensure they understand the kind of employment he wants.

Joe also asks his contacts to spend a few moments with him to give him some understanding about their work place. He asks questions like: "What is the company like to work for? What's the company culture like? Do employees get along? Is the company employee centric? What is the management and leadership style like? Is the company hiring?"

Joe asks these questions to see if he might want to work in those companies. Remember, he's not looking for just

any company but one where he can make a difference and be fulfilled.

Joe also turns to his network for personal support. They are his inner circle and an excellent source for feedback. However, he needs to keep an open and non-defensive approach to that feedback. If he closely identified with his previous place of employment, a place where he felt he belonged, he lost that when he lost his job. He could turn to his network to help him regain a new sense of belonging. For Joe, his network can be a source of personal affirmation, encouragement and empowerment.

**The Search:** Once Joe is satisfied with his resume he makes a list of decision-makers he knows. He will want to discuss possible job openings in their company with them. He's not specifically asking for a job interview but scouting job possibilities. However, if a job opportunity presents itself during his discussions he will ask for an interview.

Joe keeps an eye open for job postings in his local newspaper and combs the job search engines on the internet for job openings. He also uses his social network pages like LinkedIn and Facebook. He uses Twitter to get his word out and keep others informed about his job prospects. He keeps in contact with his friends through email and builds a data base of names and key decision makers of potential employers on his contact manager.

When Joe sees a job ad that interests him, he reviews his resume and makes sure he includes skills and experiences requested in the advertisement. Joe has prepared a resume but it's content is quite generic. He knows he must tweak it to make it fit with the job ad. Joe also prepares a short cover letter that connects his experience and skills with the job outline found in the ad.

Joe has also learned that many companies want job applicants to send their resume by email. He prepares a resume that is short but sharp in content. He recognizes that companies receive hundreds of applications, so he wants his to stand out and get the attention it deserves. Whenever possible Joe contacts those who scan the applications to ensure they review his.

**Lessons Learned:** When seeking new employment prepare a result-oriented resume and a cover letter that reflects the job requirements. Keep it short, sharp and clear of error. Seek employment around your strengths and what you do best. Develop a strong network of those who can assist you in finding new employment. Keep a journal of your activities and use all the internet job search engines available. Here are a half-dozen that Joe used:

#### Work

Directory: [Indeed.com](#) [Eluta.ca](#) [Monster.ca](#) [Wowjobs.ca](#) [Workopolis.com](#)

## Career Shift #4 - Joe Lands an Interview

The past three months have been grueling for Joe. He lost his job, took ownership of what happened to him, spent time considering what is important to him in his career and his future, decided to re-brand himself based on his KSAEVAs, developed a business-like routine for himself, prepared resumes and letters of introduction, worked his network, searched for new opportunities in the local newspapers, searched employment engines on the internet, applied for work which he felt was a good fit for him, and now has received an appointment for an interview.

**The Preparation:** Remember Joe spent most of his career in one company. He hasn't had a job interview for over 20 years. He's confident his KSAEVAs meet the requirements as described in the job posting, but he's not sure how he should approach the interview. He also doesn't know much about the company that invited him to come for an interview. He checked with his network and found it knows little about it as well. So, Joe decides to do some more homework. He looks up the company on the internet and reads all the information provided. He "cold calls" the company and asked to speak to a Manager. He indicates that he has applied for a position within the company and has an up-coming interview. He would appreciate an opportunity to learn more about the company and the position. The manager gives him some more insight about the company over the telephone.

Joe jots down key questions he might be asked and makes a few points about how he might respond. His questions include:

What does he consider his strengths and weaknesses?

Why did he leave his last employment?

- Could he give examples of his successes?
- What did he learn from the mistakes he made?
- What can he contribute to this company?
- Could he give examples of problems he met in his last job and how he overcame them?

Joe reviews the questions and his responses. He doesn't want to memorize them exactly has he prepared them. This could make him come across to the interviewer as plastic or robotic. However, he does want to remember key points and can respond with clarity, warmth and understanding.

To make sure he is prepared for the interview he asks a trusting friend to help him with his interviewing technique and give him some honest feedback. This will give him an opportunity to work through his responses and get comfortable with his presentation. If Joe was seeing a career coach he would have received expert advice about how to handle the interview and practiced responding to a potential interviewer's questions. In either case Joe wants feedback on his approach to an interview.

**The Interview:** The day has arrived. Joe feels he's prepared. He wears appropriate clothes for the interview. He has learned that employees of this company dress in smart casual outfits, so he has dressed accordingly. (If the company dress code leaned toward suit and tie, he would have worn his best suit and tie). Joe is also aware of the importance of personal hygiene and to use scent free aftershave lotion and deodorant.

Joe wants to go into the interview relaxed but confident. He made sure he had sufficient sleep the night before, kept to his exercise routine - for Joe that was a brisk morning walk - and reduced his coffee intake. Joe makes sure he arrives on time.

In the waiting room Joe doesn't want to think about the interview, but he does need to relax. He calms himself down by completing deep breathing exercises.

As he enters the interview room he is confronted with three people. The manager who is seeking an employer, a representative from the Human Resource Division, and a member of the manager's team. He was prepared for this but seeing three people sitting around a table to interview him was a bit daunting. Nevertheless, he greeted them cheerfully with a firm handshake. As he sat down he took another deep breath to further remove his jitters.

He approached the interview with enthusiasm. He learned everything he could about the position and the company before coming to the interview. Because he did this he presented himself as someone who would be a positive fit for the position.

He emphasized how he can help the company. He explained how he could use his previous experience and strengths to solve problems and contribute to the position and to the team.

He gave three examples of how he overcame challenges and accomplished goals. Joe linked this part of the interview with the examples he prepared when he asked himself: "Could he give examples of problems he encountered in his last job and how he overcame them?"

He responded to the dreaded question about his greatest weakness with openness and poise. He linked a weakness with a strength and explained how he corrected it. This is

how he did it: "I'm a well-organized person who is task oriented (strength). However, at times I procrastinate (weakness). Now whenever I notice I'm putting off a task and it is an important one I should tackle, I put it on my to do list for first thing in the morning and get it done (correction).

Joe asked a few questions of his own about the position to help him clarify items that were a bit confusing to him. Just as the interviewers were assessing Joe to determine if he would be a good fit for the position, Joe was clarifying for himself whether the position would be a good fit for him.

During the interview, Joe held steady eye contact with his interviewers, sat straight, kept his hands and arms relaxed, projected a sense of confidence without being over bearing, listened with intensity and answered questions with calmness and clarity.

At the end of the interview, he didn't know if he would be hired for the job, but his first interview was over and even if he didn't get this one he was better prepared for the next one.

**Appreciation:** Before Joe left the interview, he thanked the interviewers for meeting with him and giving him an opportunity to present himself to them. The next day he sent a quick note to the manager thanking him and the interviewers and ended it by saying he was looking forward to hearing from them.

Joe's first interview was over but since he didn't know whether he was the successful candidate he continued to search for other job opportunities.

**Lessons Learned:** If you haven't had a job interview for some time then you need to identify key interview questions and prepare and practice responses. At the time of the interview be punctual, dress appropriately and enter it relaxed, poised and confident. If you are prone to anxiety, then practice the simple technique of deep breathing before you enter the interview. There are two things going on in the interview, the manager is trying to determine if you are a good fit for his team, and you are clarifying whether the job is a good fit for you. The more you are prepared for the job interview the better it will go. If you aren't hired, that's all right because the interview will prepare you for the next one

## Career Shift #5 - Joe Arrives at His New Work

Near the end of the fourth month after Joe lost his job, he was offered employment as Project Coordinator at FACSi Incorporated. This was the eighth position that Joe applied for, two companies didn't respond to his application, and of the six remaining he had nine interviews. Two companies called him back for a second interview and he had three with FACSi. All three companies offered Joe a position.

During the interviewing process Joe experienced emotional ups and downs, at times he was excited as he thought he was close to an offer and other times he was disappointed because the offer wasn't forthcoming. However, during the whole process, he kept a positive attitude and maintained his business-like routine. He was confident that he would eventually receive an offer, and he did. Joe decided to accept FACSi's offer because he felt the position and the company was the best fit for him.

**Negotiating salary and benefits:** Joe had a wealth of knowledge, experience and skills related to the new position, so he wanted to make sure that these were considered when he and FACSi discussed salary and benefits. Joe understood that he might not receive the same level of salary as his previous employment. He spent over twenty years there and built up a considerable amount of good will capital. FACSi, in its stead, received an excellent reference from his previous employer and recognized his strong credentials. Joe still had to prove himself with FACSi.

Before Joe discussed his compensation package he sat down and sorted out his negotiating strategy. He mapped out the benefits that were important to him, and which ones he was willing to forgo. He searched the website for salary comparisons to get an idea of the top and low

salary ranges for equivalent positions within his geographic area. And he checked his previous income tax statements to reassure himself what his previous employer paid him.

In the end, Joe and FACSi came to an agreement. Joe's salary wasn't at the level of his previous salary, but it was near the top of the range of comparable positions, and his benefits were equivalent to what he received in the past. Joe and FACSi agreed that he would receive a bonus at the end of one year based on performance and the two of them would review his salary at that time.

**Orientation:** FACSi was a small company of 120 employees. It provided a strong orientation program for Joe. He was given an Employee Handbook that outlined the company's strategic direction, the importance of the company's value and culture, the benefits he could expect, and several expectations that pertained to both employer and employee.

Joe was introduced to his new team. His role and responsibilities were discussed and clarified. His Team Leader made a point of introducing Joe to key decision-makers, particularly those who would work closely with him as a Project Coordinator. Joe was given a tour of the company's offices and facilities and a general overview of all the various teams and responsibility centers throughout the company. Joe felt welcomed at FACSi. He viewed the orientation as an opportunity for learning about the company's culture and its people. Joe was eager to get started in his position.

**Settling In:** Entering a new place of business as an experienced employee is always a bit tricky. On the one hand Joe was excited and on the other he was somewhat apprehensive about how he would be accepted. The

orientation went well, but it was up to him now to show how he could fit into this new work community.

One of the things Joe learned about himself when he was reflecting on his past employment and preparing for his future, was that he tended to come across to others as "always right," and a "bit of a perfectionist." Attention to detail did him in good stead but being somewhat rigid about "being right" reduced his ability to influence others. Joe intended to pay attention to this tendency and adjust in his relationships within his new team. Rather than push his position on others he would take a more consultative approach.

Joe quickly noticed several strengths within his team, but he also noticed many areas where it could improve. Since Joe was a new member of the team he wanted to settle in and gain trust with his team members before suggesting changes. Trust takes time to develop, so Joe abided his time, worked hard at being a helpful team member, and waited for an opportune moment to introduce areas for improvement.

Although Joe had excellent knowledge, skills and experience to bring to his position and understood that his manager wanted him to bring them to bear in his new position, he couldn't say things like: "This is the way we did this in my last company, we should do it here, because it worked there." What works in one place may not necessarily work in another. Joe understood this. He was cautious about how he approached using his experience before he really understood the culture and why things were done the way they were in this new organization.

**Learning Curve:** Joe recognized that when one enters a new work environment there is a steep learning curve. So, he became like a sponge and soaked up everything he could about the people, products, processes and

technology. He wanted to get on board quickly. He was willing to ask for help when he needed it. He was careful to clarify what he needed to know before he asked by jotting down a few notes; and when he sought information he was specific about what he needed to know and when he required it. Joe also knew he had a lot to give. He offered a helping hand whenever he found the opportunity. When he made mistakes, he took ownership for them without making excuses, corrected them, learned from them and moved on to his next task.

Joe knew he had to prove to the company that he was a "keeper" who would be a valuable employee and who had the potential to advance within the organization. Joe looked forward to his future with FACSi and this time he was in the driver's seat steering his own career.

**Lessons Learned:** When you negotiate a compensation package make sure you do your homework about what you want and need. If you are an experienced person or have several offers from other companies use these as a leverage in your negotiations. In a new position, be prepared to offer your experience, skills and knowledge in a way that will help the organization grow and prosper. Take time to build trust with your team and managers; take ownership of your responsibilities and be accountable for everything you do. Learn and contribute with eagerness and enthusiasm. How you project yourself will be how you are perceived. Make sure that perception is built on your strengths. And when it comes to your career, keep yourself in the driver's seat.