

FEATURE ARTICLE IV



FOR THE UNEMPLOYED[®]

BY KATHY GRAHAM

HARSH REALITY

“Since the start of the recession in December 2007, the number of unemployed persons has risen by 8.2 million ... the long-term unemployed was little changed over the month [October] at 5.6 million ... about 2.4 million [additional] persons were not counted as unemployed because they had not searched for work in the 4 weeks preceding the survey [yet they want and are available to work but are not in the labor force],” states the October 2009 Employment Situation Summary released November 6, 2009 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

If you’re one of these statistics, getting out of bed to look for your next position can be hard to do—hiding under the covers until this storm blows over seems like a more attractive option. Unfortunately, staying in bed or staying at home taking care of all those tasks you put off for tomorrow when you were employed is NOT a good choice because it will suck your future and your self-esteem dry.

In a way, it’s funny that one of the largest complaints that I, as a career strategist, hear

from my individual clients and other professionals hear from their unemployed clientele is that each unemployed feels alone. The reality is if you’re unemployed, even if you’ve been unemployed for a long time, you’re not alone. Just look at those numbers: you are one of many going through this same phase all at the same time, which is, in part, what’s making the job search process so grim.

When the number of candidates for a position increases, like it does in any recession, most companies switch from using expensive professional outside recruiters to using their own resources, including inexpensive social media tools. The negative consequence to the job seeker in one of those troughs in the economic cycle is that when they need a recruiter the most, those individuals have many fewer searches. Additionally, the searches they do have now want many more requirements to be specifically met before the job seeker will even be considered.

In other words, there is an inverse relationship between professional recruiters and their potential candidates for their position assignments. Good times: recruiter has many jobs, few candidates, and, therefore, more flexibility with how stringently a job seeker needs to fit the profile in order to be presented to a company. Bad times: recruiter has fewer jobs, too many candidates, and, therefore, way less flexibility in considering who to consider for a position.

So the unemployed person in an economic trough needs more than usual to create his or her own next position and future. This article is devoted to mentioning three resources that the unemployed can use to make that success story happen.

YOU CAN DO IT

The first resource happens to me my own speaking career mentor, Conor Cunneen. He teaches the two year course for individuals wanting to become professional speakers at the Illinois chapter of the National Speakers Association. He’s one of the most upbeat and funniest people that I know. Conor won the Toastmaster’s top honor, *Chicago’s Humorous Speaker of the Year* with his speech on *Customer Service in San Quentin*—it’s a riot of a talk.



Conor Cunneen
Humorist, Mentor, Counselor to the Unemployed, Teacher, Radio Show Host, & Author, *SHEIFGAB the World*

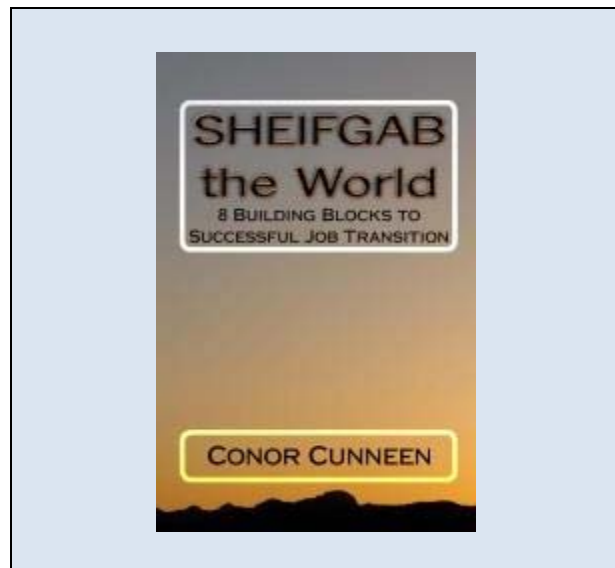
You’d never guess that you’re speaking with someone who has survived cancer twice, who lost his job, and successfully reinvented himself. He is now co-host of *JobTalk* on Chicago radio and works extensively helping the unemployed. I have personally heard the vast number of accolades the people he has

worked with say about him. Conor, myself, and my other favorite author, Dr. Susan Jeffers, all concur on the same overall message, which is: YOU CAN DO IT because we’ve all seen multitudes of others be in the same boat you are in who have gone on to even more successes in their careers and lives.

There are three key elements to moving past unemployment into a richer future.

GET YOUR HEAD RIGHT

The first step involves a mind adjustment. Conor Cunneen in his latest book, *SHEIFGAB the World: 8 Building Blocks to Successful Job Transition*, nails the process needed to change your outlook. For starters, he has his Irish character, Finbarr, banning the use of the word “unemployed.”



Finbarr says, “I do not believe that you are unemployed. You are in transition. You are in job search. You are between successes, you are a NIGEP, a Non-Income Generating EMPLOYED Person. You are employed—self-employed, if you will—doing

THE...most...important job you will EVER do in your life [finding your next job].”

Conor dissects the transition process into 8 building blocks that form the made up Irish word SHEIFGAB. “S” stands for Structure. The sub title in that chapter begins “Life without Structure is a Rudderless Ship.” How true. One of the other facets of unemployment that’s difficult to deal with is the lack of a structured day. SHEIFGAB gives numerous ways to build that structure yourself. Conor then tackles the topics of the best ways to seek Help, build a supporting Environment, Improve, effectively utilize Family/Friends, set and meet Goals, keep up the Attitude/fight AGEism, and direct Behavior. For \$14.95 at Amazon.com, it’s a good pick-me-up that will get your head tackling your situation in a way that will achieve results. Conor’s website is www.IrishmanSpeaks.com.

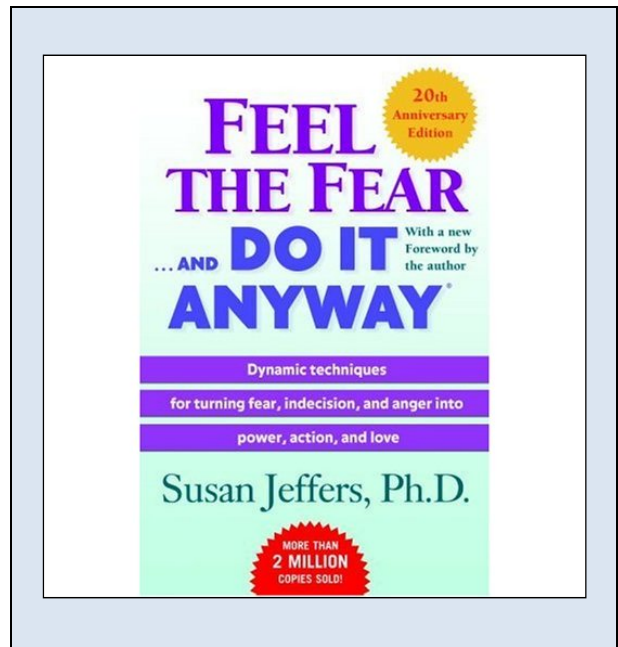
MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

So what about THE FEAR of the unknown that comes crawling in at 3AM, waking you up and not letting you get back to sleep? Susan Jeffers, Ph.D. wrote a book 20 years ago that’s still selling big that addresses this topic specifically. The book is appropriately titled *Feel the Fear...and Do It AnyWay*®. Her five truths are:

1. “The fear will never go away as long as I continue to grow.
2. The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out and do it.
3. The only way to feel better about myself is to go out...and do it.
4. Not only am I going to experience fear whenever I’m on unfamiliar territory, so is everyone else.

5. Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness.”

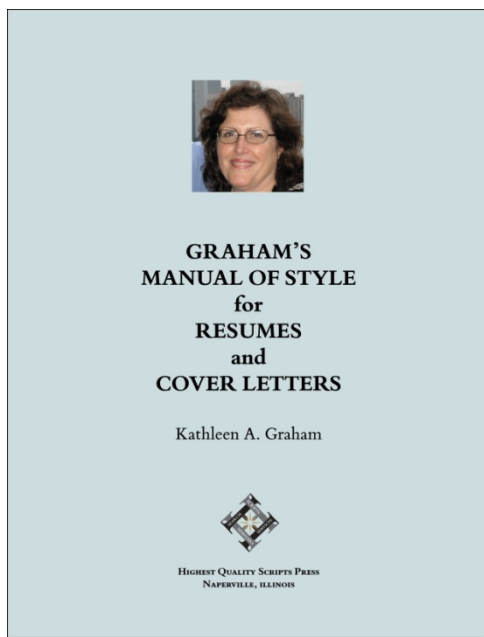
With a Ph.D. in Psychology and lots of experience, both personal and professional, Jeffers via her book provides many techniques to calm the edginess that dealing with the unknown has a tendency to create. All of Jeffers’s books are available on Amazon.com, this one for less than an \$11 investment. Susan’s website is www.susanjeffers.com.



NUTS AND BOLTS

Managing the mind and emotions is two-thirds of the solution entailed in transforming unemployment into the best next job in your life. The third ingredient is the materials that you use to sell yourself: what you hand out, what you say, and who you say it to. Now, that’s my bailiwick. Yes, my *Your Career Campaign*™ professionals will tell you that I’m quite motivational but my emphasis is on “this is how you do it.”

Two of the most used and abused materials in the unemployed person's arsenal are the resume and the cover letter, which is why I just wrote my latest book, [*Graham's Manual of Style for Resumes and Cover Letters*](#).



Available at Amazon.com for \$14.95, it's a coil bound 8.5" x 11" book that lets you open it flat so that you can see countless "before" resumes and cover letters on the left with the "after" versions on the right. These resumes and cover letters are real ones that have had the identifying information changed to protect the individuals who created them.

Each section of a resume is taken apart and examined thoroughly, with options for creativity discussed and the rules that must not be broken listed. One page and two page examples of the same resume are provided whenever appropriate.

This manual is designed to be with someone for a lifetime. It covers what's on a fresh college graduate's resume, how that information changes location and when items

get dropped or moved. It tackles the opposite end of the spectrum, too: what to do when after 10+ years of work achievements your accomplishments no longer fit on two pages.

When to use what types of fonts, how to handle compensation questions, how to check to ensure that the resume you're sending electronically is actually going to look like it was intended (I can't tell you how many people have sent me resumes where they didn't set the final tracker and I could see all their spelling errors...or the ones where someone used a template and forgot to change the author's name -oops), and what to do when life happening gives you a special situation (long-time unemployment, changing careers, job hopping, etc.) are all covered in detail...plus much more.

The index is something that I'm very proud of because a professional indexer created it. What that means is that you should be able to find specific topics easily.

When in November 2007, I did my 2008 Financial Services Job Forecast and could see a rough winter/probable blizzard ahead, I decided to use my skills to helping those who were going to be the most impacted: the individuals. I'm very happy that I created the suite of products starting with the *Your Career Campaign*[™] service, then the *Your Career Strategist*[™] service, and now the *Your Career Strategist*[™] workshops and this resume writing book. It's been a true pleasure and honor to successfully help so many people keep their careers moving upward in the worse economy that I've ever witnessed. Hope this article and these products keep your career progressing, too, because a career can grow in any environment, including this one.