My Position Has Been Terminated

Now What?

Walter Grant III, PhD
Did you not plan for this contingency?
I mean the Starship Enterprise had a self-destruct button.
I’m just saying.
My History

• Over my 45 year career, I had 4 “jobs”:
  – MD Anderson
  – Gulf Coast Oncology, PA
  – GIII Physics, Inc.
  – Baylor College of Medicine
My History

• **TWO** of those “disappeared” w/o warning:
  – MD Anderson
  – Gulf Coast Oncology, PA  ~12 months
  – GIII Physics, Inc.
  – Baylor College of Medicine  ~24 years
So When I Think About It...

• I realize that I “catastrophically” lost my sole source of employment:
  – 25% of the way through my career.
  – At the end of my career.

• Since I had 50% of my jobs end abruptly, maybe I do have some “expert” experiences to share.
It Isn’t Fun

“Of course, I would love to work late.”
It Isn’t Fun

I knew a lot of physicists who experienced this misfortune
It Isn’t Fun

It’s important to realize that it isn’t unique to Medical Physics
“Getting fired hurts a lot,” Tannenbaum says. “It was devastating, and I had the range of emotions, including humility and self-doubt. I questioned everything.”

MMQB - Jenny Vrentas
6/15/15

You Aren’t Unique
Within 48 hours of Tannenbaum being fired after a 6-10 Jets season, Parcells called. His message, in typical fashion, was brief and to the point: *This is not going to be one of those pity conversations you’re probably getting from everyone else. I just want you to know, what matters in life is what you do after you get knocked down. I’m here if you need anything. Goodbye.* The two are still in regular contact, sometimes talking as often as multiple times a week.
That’s What I’ll Discuss Today

“This is not going to be one of those pity conservations you’re probably getting from everyone else. I just want you to know, what matters in life is what you do after you get knocked down.”
Tip #1

• All fights are about sex or money!

  – Make sure you know which one you are fighting about.
We Are Expensive

• Medical Physicists rank in the top 10% of salaried employees in America.
• We “want” expensive toys.
• We are poor businessmen because we don’t do what is necessary to demonstrate our value.
We Are Expensive

SO WHEN IT COMES TIME TO CUT COSTS, WE HAVE A BULLSEYE ON OUR BUTTS.
So Realize This --

You may not be able to stop it.
Passage #1

• After a decade at MD Anderson, I left to join a Private Practice Physician Group.

• **MONEY!!!**
  – Doubled my salary.
  – *Matched 25% of my salary into Pension Plan.*
  – Car
  – I even negotiated 10 trips to Houston/year to see my children.
Passage #1

• The head physician was past-chair at NCI.
  – Checked around and all seemed OK.
• And he was trying to build an empire so it appeared to have promise professionally as well as economically.
• St. Petersburg, FL is a resort town.
• But about a year later, right after I get married and buy a house, the three man Physician Group dissolved.

• Why?

**MONEY!!**

• In those days it took 18-20 patients/day for a physician to earn $10^6.$
Passage #1

• What happens to me?
• The docs say “We love you BUT...”
• The hospital offers me a job at my same salary.
  – I was too naïve at the time to understand what that meant.
• I tell them, “No Thanks.”
Serious Question

• How long can you (and your family) exist if you lose your job?
• The next evening I run into a sailing buddy who’s also a urologist.
• He tells me how his “life” changed because of DRG’s.
• He asks if I considered going into private practice.
• Told him the doctors might not want me.
Private Practice It Is.

- GIII Physics, Inc. is created.
- I realized I needed more than Physics Skills:
  1. Learn to Really Negotiate
     - Select your bank
     - Contracts with hospitals
  2. Business
     - Bookkeeping
     - “Grow your business”
Private Practice It Is.

• It was great.
  – I was my own boss.
  – I worked where I wanted to work.
  – Still had my 25% pension plan.

• Caveat
  – It was a struggle to expand professionally.
    • Coverage while on vacation
    • Meeting Costs
• I join Baylor College of Medicine
  – In addition to dealing with BCM, I also have to cover the three BCM Teaching Hospitals –
    • The Methodist Hospital
    • Ben Taub County Hospital
    • The VA Hospital
  – BUT ONLY TMH PAYS FOR ME!!!!
Tip #2

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW THE CHAIN OF COMMAND
Passage #2

• What else **MIGHT** be important to survival?
  – There “might” be an “Expiration Date” if you are the expensive leader.
    • The Technology(?) Arms Race has accelerated greatly in the last 15 years.
  – So you “might” want to move on after 10(?) years.

*OR*

– You “might” want to keep a low profile and not be the expensive leader.
Passage #2

• How did this position end?
  – I was called over to Baylor where I was told that Methodist has terminated the contract and I can go back and get personal belongings.
Passage #2

• Here’s my warning from this experience.
  – When I went back to my office, I was allowed to take personal pictures and plaques, but no books or electronics, including my iPad or computer.
  – It became clear over time that they really had no plan in place for me to get my property.
But it raises serious questions:

– Do you have all your tools and data stored independently of your employer?
– Is your personal electronic safety compromised?
Passage #3

• Baylor has an excellent Emeritus program for age-challenged faculty that includes “inexpensive” health insurance.

• But not for my wife as she is not on Medicare yet.

• Turned out her retirement program would include me as I was Medicare B.
Summary of My Advice Today

• “Stuff Happens.” – Forrest Gump
• “The man with the most arrows in his quiver usually wins the battle.”
• “Whose Your Daddy?”
• “Don’t jump into cactus bushes...”
  – I believe the simplest way to look for cheapness is in staffing.
    • Safety Is No Accident
    • Abt Reports
    • Turnover Rate
Thanks For Listening