

The Beat Goes On

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Many of you are familiar with my struggles in the job market. For those of you who are not, a recap: I was laid off a year ago this August, and on unemployment for several months. In January 2009, I joined a national company, actually landing a job that I had sought two years before. In April (after my 90 day probation period was up and I was eligible for all benefits), I was told that my department was going to be "re-organized." I knew what that meant. Call it, spin it, and manipulate it anyway you want: this is "soft layoff" in my book. Could this be happening? Are you kidding me?

We were told a new Chief Sales Officer had been hired and that basically, the department would be knocked down and "rebuilt". A new org chart was sent out with all the new job descriptions and we were instructed to apply for the jobs that we were interested in. We were also told that there was *no guarantee* that we would be placed in a new position, but that *if we were*, and *if it was in a different state*, they would not be paying any relocation costs. And that we should all be "*keeping this point in mind*" as we reapply (gee, thanks for the empathy: hard to *keep* anything in mind when you feel like you're *losing* your mind!). So the newest journey began. We were told it would be swift, that decisions would be made as soon as possible (yeah, right). I was called to interview in Pittsburgh, and this is how it went:

8:40am: Arrive at airport at 8:40am for a 10:05 flight. Shapely figure encased in Spanx underneath interview suit, coffee in hand, car parked, hard back book.

9:50am: (Original boarding time): "Ladies and Gentleman, we have a delay, as the plane has not gotten here yet, our new estimated time of departure is 10:30.

10:30am: "Ladies and Gentleman, we have a delay, as the plane has not gotten here yet. Our new estimated time of departure is 11:30. (Start chanting, "Don't panic" in my head.)

11:45am: We board the plane.

12:50pm: We land. (1:30pm interview.) ..."Hello Jillian, its Laura O'Connor...Please let the NEW Regional Vice President know that I have just landed. I am still on the tarmac, but assure him and the other 3 (!!!) people that I am supposed to meet with that I will be there as soon as I can (seriously!).

1:05pm: Catch cab, change shoes, spray hair, re-apply lipstick, quiz and annoy cab driver on how long he thinks the ride will be to the office. His answer : "Depends on traffic..." Thanks, dude.

1:25pm: Get to office, interview (bombarded with "Name a Situation When...." questions), I am done in about 45 minutes.

2:20pm: Thank everyone involved in the interview, call a cab to pick me up at 3:00 (boarding to go back to Detroit at 4:45pm), schmooze with some co-workers, remove straightjacket of Spanx to pee (finally!), pull the Spanx back on (torture, but mandatory), bid farewell.

3:30pm: Get to the Pittsburgh airport, grab a sandwich, water, my phone, and plan on relaxing until we board at 4:40pm.

4:45pm: "Ladies and Gentleman, the aircraft has a slight maintenance problem. We don't expect it to take too long and will probably be delayed for an estimated 15 minutes." (This can't be happening...)

5:15pm: "Ladies and Gentleman, the slight maintenance problem is going to take a little longer and we will keep you informed of the status." (Could this be happening?)

5:45pm: "Ladies and Gentleman, we suggest you start calling the Northwest Airlines reservations desk as this flight is now delayed indefinitely (this *is* happening.). The 7:00pm flight is booked so please do

not approach the desk to request booking on that flight (gee, thanks). The next available flight to Detroit is tomorrow morning at 6:45 am." (Are you kidding me?)

8:00pm: Finally get to the front of the line: book my flight for 6:45am, pick up my voucher for a hotel room, and a \$10.00 voucher towards food (which by the way, doesn't include alcohol...I asked), and head out to catch the courtesy van to the Crown Plaza....which I find out is 20 minutes away.

8:30pm: Check into the hotel, eat a cheap steak, drink cheap wine, and go to my room. I have to conserve my battery time on my phone as I have not brought a charger for what was supposed to be an eight hour trip. I call my ex to let him know my "situation" and to tell him that he is now going to have to take our son to his oral surgery appointment in the morning (he is having 4 teeth extracted), and to assure him I will call when I land in the morning. I realize that I have no brush, comb, change of clothes, or anything to prepare for bed or for the next day. I have a mini breakdown, then I shower.

10:00pm: Request a wake up call at 4:20am in order to catch the 5:00am shuttle.

4:20am: "Ring, Ring." (Really? I haven't been up this early since I was in Vegas and could actually relate to the slogan, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas!")

5:20am: Arrive at the airport. I have an hour until we board. I get my coffee, say, "Good Morning" to the familiar faces from the night before, and pray that I don't run into anyone from my real life. I have rigged my hair up in a sort of cocoon, using various ancient bobby pins, clips, and rubber bands that I have fished out of the lining of my purse (think "MacGyver!"). I have eliminated the Spanx from my repeated ensemble for fear of developing a blood clot or intestinal damage. I try to convince myself that my fellow passengers won't notice. All I need now is to run into all my old boyfriends. I suddenly envision the possibility of a "Laura's Old Boyfriend" Reunion convening at the airport.

6:30am: WE BOARD!

6:45am: "Ladies and Gentleman, we are ready for take off. Please turn off all electronic devices including computers, cell phones, Blackberrys, blueberrys, and Burberrys. Fasten your seat belts and make sure all tray tables are in their upright position."

6:50am: Sitting on the runway. "Ladies and Gentleman, sorry for the delay. We are waiting for instructions from the flight tower. We should be taking off shortly".

7:55am: (SERIOUSLY!!) "Ladies and Gentleman we have been instructed to return to the terminal. We have some weight distribution problems (I KNOW they are talking about me)." Return to the terminal. Return to runway.

8:10am: Take Off.

9:20am: Touch Down.

9:30am: Gather my stuff, head for my car (which by the way I have in poshy "valet parking" since this was suppose to be a day trip).

10:15am: Arrive at home. Make mashed potatoes, mac 'n cheese and wait for my son to arrive post-surgery.

10:35am: He arrives.

It is now the beginning of August. We all received emails last week that decisions regarding our fate with the company will not be determined until the end of the month. I feel I should get the job automatically based on the perseverance and tenacity involved in surviving this trip. So the beat goes on. I relayed this story to a friend of mine (male). He told me that there was "no crying in baseball or travel". I told him to put on a pair of Spanx and get back to me.