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THE NEWS HERALD
HOMEFRONT

*You're Fired.
And Everything
Will Be OK*

Recently, once again I found myself thumbing through a copy of *Attaché*, the US Airways in-flight magazine, and came across an interesting article. This one told the story of men who were fired from lucrative jobs in the prime of their lives. Rather than feeling sorry for themselves, they dusted themselves off, jumped back into the job market and found even greater success.

Michael Bloomberg was the first example. A graduate of Harvard Business School and a partner in the Wall Street firm of Salomon Brothers at the age of 31, by 39, when the firm sold itself to a larger company, he was given a hefty severance package and essentially told he was history. Instead of filling his day with treks to the golf course, he invested his money and developed a service for denizens of Wall Street that conducted sophisticated analysis on bonds. His company grew into a multibillion dollar company. And if that wasn't accolades enough, Bloomberg decided to run for Mayor of New York and won.

Joe Torre was another example cited in the article.

He was fired four times by the New York Mets as manager. The Atlanta Braves fired him in 1984 and then the St. Louis Cardinals fired him in 1995. Most people would have gone into another line of work, but not Torre. Signed on with the New York Yankees in 1996, he challenged George Steinbrenner who was well known for firing managers with, "What's the worst that you can do to me? Fire me?" As fate would have it, Torre led the Yankees to their first championship in 18 years in 1996 and in the years since has led them to three more championships.



As
I See It

Peg DeMarco

The last example told the story of the owners of Handy Dan, a home improvement company that faced a takeover in 1978. Its top executives, Arthur Blank and Bernie Marcus, were fired, but decided to start their own company — something called Home Depot. In Home Depot's first year, the two executives lost half of their \$2 million investment, but they didn't give up and, of course, the rest is history.

I may not be well known or a millionaire like the three examples above, but I have my own little story about getting fired — and it was the best thing that could have happened to me. About 15 years ago, I began working for a private investigator. The job was very interesting, but my radar went up on my first day of work when the boss handed me a three-inch thick folder filled with one-page memos that I was to read, digest and initial. His memos consisted of how to correctly replace a roll of toilet paper in the bathroom, how to clean the coffee grinds out of the coffee pot, how to set the thermostat, how to vacuum the office at the end of each day — well, you get the picture. He was quite a control freak.

And he was terribly cheap. When the power went out at work one day, instead of waiting patiently for it to come back on, I was expected to call the secretary of an office across the alley from his office, run an electrical extension cord from the attic down through the hallway, throw the extension cord across the alley, and continue working. By the time I got the cord thrown across the alley (no easy feat), the power came back on and my next job was to disconnect everything.

I enjoyed my work, but despised my boss so much so that when a local radio station held a contest to find the worst boss in Charlotte, I was tempted to throw his name into the hat. The "winner" would have the pleasure of watching from the ground as his or her boss was put in an airplane and then thrown out wearing a parachute. I was very close to entering his name, but unfortunately ran out of time. I felt sure I would have won.

On the fateful day of my firing, he called me into his office and closed the door. Sneering at me like usual, he began with, "I've called you in here to ask you for your keys. I've decided to fire you."

"Great," I said, jumping up. "Let me go get them."

"Not yet," he said, surprised that I wasn't upset.

"Don't you want to know why I'm firing you?"

I sat back down and shrugged. "Sure. Why?"

"You have no respect for me or my company."

"Now, sir," I said with a half smile. "That's where you're wrong. I have complete respect for the company. I've never been late, worked overtime without extra pay, and my attendance is impeccable. It's you that I have no respect for."

After tossing him the keys, gathering my things, and scurrying down the stairs, I knew that I had done the right thing even though I was now out of a job.

I was on a righteous high until I filed for unemployment in downtown Charlotte and sat in front of my caseworker. When the young man asked what had happened to make me lose my job, tears streamed down my cheeks as I said the words, "I was fired."

He jumped up, grabbed a tissue and handed it to me. "There, there," he said, patting my hand. "It's going to be okay."

I blew my nose, stopped crying and smiled at him. "I've been working since I was 17, and this is the first time I've ever been fired."

"Aw, it's nothing, ma'am," he said with a laugh. "If it's any consolation to you, I've been fired myself. Life goes on."

And the young man was right. Life did go on for me and, today, I work for a wonderfully kind, amazingly talented, dynamic young woman and have never been happier.

So, I imagine the morale of this story and the intention of the Attaché article is just this: getting fired may be the best thing that could ever happen to you — but only if you learn by the experience and try even harder to succeed.

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