

Before and after the odds turn against you

by Mayuri Reddy



Before: Stay vigilant and be prepared

1 Start a Greatest Hits Folder

Keep proof of your work by saving screenshots of your org chart, compliments from your manager/colleagues, performance reviews and work you've done.

Save these files on your personal computer or cloud – so you always have access to it. This ensures that if there is ever any legal dispute, promotion you're passed over due to discrimination, etc – , you have ample evidence to support your claims.

2 Start tracking your experiences

If you believe you are experiencing discrimination, microaggression, gaslighting, manipulation, and generally toxic behavior from leaders or colleagues – start keeping track of this. You can do this by journaling your experiences when they happen (including the date), saving emails containing misinformation or belittling language, and/or company policies that have made you uncomfortable at work

3 Don't badmouth the company

Your co-workers are not your family. No matter how close you think you are to your teammates, you might not know their intentions, or who they could speak to about you. You don't want this to be used against you.

4 Stop signing amendments or performance plans

If you observe employees being pushed out, the company's low financial performance or you have sensed a case being built against you – if your employer tries to offer you a new contract, an amendment or claims your performance is struggling and wants to have you sign a performance plan – don't! Speak to a lawyer ASAP, there could be malintent behind their actions.

Check legal help options: Explore if/what options are available in your country for legal protection insurance. For example in Germany, legal insurance covers legal fees should the employee choose to take action against their employer. Keep in mind, you need to have the policy at least 3–6 months before you can activate its benefits.

After: When you lose your job

1 Take a moment for yourself

Losing a job - whether through a lay-off or firing - is frustrating, infuriating, traumatizing and scary. Likely all at once. But the biggest piece of advice I can offer is to allow yourself to feel those feelings - this will be crucial to having the strength to negotiate for better terms or file a lawsuit, and will help with finding closure.

2 Don't sign anything

Following a dismissal, your employer may push you to sign papers as "standard protocol" and may be adamant about a specific timeline in which this needs to be done. This could be a tactic to have you sign something that absolves them of responsibility or reduces your ability to take action against them. You are entitled to have your documents reviewed.

3 Speak to a lawyer ASAP

Regardless of the grounds or validity of the dismissal, speak to a lawyer. Send them your contract, the dismissal papers, and any evidence you have for them to assess your situation. This is of particular importance if you suspect foul play, e.g.: being dismissed shortly after filing a harassment complaint or being laid off while less tenured teammates kept their job.

Note: some Labor Lawyers will do a free 10-15 minute consultation, and then have an hourly charge. Clarify pricing in advance.

You should get answers to:

- whether the termination was legal
- the grounds for a lawsuit; whether the offer they provided was fair
- potential costs for taking further action
- potential length of legal process
- the likelihood of each outcome

4 Assess what makes sense for you

Based on the information you've gathered, take some time to think about which path feels right. This could include speaking with your family and friends, and taking time alone to think. Whatever decision you make, make sure it's not based on fear, but rather on knowledge and awareness of your options.

5 Be mindful of the statute of limitations

Even if the last thing you want to think about when being dismissed is getting into "go mode", you might not have an option based on the laws in your country. For example: in Germany, you only have 3 weeks to file your lawsuit from the day you were provided notice. Be sure you know if there are similar limitations based on where you live.

6 Sign up for unemployment benefits/social benefits

Based on where you live, there are going to be different offerings regarding social benefits. It's smart to do this as soon as you can. If you live in Germany, you need to register as a jobseeker with the Agentur für Arbeit (Employment Agency) within 3 days of receiving your notice. Failing to do so could mean a delay in your benefits.

THE AUTHOR



Mayuri Reddy's (She/Her) mission is to help employees understand their rights so they are empowered to stand up for themselves. Inspired by her own journey, she is building a Legal Tech company in Germany aimed at demystifying German Labor Law. Mayuri is a leader and consultant with experience in marketing, events, project management and DEI. She is from Seattle but has called Berlin her home for the past 7 years. To follow her work, check out her [LinkedIn](#) and [TikTok](#).