

Dive Into
ACTION!

Find Your Niche In
Times of Uncertainty

Gary Lim, M.A.


DORATO PRESS

Dedicated to my wife Judy, who travels with me on
the Road to Gumption and anywhere else I might write about,
and to our daughter, who keeps asking me when my next book will be done,
no matter what it might be about.

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DIVE INTO ACTION! FIND YOUR NICHE IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY.
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“Our greatest glory is not in never falling,
but in rising every time we fall.”

— Confucius

Introduction

Whether the economy is considered “bad”, or is “good”, we will inevitably experience times of uncertainty. When the economic situation is challenging, job losses and company downsizings become one of the largest sources of uncertainty, not only for those who lose their jobs, but also for those who remain. Even as the economy becomes friendlier, however, times of uncertainty can still affect us as companies and organizations adjust to conditions of growth.

No matter what the cause of your uncertainty, whether you are employed or not, my mantra still remains:

“Uncertain times call for certain action.”

In times of uncertainty, you need to take action. If you are a victim of a job loss, the action centers on what you need to do to find the next step in your career, whether it is another job, another industry, or even self-employment. If you are still in a job, but feel or know that your situation will be changing soon, the same need for action applies to you as well.

To focus on this need for action, I turned the word “action” into an acronym that serves as an iterative cycle – a reminder – of proceeding with your action plan:

A is for **Accept**

C is for **Connect**

T is for **Transform**

I is for **Implement**

O is for **Objective**

N is for **Nerves**

When you remember the word ACTION, you do the things each letter represents, which helps you stay working toward your goals. You don’t let yourself fall into the trap of “I’ll wait and see

what develops”, where that leaves your outcome truly to chance and luck.

Many people think others have all the luck. But most of the people who seem to be lucky, actually work hard to create their luck. They take action, and they stick to it.

In this story, the fictional character of Bill McNolten is a man who has been at one company for the past 15 years. He suddenly finds himself without a job, a victim of a layoff. This is a wrenchingly new experience for him, a major upheaval that is at first an emotional roller coaster.

As he works his way through the initial feeling of crisis with the support of both his wife and college-age daughter, Bill gradually begins to learn and discover on his own what he needs to do to get to his next goal. And that is to take ACTION, as I have previously described in its acronym form of the word.

I know the feelings well. To lose a job unexpectedly, and then to have to look for a new one, is tremendously stressful. To be forced to look for a new job, even while still in the current one, can be just as stressful. I have experienced both situations in my past career history, during my own times of uncertainty.

You must keep the faith as you act. As Winston Churchill once said, “The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.”

With this quick-reading story of Bill McNolten, I hope you benefit from the lessons of ACTION, and draw strength from them. So as you embark on your journey, remember to always Dive into ACTION, and work toward your goals!

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Prologue – The News

The door swung open and banged against the door stop, bouncing back toward the man walking through. He raised his forearm to block the impact, sending the door back along its arc. Ricocheting once more off the door stop, the door swung shut with a loud slam.

Bill McNolten almost threw his briefcase onto the kitchen table and looked at the clock on the wall. 10:25 in the morning. It felt strange to be home from work at 10:25 in the morning on a weekday. But here he was. And no one else was home.

Almost 15 years, he thought. I've been with that company almost 15 years, and this is the thanks I get. To be home at 10:25 on a weekday. His mind replayed the conversation that occurred that morning, soon after he had arrived at his office.

“Hey Bill, got a minute?” his boss poked his head in Bill's office. “Can you come down to my office?”

“Sure, Mark,” said Bill, as he grabbed a notepad and followed him two doors down the hallway. The men entered the office, and Mark closed the door.

“Have a seat.” With his palm outstretched, Mark indicated the small round conference table in one corner of his office. Both men seated themselves.

Bill opened his notepad to the next empty page and looked at Mark. “So, what's on your mind?”

“Actually, a lot,” admitted Mark. He seemed distracted. “It’s been a lousy couple of months.”

“I can imagine, with the downsizing we’ve been going through.” Bill nodded sympathetically. He had been reporting to Mark for about three years, but the two men had known each other from when Mark first joined the company ten years ago.

Mark eyes seemed to be fixed on a spot on the edge of the table. “Yeah.” He sighed.

Still looking at the spot on the table, Mark continued, “And it just got worse. Because now I have to tell one of my good friends and colleagues that we have to part company.” He looked up and met Bill’s gaze.

Bill looked at him, reading his expression, and blinked twice. A long silent moment ensued.

“You mean ... ?” Bill trailed off.

Mark nodded his head and sighed again. “I’m afraid so, Bill.”

Bill stared at Mark, but for a moment saw only what seemed to be white noise. When the image cleared, Mark was still looking at him with an expression that was somehow simultaneously uncomfortable and forlorn.

“You’re laying ... *me* off?” Bill asked in disbelief, gesturing toward himself.

Mark could only nod his head again. “I don’t know what to say, Bill.”

“Well, how about telling me why?” Bill’s shock started its transformation into anger.

Mark shifted uncomfortably in his seat. “You know how the higher-ups are looking at the product lines and combining some of the organizations. Your line is one of those.” He looked at Bill almost pleadingly. “I tried to argue the case for keeping your line separate, but they decided otherwise.”

“Well, I guess your argument wasn’t good enough.” Bill looked away for the first time since the news broke, and stared at the ceiling. He snapped his head back down, eyes flashing angrily at Mark. “I wish you would have asked me to help build your case for you!”

And maybe it wouldn’t have made any difference at all, Bill thought glumly as he sat down at his kitchen table, jacket still on. The rest of his meeting with Mark was like being in a haze, with Mark outlining the severance package he had negotiated hard to earn for Bill. And the visit with human resources to sign out, that was like being in the Twilight Zone, with terms like “COBRA” and “outplacement” just floating by in space.

Bill couldn’t even spend much time saying goodbye to his co-workers. Strangely enough, not many of them were around. He just collected his personal items from his office, of course leaving the company-issued laptop and cell phone, and went out to his car. Which he had parked only about 90 minutes before, when he first arrived at the office.

Driving out of the parking lot, Bill wasn't really sure where to go, so he just headed home. He was numb. He didn't even think about calling his wife Carolyn at her office, not because he didn't want to, but simply because he didn't think of it. He was too numb.

So here he was, sitting at his kitchen table, at now 10:33 in the morning on a weekday. Not only was he home for the day, he was home, period. What now?

Taking a deep breath, he pulled out his personal cell phone and hit the speed dial for his wife's number.

Chapter 1 – It Sinks In

““**T**hey did what?!” Carolyn was tilted back in her chair when Bill called. She abruptly sat forward, the chair’s recoil almost throwing her onto her desk. “How could they do that? You’ve been there almost 15 years!”

“I know,” said Bill, elbows on the kitchen table at home. “It stinks. But Mark did say that he tried fighting for my line. And I think he’s being honest with me. The senior executives see it another way.”

“Obviously not the right way.” Carolyn slapped the top of her desk, then sighed. “I’m sorry, honey. What can I do? Do you want me to take the rest of the day off?”

“No, I’m okay,” Bill replied. “We can talk more tonight. I’m just going to get my head together first.”

“You sure? I can tell my boss something came up.”

“No, really honey, I’m good.” Bill was actually feeling slightly better after breaking the news to his wife. “Just work your day, and don’t think much about it. Remember, we’ve got some severance coming, so there’s no need to panic.”

The couple bid their goodbyes and Bill ended the call. He sat there for a moment, drumming his fingers on the tabletop, thinking about his next move, when his cell phone rang.

Looking at the caller ID screen, Bill’s face lit up in spite of the events of the morning. A call from his

daughter Rachel always brought a smile to his face. He flipped open the phone.

“How’s my little girl doing?”

“C’mon Dad, you know I’m not so little anymore,” said Rachel with a laugh. This was the familiar start of their greeting.

“Well, you know what I say ... you’ll always be my little girl, even when you’re all grown up!” They both laughed together. Rachel was a senior at Rosenbluth College, about a three-hour drive from home.

“So what’s up?” Bill asked his daughter.

“Dad, I need some help. It’s time for on-campus recruiting to get underway full swing, and there’s not much happening. Career Services says that most companies are under a hiring freeze right now, or are being even more selective than they’ve been before.”

Bill stood up and crossed the family room to the door that opened onto their back deck, looked out and continued to listen.

Rachel went on, “Even though some of the companies have let some people go, they’re still hiring from colleges for entry-level positions. But it’s pretty competitive.”

“That’s for sure,” agreed her father.

“I think I’ll need your help in trying to figure out how to get some of those companies to notice me, Dad.”

Bill stood silent, thinking for a moment.

“Dad? Are you there?”

“Oh, sorry Rache. I was just thinking. Of course I’ll help you with your search. Actually, it’s something we can end up doing together, because I’m in the same boat. I just got laid off this morning.”

“*What?*” Rachel was startled, to say the least.

Bill told his daughter what had happened at his company earlier.

“Are we going to be okay, Dad? I mean, with my finishing school and everything?” asked Rachel, concern at the edges of her voice.

“No worries, honey. Your school is paid for with money we put away years ago. Besides, when you’re this close to graduating, your mom and I would absolutely want you to finish.” Bill turned and walked back to the kitchen table. “You’ve worked too hard for this.”

“What are you going to do now?”

Bill held the phone between his shoulder and his ear as he took off his jacket. “Well, I’m going to start dusting off the resume and getting it updated. I probably should have been doing that all along, but never got to it, I guess.”

“Well Dad, now’s your chance.”

“Right. The company is also giving me a few months’ access to outplacement services, to help me with some of the details of looking for the next position. Sometimes those things are also good as kind of a support group, too.”

Bill drummed his fingers on the kitchen table and continued. “A support group might be good. I hear it’s lonely work, looking for a job. I don’t know. I haven’t had to do it in awhile.”

His daughter’s voice reached out from the phone, comfort to his ears. “I’ll be your support group, Dad!” She laughed.

“Thanks, my girl.” Bill brightened and smiled into the phone. “Like I said, maybe we can work on this together as a team. We both need to find jobs now, don’t we?”

“Sure do. Where do we start?” Even though Rachel was only 21, Bill found her amazingly even-keel beyond her years. She could take things in stride, then move on.

“Let me get my act together in the next couple of days, then I’ll call you again.”

“Do you want me to send you a copy of my resume, Dad?”

Bill stood up and again walked over to the deck door to gaze out at the trees that bordered their backyard. “No, we’ve got to get our mindset straight first,” he said thoughtfully.

“Mindset? What do you mean?”

His eyes snapped into focus again as clarity hit him. “We’ve got to figure out what we’re going for, before we go for it. It won’t do us any good to have a resume for a job that we might not be interested in, right?”

Rachel was puzzled. “But I thought the resume is the same one you use for any job.”

“It is and it isn’t,” answered Bill. “The information stays the same, like where you worked and what positions you had, but some of the other things might be put differently, depending on what you want to do.”

He was starting to see a path, starting to come out of the fog that first enshrouded him when Mark told him he was being let go. Despite the shock of the morning’s developments, Bill started to feel some energy creep back into his voice.

“This morning caught me so much by surprise that I’m forgetting the things I learned when I was on the other side of the fence.” Bill sat down on a nearby couch in the family room. “Now it’s time for me to pay attention to that again.”

“You lost me, Dad.” Rachel was just a bit exasperated. “First we’re talking resumes, then mindset, and now the other side of the fence. What fence?”

Bill laughed. It seemed strange to laugh on a day like this, but it felt good. Talking to both Carolyn and Rachel was helping to ease the burden.

“I meant, when I was the one doing the hiring. There were things I looked for in candidates, and what I need to do now is to remember those things to shape how we present ourselves, now that we’re the candidates.”

“If you say so.”

“I say so.” Bill grinned. “Anyway, let me get my head together and we’ll talk again.”

“Okay, Dad. I have to get to class soon anyhow. Say hi to Mom!”

Father and daughter said their goodbyes, and Bill flipped his phone closed. He sat for a moment, tapping his phone on the side of his jaw. Kids always keep you grounded, he mused. Rachel had taken the news of his layoff in stride, showed her concern, asked a question, then moved right along. And that’s what he needed to do, too.

Bill got up and headed to the fridge for something to drink.

About the Author

Gary Lim, M.A., is the founder of ActionPronto.com, the business through which he offers “action plan coaching” services, keynote speaking, and seminars. He is president of Aurarius LLC, a management consulting firm he first founded in California’s “Silicon Valley” then relocated to Upstate New York. He is also a co-founder of HealthcareBusinessOffice LLC. Gary’s past business experience included leadership positions at larger firms such as Hewlett Packard, ROLM, XEROX, and Novell, and at small companies and start-ups.

A seasoned and energetic public speaker, Gary is known as “The Actuator” and has spoken to audiences in many venues, including keynote addresses, conference workshops, corporate/executive seminars, product launches, and training courses. He has worked with thousands of attendees from organizations ranging from Fortune 500 corporations and mid-market firms to not-for-profits and educational institutions. His coaching client base continues to grow.

As an author, *Dive Into ACTION!* is Gary’s third released book. His first, *The Road to Gumption: Using Your Inner Courage to Balance Your Work and Personal Life* (Dorato Press) was an Amazon #1 Bestseller in its category. Next came *Let It Fly! Defy the Laws of Business Gravity and Keep Your Company Soaring* (Dorato), a business parable featuring effective business leadership principles and a story set at a well-known golf course along the Pacific Ocean. Gary’s fourth book, *Get CRAZY About What You Do! Take Your Success to New Heights* will be completed soon.

In his work with coaching clients, seminar attendees, and company meetings, Gary is often considered among the best at assessing a complex business or personal situation, identifying the critical issues, and offering practical insight for solutions.

He earned a Bachelor's degree *cum laude* from Princeton University, and a Master's degree in organizational management from University of Phoenix.

For more information on action plan coaching services, turn the page. To book speaking engagements and seminars, you can find more details on the Web, or contact Gary directly:

Coaching Web site: www.ActionPronto.com
Book information: www.BooksByGaryLim.com
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Phone contact: 315-885-1532 (direct to Gary)

He can speak more about addressing customized needs, such as:

- Keynote speeches
- Breakout sessions
- Seminars
- Volume pricing for coaching services
- Volume pricing on books

ACTION PLAN COACHING SERVICES

There are several levels of "action plan coaching" services that Gary Lim offers, including the Inner Circle, Diamond Level, and Emerald Level. The levels are differentiated by subject matter, response time, and method of communication.

The highest level, the Inner Circle, is for existing or budding entrepreneurs and company owners/leaders. This is a group of people who wish to get feedback not only on their personal action plans, but also on issues related to company business. The highest level of coaching, one-on-one dialogue with Gary occurs by phone and by email, with the quickest response time. Clients in the Inner Circle not only have a personal sounding board at their disposal, but also the ear of an experienced business advisor.

The next level, Diamond Level, is for those who would like timely feedback on their personal action plans: what they need to do to stay on track to find their next great opportunity, what they should be thinking about, what they should be acting on. This interactive dialogue occurs one-on-one with Gary by phone or by email.

The Emerald Level is for those clients whose personal action plans might not require as fast a response time, but who will still benefit from the valuable one-on-one dialogue with Gary. This interaction takes place only through email.

At any time, clients can upgrade from one coaching service level to another. Each level offers unlimited contact with Gary, within the context of the services defined. For more information, visit the ActionPronto Web site and click on Services, or contact Gary:

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