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How to get yourself fired

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Jeff Havens, 31, is a former high school English teacher who joined the world of stand-up comedy six years ago and became a corporate motivational speaker.

After the success of his humorous presentation about corporate culture called *Uncrapify your life*, the Madison, Wisc., resident embarked on a college campus tour geared to helping new graduates get, and keep, jobs. His subsequent book, *How to get fired, an employees guide to perpetual unemployment* is published by Big Pow! Books.

The book is dedicated "to all the lazy, incompetent, arrogant, uncooperative, self-absorbed, deceitful, gossip-mongering, intolerant, perpetually complaining people who get fired every year."

Q: That's one brutal dedication! Is there something wrong with today's graduates?

A: Certainly. To a large extent, parents have shielded them from pain and harm and anything difficult. They have an entitled mindset. Employers say they are not willing to put in the time to move up. They expect to start at the top. They need to understand that professional life is like playing an instrument or sport and they have to practise to get good at it.

Q: Why use humour?

A: The reason for humour is that for the last two years we've been bombarded with depressing news about jobs and the economy. People are full of sadness. They don't need any more of that. Humour is a way to get an important message across in a way that will make them smile. For young people, if you don't make it entertaining, they won't pay much attention.

Q: Have you ever been fired?

A: No, but I have failed to get hired, which I feel is a pre-emptive firing. When I was teaching, I was tied to Nashville (married) and I quit the school that wasn't a fit for me. The only offer I had was a rural school, also not a good fit. I did odd jobs but employers knew I had no idea what I wanted to do and was just using them for a paycheck.

Q: It's not always a person's fault when they get fired, is it?

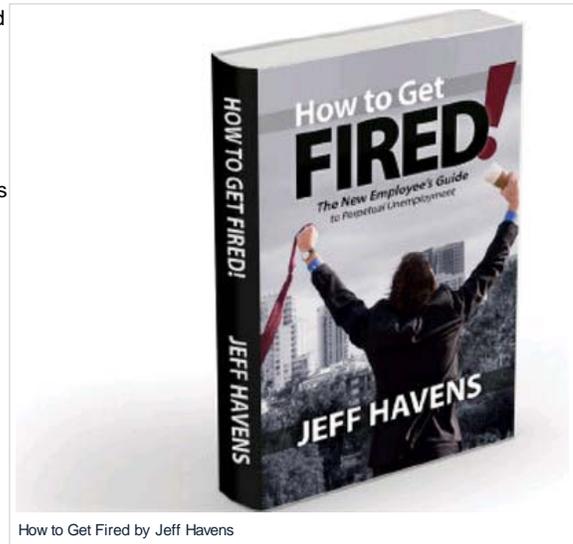
A: I have left off layoffs and outsourcing over which you have no control. Instead, I put the power in your own hands so that, when there is a layoff, you won't be the first person they look at. This is a very tough economy. I know someone whose severance package was tied to training his replacement. That doesn't endear me to that employer. And sometimes the boss is crazy.

Q: Your list of things to do to get fired includes unreliable work, performing tasks slowly and with errors, absenteeism, personal business at work, drug and alcohol abuse, dishonesty, refusing orders and not getting along with others. You also say not to lie on a resume but show examples of successful people who did just that including Mike Brown, former head of FEMA.

A: Their lies are more than 15 years old. If you think you can get away with for the 10 or 15 years it takes to be successful, okay. But in the era of the Internet, it is harder to get away with it. Employers now do background checks on potential hires. If caught early, you get fired.

Q: Today's college grads are facing a very different employment world than a generation ago? How has this affected the job search?

A: Employers need to understand that everyone our age and younger has been told our entire lives there will be no one to take care of us.



How to Get Fired by Jeff Havens

No pensions, no benefits and the second they can outsource our jobs they will. Before they even meet you as a potential employee, there is a deficit of trust young people have coming into a job. Employers need to do some more work at the front end, to inspire loyalty.

Q: What do college kids have to say to you?

A: It's been really great. College kids are the most ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) audience you can have. You can judge your success by how many are texting and how many walk out. Few do. They laugh at the parts that are supposed to be funny ... The message is put in the work, put in the time and sometimes you have to do things you don't want to do.

Q: If you could only give a job seeker one piece of advice, what would it be?

A: Once you have your interview, or the first week you get hired, you need to have some version of this conversation. "My intention is just not to meet your expectations but to surpass them. I'm going to work to get up to speed. Please tell me what I'm doing well and doing poorly. I am going to be the best employee you'll ever have." This dispels a lot of concern.

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