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The moment Shirley Wodynski realized her employer was losing money, she knew her job was in jeopardy. She was the last hired and one of the highest-paid employees at the trade association where she worked. Plus the boss who hired her and "loved her to death" had left. Her fate was now in the hands of someone new, which she thought made her even more vulnerable.

"My new boss was a really nice guy, but I wasn't sure we would develop a relationship where he thought I was great," recalls Wodynski, 48. "I did have a concern that I was going to be told, 'We can't afford to pay you anymore.' I did think about what I could do to keep my job."

With layoffs mounting across the U.S., it might seem as though there is nothing anyone can do to avoid a pink slip. But you can take steps to protect your job. Smart companies pay attention to performance and make allowances to keep people they think they can't do without.

"You need to be asking, 'What can I do to make such an impression that they'll look at me as indispensable?'" suggests Laura DeCarlo, executive director of Career Directors International, a professional association whose members assist job seekers.

It doesn't matter whether you are worried about a layoff, like Wodynski, or feel reasonably secure. Now is the time to try to recession-proof your job. Here's how to go about it:

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