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Emily Robertson has asked you to create a resume for her. After working for the same high-tech company, Innovation Inc., in San Francisco, California, for 15 years, she was laid off last month (April 2021). She feels discouraged and wonders if she will ever find another job because she just turned 51. She was laid off on her birthday. You ask her to tell you about herself, and this is what she shares.

She was born in San Francisco and has spent her entire life in the San Francisco Bay area, and has no desire to live anywhere else. She graduated from San Francisco High School with a 3.8 GPA in 1988. She was a member of the CSF (California Scholarship Federation), the marching band, and was elected class secretary her junior year. She was an active Girl Scout starting at the age of 8 and earned her Gold Award for putting on a day-long program during which Brownies earned their nature award.

She started college the September after she graduated from high school. She attended California State University, San Francisco (CSUSF). She began as a biology major with the hopes of eventually attending medical school. After getting a "D" in her first chemistry class the second semester of her freshman year, she changed her major to business. She transferred and graduated from Lam College of Business at CSUSF. Despite the "D" in chemistry, she graduated with honors (3.8 GPS) in 1992. She was on the dean's list the last semester of her junior year and both semesters of her senior year. She joined the CSUSF chapter of Alpha Kappa Psi (co-ed business fraternity), Psi Kappa, and was elected Program Chair her senior year. She continued to support the chapter after graduation and became a member of the advisory board in 2017.

With the help of the CSUSF Career Services Department, she landed her first job. She started as an assistant buyer in housewares for Macy's in July 1992. The job was fascinating. She worked in the heart of downtown San Francisco. She met with representatives of all the major appliance and cookware companies. She has always been a "foodie" with a passion for creating healthy meals. Getting to try products and learn how to use them was a thrill. She could not wait to get home and try a new piece of cookware she bought using her employee discount. And she loved sharing her creations with her co-workers the next day. She often worked on the sales floor to get customer reactions to products and displays. Her first Christmas in retail was magical. The music, the festivities, the office party, and the intensity of the sales floor was terrific. The January after her fifth Christmas at Macy's brought a lot of changes. Her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. The irregular hours of retail would not let her provide the help her mother needed. She realized she needed to find an 8-5 job that allowed her to have time off when she needed it, not when there were no store sales or meetings with sales representatives. In February, she started her job search and felt very lucky she found a job close to home by April.

On April 10,1997, she started as an administrative assistant in the business development department at Innovation Inc. She had used her Alpha Kappa Psi network to secure an interview with her boss, Susan Lane, Executive Assistant to the V.P. of Client Development, Jason Woodard. The job was not very challenging. She spent most of her time pulling and replacing files, creating spreadsheets, and coordinating meetings. But she was grateful to have a job that gave her the stability and benefits she needed to focus on her mother's health. In November of 2001, Susan was on vacation, and Jason asked if she could help with a rush project. A prospective client was coming into town unexpectedly, and he needed someone to coordinate travel plans and prepare a proposal PowerPoint. It was the first time she had used the project management and presentation skills she had worked so hard to master when she was in college. The project went seamlessly. The client's travel experience was excellent. The presentation convinced them to become a customer, and Jason nominated her for an "Employee of the Month" award that she got in February 2002 along with a $350 bonus.

In March, Jason invited her to his office to discuss her career goals. He wanted to know where she saw herself in 5 years. She shared that she had taken the administrative assistant job so she could help her mother. Her mother completed her surgeries and chemotherapy and was now considered cancer free. Her mother was restarting the activities she had given up during treatment. Now Emily’s focus could shift from her mom to her career. She realized working as an administrative assistant did not provide the challenges she wanted and had started looking for other positions where she could use her skills, talents, and educations. Jason said he was delighted to hear her speak that way. The company had a mentorship program that allowed staff to rotate through departments to learn about all aspects of corporate operations. He would like to nominate her for the program if she agreed. She did, and in May 2003, she started a two-year rotation. In May 2005, she had the option to apply for a manager-level position in any department. She decided to apply for Assistant Manager of the Quality Assurance Division, working with the R&D division. She got the job.

The company had experienced rapid growth during the previous 18 months and struggled to ensure all processes, products, and procedures followed corporate, state, and federal regulations. Her first assignment was to ensure the company complied with heavy metal regulations. The company was developing a new line of chip resistors and semiconductors they wanted to take to market in September 2006 that relied upon heavy metals. The plan was to market the chip resistors and semiconductors in the US, Canada, Mexico, and Australia. If design changes were needed, the design department needed to know within 90 days. She discovered the level of lead in the prototype would exceed the standards set by Australia by 10%. The amount was within an acceptable range for all other countries. She prepared a cost analysis showing the income loss if the products were not marketed in Australia and the cost of a redesign. Her next assignment was to develop a strategy for decreasing the number of keyboards produced that did not meet company standards; 10% of the keyboards manufactured did not pass quality control. She needed to determine if the company needed to redesign the keyboard or provide additional training for technicians. She interviewed production line workers, conducted focus groups, and developed and tested a theory of the cause of the high rate of failure. The point of failure occurred during the molding of the keyboards before delivery to the company. Production line workers would try to work around the flaws but were successful only 90% of the time. She presented her findings to the executive team. She was authorized to work directly with the company providing the keyboard frames. After working with the company, she decided the wisest thing to do would be to find a company that could meet Innovation Inc.'s standards. She worked with the company's legal team from the development of the contract through the acceptance by Keyon (the company that would make the keyboards in the future) and Innovation Inc.

When the Manager of Quality Assurance position opened because the employee retired, she was offered the job. She started her new role in May 2011. In her new role, she met monthly with the heads of R&D, Sales, Production, Marketing, Shipping, and Customer Service and the executive management team. She was now responsible for ensuring compliance with processes, procedures, policies, and regulations for the entire company. She supervised a staff of 6 Assistant Managers (one for each division), an administrative assistant, and an employee in the mentorship program. Her first act was to hire an Assistant Manager to fill the position she vacated. Her first challenge was to energize her staff. She had always been a self-starter, which is how she earned the promotion. The previous Manager let staff work at their own pace, so she walked into a role that required her to take immediate action to ensure her staff was aggressively monitoring quality across the company. She started by meeting with each of her reports and outlined her expectations. She initiated weekly stand-up meetings (the previous supervisor only met one-on-one with employees), which some employees appreciated and others resented. She developed a productivity matrix that ensured the review of all processes once a year, and assistant managers sat in on planning meetings for their assigned divisions. She had to lobby for the inclusion of her staff in the division planning meeting but was able to convince the department heads raising compliance issues early in the planning process would save time and money. Under her watch, losses due to waste decreased by 5% or $5M. Every year she was in this position, the company passed all onsite safety audits by Cal/OSHA (California Division of Occupational Safety and Health) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. She mentored six employees as part of the company mentorship program; three qualified for management positions.

In September 2015, she began an MBA program through the University of Southern California (USC). She completed the program with honors in September 2018. It was a challenge keeping up her work and completing classes and projects, but it paid off.

In February 2020, after the termination of the current V.P. of Operations, she was offered the job. Her work in Quality Assurance provided her with insights into every division of the company. And she had learned so much in her MBA program. But she was worried. It was a significant increase in responsibility; many of the people who had been colleagues would now report to her. Many had not been too happy with what they saw as barriers to success they felt she caused—changes in plans and missed deadlines that occurred when she had to point out the violations of policies and regulations. Some had lost bonuses and promotions because of these delays. Would they hold those against her or realize she was doing a job and that her efforts improved products and profits?

She was beginning to meet with her staff; the 6 division chiefs (R&D, Sales, Production, Marketing, Shipping, and Customer Service), an executive assistant (who like how her last boss ran things and saw no reason he should have been fired), and an administrative assistant who reported to the executive assistant, when COVID-19 required drastic changes in operations. She asked each of her division chiefs to develop a 30/60/90-day plan to meet anticipated state and federal COVID-19 operational requirements. Three of her division chiefs, Customer Service, Shipping, and Marketing, responded immediately. The other division chiefs said she was overreacting—the companies would not be shut down; it would be too much of a blow to the economy. She used the information she could gather to propose a plan to the executive team. She presented an analysis of the financial impact on profits and expenses at various levels of shutdowns. From March 2020 until her termination in April 2021, she spent her time trying to retain talent (the R&D staff) and working with the V.P. of H.R. to identify and lay off nonessential staff systematically. She was terminated for failing to achieve organizational goals. She had been unable to meet 2020 revenue goals and had not met them the first quarter of 2021. She got a 6-month severance package that included medical benefits.

She is not sure if the safest thing to do is return to Quality Assurance or try to secure a V.P. of operations job. She would like a resume that would let her do either.