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SCRIPTS FOR LAYOFFS, GAPS + DIFFICULT EXITS

Say It Without Shrinking

Word-for-word language for “so, what happened?” in interviews, networking conversations, and on LinkedIn, without sounding defensive, bitter, or diminished.

6 SCRIPTS

SWAP TABLE

PRACTICE LOG

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SAY IT WITHOUT SHRINKING

The 3-part structure every script uses

Here is what a former recruiter will tell you: the explanation itself is rarely what costs senior women the offer. What costs them is the apology wrapped around it: the over-explaining, the visible flinch, the 3 extra sentences that turn an organizational event into a personal confession. Hiring teams take their cue from how you carry the story.

Every script in this workbook follows the same structure:

What changed (1 sentence, organizational) → **What you built before the change** (scope, outcomes, numbers) → **What you are targeting now** (forward-facing). Factual. Brief. Done.

The swap table: words that shrink you, and what to say instead

INSTEAD OF...	SAY...
"I was let go" (whispered, like a confession)	"My role was eliminated in a restructuring."
"I probably should have seen it coming"	Nothing. Delete it. It is not information.
"I'm just exploring / just seeing what's out there"	"I'm targeting [lane], and being deliberate about it."
"I only managed a small team"	"I led a team of [N] responsible for [outcome]."
"Sorry, 1 more thing..."	The direct ask, unapologized: "1 more question."
3 minutes of context about the politics	"New leadership took a different direction."

The rule underneath all of it: 1 sentence for the event. The rest of the airtime belongs to your work.

01 The layoff

For interviews and recruiter screens.

THE SCRIPT

“My role was affected in a broader restructuring; my function was consolidated across regions. Before the change, I led the platform migration and built the team that ran it, about \$40M in scope. I’m now focused on roles where I can bring that kind of operational rebuild to a company at an inflection point.”

What it never includes: how many rounds of layoffs there were, how unfair it felt, how shocked you were, or a defense of the company’s decision.

Your turn

1 • WHAT CHANGED (1 SENTENCE)

2 • WHAT I BUILT BEFORE THE CHANGE

3 • WHAT I AM TARGETING NOW

SAY IT OUT LOUD 10 TIMES. CHECK A BOX EACH TIME IT SOUNDS LIKE INFORMATION, NOT DEFENSE.

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02 The career gap

Caregiving, burnout, health, relocation, motherhood, survival. All of them use the same door.

THE SCRIPT

“I stepped away for 2 years for family reasons; that chapter is complete. Before that, I spent 12 years in program leadership, most recently running cross-functional delivery for a 200-person org. I’m returning with a clear focus on X, and what I want to talk about is what I’d do in the first 90 days here.”

“That chapter is complete” is the load-bearing sentence. It closes the topic without inviting sympathy or follow-up questions, and it signals that you, not the gap, control the narrative.

Your turn

1 • WHAT CHANGED (1 SENTENCE)

2 • WHAT I BUILT BEFORE THE CHANGE

3 • WHAT I AM TARGETING NOW

You do not owe anyone the medical, marital, or financial details. “Family reasons” and “that chapter is complete” are complete answers, delivered at eye level.

03 The difficult or political exit

Including the toxic workplace you finally left.

THE SCRIPT

“New leadership came in and took the organization in a different direction, and it became clear the mandate I’d been brought in for was no longer the priority. I’m proud of what my team delivered; we took NPS from 20 to 48 in 18 months. I’m looking for an environment where that mandate is genuinely resourced.”

Never criticize the leader, the politics, or the culture. Not because it isn’t true, but because interviews reward composure about the past more than accuracy about it. “Different direction” is understood by every senior person in the room.

IF IT WAS A TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

“The organization went through significant leadership change, and the environment stopped being 1 where I could do my best work. I’m proud of what I delivered there, and I’m deliberate about what I’m looking for next, which is why I’m here.”

Your turn

1 • WHAT CHANGED (1 SENTENCE)

2 • WHAT I BUILT BEFORE THE CHANGE

3 • WHAT I AM TARGETING NOW

04 The stalled search, the reorg, and LinkedIn

3 more rooms, same posture.

“HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN LOOKING?”

“I’ve been deliberate rather than fast. I spent the first stretch getting clear on the level and kind of mandate I want, and I’m only pursuing roles that fit it, which is why I’m in this conversation.”

THE REORG / SHRINKING ROLE (STILL EMPLOYED)

“The company restructured and my function was consolidated under a new organization. Before that, I owned X and delivered Y. I’m talking to teams where that experience solves a current problem, which is what drew me to this conversation.”

THE LINKEDIN ANNOUNCEMENT (ONCE, FORWARD-FACING)

“After [N] years leading [function] at [company], my role was affected by a restructuring. I’m taking that as a forcing function to be intentional about what’s next: [direction]. If you’re working on [problem you solve], I’d genuinely like to compare notes.”

No gratitude-spiral, no long goodbye post. Announce once, or not at all. The internet does not need your rawest draft.

05 The networking one-liner and “tell me about yourself”

Compress everything. Stay at peer level.

THE 2-SENTENCE NETWORKING VERSION

“I spent [N] years doing [through-line], most recently [scope]. I’m in a transition and being deliberate about what’s next, and I’d value your read on where that kind of work is most needed right now.”

Asking for their read, not for a job, is what keeps the conversation at peer level, which is exactly where you belong.

Build your 30-second introduction

WHO I AM + THROUGH-LINE (1 SENTENCE)

MOST RECENT SCOPE + 1 NUMBER

WHAT I AM TARGETING + WHY THEM

Practice log

DATE	WHO HEARD IT	WHAT I AM ADJUSTING

The pressure test

Run your script through this list. Every unchecked box is a rehearsal away from fixed.

- ☐ The event gets exactly 1 sentence
- ☐ Nothing in it apologizes, defends the company, or relitigates the politics
- ☐ There is at least 1 concrete number or artifact in the middle section
- ☐ It ends facing forward: what I am targeting, not what I lost
- ☐ I have said it out loud at least 10 times
- ☐ I have said it to a human who would tell me the truth
- ☐ It sounds like information, not a confession
- ☐ I can say it at the end of a long day, tired, and it still holds

“Interviewers do not judge the event nearly as much as they read your relationship to it. Composure about the past is the signal of seniority.”

THE 1 LINE I KEEP STUMBLING ON, AND WHAT I WILL SAY INSTEAD

THE WORK BEHIND THE WORK

You do not have to carry this alone.

This workbook is the work I do with private clients, in miniature.

If you worked through these pages and thought “this is exactly where I am,” bring your specific situation to a private consultation. We talk about where you are, and whether I can help. No pressure, no ambush.

[Request a private consultation →](#)

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