When you have been employed for a while, earning a relatively good salary that affords you and your family a relatively comfortable lifestyle, it is easy to settle into a comfort zone. If you are an industrious, smart and valuable employee, you may even feel indispensable. But if there is one life lesson you should learn, it is that nobody is indispensable. Just after you've taken a car loan to upgrade to a better car, signed up for a mortgage and made monthly repayments for a year or taken a million-shilling sacco loan to finally build your dream house and spent the cash on materials and basically committed your money in one project or another, you get a redundancy notice on a bright Monday morning out of the blue. What do you do? Thinking about this may sound like an impossibility for you. Maybe you say to yourself: "I've won the best employee award so many times, it seems like a permanent title. Or, I am the head of department, the team leader, the MD, the CEO. I'm a mid-level manager so I can't be fired. I am the hardest worker, so my job is safe."

But the truth is, nobody is safe from sudden job loss. It could happen to anybody, be it the CEO or the messenger and everyone in between. I have seen people who consoled themselves that their jobs were safe, lose their jobs. And the possibility of losing a job has never been more real as more Kenyan and foreign companies reduce their workforce. If you've been following the news, you've noticed that the spate of job losses that started a couple of years ago continues unabated. Big and small companies are letting go of their staff: Nation Media Group, Eveready, Kenya Airways, Bamburi Cement, Standard Group ... are some of the companies that have fired tens to hundreds of their workers at a go.

In this era of retrenchment/downsizing/restructuring/redundancy, are you ready to be fired? If you were sacked suddenly today, what would you do? How long can you survive without a salary? How long can you meet your financial obligations without a salary or without looking for well-wishers to bail you out? For some people, that would be a few days, a few weeks or a month at most. Holidays are good, but one of the most important savings goals to have is an emergency fund. An emergency fund is made up of between three to 12 months worth of your living expenses saved up for emergencies like sudden job loss, medical expenses, accidents, repairs and other such emergencies. To figure out how much you need, track your daily expenses for one to three months. Take the highest amount of money you spend per month and multiply it by three and also by 12. This is your emergency fund savings goal, starting with one month's worth of expenses, then building it up to between three to 12 months' worth of living expenses. Divide the goal into bite-size portions to be saving each month, steadily until you get to your goal. As you save for other goals, make building an emergency fund, a priority.

Another way to be ready for sudden job loss is to have a side hustle or two or more. When you have more than one stream of income, the additional sources of income cushion you when one stream dries up. So take some time to think about some viable business ideas you can test. A good business solves people's problems. If you are alert and observant, your eyes, ears and mind will become a fertile source of possible ideas. What problem can you solve for people? Which gaps in the existing businesses can you fill? How do you differentiate yourself from all the other people offering the same goods/services? What new/innovative thing can you do to solve people's problems? Test your idea by talking to potential clients? Find out what problem they want solved and how and how much they would pay for it.

Another way to cushion yourself from job loss is to take out employment insurance. You pay monthly premiums based on your salary and in the event that you lose your job, they pay you a certain amount for a specified amount of time. Jamii Bora and CIC insurance had employment insurance some time back, but I'd have to check if they still offer this product.

Another way to lessen the effects of a sudden job loss is to have a network of people who can connect you with your next gig based on your skills, experience and other qualifications. Being a member of a good trade/industry association where you interact with potential employers and links to potential employers, job alerts and other resources, can have you back to work in the shortest time possible, thereby minimizing the effect of sudden job loss.

Lastly, if you lose your job suddenly, try to cut back on most expenses and be left with the bare minimum. This will help the cash in your emergency fund stretch out for longer.