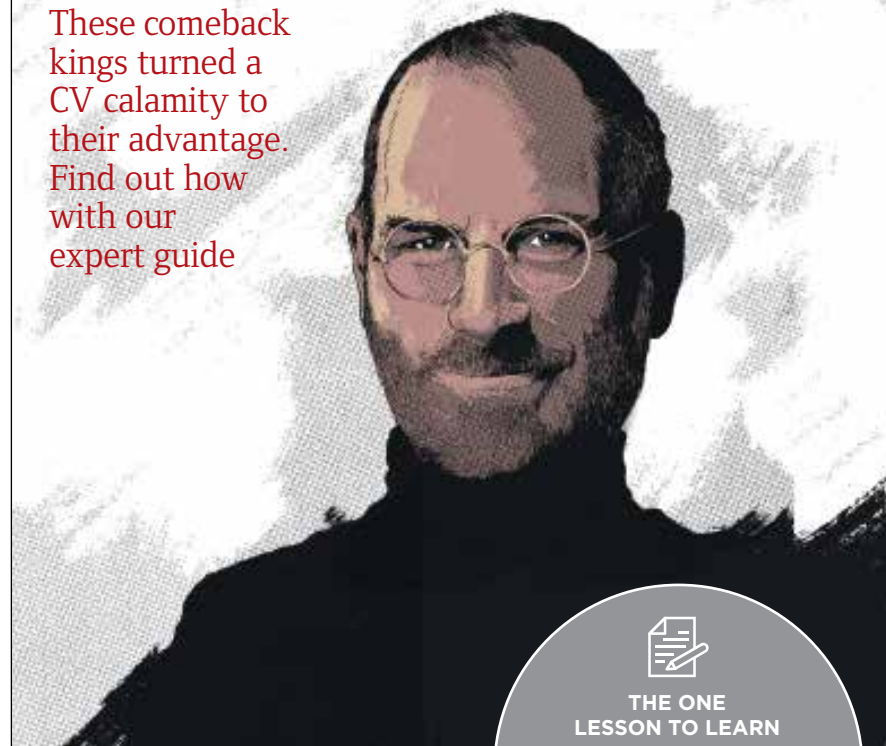


## + WORK

# How to recover from a career disaster

These comeback kings turned a CV calamity to their advantage. Find out how with our expert guide



## THE ONE LESSON TO LEARN

"See your career as a collection of experiences," explains Richard Alderson. "Some of these will be successful and some won't, but they will contribute to your overall success in the long term."

RECOVERY #1

## You're forced out Steve Jobs

### What went wrong?

By 1985, Jobs was seen in the company he had co-founded as a petulant prima donna, prone to mood swings and obsessed with the beauty of his Apple Mac range, refusing to address the need for profitability. Reluctantly, his bosses relieved him of his role as head of the Mac division.

### What did he do?

Stormed out and formed NeXT as a would-be rival to Apple.

### What should he have done?

"Sometimes failure is an important part of your career," reasons Richard Alderson, founder of CareerShifters ([careershifters.org](http://careershifters.org)). "Steve Jobs demonstrated that. Yes, his next project failed, but he took so many lessons from the experience that when he returned to Apple he was able to help transform the company."

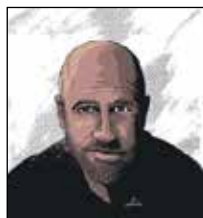
### Where is he now?

No longer with us, but he left the world a better place.

RECOVERY #2

## Your professional reputation is destroyed

James Frey



### What went wrong?

Frey fabricated large parts of his 2003 memoir, *A Million Little Pieces*, a chronicle of his crack addiction, and its follow-up, *My Friend Leonard*. He was dropped by his agent and his publisher cancelled his seven-figure contract.

### What did he do?

He argued his case with Oprah. And lost.

### What should he have done?

"Aside from not lying in the first place," says Jonathan Black, director of Oxford University's Careers Service ([careers.ox.ac.uk](http://careers.ox.ac.uk)), "he should have come clean immediately. As the late Denis Healey said, 'When you're in a hole, stop digging.'"

### Where is he now?

Runs a YA fiction factory, not without controversy.

### The one lesson to learn

"It's just not worth lying on your CV or in the interview," explains Black. "Employers seek honesty in their staff. If you lie, not only are you in serious trouble if/when you're found out, but you have to live that lie throughout your career - which most people find stressful to maintain."



RECOVERY #3

## You lose support Ed Balls

### What went wrong?

Gordon Brown's chosen one was somewhat frozen out by Ed Miliband, but the shadow chancellor still seemed like a safe bet for high office until he lost his Morley and Outwood constituency in May 2015. Worse still, in the aftermath of the election it became clear that the party insiders had realised he was in trouble but did not communicate this to him.

### What did he do?

Took up a Harvard fellowship, became chairman of Norwich FC and turned down *I'm A Celebrity...*

### What should he have done?

"This looks like the challenge of hope over experience," says Jonathan Black. "He should have asked tough questions of the insiders, listened to what they said and read between the lines of what they weren't saying. And then treated the unwelcome news seriously, rather than ignoring it and hoping to ride it out."

### Where is he now?

Contributing to the *FT* and the *Wall Street Journal*.  
**The one lesson to learn**  
"Listen to the feedback you get," advises Black. "Don't be afraid to ask some difficult questions, then act on what you hear."

RECOVERY #4

## You're fired Brian Clough

### What went wrong?

Clough was appointed manager of Leeds United in the summer of 1974 - 44 days later, after a calamitous start, he was sacked.

### What did he do?

Managed Nottingham Forest, recruited former partner Peter Taylor, secured promotion and led the club to league and European glory.

### What should he have done?

"Before saying yes to any job offer we need to do due diligence," argues career psychologist Denise Taylor ([amazingpeople.co.uk](http://amazingpeople.co.uk)). "Also, senior staff often bring in people with whom they have worked effectively before. Clough should have done this with Peter Taylor."

### Where is he now?

Putting God right on one or two things.



## THE ONE LESSON TO LEARN

"Understand who you are, how you work best and your values," says Denise Taylor. "Then compare job offers against these to make a good decision and get career satisfaction."

## THE ONE LESSON TO LEARN

"It's not just about the money," says Denise Taylor. "It's about the impact on your health. Moving on can be the best option."

Illustrations: Joe Wilson

RECOVERY #5

## Your personal reputation is destroyed

Paul Gambaccini



### What went wrong?

The broadcaster was arrested for historical sex offences in 2013. He was dropped by the BBC and spent a year on bail before the CPS declared there was insufficient evidence.

### What did he do?

He maintained his innocence but declined to sue the police as "the odds are in their favour".

### What should he have done?

"He had the choice to sue or let it go," says Denise Taylor. "He did the right thing. If you take legal action, get advice on your chances of success, but be wary of court. Often, signing a non-disclosure agreement and settling - not that he did this - is smarter."

### Where is he now?

Broadcasting on Radio 2 and Radio 4.



RECOVERY #6

## You lose it all (but bounce back)

Thor Bjorgolfsson

### What went wrong?

Bjorgolfsson found himself £700 million in debt after the crash of Iceland's second biggest bank in 2008.

### What did he do?

He apologised publicly, via a newspaper advert, and began selling off companies and personal assets to repay the debt. He then rebuilt his fortune.

### What should he have done?

"He pretty much did everything right," says Richard Alderson.

"When things go wrong at work, you gain far more respect by saying, 'OK, I messed up, I'm sorry, and this is what I'm going to do to make it better.'"

### Where is he now?

Back in business, primarily in Russia.

### The one lesson to learn

"As well as taking responsibility for your mistakes," advises Alderson, "put actions in place to correct them and take charge of making it better."



RECOVERY #7

## You break the law Jérôme Kerviel

### What went wrong?

In 2008 Kerviel almost ruined French bank Société Générale when he lost £3.8 billion in a series of illegal trades. He was sentenced to five years in prison and ordered to repay the money.

### What did he do?

Argued that a broken system was culpable, not him. Became something of a folk hero.

### What should he have done?

"He needed a trusted mentor outside SocGen to bring perspective," says Jonathan Black. "That might have helped him find a legal way through."

### Where is he now?

Out of jail, fighting a civil case against SocGen.

### The one lesson to learn

"Having a confidant prepared to challenge you can provide access to how others will see your actions." **John Naughton**



A few good men  
Not everyone's career implodes. Here are four who never put a foot wrong...

1

Gary Lineker

Never yellow-carded. When Piers Morgan accused him of never making a tackle, Lineker tweeted, "Nope. Never hacked anyone."

2

Gerry Spence

US lawyer who, it is said, never lost a criminal case, and hasn't lost a civil case for 45 years.

3

Joe Calzaghe

The underrated, undefeated Welsh boxer retired with a perfect 46-0 record.

4

Vasily Zaytsev

The ace Soviet Union sniper killed 225 Axis soldiers while defending Stalingrad.