

UNDER\$PENT

10 top tips to survive & save in an era of mass redundancies

1,000 people were made redundant in Brisbane this week, so the media and industry groups say – Highly educated people in well paid jobs in mining, construction and professional services. Job security and the rising cost of living is a worry for all of us. I'm no expert on the state of the economy but I am passionate about being underspent not overspent. I didn't buy anything new or 2nd hand during 2014 and I saved a staggering 38% of my take-home salary without dramatically changing my life. Here are my 10 top tips to survive and save in an era of mass redundancies.

1. **Set-up and stick to a budget.** 60% of us can't afford to pay our credit cards debts and 41% of us borrow from friends, family and loans each and every month to survive until pay day. Everyone's circumstances and financial obligations are different but I've found that setting up a monthly budget helped me save money. Email me for my FREE budget template.
2. **SAVE!** For me saving money is a non-negotiable. I put \$500 into an 'emergency' savings account every single month simply because no one knows what's around the corner or what will happen next week.
3. **Keep a spending diary.** For the next 7 days keep a spending diary. Write down information about every single item that you buy and the price to track your discretionary spending. Email me for my FREE Underspent Reality Check Workbook.
4. **Quit the take-away coffee.** A take away coffee on my walk to work and one at lunchtime used to be my daily treat until I realised I was spending \$45.00 a week (that's over \$2,000 a year). I quit the coffees and I'm using the money I would have 'wasted' on coffee to self-publish my 3rd book - a storybook for kids about saving money.
5. **Pennies make pounds** – Get an old jar and use it to store all your loose change and coins. I empty out the coins in my purse at the end of each week and pop them in my jar. Then a couple of times a year I put them money in my savings account for Christmas. It's a simple way to save some extra dollars each year.
6. **Bike or hike.** It depends on where you live and how much time you have but cycling or walking to and from work just one day a week can save most people around \$10. That's \$500 a year and like they say, every little helps!
7. **Utilise free professional training.** There has never been a better time to enhance and broaden your professional and business skills. There are loads of free training courses and events in our cities every day. A few Saturdays ago my colleague Emily and I spent the day at the Entourage's 8 hour extravaganza of training and coaching from business rock stars like Michelle Bridges, Jack Delosa and Phillip Di Bella. All without spending a cent.
8. **Make yourself accountable.** Paying for a mentor or coach is very valuable but can be expensive. Each Wednesday night I spend an hour on skype with my seven accountability buddies. We set our goals for the week, follow through on things we said that we would do and support each other's personal, professional and financial growth.
9. **Get a 2nd income.** Last year I wrote and self-published 2 books; Decongestion and Underspent. I've not covered my costs just yet but I am generating extra income and I'm feeling very positive about my professional and financial future.
10. **Be realistic and do celebrate your successes.** I'm passionate about saving money 'cos life is stress-free when you're debt-free. I'm realistic. Quitting buying, shopping and spending is tough. Saving money is even harder. With mass redundancies, weak employment prospects, soaring house prices and sky-high rates of depression and divorce there's never been a better time to be underspent, not overspent. If you succeed BNNM - Buy Nothing New Month this October please give yourself a huge high five from me!

What do you do to save money in these tough economic times?

RACHEL SMITH

