

Tips From the Trenches: Embarking on Your Career Transition Journey

By: David Bolz

Transitions are difficult for everyone. You are embarking on one of life's difficult journeys. As you start your journey, please have a plan. "Plan your work and work your plan," as successful project managers say. You need to successfully navigate three key milestones during your career transition: rebuilding your confident attitude; inventorying your strengths and accomplishments and building your personal and professional network.

Milestone 1: Rebuilding Your Confident Attitude

Make sure the lenses that you're looking through are clear as possible. This is a time to take care of yourself and look at what you want to achieve from your career. Here are some suggestions of how to rebuild your confident attitude:

Gain a New Perspective "It's About Attitude." Take a vacation. Time and distance from your routine is a great way to engage your creative thought process. Get out of your cocoon and **connect with other people**. Although your job is very important, it's only your job. **You are more than your job**. You've been successful in the past and you'll be successful in the future. Take some time to count your blessings. You'll be surprised how your right brain – or unconscious mind – will help direct and support you.

Confide in Your Good Friends. There's a tendency to want to take on a challenge alone. Don't let this happen. You're facing a big challenge. **You need other people**. First and foremost, connect with your spouse, life-partner, close relatives or friends. It also is the first and key step in allowing others to help you in your career search.

Take Good Care of Yourself. You're embarking on a journey. Surround yourself with positive thoughts, experiences and people. In addition to a grateful attitude, find positive experiences to enjoy by yourself and with others. Manage your time wisely by making intentional choices of how you spend your time on a daily and weekly basis.

Develop Personal Goals. Choose to develop personal goals. The list to choose from is almost endless. Write your plans out. It will help clarify your thinking and keep you focused.

Milestone 2: Inventory Your Strengths and Accomplishments

Like constructing a new building, the owner and architect begin with a plan which rests on a good foundation. I suggest a key element of the foundation consists of your accomplishments and strengths. Let's explore some practical steps you can take to sharpen your awareness of and how to speak to your strengths and accomplishments:

Allow Others to Help You. Some excellent ways to gain perspective and crystallize your thinking are to talk with a trusted mentor, career counselor and professional colleagues. Share ideas and ask for feedback about your strengths, plans and goals.

Create a Portfolio of Achievement. Find those old reports, memos or letters of achievement. Find as many as you can. Organize them into a scrap book. You may be the only one to see your work portfolio. I guarantee it will be one of your most valuable assets during your career search. When you complete this work you will have a visual record of your professional achievements. You will feel more confident. Your confidence will show when you talk

with your professional network, friends, and neighbors. You'll be steps ahead knowing that your previous successes will open doors to your future successes.

Outline Your Professional Job Search Steps. Understand and commit that finding a job is now your 40-hour-a-week job. You will need to assess your strengths, interests and career goals, thus developing a greater understanding yourself. Additional steps include: developing an updated resume, organizing networking resources, researching employment opportunities, and interviewing. Your plan should include anticipated resources and potential barriers to achieving your goals.

Milestone 3: Accessing and Building Networks of People

We all live in networks of people: home, families, friends, communities and our professions. Pay close attention to all of your networks and nurture them always – especially now. Here are some constructive tips that I have found useful:

Keeping it Together at Home. Establish a family calendar for each day of the week and reserve time, at least weekly, to update your family on your job search. This simple approach heads-off problems before they arise. Most importantly, you have an opportunity to become more effective while building a stronger relationship with your family. What a deal!

Consult with a Mentor, Priest, or Counselor. Think about who you want to invite with you on your journey. Perhaps you know a friend or neighbor that you respect who experienced a career transition. They may be a good resource and partner.

Find Ways to Bring Structure to Your Day. Start at the beginning and start small:

- Establish achievable and realistic goals in your personal life and job search.
- Read the business section, subscribe to newspapers and journals. Go to the library.
- Maintain the activities in your life: school, church, community events.

Taking these initial steps will help you regain control in your life. They will also be a foundation for the networking and interviewing phases of your journey.

Inventory Your Contacts to Begin Networking. Organize your contacts on your computer, notebook or address book. There's no magical software tool. Just be sure you don't lose one of your most valuable assets: personal and business colleagues. Most likely, your next job is to come from this list of people.

Conclusion

As you engage in your career transition, it's my hope and prayer that you will re-build your confident attitude, identify your strengths and accomplishments and enhance your personal and professional networks while meeting many wonderful people along the milestones of your journey. And of course, flourish in your career and life!

Contact Dave Bolz at: David.Bolz@verizon.net. Dave is Joseph's People Chapter leader at St. Elizabeth's (Eagle Chapter in Uwchlan Township, PA) and serves as HR Director for BlackRock Investments Wilmington, Delaware location.

Resources

Books

Blanke, Gail. Between Trapezes. Rodale, 2004. Blanke shares the stories of several professionals who are looking for significance in their work in addition to dealing with the ambiguity of living in mid-air “between the trapezes”

Bolles, Richard. What Color is Your Parachute?

This book is “the bible” when it comes to career search and development. Buy it, read it and do what he says.

Bridges, William. Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change. Perseus Books. 1991. At the early stage of a career transition, chapter 7 is most helpful – *Taking Care of Yourself*. (Pages 87- 102.)

Dyer, Wayne. The Power of Intention.

Dr. Dyer helps many people clarify their purpose and see your challenges as a teacher. He encourages you to create the life you want.

McKnight, Richard, PhD. Victim, Survivor or Navigator? Choosing a Response to Workplace Change.

An inspiring and practical guide that encourages the reader to gain from change in the workplace and life.

Internet Sites

Fast Company – Excellent resource guides on important topics such as: Internet & Technology; Careers; Leadership; Strategy and Innovation; Human Resources; Marketing & Branding; Sales & Customer Service; and Education

Wall Street Journal - offers articles, pod casts and services on-line at

<http://www.careerjournal.cm/index/html>

The Wall Street Journal for Entrepreneurs. The site is full of information and timely articles on

franchising, finance, e-commerce and running a business. Located at: <http://www.startupjournal.com>

Business Week Careers. Another excellent business site for insightful resources. Located at:

<http://businessweek.com/careers>

Application Exercises:

Use the application exercises to establish a concrete and realistic plan for your first steps during your transition.

1. Acknowledge what you've lost. Determine with whom, in your close circle of friends, you want to confide about your recent job loss. Who needs to know? How can they support you?
2. Take some time off. Determine what is right for you and your family. Is it a long vacation including travel? Or is it a trip to the local state park for a camp-out? The purpose of this time is to help your mind and body recover from recent events and manage your stress.
3. Organize your work materials. Identify your best work products. Create a scrap book including memos, pictures, performance reviews, hand-written notes or e-mails that remind you of and document your achievements.
4. What's your initial plan during your career transition? Write-out your professional and personal goals. What industries will you target? What type of positions will you search for? Personally, what do you wish to accomplish? Would you like to learn a new skill? Complete home improvement projects? Remember: your work life has changed. One important goal is to maintain your current activities and community involvement.