



The Blake Group Not Just Consulting. Solutions.™

November - December 2008 Newsletter

What do you want to be when you grow up? Or - Your Career Agility During a Perfect Storm

Let's see what we are facing:

- Aging & retiring Boomers creating large skills and knowledge gaps
- The Big "R" word
- Record levels of job losses this year
- Foreclosures and mortgage failures
- Rising energy expenses
- Mergers and acquisitions in the financial and other industries
- Airlines charging for water, soft drinks, baggage, pillows and blankets (but we can keep the pillows & blankets)

Did I leave anything out? What else do you need to know?

Every year at this time I write a newsletter to about assessing career issues and choices. It is a newsletter dedicated to reviewing your career and whether you should look at making different choices and doing a better job of managing your career.

This year we all are facing some very hard issues and serious concerns. We all know people that have lost houses and jobs. We all struggle to navigate through the morass and quagmire and wonder what will happen next. One of my close friends, a psychologist and Vietnam Vet, is seeing clients with the "hundred yard stare." What he means is that his clients have that "deer in the headlight" look as they try cope with loss, fear and ambiguity.

So on that happy note - let's talk career! *R-I-G-H-T...*

Now is as Good as Time as Any

Well I say - we better look at whether we are doing the right things as well as doing things right for our jobs and our career. Right now is the best time to be true to your future.

Many years ago I read a book that helped me understand the true nature of work that we are facing today. It is titled, *The Way of the Ronin* by Beverly Potter, Ph.D. A Ronin is a Japanese word for lordless samurai. It is used to describe people that left their designated place in life. Potter adds that career Ronin are those people that are "employing career strategies grounded in the premise of rapid change." The new Ronin make lateral moves that follow their interests becoming generalists with specialties. That is, their breadth of experience combined with self-made motivation becomes their mantle for career success. In one sense, doing Ronin means becoming our own master to direct ourselves.

Manage & Know Yourself

The following are some ideas and activities from *Ronin* and my career coaching that you can put into motion now:

- **Motivation:** How do you motivate yourself? Do you "work for" positives or "avoid negatives"? Many of us manage ourselves in ways that sabotage our interests. "Working for" is the ability to focus on positives we want to achieve.
- **Goals:** Without a goal, wherever you are is the place you will end up. Goals are tools meant to guide us, not enslave us. Focus on what you can influence and reevaluate them periodically.
- **Acknowledging Yourself:** Focus on what you do well and what was done well; not on failures. Self acknowledgement promotes "working for."
- **Small Steps:** Don't employ all or nothing. Build your career agility in small increments.

- **Know Yourself:** Analyze your occupational temperament. When you know your needs and rhythm it is easier to make decisions about what you value and when to stay or go. Don't concern yourself with skills while assessing your occupational temperament
- **Transform Dissatisfaction:** Dead-end work is unsatisfying, leads to nothing, and provides little opportunity to develop your talents. Find ways to transform your work to something that will honor your values and talents.

Stay in Balance

Extremes disrupt balance. How do you know you are out of balance? What you feel about yourself and what others say. We can't escape our minds. It interprets everything in terms of our personal reality. Feedback from others is a mirror. Criticism and compliments are the reflection. Many people reject feedback by punishing the messenger. Don't. You need the reflections from the world especially in times of change.

The second indicator is feelings of dissatisfaction or satisfaction. There is no one feeling to watch for, no one thought to expect. Record all your feelings and look for patterns. Bill worked advising clients and staff all day. He was constantly working with abstractions and payoffs took a long time to manifest. He was distressed by the imbalance. We talked about how to find balance. He chose to begin a part time leather working business. By applying his artistic side, he made custom made briefcases, business card holders, wallets, etc. Soon, his work became known throughout the Southwest. Now as he approaches retirement, he has not only found balance in the immediate results of making a product he has also started a business that he enjoys and will continue into his retirement.

Concentrate on Success Factors

To get the competitive edge, you need to find your unique success factors. Identify those areas that are decisive for success in your work and career to this point. Look for patterns in your successes to find key factors. Reflect on your:

- **Personal Qualities:** These describe who you are - artistic, adaptable, conscientious, perceptive, patient, meticulous, cheerful, resourceful, responsible, tolerant, persistent, flexible, and creative.
- **Functional Skills:** These describe how you deal with people, ideas, data or things – administer, advise, assemble, coach, counsel, compile, investigate, teach, negotiate, persuade and encourage.
- **Content Skills:** These describe specific skills in which you have developed competencies – accounting, gourmet cooking, music, languages, crafts, programming, and building or constructing.

Prioritize the top four personal, functional skills, and content skills that are most important to you. Describe your favorite interests from childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Next, identify your current favorite interests. Overall, what three seem the most important to you right now? Do you see any patterns here? Are you in a career that enables you to use the personal qualities, skills and interests that you have identified?

Take some additional time to reflect on these questions:

- Where am I now in my career development?
- What am I currently doing?
- Where do I want to be in my career?
- What do I want to be doing?
- How can I get there?
- What are some possible strategies for moving toward my career goals?

If you take the time to reflect on the answers to the above questions and look for the patterns revealed in your successes, you will find your way to a more rewarding career.

Have a great Holiday season. Be safe and stay well. See you next year.

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P.S. – Here we grow again. Very soon you will see our new coaching & counseling service – Life's Path Coaching & Counseling. We will have the website up very soon.