

Transitioning to a Job You Love by *Marie Peeler*



Even though the unemployment numbers are not what they once were, most of us know of at least one person who has suffered through a prolonged and involuntary period of joblessness. This tends to make complaining about the jobs we currently have, even if they are awful, seem insensitive and gauche.

Still, it's important to be honest with yourself when the job you hold leaves you feeling unsatisfied or unchallenged. And now that unemployment numbers are beginning to rebound, this is a great time to look for a new job, or even transition to a new career. Yet, holding down a job (even an unfulfilling one) while looking for a new one can seem incredibly taxing and overwhelming, especially given that you might be out of practice when it comes to the job hunt.

As you position yourself for the next opportunity, it's important to examine your values, grow your contacts, and conduct informational interviews in order to best match yourself with a fulfilling career.

Examining Your Values

There are many methods and tools available to help you assess your values, but I find that simply answering a short list of relevant questions is the most valuable:

- What feels right in my life right now?
- What feels out of alignment?
- What five words would others use to describe me?
- What words would I LIKE to be able to use to describe myself?
- What do I want most fervently?

As you start to identify the top four to six values on your list, be sure to consider what it would look like to embody or achieve each value.

For instance, if "balance" is on your list of values, as it is on so many people's, be sure to identify what balance means to you. Does it mean achieving a desirable ratio between work that you find exciting versus work that is routine? Is it a measure of how many hours you spend in the office versus how many you spend elsewhere? Or does balance mean something else altogether to you? Be sure to nail that down. Otherwise you won't know what to look for or be able to honestly assess any opportunities that come your way.

Growing your contacts

No matter how much you dislike your current job, chances are there are people you interact with in some capacity that know you or know of you, and like you. Add them to your online contact community (such as LinkedIn), and keep them in mind as potential resources as you operate in reality, as well as in virtually.

In addition to these people, think of your friends and neighbors as other worthwhile individuals to be added to your network. You probably are not going to hound your friend for a job, but a professional contact of yours might have a work-related question for someone in the same field as your friend. You now have an opportunity to introduce them. After all, you shouldn't think of your contacts as solely people from whom you can get things...you should be just as concerned, if not more so, with giving things to them as well. (That said, it's always easier to ask for something knowing that you've set an example of professional generosity.)

Conducting informational interviews

Many people think of the interview as only a tool to sell one's self to a prospective employer. But anytime you speak to anyone about your job search you have the chance to sell yourself. And interviewing can go both ways.

Your network has a wealth of information that you need. Individuals in your network have knowledge of companies and industries that you want to know about. They know whether your skills and experience are relevant in a particular occupation. They know people that you'd like to be introduced to.

Tap into this wealth of knowledge by conducting information interviews. Start by calling someone and saying something like, "I'm contemplating a job search and I would love to know more about XYZ corp. I know you work there. Would you be willing to tell me about it over coffee?" Or, "I searched on LinkedIn and noticed that you are connected to someone who works at XYZ corp. Do you know him or her well enough to introduce me? I want to ask them about the corporate culture."

When someone agrees to speak with you, arrive prepared with your questions, but also be ready to answer their questions. Even though you are not expecting this person to give you a job, make no mistake, this is an interview and you want to shine. This person has an entire network of their own that they might share if they like how you come across and what you have to say.

At the end of any such interview, it always pays to ask, "Is there anyone else you know that you think it might be beneficial for me to speak with? Would you be willing to introduce me?" Don't worry about asking for a job though. If you've done a good job of shining, and the person is in a capacity to hire, their wheels are already turning trying to come up with a way that they can use you.

As more jobs come onto the market, it's important to be ready for the right one. Knowing what kind of job that should be—after examining your values, growing your contact base, and conducting informational interviews—can help you be ready to make a career move that you'll love.



Marie Peeler is a principal of Peeler Associates, a Pembroke, Massachusetts-based organization that helps leaders clarify objectives, find engagement, improve interpersonal effectiveness, and attain their goals through services that include executive coaching, team development, custom workshops and seminars, leadership assessment, career planning, business retreats, and keynote, conference and meeting presentations. As an executive coach and leadership development consultant, Marie has worked with both individuals and organizations to increase their business effectiveness through true and lasting transformation. For more information, please visit www.peelerassociates.com.

As published June 14, 2013 at:

<http://www.astd.org/Publications/Blogs/Career-Development-Blog/2013/06/Transitioning-to-a-Job-You-Love>