



Today is your day!
Everyone is capable of
living their dream. All it
takes is **courage**,
determination, and
inspiration!

The Career Continuum: Determining Your Next Career Step ***Lorraine Rinker, Principal Careerist***

“People have read so much hype about passion that they feel they are missing something because they do not jump out of bed champing at the bit to get to work. They are afraid that if they are not completely engaged, then they must be dull and uninteresting at best, spiritually bankrupt at worst.” – Barbara Moses, “What Next?”

The reality is . . .not everyone needs to feel passionate about their work. People just starting out in their career life will be exploring opportunities to find out what it is they like and dislike about their work life, what defines a “good fit” (or not), and what they want out of their work. Mid-careerers have enough experience behind them to know whether their work is where they derive most of their passion from, or are they able to find passion in other segments of their life to offset any “so called lack of passion” in their work. Some people simply do not need to feel passionate about their work. These are people who are successful in their work, and derive a sense of personal fulfillment in activities outside of their work. It is possible to be content in your life without loving your work. The point is to have something in your life that you love to do; in work, play, or “other”. Having said that, the following are practical ways to manage various stages of your career throughout a lifetime journey called the “career continuum”.

Finding the “perfect” job: It’s more important to get off to a great start, than to try to land the “perfect” job. If you're a recent grad, take note and get real: there are jobs out there - - you just need to take the most effective approach to finding them. Career fairs and pouring through job listings in newspapers is not where most people are finding today's jobs. Students need to be more aggressive and creative in their job search; and that begins with expanding their contact networks. Make a list of the top 10 opportunities and go ahead and apply on-line through the company web sites. But, you're not done yet! Follow up with your personal contact and let them know you're "in the system" and would appreciate any additional leads they may come across. In the meantime, be realistic about your intentions; don't obsess about finding the "perfect job". Focus on the fact that your first job is just that; your first job!

LORRAINE LEE RINKER - PRINCIPAL CAREERIST

P. O. Box 4513 El Dorado Hills, CA 95762



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Should you stay or should you go? You've worked long and hard, mastered your craft and have become an "expert" in your area of specialty. After reflecting on your career, you realize that it is no longer aligned with your purpose in life. Now what?

Because a career is a journey, planning your career should include a marketing plan as well. Part of your marketing plan should outline how you will maintain marketable skills. This is essential during your career for both advancement within your current company, and to help you excel when you decide to take that "next step" and venture out.

Decided to stay? Make a lateral move: If a move up in your career is not viable at your company, consider a lateral move within your company to expand your business knowledge and experience while maintaining your company-specific knowledge. A lateral move is an excellent opportunity to learn the business from a different perspective. This is a great way to add dimension to your career; broaden your repertoire with multiple specialties, while building your expertise as a generalist in your industry. For instance, if you are currently an Information Technology Director with excellent business acumen, relationship and communication skills; you could consider applying for a senior management position in the Marketing Department as a business/IT liaison. You would be leveraging your technology acumen while learning how the business runs from the marketing perspective. This experience will broaden your choice of opportunities in the job market and help avoid being pigeon-holed into only technology positions.

Time to go? Make a graceful exit: Whether you consider a step-down, lateral, or advanced move to another company; make a graceful exit. That means, prepare, plan, and be discreet. Preparation and planning are especially important if you hold a senior position with your current employer. It will only reflect on you positively if you prepare and plan for a smooth exit transition. Having an



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exit strategy (succession plan) in place long before you plan to leave will help ensure your graceful exit. Of course, you will share your resume (which you have been keeping up to date all along so there is no need to rush an updated version) and tell a few key friends and industry colleagues that you're looking. All the while; being discreet and respectful. After all, you will probably need key references from those you are leaving behind.

20-plus years in your current career? Don't get pigeon-holed: If you want to venture into new territory and try something different in your next job, lateral moves during your career can build enough diversity into your skill-set to reduce the likelihood of being pigeon-holed into limited opportunities. For instance, working only for Fortune 100 companies during a 20-plus-year career may be considered impressive, until you want to venture into a start-up opportunity. Don't be surprised if you're perceived as someone who would not be a good fit for a start-up's entrepreneurial environment. But, if during your 20-year career in the corporate arena; you've worked at small, medium, and large companies; then you may be perceived as being somewhat adaptable.

About the Author: Lorraine Rinker is a Real World Careerist with Rinker and Associates, a career consulting organization. Possessing in-depth Fortune 100 experience and a 25-year Information Technology career culminating at the executive level, Lorraine now applies her passion for helping others find their "next step" through career and business coach-consulting. For more FREE tips on how to "get on your way", visit www.rwcs.biz. © 2005-2007 Rinker and Associates.

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