

## *Psychology at Work: Six Tips to Survive (and Thrive) Through Career Transitions*

### **1. JOB SEARCH IS AWFUL.**

That's just the way it is. And it doesn't matter how high or low level your position is or the number of years you have been working. It doesn't matter if *you* decided to begin the search or if the decision was made *for* you. Even if you hated what you were doing, at least you weren't in job search.

Any way you slice it or dice it, being in job search means dealing with self-doubt, uncertainty, and humility. So people that are in one tend to take a job – *any* job – because it gets them *out* of the search. That's an okay short term solution, but it has some very serious flaws:

- a) If you hate the job you take, you won't do it well and you'll lose it (or quit) and be right back in a search again.
- b) Even if you love the job and you perform well, you'll probably still be right back in job search again because it's highly likely that something will change: your company will consolidate or merge or maybe the boss that you love so much will leave. The odds are pretty strong that *something* will happen – the average person doesn't spend more than 3-5 years in a job.
  - ▶ So you must learn a **systematic** approach to job search. Such a thing really does exist. If you learn it, you will increase the chances of finding what you want, each time you have to look.
  - ▶ You must be **disciplined** in following that system. If you are, you will increase the number of offers you get. Then you can actually choose the *best* one, rather than accepting the *only* one.
  - ▶ You must have a **long term plan** that provides direction, and keeps you on course. That way you can always plan alternate routes when unplanned changes happen. Your *direction* becomes your stability. Without it, you remain tossed about at the whim of the fickle 'Job Gods'.

### **2. YOU DO HAVE CHOICES.**

At a certain point, people think they cease to have viable career options. They believe they have too much invested in their current career to make a change and pursue something that might be more satisfying (if they even knew what that might look like, which they usually don't). They believe they have to stay in the area in which they have the most tenure and experience, even though it may have lost its luster long ago.



The economy and the job market play into this feeling as well. When there are abundant jobs, it is one thing to decide to pursue something new and different. But what happens in a recession; in a time of few jobs and many candidates? People think they are lucky to have a job at all. They think they really don't have any choices.

**Do not kid yourself:**

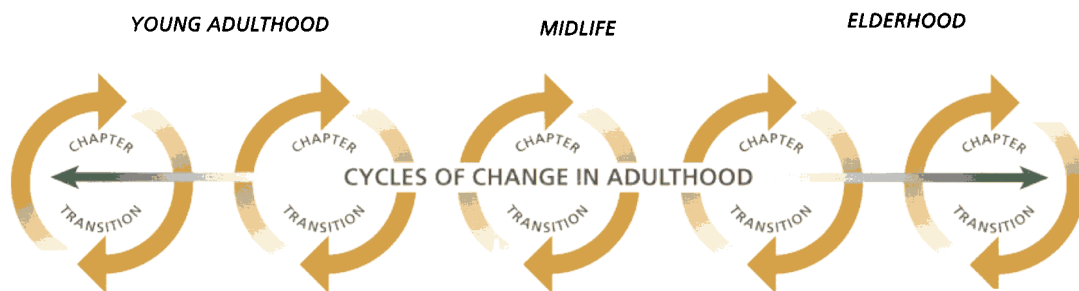
**a) There is still a shortage of talent** and there will be at least through 2010, according to all the census numbers and the BLS. Companies are still desperately seeking experienced and knowledgeable players – including people from outside their industry. The recession and the job market certainly make it more difficult to find these opportunities, but they definitely exist. *You must learn how to find them.*

You must learn the art of job search research and uncover mid size companies, poised for growth. These are the companies that need you and want you and welcome your inquiries and your talent (if you know how to position yourself). The research skills you master out of necessity today will serve you equally well the next time you search, whatever the market conditions are.

**b) Values change and the source of career satisfaction shifts. This is a natural and predictable part of the adult developmental lifecycle.** In other words, even if the economy was hearty and robust, it is very likely that at some point along the steady road of your career, the things that once energized and excited you will begin to lose their appeal.

People once assumed that a career was linear – you picked it when you graduated from college and stayed on the same course until you retired. Maybe there was a blip along the way, but it was still pretty linear.

Occupational psychologists now believe that adults develop in a series of *cycles*. Each cycle is a life chapter, followed by a period of transition and revitalization, and then a new chapter begins.



We cycle through this series over and over again. That is unless we get stuck at the end of a chapter, unable to transition and revitalize. The most common reasons for getting stuck in a no-longer-satisfying life chapter are fear (what will I do if I don't do this anymore?) or denial (I don't really hate what I am doing; I'm just having a bad day, week, month, year.....). How do you keep from getting stuck?

### **3. DON'T FOCUS BACKWARDS – LOOK AHEAD AND REFOCUS ON YOU**

The way to get unstuck and move forward is to *look* forward. But most people do the exact opposite. Clients come to us full of stories about what they did and what they used to do. They can talk for hours about their history. But almost none of them can talk for more than 3 minutes about their vision of their own personal future.

They create resumes that highlight their past and hope that someone reading it will figure out what they should do next. They network like crazy to “get the word out

that they're looking" but they can't say what they are looking *for*. This approach rarely works. **If you cannot clearly imagine your future, no one else will do it for you!**

So we work with people to refocus that energy and create a future vision – a Career-Vision. Not an unrealistic, pie-in-the-sky vision, but a vision that matches their inner identity to the realities of the outer world. Our methodology (The Wenroth Career – Visioning program) is heavily grounded in psychometric analysis, coupled with thorough data interpretation and feedback. This provides an objective perspective on a person's strengths, challenges, motives, values, life-balance and priorities. With the client, we validate and apply those insights to the world of work.

Many people think it is too late to create the kind of life and career that they really want. Well, 20 years from now you'll wish you were as young as you are today and you had a chance to do it all again. So consider it now.

After all, research tells us that there is a *new* middle age. A *second* middle age that stretches from 60 to 80 years of age. We have all that extra time to enjoy and to be hearty! An extra 20 years added on to mid-life before you officially become an elder. Take those 20 years, and subtract them from your current age. What would you do differently, knowing what you know now?

## **4. EVALUATE THE MARKET**

Armed with self-awareness, you must next evaluate the market – learn to explore the world of work as it is today, and the options within it for you. This step requires research. Many people skip it, because they don't know how to do it. You cannot skip this step. Work with someone that can show you the ropes. ***Learn how!***

- ▶ What kinds of industries have the kinds of problems that you want to solve?
- ▶ What are the major and mid-size companies in those industries?
- ▶ What's the title of the position most appropriate for you?
- ▶ What's the title of the person you would report to?
- ▶ Why would this person hire you to solve their problems?
- ▶ What could you do to improve your desirability?
- ▶ What might be a reasonable next job that would increase your chances of getting hired down the road?
- ▶ And finally, your past comes back into play: all that you have done and all that you have learned in your past can highlight your competitive differentiation, even while leveraging those old accomplishments towards a new goal.

## **5. GET HELP. BE SMART!**

Once you have completed your self assessment and market evaluation, you will have job targets. Now the work of actually *finding* the job begins. People that get help find more positions, faster. We partner with The Five O'Clock Club – the very best job search counseling available. It also happens to be the most affordable. This is the place the outplacement professionals go to teach and train their best consultants. On average, people that attend the Five O'Clock Club regularly land jobs or are negotiating offers within ten sessions. But you **MUST** have completed your assessment to move through the process. The Wenroth Group assessments require an average of 5 hours of private coaching.