



Summer is Over: Time To Energize Your Career

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Summer is over. Hopefully you had time to relax with family and friends. Perhaps the ocean breezes inspired you to think about your career and how you might keep it interesting, fulfilling and meaningful. Here are some tips to keep the juices flowing.

Tip 1. Take Inventory—Where are you?

Self-reflection and self-assessment are key to energizing your career. Both are often overlooked. After all, we have very busy lives. Perhaps it seems too time-consuming, self-indulgent, too difficult or even threatening. It is certainly not regularly encouraged or rewarded. It is, however, key to sustaining a meaningful career.

What do *you* value? What motivates *you*? What would *you* like to achieve? How are you showing up? What are your strengths (substantive, interpersonal, management, business development, leadership)? What are you doing that is working? What is getting in your way?

These are some valuable questions to consider. There are on-line resources available to guide you. Your mentor, sponsor, trusted friends and colleagues can be great sounding boards and excellent sources of feedback. A career coach can also provide you with candor and valuable independent guidance and insights. The key is to take some time to think about *you*.

Tip 2: What's Your Vision—Consider Multiple Options

Where do you want to be in 1 year? 2 years? 5 years? Thinking about your future in increments that make sense *for you* is another key step in nourishing a fulfilling career. Consider and explore a number of potential “next step” options. What do you enjoy doing? What do you dislike? Is there a “reach” role to which you aspire? Do you have a role model? You may currently only have a short-term vision and your vision may change over time. The important thing is to think about these questions expansively and regularly.

Tip 3: Create a Strategic Plan with Goals and Action Steps

Having taken inventory and articulated a vision, now is the time to “close the gap” with a “roadmap” of goals and action steps that will propel you towards the next stop in your career. It is likely that you are *setting goals* in other parts of your life. Perhaps you are a runner preparing for your next 5K or 10K. Most of us have financial goals as well as health goals. So why not clear and concise career goals?

Effective goals are SMART: specific, measureable, acceptable, results-oriented and time-bound. They lay out what *you* want to accomplish with specific measureable targets to hold yourself accountable

and allow you to celebrate your successes. They move you towards *your* vision by closing the gap between where you are today and where you want to be.

With each of your goals in mind, define SMART *action steps* you will take to achieve your goals. I like to call these “mini-goals.” Some action steps might include (i) taking specific on-line assessments related to your values and motivators; (ii) scheduling informational interviews; (iii) reaching out to mentors/sponsors/peers; (iv) becoming active in external organizations; (vi) networking; and (v) engaging in pro bono activities.

Tip 4: Consider Potential Obstacles

In defining your goals and action steps, think about potential obstacles and how you will address them. A common obstacle is *time* and *procrastination*. You may have heard that a “dream is a goal without a deadline”. Set dates for accomplishing both your goals and related action steps. Build in time for procrastination and unexpected interruptions. Calendar these dates and find someone to support you and hold you accountable

You may also want to think about whether you can achieve your goals and vision in your current organization. Are there opportunities for you to grow or must you go elsewhere? Should you decide that a change is needed, having a plan will serve as a very useful guide.

Tip 5: Communicate Your Plan—Ask for Help

Let others know about your plan. Identify *who* can help you and seek their guidance. Consider your manager, supervisor, mentor, peers, trusted friends. If they know about your vision and goals, they can help you get assignments and identify, and even pay for valuable training. They can also introduce you to others who can help.

Tip 6: Monitor your progress and flex as needed

Monitor your progress regularly—at least monthly if not more often. Reward yourself for achieving your goals. And remember that your plan is not set in stone. If you need to make adjustments, don’t hesitate to do so.

Concluding Thoughts

Now is a great time to examine your career and envision your future. Focus on yourself—where you are now and where you want to be. Then take action to close the gap and ensure your career remains fulfilling and meaningful *to you*.

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