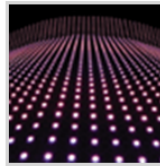


Monday, 22 February 2010

CHANGING CAREERS

The Magazine for Career Changers Everywhere

Career Options? You Choose!



Patricia Wheatley Burt urges you to take control of your destiny and create career success....

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Career Options? You Choose!

Patricia Wheatley Burt urges you to take control of your career destiny!

Apparently the Football Association are considering a 'mercy rule' in youth soccer that would result in games being stopped if a team opens up a nine-goal lead. This is supposedly to prevent young players from 'becoming disillusioned or humiliated whilst playing the beautiful game'. Surely the greater danger is failing to help young people prepare for the competitive world we really live in. No matter how hard we might legislate against failing or bad times, we have to get on and deal with the situation to hopefully turn it into a success.

Over twenty years ago, when starting my own consultancy, I went on a Business Start-up programme on Managing Finance run by a man who had owned seven businesses although six of them went bankrupt! At the time we all laughed about how ludicrous this was – but who better to guide us through lessons learnt than him? We can learn from other peoples' actions but in the end we each have to experience life to build our creativity and resilience to whatever is thrown our way.

Taking control of your destiny

Management teams are coming up with radical approaches to employing staff, not least those that offer options similar perhaps to KPMG, of a 20 – 30% pay cut or unpaid sabbaticals or re-deployment etc., all to avoid redundancies. The question is how do you, as an employee feel about who is in control of your destiny?

- What scope is there for you to offer ideas you may have?
- If you had the choice, what would you chose as a career option now?
- Would you rather suggest the options for your future or have them imposed?
- Should management be the only ones to come up with the ideas?

Are you watching the changing landscape or being part of it?

The options facing all employees – is that you still have choice even if the options seem limited. Essentially the choice is: which employer and which career path. Whilst options

in the past might have been whether to be with employer A or B, today's choice may be limited to what career you can pursue with your existing employer – or what other career you could choose but elsewhere. Sometimes too, we need a kick to make us face up to some niggling thoughts about:

- whether there are skills and talents you should really be using;
- whether you have been doing the same tasks every year, for the past five or ten years, and just not extended yourself;
- how you have always meant to do part time studies to get that MBA, etc.,
- your journey time to work, its complexity; or working hours and the rest of your life

Now, oddly, you do have the chance to consider if your career is going in the direction you really want it to, at the same time as whether you can offer more or different skills to your current employer: making you an even more attractive employee.

Generation X+1: is it you?

Are you a member of Generation X+1, aged between 25 – 40? If you are, you are one of those happy people who have been successful in nearly everything you have turned your hand to. Exams couldn't be failed, you got into University – a good degree and maybe an MA too. Work experience was relatively easily come by, and then your first jobs in roughly the right firm. So here you are, facing a world of uncertainty, perhaps with some heavy financial commitments and thinking: 'Choices?? She must be mad!'

It would be reasonable to hope you have an awareness of how your firm is faring in this economy, and therefore be aware what the Management Team might be focusing on. Rather than sitting waiting to be told what the choices are, you could:

- make it known that you too have ideas and what those are;
- canvass colleagues and create your own think-tank,
- tap into any existing consultative/ representative groups* , or
- speak to your immediate Manager or Mentor to share the ideas

You could look at the firm's structure and consider what alternative jobs, alternative careers, terms and conditions of employment, pay scales, and benefits, etc., as a group you could consider. You might even offer the concept of a Contractual Interregnum or interim contract to cover a short period of 1 – 3 years, which overrides existing contracts of employment, whilst your firm manages itself through this economic strife. There are many ideas – so here are a few more to encourage you:

- unpaid 6 – 12 month sabbaticals or holidays to travel the world
- secondments into the public sector – who are always keen to have private practice expertise in their teams and pass on / share the cost;

- re-locate to overseas offices where there may be undeveloped options;
- alter office hours – so that travel / childcare wouldn't cost as much;
- share desk space – using flexible hours and technology to work from home as well;
- why not job-share, so you can study for another qualification;
- re-train into another sector or specialism, especially if you are relatively new
- re-negotiate terms and conditions of employment, including pay – by team or everyone;
- consider roles / activities that are pro bono and add to the firm's profile
- offer to undertake marketing activities, e.g. call existing or prospective clients, tidy-up the databases, getting to know those clients
- write articles or papers on topics you could research
- get a working group of you to revisit what benefits you all really need and maybe get them re-negotiated

Clearly you, like your colleagues, will have a number of hidden talents and ideas which the firm may never find out about: unless you tell them. Every firm wants to keep its talented, imaginative and commercially minded staff so that when the up-turn comes, the firm is poised to grab the business. By you having a can-do attitude, showing you are a lateral thinker and prepared to speak up – you will also stand out, and so continue to pursue your chosen path.

*Each firm with over 100 staff should have some form of Staff Representative Group.

Patricia Wheatley Burt is a Director and Principal Consultant of Trafalgar - The People Business. For more details of how to develop these ideas and a Radical Thinking Shift please contact Patricia and her team on: +44 (0)20 7565 7547, or email: patricia@trafalgarpeople.com.

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