

(on fear) What's Your Career Fear Factor?



It's funny how coincidences can lead to an idea for the next newsletter. It seemed that everything I read this month dealt with career-related fears. (It is Hallowe'en!)

A strong emotion, fear can incapacitate or spur to action. When it comes to careers, too often I think we let fear stop us dead in our tracks. We fear failure, we fear success — human beings are a complicated bunch!

Fear of Failure

We are afraid of looking foolish, making a mistake, of wasting opportunities, time or money. But without failure there cannot be success. Did you know that the 40 in WD-40 refers to the fact that it took 40 tries to get it right?

Malcolm Gladwell's recent book, *The Outliers* (Mr. Gladwell, who grew up in Elmira, was recently ranked 2nd in a list of global influential business thinkers, see thinkers50.com), explains how every "overnight success" or apparent prodigy actually puts in 10,000 hours in developing his or her gift.

Get out there and start failing: with time you are guaranteed at least progress, if not full-out phenomenal success.

Fear of Success

Success brings its own pressures: to keep the status by maintaining the level of creativity, renown and accomplishment that success demands.

I see it this way: if you redefine success, you reduce the pressure. Rather than striving for a high salary, recognition, title, or whatever your personal success-meter is, strive for contentment. Be happy with what you do on a daily basis. The cool thing is that if you are happy, you are likely working to your strengths; if you are working to your strengths you can hardly help but be successful.

Every one of us has innate talents, strengths, and aptitudes that we are meant to use, that will bring us happiness and a measure of success. If, for example, you have talent as an artist but are working/struggling (read: hating it) in an office, get out of your own way and find a way to make it happen. You may not be rich, but you'll be fulfilled; you may not achieve global recognition, but your art will bring your supporters a great deal of pleasure.

Embrace the Possible

Too often people get stuck in rigid thinking. "I don't have the education that others have, I don't have the money to start, I don't live in the right place" are the oft-heard self-defeating attitudes. I have plenty of clients who do not have the education, but who have reached the pinnacle of their professions. They quite simply did not allow themselves to be held back.

There are endless ways of living and earning your living. Business is predicated on variety and possibility. What's holding you back? Unwilling to let go of your pleasure vehicle and its related cost? Afraid to approach your spouse with an alternate lifestyle? Unsure of living far from family? Ditch the car, talk to your loved ones, make an effort to achieve your "dream job." But don't just "try"; trying doesn't lead to completion—you must DO. You've but one life to live: Live it to the max!

Huge topic. Here are a few links to useful info:

www.positivityblog.com | www.job-hunt.org

www.careershifters.org | Don't miss page 2 ➔

A Few More Thoughts

I was all done writing, and then Jim Forte's newsletter landed in my Inbox.

Mr. Forte is a "thought leader" in employee performance. He adds to the discussion of fear with words from Tom Peters and some of his own.

You Can't Shrink Your Way To Greatness

This is classic Tom Peters wisdom. In fact, no one says it better than he so here goes, "*If your strategy is to lie low, do your job, follow instructions, and hope nobody notices you, (a) nobody will ever notice you, and (b) you are actually increasing the chances of something bad happening. If, on the other hand, you develop a reputation as the person who is always pushing the envelope, challenging the organization to go to the next level, and using your influence to get good stuff done, you've got the world's best job security.*" This is from the chapter (written by Tom Peters), "What, Exactly, Are You Afraid Of," in the great book, *The Big Moo*, edited by Seth Godin.

Today, it is time to **show up, step up and stand out** in the workplace. In a down economy, if you look to hide, **they will find you and downsize you** because you aren't adding great value.

But if you look to visibly make a difference know the needs and direction of the company and add great value, know the needs of customers and respond in an extraordinary way, then there is room for you. You are a contributor. **You are a value builder.**

Show up ready to make a difference. **Step up** to bigger things by working in areas that use your talents and strengths. **Stand out** by contributing true value - value from the company's perspective. Fired Up! employees never shy away, hide or go unnoticed: they are focused on greatness. **Commit today to create and live a "Get Fired Up! Plan."**

And then I thought that I couldn't simply raise the issue of career-fear without providing some practical "to-do" steps.

Practical Steps to Overcoming Fear

1. Examine your fear. The saying "the more you resist, the more it persists" comes to mind. Don't squash it down, trying desperately to ignore it. Explore, at depth, questions such as: What is the worse that could happen? Would I survive if the worse happened? What, really, am I afraid of?
2. Establish small steps. Breaking any big project into manageable bits is how the most complex of projects get done.
3. Re-think failure. Remember the WD-40 story. And somewhere I read that Thomas Edison tried (failed) over 200 times before the light bulb worked. In fact, Edison had many failures that never took off, including an early version of talking motion pictures!
4. Live in the here and now. Don't allow your imagination to race off to potential doom and gloom scenarios. Concentrate on today.
5. Believe in yourself. You are special. Each of us has gifts, strengths, talents - innate abilities in unique combinations and concentrations. Learning about yours, and putting them to good and fruitful use is up to you. Even if it takes you two years to figure it all out, so what? That's two years sooner than if you wait another ten years before you are finally desperate for change.

Career success, although not entirely in our control, certainly won't happen without our efforts.

Part of this month's newsletter topic is spurred by the intense research that I've been conducting as I prepared to submit a Case Study and take an exam towards a new certification. I am now a **Certified Career Strategist**.

I continue to offer expert resumes, cover letters, biographies, project profiles, as well as interview coaching — all with a view to supporting my clients' career goals.

To your career success, Stephanie

p.s. please feel free to share this newsletter with colleagues, friends and family who might benefit from its content.