

Career Development Strategies for a De-Jobbed World **Dave Redekopp & Wendy Fox**

Our clients come to us asking "What should I do?". Helping clients answer this question has typically been the focus of career development practice. Now, with the changes accompanying our economy's shift to the "communication age," we need to encourage our clients to ask another question: "How should I do what I want to do?" The "how" question is rarely asked by our clients because they and we already have a default answer: "By obtaining a full-time job." Why this default answer needs to be re-examined, why the "how" question needs to be asked and some strategies for beginning to answer the "how" question are the main issues addressed by this paper.

For a host of reasons that have been elaborated by authors such as Nuala Beck, Warren Bennis, William Bridges, Peter Drucker and Charles Handy, the competitive, rapidly changing work environment requires workers and the work they do to be:

- able to change quickly (to respond to new needs)
- focused on quality (to retain customers)
- focused on service (to retain customers)
- creative (to find better solutions to problems or to better meet customer needs)
- cost-effective (to be competitive by lowering costs for the customer)
- quick (to get the job done before customer needs change)
- self-initiated (to respond to the customer or a problem immediately)

It is difficult to create these abilities within an organization full of traditional jobs. It is much easier to produce these characteristics when:

- workers are paid only when their services are needed
- workers and the work they do can be switched and/or changed quickly
- workers work on specific projects with specific goals and due dates
- workers communicate with each other in teams rather than upward through a series of supervisors and managers
- workers are given responsibility to get the "job" done

Organizations are therefore moving to alternate ways of getting work done. Although "jobs" will almost certainly always be with us, work is now being packaged in a variety of different ways.

The Work Alternatives

There is little new about the work alternatives described below except that they are becoming increasingly common and increasingly viable options for our clients. As you read the descriptions, notice that they are described in order of the amount of risk involved in taking them on.

Full-Time Employment. Full-time employment is defined as work for a single employer done to a job description for more than 30 hours a week. Usually, full-time employment comes with an expectation of permanence. In Canada, employers are required to make Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance contributions for full-time employees. Full-time employment gives people a feeling of security and predictability.

Part-Time Employment. Part-time work involves working less than 30 hours per week within a specific job for a single employer. As with full-time employment, part-time employment often carries with it the assumption of permanence or durability. People who want part-time positions usually have other non-work interests (e.g., children, hobbies, school) that are important to them.

Multi-Tracking. Multi-tracking occurs when an individual holds more than one job at one time. These jobs can be full-time and/or part-time. A full-time factory worker who "moonlights" by working some evening shifts at a restaurant is a multi-tracker. So is a person who holds a part-time position at a clothing store and a part-time position at a gas station. Multi-tracking allows people to pursue a variety of interests.

Job Sharing. Individuals are job sharing when two or more of them work within a single job description. Usually, a full-time position is shared by two or more people; when one goes home, the other takes over. Job sharing is attractive to those who want some predictability but who do not want to work full-time.

Work Sharing. Work sharing is like job sharing with the exception that a function rather than position is shared. Two or more people agree to get certain tasks done for an employer in a work sharing arrangement. For example, an employer may require an after-sales service system to make sure customers are happy with the products they have purchased. The employer could create positions to do this (e.g., Service Manager, Service Specialist, Quality Inspector), or the employer could have a team of people responsible for making sure that after-sales service takes place. The latter option involves work sharing. Work sharing is chosen by those who want diversity and flexibility in their work.

Talent Pooling. Individuals within a talent pool commit to each other to find work for members of the pool. Typically, informal arrangements among a group of people with common interests result in a talent pool. A group of people get together and agree to be each others' marketer and referral source. For example, consider six people who have lost their oil patch work. Each person has different talents. These six people could form a talent pool in which all of them would seek work for their specific talents and for the talents of others in the pool. People choose talent pools in order to broaden their ability to find meaningful work. Also, talent pools allow individuals to say "yes" to work for which they do have the competence, but for which one of the members of the pool does.

Agent. Agents are well known in the world of movie stars and athletes. They will become better known in other areas of work in the near future. Agents (sometimes called brokers) represent other people's talents or products. They earn their income by taking a fee for linking people with talent to work that needs to be done. People choose to be agents when they enjoy selling and value the use of people's talent.

Contracting. Contract employees are those who work for a pre-set time period. Usually working full-time, these employees move from one contract to the next. The major challenge they face is to avoid having long gaps between contracts. Contracting usually comes with no benefits (e.g., dental, employment insurance), so contractors have to look after their own benefits. Contracting is an option for individuals who have confidence in their abilities and like a variety of work for different organizations in different settings.

Consulting. Consultants work on a number of projects simultaneously. They are like a multi-tracking contractor. Consultants usually work on a number of time-specific and outcome-specific projects, often for a number of different clients, at the same time. For example, researcher who is running a training session for one client, writing a report for another client and analyzing data for another is consulting. Consulting allows for a great deal of variety in one's work life.

Self-Employment. People who develop, market and deliver a service or product are self-employed, if they do not employ others (when they also employ others, they come entrepreneurs). Many of the increasing numbers of home-based businesses are examples of self-employment. The potter who produces and sells work from his or her home is self-employed. Self-employment is a favoured option for people who want to be independent and to be "their own boss."

Entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is a self-employed individual who also employs others. The potter whose operation becomes so large that additional people are needed becomes an entrepreneur as soon as someone else is hired to help out. A

person who buys a franchise operation is also an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is the most risky work alternative because commitments are made to others as well as to oneself. Also, entrepreneurs often invest significant amounts of money to get their operations started. However, entrepreneurs probably have the greatest potential to make money and to control their own destinies.

The growing availability of alternatives to full-time employment and the decreasing availability of full-time employment demands that we help our clients ask and continuously re-answer "How do I want to do what I want to do?". Our clients hear that "there are no jobs out there." It might be useful if they began hearing "there's lots of work out there."

Asking and Answering the "How" Question

This paper cannot address the various ways of helping clients ask and answer the "how" question of work. However, a general approach along with some tips/suggestions is provided.

A General Approach: The 5 P's

Kris Magnusson of the University of Calgary developed a career planning model suitable for answering both the "what" and "how" questions of our clients. It begins with establishing sources of clients' **pride**: situations in which clients felt good about their accomplishments and themselves. By identifying and elaborating on these pride experiences, clients can begin to discover their sources of **passion**: the things that motivate, inspire and drive them. Passion provides energy and motivation; it can be harnessed into productive directions by creating **purpose(s)**. Purpose is targetted passion in which passion finds an outlet in the world of work. In the old days, purpose was found primarily through full-time employment. Now, purpose can be found in a variety of ways if one knows where to look and is aware of the work alternatives. Purpose comes to fruition with **performance**; doing what needs to be done to effectively find and move through work. Career development practitioners have typically been strong in performance issues such as action planning, resumé development and skill training. The new economy will force us to work on new performance issues with our clients, though, particularly relationship-building, proposal writing and marketing. Performance improves with practice, and this eventually leads to **poise**. Poise accompanies the graceful execution of performance; it is performance with confidence and flair. Poise leads to further pride, and the cycle continues through clarified passion, more focused purposes, enhanced performance and further poise.

Notice in Magnusson's model that there is no mention of occupational choice, nor

is there an implicit assumption that purposes will be found through full-time employment. Purpose can be created in a host of ways—through full-time employment, through any of the work alternatives and/or through non-work activities. Purpose is created where needs and opportunities are found.

Tips/Things to Think About

Tapping the Emerging Marketplace. Creating purpose is not a one-shot affair. Purpose and the performance that accompanies it change with economic and personal changes. Creating purpose is not about making an occupational choice; creating purpose is about assembling one's assets to meet a need in a way that fulfils one's passions. The creation of purpose is therefore ongoing and demands that our clients continually keep track of trends, needs and market demands. For example, individuals interested in the energy sector were likely quite excited by the announcements of oil sands projects' expansions in Fort McMurray. In the traditional labour market these announcements would be followed by individuals rushing to Fort McMurray from all over Canada in the quest for full-time jobs. In the new work dynamic, these individuals would find themselves disappointed (which, in fact, is what happened). In the new work world we need to help our clients look at these types of announcements in terms of the needs they generate upstream, sidestream and downstream from the source. For example, instead of rushing to Syncrude for a job, why not go upstream and figure out who Syncrude's suppliers are, where they are and what they need? Or, why not go sidestream and look at how Syncrude's competitors are going to handle this increased competition? Or how about going downstream and checking out the impact of increased production on the entire oil distribution system from Fort McMurray to the rest of the world? A host of needs will emerge from this type of announcement, but they may not be presented in the form of full-time jobs.

Marketing. Everyday is a work search day within many of the work alternatives. Marketing becomes a key performance issue for consultants, contractors, agents and others. Career development practice has not kept up with this shift from job search to work search, from occasional resumé writing to frequent proposal writing or from networking to the establishment of solid reciprocal relationships. There is a significant amount of work to be done to develop tools and processes for our clients that will help them move towards being effective and comfortable with continuous marketing.

Language. Much of our language and conceptions of work keep us and our clients tied to a world that no longer exists. We still emphasize "job search workshops" when we know more than 50% of our clients will not be obtaining "jobs" (in the sense our clients think of them—40 hours/week with benefits) within a few years.

We still spend considerable time teaching résumé writing (which is still important!) without usually thinking about the bigger picture, which is all about "marketing documentation" (of which a résumé is but one important part). We still conceptualize success in employment programs (and why are we still calling them "employment" programs with its implicit reference to full-time employment?) in terms of graduates who obtain full-time employment. We still talk about and teach "employability skills" (which, also, are important) instead of broadening our horizons to the new set of "workability skills." We still allude to "occupational choice" when we know that (a) occupations come and go at a rapid rate and (b) much of the work that needs to be done does not come packaged as an occupation. Our clients may have an easier time facing the rapid and significant changes in the work world if our practice more consistently reflects the true nature of work.

This paper touches only lightly on the emerging world of work and some ways we as practitioners can be helpful within it. The opportunities this work world presents our clients are limitless; however, finding and/or creating these opportunities requires skill, knowledge and attitude sets in which neither we nor our clients fully demonstrate poise (yet!).

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