

JTSCHROEDER CONSULTING, LLC



*Strength-Based Career Counseling & Coaching*

**Career Sustainability Workshop**  
for  
Financial Service Group

July 13, 2010

**Career Sustainability: part of the holistic Personal Sustainability model**

**What's Happening with our Careers?**

**Observations:**

- Individuals will change careers (not jobs) multiple times throughout their lifetime
- Career is commonly considered to be the largest financial asset
- Career is defined as the “totality of work – both paid and unpaid – one does in his/her lifetime.” (National Career Development Association)
- Increasing longevity is extending the duration of careers
- Life-long employment is shifting to project-based involvement or contract/self-employment
- Evidence suggests that career is the most essential of the five elements of wellbeing (career, social, financial, physical and community). People with high career wellbeing are more than *twice* as likely to be thriving in their lives overall. (Rath and Harter, 2010)
- Only 20% of people actually like the activity they engage in each day (Rath and Harter, 2010)

**Essential Tools for Navigating Careers from this point forward...**

1. Openness to a shift in mindset
2. Increased self-awareness
3. Attention to the ever-changing needs of your organization, other organizations, the general marketplace – positioning yourself as part of the solution
4. Focus on resilience, perseverance, sustainability

## Openness to a shift in mindset

- Change is hard, particularly when it forces us to challenge deeply embedded cultural expectations
- Consider these book titles, both written in 1994:
- *We Are All Self-Employed: The New Social Contract for Working in a Changed World*, by Cliff Hakim. The opening quote is, “The biggest mistake you can make is to believe that you work for someone else.” H.Jackson Brown, *The Father’s Book of Wisdom*
- *Job Shift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs*, by William Bridges

More than 16 years ago, Bridges warned that “The old rules are gone. Finished. Disappeared and left no forwarding address.”

In addition, he said that “workers will be wise to think they are in business for themselves and that their tasks have been outsourced to them by the organization.”

The essence of the new mindset is a shift in responsibility...

“Now, security resides in the person rather than the position.” (Bridges, 1994)

In Janine Moon’s 2010 book, *Career Ownership*, she points out the benefits of taking personal responsibility for our careers:

- You stop waiting for someone else to recognize what you have to contribute to the organization
- You no longer feel like a victim of a someone else’s decision
- You intentionally direct the forward motion of your career, embracing your strengths while focused on personal/professional growth

Challenges:

- Your own excuses (“this job will last, I’m irreplaceable, it’s too much work”)
- Charting new territory – there are few role models
- Intimidated by the amount of work – owning your own career is intentional and labor intensive, but the long term rewards are great

## Increased Self-Awareness

“Knowing yourself is at the core of Career Ownership” (Moon, 2010)

Going it on your own:

- Countless Self-help assessment activities are available
- Books: *StrengthsFinder 2.0*; *Career Anchors*; *Career Ownership*; *Authentic Happiness*; *What Color is Your Parachute for Retirement?*
- Websites: [www.queendom.com](http://www.queendom.com) ; [www.myPath.com](http://www.myPath.com)
- Pitfalls to avoid: skipping self-assessment because it seems unnecessary or you have taken previous assessments or you “know” yourself well enough; relying entirely on what a manager or mentor has told you about your strengths; turning to family and friends for advice

Seeking the support of objective professionals:

- When self-assessment activity leads to an overwhelming amount of information but no clarity about how to make it useful
  - When you need help separating your emotions from facts and could benefit from the process of skillful questioning, guided brainstorming, and the development of an action plan monitored by an accountability partner
  - When you are interested in obtaining valid and reliable test results derived from professional administration and interpretation. (such as the MBTI – personality preferences; EQi – emotional intelligence; or CISS – interests and skills)
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## Strengths Exercise

(Adapted from Donald Schutt, Jr., Ph.D – Strength-Based Approach to Career Development Using Appreciative Inquiry)

- Focuses on past successes and your “positive core”
- Identifies your personal best practices, helping you to become more courageous and innovative as you think about your true potential
- Allows you to envision and build a satisfying career through positive and intentional planning

## Building on Your Strengths – Interview Guide

1. Think about a time when you felt most satisfied and energized in your career – a time when you were enjoying yourself and doing great work
2. Choose a partner and interview each other for about 10 minutes.
3. Briefly describe the situation to your interview partner.
  - a. What was it – specifically - that created a sense of happiness and fulfillment?
  - b. Who was involved? What did the person(s) do?
  - c. What did you do that contributed to your own sense of happiness and fulfillment?
  - d. As you think about that time when you felt most happy, what workplace characteristics stand out for you as important or necessary for your happiness and success?
  - e. What else about that time made it meaningful for you?

## **Attention to the ever-changing needs (of your organization, other organizations, the general marketplace) – Positioning yourself as part of the solution**

- Organizations have needs for work to be done even though no “jobs” may be posted.
- Do your research: identify areas of growth, competitors, best customers, marketing strategies, funded projects, financial reports, key players/connectors
- you may need to do lots of digging what will require courage, persistence, and creativity
- access information online: web site, press releases, Google searches, industry and competitor sites
- talk with your managers, leadership, connectors, mentors and cross functional contacts in business development/sales
- Think like an external consultant – find the business area that needs what you have to offer
- Seek out mentors within your organization, profession, gender, gap areas
- After determining how you best align with your organization and identify a career path, create a business case/proposal

## **Focus on resilience, perseverance, sustainability**

“Organizations today operate in such a turbulent environment that no arrangement serves them for very long. What you will need is the ability to bend and not break, to let go readily of the outdated and learn the new, to bounce back quickly from disappointment, to live with high levels of uncertainty, and to find your security from within rather than from outside.”  
(Bridges, 1994)

More recently, at the 2010 University of Wisconsin-Madison graduation ceremony, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan said...

“Rather than telling you about time-honored truths, I want to talk about skillfully managing uncertainty and serendipity as the defining elements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education. It’s not just knowledge and subject mastery: your ability to adapt, be creative and pursue your passion will determine how you fare in the job market.”  
(Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 16, 2010)

## **Courage, Perseverance and Resilience...all contribute to Career Sustainability!**

### **Key Resources:**

*A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink

*The Resilience Factor*, Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte

*The Resiliency Advantage*, Al Siebert

*Perseverance*, Margaret Wheatley

*We Are All Self-Employed: The New Social Contract for Working in a Changed World*, Cliff Hakim.

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*Job Shift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs*, William Bridges  
*StrengthsFinder 2.0*, Tom Rath  
*Career Anchors*, Edgar Schein  
*Career Ownership*, Janine Moon  
*Authentic Happiness*, Martin Seligman  
*What Color is Your Parachute for Retirement?*, Richard Bolles and John Nelson  
*Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer  
*The Opt-Out Revolt*, Lisa Mainiero and Sherry Sullivan  
*Well Being*, Tom Rath and Jim Harter