

STYBEL PEABODY & ASSOCIATES, INC.



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How to Avoid Being a Victim of Change

Consider this scenario:

You are at a social gathering. You meet a stranger who asks, "Tell me about yourself?" Will your first response be?

In a 2017 PSYCHOLOGY TODAY article we wrote called "When Work Is Who I Am," we discussed the emotional vulnerability of professionals who confuse what they do with who they are.

This confusion has profound implications for people who self-define themselves as "heir to the family business," "associate on track to

become partner," "CEO," "Physician," "Attorney," "Professor," or "Spouse of a Successful Leader," etc.

Perhaps you are so close to managing your career, you are too close.

Look at the Dictionary:

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines career as "the pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement especially in public, professional, or business life."

There are two ways career coaches can help you:

(1) be your partner to help you design a program for "consecutive, progressive, achievement."

(2) be your partner to help you structure your response when the pursuit of "consecutive, progressive, achievement" needs to be questioned as a viable goal.

Career coaches exist outside the organizational boundaries of the place where you currently work.

In an earlier PSYCHOLOGY TODAY piece, we wrote that professional lives are on an "assignment cycle" rhythm. People can no longer think that their professional lives are defined as enduring relationships within one organization (2015).

"Consecutive, Progressive Achievement."

During the mid-Twentieth Century Post World War II economic boom, "Take care of your company and your company will take care of you" was a serious statement that owners and employees treated with respect. In the 21st Century, this phrase only as value as an example of how things used to be.

Jobs come and go. Companies come and go.

You are responsible for managing your career. You hire a career coach to provide a second opinion about what you are doing to advance that career. Career coaches can help you with stay/go decisions, job search campaign management, and keeping your network warm.

Campaign Manager for Your Job Search.

Sometimes the best advice might be to leave your current place of employment. Sometimes you are forced to leave.

A job search is a campaign. Most successful campaigns are managed. Are you managing your time well? Are you using all the distribution channels available to you or only the distribution channels that are easy for you? Are you even emotionally suited to be the manager of your job search campaign?

Many employees are used to reporting to someone who keeps their "feet to the fire." A good career consultant becomes your accountability partner.

A career coach helps you focus your campaign. For example:

A partner at a private equity firm was forced out and is now seeking a similar role with another private equity firm. This presents a dilemma. If the partner focuses networking efforts too narrowly, the partner may not receive important information that joining another PE firm is now impossible. On the other hand, if the partner comes across not focused enough, this will create a negative impression in the partner's network. How can the partner network while striking the right balance between being focused yet open to new ideas?

Do the people in your immediate family want to listen to every detail of your job search? Can they listen and not get frightened? Spouses and significant others can be sympathetic. Can they be impartial?

Other than the fact that your services are free, would you hire yourself to be your job search campaign manager?

Keep Your Network Warm.

Below is a story we have heard many times.

The job search has come to a successful conclusion. We meet our client for dinner to toast her new success. The client says she made a profound error in letting her professional network grow cold in her last job and promises never to let that happen again.

A year later we meet to check up on how things are going.

The job is going well. Between job demands and family responsibilities, the client has again allowed her professional network to grow cold.

She knows this is an error but cannot find a way to deal with it.

A career coach can help you keep your networks warm through building a practical association management strategy or an association strategy that links family and professional issues. A career coach can also be used as an outsourced resource to help keep your professional brand warm via consistent social media outreach on LinkedIn.

Time to Rethink “Consecutive, Progressive Achievement.”

The late Harvard Business School Professor Anthony Athos once said that there are three chapters in a professional life: (1) learn the game (2) win the game (3) define the game you wish to play for the next five-ten years.

Some people embrace Chapter Three and wish impartial, objective guidance to help them be successful at it. For example:

The CEO of a tech company that was acquired was expected to assume the role of “serial entrepreneur:” start a new company, raise money, grow the business, and sell it. This CEO wanted to consider something totally different for the next ten years of his professional life but wanted structure to help him figure it out: The

CEO now flies sick children and their parents from rural areas into cities with major pediatric health care facilities. This role allows him to engage in his passion for flying and providing value to others.

Some people are forced into Chapter Three and have no idea how to move into it.

A common example takes place in large professional service firms:

A partner in a law firm reached a mandatory retirement age of 65. He turned in his equity for cash and now must leave the firm. He does not wish to establish a solo legal practice and is not ready to retire. He wants to consider something outside law.

Where to Find Career Coaches.

Are you comfortable talking about your interest in hiring a career coach? If so, talk to people in your network. Employment and labor attorneys often are aware of career coaches in their communities.

Ask the Executive Director of your local professional association for the names of good career coaches who understand your industry/function.

“Google” article about career management. Can you find articles or books that speak to you? Contact the authors and see if they are available to work with you or could refer you to a local professional.

A meaningful professional life is not necessarily the same as competence in the job one is currently employed to do. Defining yourself by your job title carries emotional risks in a world where existing jobs are constantly being destroyed and new jobs are constantly being created. It sometimes makes sense to get an objective, impartial perspective to manage change and not simply be its victim.

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Companies retain Stybel Peabody & Associates, Inc. when it desires "Smooth Leadership Change at the Top."

Core services revolve around (1) Retained Search limited to Board Directors, CEOs, COOs, and CFOs (2) Relationship Management

Consultation at this level and (3) Executive
Outplacement.

Business leaders wishing a free 30-minute
consult can contact:

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