

Is It Time to Reboot Your Career?

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Introduction

We're moving faster than ever. We are juggling many programs and priorities – personal, professional, family, community, etc. We get bored or “burnt out” by the fast pace of our enterprises. We open our eyes and two, three, ten years have passed. We're learning that we need to refresh and reboot our work and priorities more frequently or lose the connection to ourselves entirely. What do we do with our computers? **Ctrl alt del!** We need to do the same thing with our careers – reboot, refresh, reorient, redesign and redirect our energy. Here's *when* and *how!*

You may be in any of the situations below where it's time to reboot your career:

- Your power goes out – little energy;
- You're confused – don't know where you are in your career;
- New program has been installed – you don't “feel right” or
- Screen freezes – you're stuck and can't move.

1. Your Power Goes Out – No Energy

No choice! You need to stop, take a deep breath and ask yourself – what's sapping your energy? Your interest? Your vitality? Once you have a clear picture, sit down with your manager and mentors. Readjust your priorities and increase your energy and sense of fulfillment.

Dean is a lead sales person in a Fortune 1000 Financial Services company. He loves working with people and serving their needs. He's also a great manager. People automatically come to him for consulting and counseling. It's not unusual for his day to start at 6:30 a.m. and finish at 10:30 p.m. – with frequent phone calls any time of the night to support global partners in several time zones. The bounce in his step, his laughter and the light in his eyes were diminishing. He was beginning to question his own abilities. He stopped. Asked the questions below to himself, his manager and team. As a result, he rebooted his career and priorities, giving back management responsibility and going full throttle into sales and business development.

Action:

Take a personal day. Go to your favorite spot for reflection and quiet. Turn off your cell phone, computer and iPod. Take a deep breath and ask yourself each of the questions below. Write your answers on a pad. Be open to your truth – what really shows up in reflection? This will get you back in touch with yourself and what you bring to work and others. You'll know what you need to do to get your energy back.

Questions for reflection:

- What have I accomplished this year?
- What value have I brought to my organization? Can I quantify it in any way?
- What do colleagues and others say about my work?

- What work has brought me the most joy and satisfaction?
- What work bored me or lacked challenge?
- What new projects or activities would “light my fire” over the next few months?
- Where do I want to be in three to five years?
- Is what I’m doing now going to get me there?

Mastery and contribution walk hand-in-hand. They are a tremendous source of energy. When we feel that we’re making contributions in our lives, we have a sense of purpose and meaning. When we’re on a path to mastery, we’re desirous of learning more and more about our profession. Once you’ve answered these questions, talk with others to see how they see you - especially your manager and colleagues. If you need to be on another path, in another job, on another project, engage in conversations with your manager. Build support for your long-term goals and make it happen.

2. Confused – Don’t Know Where You Are in Your Career

You’ve gone to all the right schools. You’ve worked in some of the better organizations. You’ve had steady progressions in responsibility and compensation until recently. You’re an avid learner and a natural learner. You realize you’re not happy and don’t understand why.

*Maria has fifteen years of experience in IT and security in the Defense Industry. She has advanced degrees from top notch schools. She has gradually moved from technical support to project management in a variety of projects. She has worked for several government contractors in the industry. She realizes she has fifteen more years to work and eventually wants to lead a small company or agency. After some career coaching, she realized that finding the “right place” is more important right now than finding the “right position.” To **excel in her profession**, Maria needs to find a place where she can work with some of the best people in the industry to hone her project management skills and build her reputation for leadership. Choosing an organization where she can excel and a manager who is not threatened by her skills is critical for her future. She has to raise the learning bar by choosing those kinds of environments and those kinds of bosses. She’ll find the “right job” once she has the “right place.” Otherwise, she can’t excel at what she does best – leading and managing in a technical community.*

Action:

It’s important to know where you are in your progress toward professional mastery. Read each of the following descriptions and check the ones that best fit your current situation. Then consider the suggested actions beneath each description you marked.

Choosing a profession. You’ve been doing a variety of jobs but haven’t yet thought in terms of choosing a profession and what it takes to become best in class.

- Review your job history. In which professions have you worked? Were some more fulfilling than others?
- Ask several people who know you well what profession they see you working in for the future.
- Determine parameters of your ideal work. What profession is it in?
- Scan websites, professional associations, magazines and want ads to broaden your knowledge of various professions.

Choosing between professions. You've held jobs in several professions and have aptitude for several. You've not yet chosen the one in which you want to excel.

- Reflect on your most satisfying jobs. Which profession or professions were they in?
- Reflect on your major work accomplishments to date. In which profession do they fit?
- Look at the style and personality of people in the different professions in which you've worked. Do you identify more with one style or setting than another?
- Which basic human needs seem most compelling to you? What professions do they suggest?
- In which profession do you see yourself ten years from now?

Positioning yourself in a profession. You have chosen a profession in which you want to excel and build mastery. You're relatively new in the profession – less than seven years.

- Work in an organization that excels in your profession. If you're not in one, research and find organizations that do.
- Identify some of the masters in your profession. This is another way to find organizations that excel in your profession. Talk with colleagues to check your assumptions.
- Do you have a mentor? If not, whom could you ask to be a mentor in this profession?
- Identify five or six trends in your profession. Talk with your mentor and colleagues to understand the implications for your future.
- Join associations in your profession.

Excelling in your profession. You have chosen a profession and mastered the basic practices in a variety of projects. You are in an organization and an industry that need experts in that profession. You have a mentor.

- Identify the "best of the best" in your profession and follow their work.
- Create opportunities to work with masters in your profession.
- Spend time with your professional colleagues discussing problems, new technologies, or new ways of enhancing competencies in your profession.
- Structure projects, presentations, positions, experiments, or research that lets you work at the frontiers of your profession.

Choosing between employment and entrepreneurship. You are an acknowledged master in your profession. You now need to assess which setting will let you learn and contribute the most, as well as fit your changing values and needs.

- Talk with colleagues who are self-employed and see what it takes to make that happen. Clarify the pros and cons in your profession.
- Review your top ten values and decide which avenue is more in keeping with them. Discuss this with your significant other, colleagues, family, and close friends.
- Interview five colleagues who are entrepreneurs and get a list of the pros and cons of this approach from them.
- Evaluate your financial needs and see how many different ways you could meet those needs – being either employed or an entrepreneur.

Decide where you are on the path to professional mastery. When you have a good grasp of where you stand, what you need to do next to reboot your career will become evident. Mastering a profession will give you confidence. You will know your value and worth to society and hiring organizations. You will find it easier to take charge of your own career.

What's the learning? Professions endure. Positions disappear. I coined the phrase – “*Take a job and you'll work for a day. Master a profession or trade and you'll work for a lifetime.*” And I still believe this. Professions are the organizing principle for any organization – large or small. And they are the centerpiece for masterful careers.

3. New Program Installed – Lack of “Fit”

Every leader and manager have their own style, values and vision. Sometimes they are a continuation of the previous leader. Oftentimes, they are not. They were brought in or promoted because there was a need for change. A hope that they could make things better, more profitable, more strategic, more competitive, etc. Employees and customers can be jarred by the new culture that begins to emerge. The organization you joined is no longer the same. What do you do?

Caesar Torres joined a growing consulting firm three years ago. He was an ace of a project manager and an extremely skilled facilitator and executive coach. His skills were valued. He was promised the organization was moving in a new strategic direction that caught his passion and needed his skill sets. One year into his new role, a new president and leadership team was announced. They held onto the strategies of the past and Caesar's role squished backwards to traditional projects. Within five months, he left and started his own consulting firm where his skills, passion and values live.

Not everyone needs to leave their organizations. But feeling a strong “fit” and emotional connection to the mission and strategies is critical for meaning and fulfillment.

Action:

Assess changes in your organization in four areas. You may discover through inquiry that you're going to be just fine. Or, you may gather the data that supports your gut feeling that something's not right here.

Mission/Vision

What is the mission? Has it been well articulated? What are the implications for your role and your work? Does it grab your own passion and heart?

Strategies

What are the new strategic directions or initiatives? Do those create more or fewer opportunities for you? Will your profession and position be central to implementing the strategies? Will this provide more learning and mastery for you?

Style

How would you describe the style of the new leadership?
How does that reinforce or conflict with your own operating style?
Does the style impact you on a day-to-day basis?

Values

What are the articulated values of the new manager/leader?
What are the lived values of the new manager/leader?
What are your primary values?
Is there a “fit” or “misfit” between your values and organization values?

If you are disturbed with the answers to several of the questions above, it's the time to explore other opportunities. Emotional and intellectual “fit” provide energy and opportunities. If you can't be true to yourself, it's time to revive your search for the place that feels right. To understand better the importance of “**career fit**”, visit our website:

http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/clientimpact/impact_archives_feb07.htm.)

4. Screen Freezes – You’re Stuck – Can’t Move

You’ve worked hard for several years. You’re excelling in your profession. You’ve had some great mentors inside and outside of your organization. But you feel like you can’t move. You’ve capped out in your late 30s in your current organization. Now what?

Pam was a recognized trainer and OD professional in a Fortune 100 company. She’d worked in several organizations and was respected and valued by her business partners. The company was going through major change in terms of product lines, global competition and new leadership. Her current manager and the leadership team were unwilling to heed the recommendations from various task forces. She felt like she was beating her head against a wall. She chose to explore options in other organizations and eventually relocated to a younger, more dynamic company.

When you feel stuck, it’s time to look at a variety of career options:



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Lateral – Move across the organization – to a different business unit, product line, department or functional area.

Enrichment – Add more responsibility and skills to your current job to prepare for another profession or project.

Explore – Research other positions inside and outside the organization to find ones that have more options for the future.

Vertical – Move up in another division or organization to open doors.

Realign – Move down – move into another functional area or profession with more options, go back to school, or move out of management back into your original profession.

Relocate – Move out and on – move geographically to another area of the country or move into another organization where you see future possibilities.

Summary

When you feel “blah” about your work, feel conflicted about the leadership, feel stuck or confused, listen. Stop! Put your finger on what is going on. What’s missing? Talk with a good friend or colleague about what you’re sensing. Look for patterns. And, have the courage to reboot, redesign and refresh your career.

Use the tools listed below to help you reboot your career.

Your power goes out – little energy: **Career Initiative® Assessment**
http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/assessments/assess_cia.htm

You're confused – don't know where you are in your career:
Career Risk™ Assessment - The Leading Career Indicators®
http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/assessments/assess_cra.htm

New program has been installed – you don't "feel right":
VALUESSMART™ Assessment - Living Your Values®
http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/assessments/assess_vs.htm

Screen freezes – you're stuck and can't move: **OPTIONSSMART™ Assessment - Aligning Your Aspirations®**
http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/assessments/assess_os.htm

To order, visit www.masteryworks.com or call 800-229-5712.

About the Author — Caela Farren, Ph.D., is President of MasteryWorks, Inc. in Falls Church, VA. She has been a consultant, entrepreneur, and educator for over 30 years. Caela has worked with hundreds of thousands of people worldwide to get them on their mastery path. Caela's practice and company builds strong links between changing trends in industries, changing strategies of organizations and the talents and aspirations of individuals. People who work with her company discover their passion, their mastery path, and bring renewed contribution and high performance to their organizations.

Caela is known internationally for her expertise in developing talent management products and services. Her solutions are user-friendly systems that serve the needs of both organizations and individuals. She is frequently quoted in the media regarding her thoughts and advice on changing careers and work patterns in the nation. Hundreds of organizations have implemented talent management solutions from MasteryWorks, Inc. — consulting, workshops, assessment instruments and web-based talent management portals.

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