Career Conversation

“How do I find a career that I love?”
“I’m just not sure what I’m supposed to be doing with my career.”
“I have been doing the same thing for too long. How do I switch now?”

It’s inevitable that you will have a professional mid-career crisis and some point in your life. Sound depressing? It’s actually not. In fact, if you didn’t have one . . . now that may be depressing. Crises arise in order to alert us that something is amiss and needs to change.

We begin our working lives in our early 20’s and think about retiring anywhere from 30 to 50 years later. Do we really think that one job or one career industry will fulfill us and sustain us for that entire duration?

The research shows our brain needs stimulation in order to grown new brain cells. We need to learn new things, master new challenges and simply to move forward in our professional lives (as in our personal lives).

For the past 30 years, I’ve had “career conversations” with professionals at all ends of the spectrum. During this time, certain patterns have emerged which led me to create a method for career change. It’s 3 simple steps; and it works. It doesn’t require voluminous reading, or a huge amount of work. It does, however, require you to do some work on getting to know yourself, since you are the **PRODUCT** that must (in effect) be **MARKETED** correctly in order to **CLOSE** the **TRANSACTION** which results in sealing the deal: your next job. Those were the steps. Simple? Easy? Common sense, right? Nevertheless, elusive to most. Here comes the tutorial:

**Step 1: PRODUCT**

Your value to an organization is your worth, and why they will hire you and pay you. It isn’t personal; it’s business. In order to understand your value, it is imperative to understand your skills, your strengths as well as your weaknesses, the type of environment you excel in, how you derail when stressed, and how you flourish when supported. What you bring to an organization that no one else does. **What problem you are helping to solve.** (Read that last sentence a few times). This first step is a building block for the rest. Most do not objectively know their weaknesses. Do you take up too much oxygen in a meeting? Too little? Leave an interviewer with a strong desire to have you join the firm? Resume/References in top shape? Your credentials in order? No holes in the product are key.

**Step 2: MARKET**

Where is your product needed the most? By whom? What challenge are you helping to solve? Great candidates often wait at the bottom of resume piles and do not get return emails if they haven’t created a market for themselves by understanding
what they bring, and who needs them at this particular time in the market. Steve Jobs figured out that people were disconnected; his products simply allowed and made it simple (and cool) to connect. He fixed an underlying problem. Ask yourself: Where am I most needed? What problem do my skills naturally help to solve? Where do these problems exist? You are reverse engineering your own job search. Most simply show up with their resumes and expect the interviewer to know what to do with them. It seldom works. Take the bull by the horns and tell them what to do with you. Make their job easier. As a recruiter for 23 years, this is a strategy that creates hires.

Step 3: **CLOSE the TRANSACTION**

The natural organizational tendency is not to make a decision unless it is a necessary one. You must make yourself necessary. Creating necessity requires understanding the organizational culture and challenges. What does the firm need that you can help to provide? No open search exists without management approving the need. Think one step ahead and understand your value so that you can be in a position to bridge the gap if necessary. Creating closure involves creating a sense of emotional and professional affinity around your candidacy. You may be brilliant; but if no one knows what to do with you – or if they simply don’t truly want to work with you, it makes little difference. Compensation will not be an obstacle if you understand your value, and if the organization is compelled to hire you.