



Who Are You? by Ed Maier

In the last newsletter, I wrote about the job or career transition process. Since that time I have heard from a number of people in the midst of their own process. Many of them struggle with the question of what they want to do next. Do they want the same type of job as before? Do they want the same type of organization—public corporation, private company, not-for-profit, social or community service agency?

Know Yourself. I call this the “know yourself” phase. As you manage your own process, I recommend you take time to define who you are, who you want to be and how you want to get there. This may be the right time for you to take some risk and change careers or entertain that entrepreneurial dream. Or, it may help you solidify your plan to stay in the career you have chosen. In either case, you should allot some time to answer your own questions about where you are and where you are going.

What Stage Are You In? Like any other process, this one has stages too. They have often been described as: shock, depression and/or physical distress, anger, panic, acceptance and rebuilding. And you don’t move through them in a linear fashion. Just as you move from one to the other, an event can occur that throws you back to an earlier stage. I describe each of these stages briefly as follows:

- Shock – You feel like a truck hit you. You may be frozen in time or feel like everything is moving in slow motion.
- Depression/distress – You don’t want to do much. You don’t want to face those around you. You might feel embarrassed. Worse yet, you might feel some physical problems—stomach distress, insomnia, headaches, etc. If the degree of this stage prevents you from acting on your transition, you should seek professional assistance from your counselor, psychologist or doctor.
- Anger – You’re mad—at the boss, at the company, at your co-workers, at yourself, your family and friends.
- Panic – You’re worried that you will not be able to replace the income level or job experience or position that you had in the past.
- Acceptance – Reality sets in and you recognize it is up to you to get on with things.
- Rebuilding – You start the real part of your search process. You are recommitted to finding the next opportunity or career.

Each of us moves back and forth through these stages at our own pace. The important point is that if you are stuck in one you should ask others for help to get out. You will be amazed at the resources you have to help you – friends, family, clergy, mentors, coaches – but you need to seek them out.

Manage Your Emotions – As you experience these stages and your own search process, you will experience a variety of emotions. Recognize this simple truth. The events that occur and the people you meet along the way don’t trigger your emotions. You do. You are the one in control. You give others permission to impact your emotions.

Your Transition Process – Once you have dealt with the truly emotional stages and enter the “acceptance” and “rebuilding” stages, create your own transition process. The process I use is simple – Assess, Plan, Execute. In this article, we will focus on the “Assess” stage. In this stage, you assess the various factors that are important to you, but they should at least include the following:

- Your economics and timeline. How much do you have and how much do you need to carry you through to your next position? Decide if you need to supplement your income while you are searching, or if budgeting and controlling expenditures are sufficient. Create a budget and eliminate or significantly reduce non-essentials.
- Determine, with cushion, how much time you have and identify support opportunities, if any.
- Identify your personal drivers – values, motivators, interests, skills, strengths, weaknesses, energizers, behavior style, hobbies, etc. What is important to you? What makes you want to get up and go to work each day? For example, if a recruiter asked you what values were important to you, how would you answer the question? You can have a great response to a question like that if you take some time to think about it. The same goes for other drivers. Ask yourself some of these questions and write down your answers.
 - What skills do you have? For example, what are the five most important skills you bring to the table? How did they help you succeed in the past? What skills are you lacking to do the job or enter the career you wish? If there are gaps, what will you do to fill them?
 - What are your strengths and weaknesses? What strengths do you have to exercise those skills? What are your weaknesses and how will you deal with them?
 - What are your hobbies? What do you like doing? What do you dislike doing? What do you have fun doing? As long as you are taking time to do a self-assessment, why not consider the things in your life that you enjoy—the things that bring joy to your life. Can you incorporate this in your thinking about your career or job?
- What were your past experiences and what you have learned about yourself from them? What has worked for you and what has not worked for you?
- Summarize these thoughts. Write them down. Put them on a white board. Create a spreadsheet. Treat this as if you were analyzing a problem at work. Use your own problem-solving process. Look at these ideas, think about them and see what patterns form. Share your thoughts with others close to you and ask what patterns they see.

Use this data to formulate your ideas on careers, communities, organizations, jobs, etc. that are a fit.

Other assessment ideas include:

- Your behavior style.
 - Do you know what it is and how it has helped or hindered you in your past jobs? There are an almost infinite number of behavioral assessment tools in the market place. Before you spend the money, think about any you have taken in the past and refer to them. If you wish to go through some form of assessment, talk to someone qualified to administer assessments. They can help you decide what it is about your behavior that you want to assess.
 - How do others see your behavior? How do you know? Have you asked your relatives, friends, mentors, counselors, former co-workers, clergy, coaches and anyone else who knows you? How does what they say compare to how you see yourself?
- Your own career assessment.
 - What career do you desire? Is it industry-specific, functional-specific, geographic-specific?
 - Where are you in relation to your career? Are you making your career or is your career making you? Are you in a succession of jobs with little or no focus on a career?
 - What career paths interest you? How can you transfer your skills and experience?
 - Should you take a career assessment to help you find a direction?



- How does the self-assessment you have performed align with the career you choose?
- How do your past performance evaluations align with the career you choose?

Summary. Your assessment should consider as many of these things and anything else that is important to your future. Take the time to do it. It won't take long because it is, after all, all about you. Once you can answer the question (Who Are You?), you will be better-positioned to build your plan and execute it successfully.

As always, I am interested in your thoughts on these articles. Feel free to contact me at Ed@ThinkStraightTalkStraight.com with your ideas, comments or questions.