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Quarterly Newsletter

Learning to Exhale: Bringing All of Yourself to Work

New Ways to Align Your Profession with You

By Patricia D. Smith and Mark Shepard

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A short while ago, when the U.S. and global economies sat on firmer ground, books and feature stories on how to reinvent your career abounded. Maybe you'd begun to admit you craved more meaning in your workday. It was draining to shut down your true spirit for 40 – 60 hours a week to earn a good wage. Now, your workday – or your job search – may be plagued with anxiety over what lies ahead.

Against all logic, this is the time to think creatively. If you suddenly can't afford to retire, or you don't dare quit your job to launch your dream career, this could be your cue to reinvent yourself at your workplace. If, in fact, you're now panicked to find yourself in a job search, this is your chance to think imaginatively about earning your income.

Take Michael D. Lenihan, for example. Now Senior Vice President in corporate banking services at a nationally known bank, Mike took time during a job transition to explore his love of art. He signed up to study with a master oil painter and began wowing his wife and children with richly colored seascapes. He went on to land his current bank post, an intensely demanding job. But he keeps on painting, as art is core to his life.

Then there's Susan Moriconi. Until recently, Susan was Vice President for Human Resources for Boston Scientific's Western region. "I was racing around between work and home," she recalls. Two years ago, everything changed. "My responsibilities shifted under a company re-organization, my husband was switching jobs, and we were camped in an apartment while carpenters remodeled our house. Then we had a family tragedy with my daughter's death." This trauma brought Susan to a halt. After deep reflection, she decided to return to her same job, where she would remain two more years.

Last summer, Susan became Vice President for Human Resources of the Institute for One World Health, which addresses childhood disease in developing countries. "I could have left Boston Scientific two years before, but I wasn't ready. Instead, I took time to gain clarity, became Vice President for Communications and led a number of vital initiatives." With support from her employer, Susan prepared for her next life chapter, arranged to mentor her successors, and departed on a positive note. "I'm at peace now in a way I've never been before," she marvels. "I'm more confident to be patient and weigh when to pursue a goal aggressively and when to let things unfold a bit."

Stewart Friedman applauds this paradigm. In his article *Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life*, *Harvard Business Review*, April 2008, he observes how traditional thinking pits your job against the rest of your life. Discover new ways to fit the various parts of yourself together, he says, and you'll feel better, perform better and enjoy greater personal harmony.

New Directions, a career/life consulting firm in Boston, has helped

executives in transition chart exhilarating new terrain as entrepreneurs, humanitarian champions, performing artists, personal consultants, and paid board directors. Some take their “life portfolio” roadmap with them to their next full-time job; some launch new careers; and others design new lifestyles that combine part-time income, creative projects, family time, and passion for helping others.

Choosing Your Own Way

Do your choices match who you are? *To change what you do, you must change how you think.* Consider:

1) Your Team

- Hand pick your personal “board of advisors” and convene regularly. Ask close friends, family, or colleagues to reflect back how they perceive you. Study patterns and themes.
- Meet with a mentor or career counselor as your sounding board.

2) Your Life Portfolio: How Do You Spend It?

Maybe you’ve mapped out a financial portfolio for allocating your money. Now you can design your own “life portfolio.”

- Diagram your current allocation of time. What percentage do you devote to your profession, family/leisure, spirituality, health, giving back? What needs to shift?

3) Your Story

- In telling your life story, when are you most animated? Describe activities that light up your spirit.
- Recollect. What pastimes did you love in high school or as a child?

4) The Power of Reflection

- Find a quiet, relaxing location, free of time pressures.
- Write, paint, or play an instrument so your subconscious can surface. Recall Zen moments when you lost track of time. What were you doing?
- Notice what draws you – books, ideas. People you admire – what do they do?

5) Action for the Love of It

- Quit an activity that drains you. Begin one that fulfills you.
- Trust your instincts. Experiment . . .

Persist

Your life is priceless. If you persevere, you can re-craft your workday to spend more time on what inspires you. All around you are people with their own dreams and convictions. Share your vision with the right confidants, and you’ll find kindred souls along the way. You are worth it.

Patricia D. Smith is Senior Vice President and Mark Shepard is Senior Consultant for **New Directions, The Life Portfolio** Company on Long Wharf in Boston. *New Directions* has helped over 2,000 executives and

professionals land new full-time jobs, launch new careers, discover part-time income opportunities, or design meaningful lives post-career. To learn more, please call 617-523-7775 or visit www.newdirections.com.

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