

Work Daze: Time for a change

by *Bob_Goldman*

Here's a radical idea - instead of marinating your brain in the same old miserable job and complaining constantly, why not recycle your employer and start enjoying your work instead of hating it?

I know. It's tough to make a change when you're really good at something. Let's face it; you are really good at whining. In fact, if whining and moaning were Olympic events, you'd win a gold medal (but you wouldn't enjoy it, because it's so darn heavy hanging on your neck.) But just in case the arrival of a new year has got you all fired up about firing your boss, a recent column in *The Wall Street Journal* may give you pause.

"People often dream about changing careers," reports reporter Erin White, "But essential change takes a lot of work, and it may require additional schooling or intensive networking. Many people lack the stamina."

Putting aside the discouraging words about your stamina - obviously, reporter White never saw you gobble your way through a tray of doughnuts - comments by noted career coaches echo her conclusion.

"(Career changers) invariably think it will take much less time than it really does," says Nella Barkley. "A profound career change usually takes years."

If you feel like a long prison sentence has just been handed down, join the club. Those of us in the Instant Gratification Generation do not want to wait years to start our thrilling, exciting, lucrative, rewarding new career. Unfortunately, change does take time. You may have to go back to school to learn a new skill, like working. And even those of us who are still capable of changing jobs may need an intensive bout of plastic surgery to help our middle-aged bodies catch up with our teenaged psyches.

"Stabilization" is the career coach's prescription for the first order of business for career changers. Make up with your co-workers. Significantly increase the effort you put into kissing up to your supervisors. You don't want your current boss to pull the employment rug out from under you before you can hop, skip and jump to your new, plush pile, wall-to-wall career.

In the *Journal* article, we are treated to a dramatic description of a career changer who radically revised his work life, transitioning from a boring corporate job to become a nurse. In other words, his change involved changing bedpans. But career changers do not have to throw out the baby with the bedpan. Another case history chronicles a commercial real estate agent who utilized the skills he developed hustling office complexes to form a new business teaching other professionals how to reduce their facility-related expenses.

While it is difficult to understand how anyone in their right mind could leave the thrilling world of commercial real estate, even for a glamorous career in facilities management, I do think it makes sense to inventory your current skills. This way, you can determine which of your many abilities could form the basis of a new career. For example, your talent for zoning out on your Aeron chair for hours at a time and still managing to look busy could easily qualify you for a position in the rapidly booming career of flagpole sitter.

Or consider your genius for dodging responsibility and blaming others for your failures. Sounds to me like you have all the skills required for a successful career as a politician (though, personally, I'd rather change bedpans.)

Now that you are totally psyched about a new career, I have to remind you that this is the month of January and no one is hiring. Right? Wrong! According to a Perri Capell column in the same issue of the same newspaper, the idea that winter is a bad time to look for a good job is a myth. Managers want to use their annual budget for fear of losing it, which increases the chances of hiring losers like thee and me.

Once you've had an interview with your new employer, Capell suggests you call the next day with something personal about the person you can use as an "icebreaker."

"It was terrific to meet you," is an effective way to start the ice-breaking process. "Just what exactly did you do to get yourself on the sex offender database?"

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