

ADMIN ADVANTAGE

The Exclusive Online Magazine for Administrative Professionals

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Personal Branding: A Complete Manual



FEATURES:

Dealing With Gaps in Employment When Applying For Jobs
Event Planning Tips for Fun and Stress-Free Office Parties
What to Do When You're Stuck in a Career Rut

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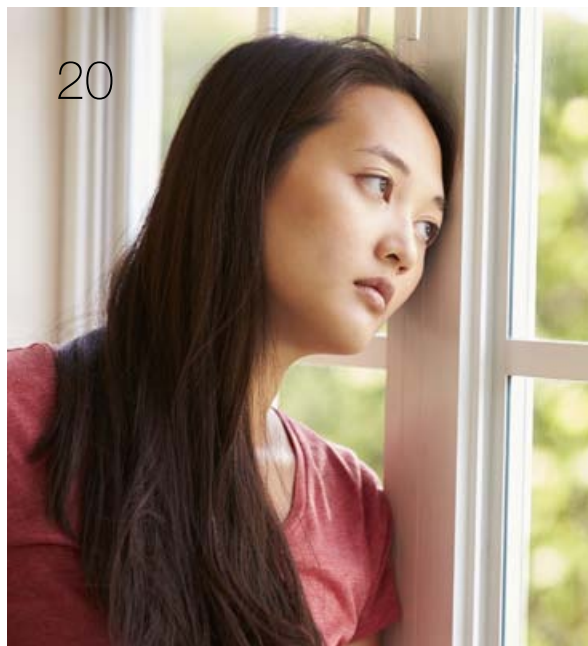
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Dealing With Gaps in Employment When Applying For Jobs

by Steven Simon, Ph.D.

If you are someone who's been out of work for a long time now or in the past, you know the concerns about getting interviews for a new job. Even when you do get interviews, there's the anxiety about explaining periods of unemployment that could prevent you from getting the job. Fortunately, you're not alone! Coping with gaps in employment is one of the most common issues of those seeking a new job. In fact, in reviewing over 10,000 employment histories, I've found it more common to find short and/or long gaps than not. ►►

Gaps in employment do not necessarily mean an employer will eliminate you from consideration. Employers are usually most concerned with filling jobs with the most qualified applicant. However, if someone has gaps in their job history, that may raise a flag about why, or concerns about implications for attendance, performance, longevity, or other workplace problems. For example, as an employer I always worry about anything that could mean a “high maintenance” employee which is time-consuming and expensive for the organization. On the other hand, as both an employer and a professional career counselor, I know those concerns can often be proactively and successfully addressed by an applicant both in the resume and in any interviews that follow.

Typical gap issues that can be acceptably explained are inability to find a new job after a layoff, need to take time out to care for a sick relative, taking years off to raise children, leaving a job to find something more satisfying, or an unsuccessful attempt at starting a business. If the issues are serious or high risk, such as frequent job losses due to inability to do the job or adjust to normal work demands, chronic psychiatric illness, substance abuse, alcohol dependence, or incarceration for a felony, the impact on a traditional job search becomes more significant. In those cases, the job search will likely take longer or may show better results by enlisting the help of a public or non-profit agency, or private rehabilitation counselor who can help with job

adjustment issues and personally find a willing employer.

For most people who have employment gaps, honesty, with an emphasis on strengths, skills, and positive explanations is a good way to approach the employment search. There is really no sense in trying to lie or overly exaggerate. Most employers will eventually find out and your credibility will be ruined, not to mention the possibility of getting fired later for lying if you should get a job.

When writing your resume, a functional format can deal with gaps by placing the focus on your strengths in terms of experience, skills, and achievements. For example, the key structural parts might be your Job Objective, Experience, and Employment. Under Experience, there might be three functional categories such as Customer Service, Sales, and Administration. Under each functional category describe the major tasks you have performed, special achievements, and any related special skills you have. In the Employment section separately list employers, position held, and dates.

With regard to dates of employment, if you have one or more short gaps, you can list years rather than specific dates. For example, if you worked January, 2011 - October, 2012, then did not work again until March, 2013, you could use a yearly format. For the first job you would use 2011-2012 as the dates of employment and 2013 as the


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date for the second job. If you use that format, be consistent for all your jobs. Any gaps or overlaps within those years can then be explained in an interview if it comes up. If you have longer gaps or gaps that don't fit a continuous work history using the yearly format, you can include the dates in the yearly format under Employment, but give a

short, concise explanation of the gap, e.g., "2007-2008 - was caring for my elderly, ill parents". You could also elaborate further in the cover letter. If the reason for the gap is due to something that could be viewed with a negative stereotype such as criminal behavior or psychiatric hospitalization, then use a statement in the resume such as "will explain in interview" or "see explanation in cover letter". If it is something that can best be explained positively in an interview, then use the "will explain in interview" option in the resume rather than take the greater risk of pre-interview elimination because of too much elaboration in the cover letter. If the gaps are short and in the distant past, for example, over 10 years ago followed by continuous employment, there is usually no need to explain in the resume or cover letter.

For the interview, plan and practice in advance to answer questions about employment gaps. This is when employers will have the best opportunity to personally assess your credibility and honesty. So in explaining your employment gaps you will likely need to walk a line of giving an honest version of the gap presented in a manner

that seems reasonable to the interviewer, while showing that what you did during the gap either enhances your attractiveness for the job, or at the very least is not a barrier. Whether the reasons for the gap are easy to explain or not, discuss them in the context of any positives that have resulted from that period. Include any part-time work or volunteer activities, community service, training courses and workshops you attended. This shows that you were active, enhancing your skills, and doing constructive activity.

In summary, when it comes to dealing with employment gaps, the key concept is to explain honestly in a positive context while mostly stressing the assets that you can bring to the job and organization. Planning well for this will enhance your credibility during the interview and the probability of overcoming any negative impacts of past unemployment. 

Dr. Simon provides career assistance to women and men in mid and late career, periods when many workers are looking to make changes. Gaps in employment are often an issue of concern in locating a new job particularly when one has experienced a layoff or other long period of unemployment. If you are experiencing this situation or other career issues visit us at <http://www.hsoutcomes.com> for a free consultation.

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Event Planning Tips for Fun and Stress-Free Office Parties

by Robert Hosking, OfficeTeam

In many offices, the designated or unofficial go-to person for coordinating birthday celebrations, company picnics and baby showers is the administrative professional. Whether you dread or enjoy planning office parties, you should tackle this task as you do with all your other tasks: with competence, professionalism and panache. Here are some tips to help you get the party started. ►►

1. Assemble a team.

You're surrounded by smart and capable professionals, so there's no need to go it alone. Ask a few colleagues to help out. The more tasks you can delegate to a planning committee, the less stress you'll feel and the more fun the event will be. Besides planning and setting up for the party, you'll also have people to help you tear down and clean up afterward.

2. Size it up.

Before your team dives into event planning, get a feel for the scope. Approximately how many people will be attending? Will the invite list include just employees, or are family members welcome? How about remote and contract workers? Once you have a ballpark figure, you can start considering venues.

3. Decide where.

Where you stage office parties is a key consideration. For monthly birthday celebrations, the break room is ideal, as staff can pop in for a quick slice of cake and get back to work. A nearby park with grills, picnic tables and a covered pavilion is the perfect spot for a laid-back company barbeque. A higher-end restaurant offers a more formal yet celebratory setting appropriate for saying good-bye to a senior colleague.

4. Say when.

Choose a day and time that maximizes turnout. To celebrate employees with upcoming birthdays, babies or work anniversaries, start with them when considering dates. When there are many guests of honor, use a meeting scheduler like Doodle (<http://doodle.com/>) to simplify event planning. If you want senior executives to attend, check their calendars as well. The best time for smaller celebrations, like monthly birthday bashes, is early afternoon. That way the staff can enjoy their lunch hour and have their cake, too!

For larger events like all-company office parties, set the time far in advance and send out save-the-date emails. Again, because you'll want senior management in attendance, coordinate dates with their executive assistants.

5. Hire experts when necessary.

You're a busy office professional, so there's no need to feel guilty about outsourcing certain

aspects of event planning. The bigger the party, the more outside help you'll need. For example, if you're tasked with organizing a picnic for 500 people, definitely spend the extra money and hire specialists for food and drinks, audiovisual needs, decorations and logistics.

6. Figure out the financing.

So, how will you pay for everything? Ask the manager who placed you on party duty what kind of budget you'll be working with. Celebrating big milestones, such as a company anniversary party, will likely be bankrolled by your organization. Smaller events like a staff birthday, however, may require soliciting donations from fellow employees.

As awkward as it can be to ask colleagues for money, the good news is that most may not mind pitching in. According to a recent OfficeTeam survey (<http://officeteam.rhi.mediaroom.com/2015-05-14-Staff-Celebrations-Come-At-A-Cost-To-Workers>), 76 percent of respondents said they're fine with chipping in for office parties, especially if it's not too often.

7. Solicit donations wisely.

It's best if the office has a party fund. But if there isn't one, or if the company doesn't cover all the expenses, know how to ask for money. Here are some tips:

- **Not everyone has to chip in, especially if you work for a large company. For birthday parties, solicit**

WORKSMART

funds just from the staff members who know the honoree and are likely to show up.

- **Don't make demands.** As with attendance, donations should be voluntary. Make the contribution process as anonymous as possible so no one will feel bad if they can't donate.
- **Don't over-do it.** More than half (54 percent) of senior managers responding to the above survey said employees are asked to contribute money for office celebrations at least once a year. But at a certain point, solicitations get old. To limit how often workers are asked to donate, consider combining multiple occasions into monthly or quarterly events.

8. Create memorable invitations.


To generate excitement and buzz, come up with creative ways to invite coworkers to office parties. For a company picnic, try invitations taped to Frisbees. Digital invites are a fun and easy way to catch employees' attention, get the event on their calendar and collect RSVPs. Log on to Evite, Punchbowl or Paperless Post for a large selection of free invitation options.

9. Come up with a crowd-pleasing menu.

Now on to what really matters: the food! The size and scope of the event determine what will be served. Larger events should be catered, of course, but a potluck might just be the thing for small staff gatherings. (In those cases, you might ask if the company can foot the bill for drinks and a celebratory cake or another dessert.) Whenever possible, include vegetarian and gluten-free options.

10. Entertain and amuse.

For larger office parties and all-company events, you'll want to have more than just food, drinks and a few decorations. For an evening social gathering, think about musicians or a deejay. The holiday party could be more fun with karaoke or a video game station. Liven up family-oriented company picnics with a face painter, balloon artist, bouncy house, scavenger hunt and lawn games. See what your budget will allow, and go from there.

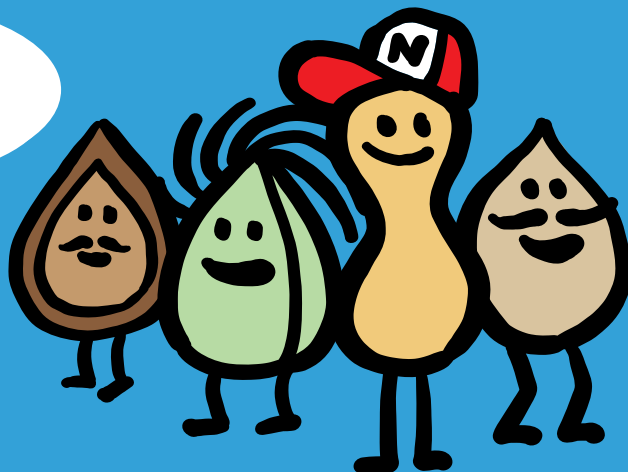
Event planning might feel overwhelming at first. After all, you'll play a large role in whether or not people have a good time. But with a can-do attitude, plenty of planning and a little help from your work friends, you'll more than just get by. You'll pull off memorable office parties and reap kudos from your boss and colleagues. 

Robert Hosking is executive director of OfficeTeam, the nation's leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled administrative and office support professionals. OfficeTeam has more than 300 locations worldwide and offers online job search services at www.officeteam.com. Connect with us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest and the OfficeTeam blog.

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Personal Branding: A Complete Manual

by Lungisa Songqishe



One thing for sure, we all have a personal brand. You have a personal brand and you have been sharing this brand with everyone that you have ever come in contact with. The way you choose to portray yourself is your personal brand. Now, the question is do you agree with this brand? Is it a true representation of who you are? »

WHAT IS A BRAND? ▼

Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room" - Jeff Bezos, Founder of Amazon

Actually a brand is absolutely anything, the mere fact that you know that one thing is not the other, is branding. Therefore a brand is a name, an idea, design, symbols, attributes, reputation and quality that differentiate one feature from another. That is why Apple's identity is different from Samsung's, even though they sell, essentially, the same idea. Same ideas, but different methods of presenting them. That's what makes the each one unique.

WHAT ABOUT PERSONAL BRANDING? ▼

"All of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You." - Tom Peters

It is the same concept, the only difference is that it is now on a personal scale. Your personal name is your brand name. You look different from everyone else, therefore your appearance is your brand design. You have different parents, fingerprints, values, personality, voice, qualities, perception and elements than everyone else. Therefore, you are unique.

This is what personal branding is about, being your original authentic self and presenting yourself as such. You do not see Apple and Samsung showcasing their brands in a similar manner, even though they are essentially selling the same idea.

You too might have the same qualifications, experience and you might even have gone to the same learning institution as the candidate you are competing for the job with. Who then gets the job? It is all up to your personal brand.

"Personal branding is about managing your name - even if you don't own a business - in a world of misinformation, disinformation, and semi-permanent Google records. Going on a date? Chances are that your "blind" date has Googled your name. Going to a job interview? Ditto." - Tim Ferriss

Why is a great personal brand important for your career?

Top tips:

CVs or resumes are no longer enough. In fact, I predict that in the years to come, resumes, as we know them today will cease to exist.

Be consistent in the manner you sell your brand. Showcase your talent and become a leader in your area of expertise.

Sell your unique pro**MISE**.

Communicate your true values, principles, ethics and integrity effectively and consistently.

Focusing on these strategies will help you get, not just any job, but a job that is best suited for you. How is that? Because the manner in which you communicate your brand is specific and unique to

TRAINING

you. And you might have the exact qualifications with your job competitor, however your attributes would be different. This way, you are not a duplicate of another, as that can be viewed as boring and predictable. Furthermore, this strategy allows you to attract the right employer that appreciates and values your brand promise.

So what would make your brand stand-out? What makes you different from anyone else? And why is it crucial to build your personal brand? This guide will help you build an authentic and marketable personal brand. Listed below are the tips to help you be unique in the face of competition.

LOOKING AT YOUR STRENGTHS ▼

This is an important factor in personal branding. It is not an idea only centred on your own perceptions, but also of those who know you well.

Those with a solid personal brand, know who they are and what they want in life. In fact, they are crystal clear on that. This is where you get to understand and describe your unique selling points. In order to help you with this important task, I have compiled several questions for you to help keep you focus on identifying your true strengths:

- 1. What was/were the highlight/s of my career, and why am I so proud of these moments?**
- 2. What was the most fulfilling task or project I have ever worked on, and why was it fulfilling?**
- 3. What role do I always play in group tasks, and how**

do others in the group view me?

4. How do I overcome the most challenging obstacles?

What tools do I use?

5. What do I enjoy doing the most (business or leisure)

6. If I were to talk to someone about the subject that I enjoy the most, what would it be?

7. If I were to accomplish something of great significance to me, and there would be no obstacles of any kind to stand in your way, what would it be?

8. Now, try to think of 10 one-word descriptions of your strengths e.g. creative, compassionate and so on

9. Choose people who know you, your friends, family and colleagues and ask them to each give you their insight of what your strengths are. After doing that compare your lists with theirs. Share your list with them and see if they perceive you the same way as you view yourself.

“Emphasize your strengths on your CV, in your cover letters and in your interviews. It may sound obvious, but you’d be surprised how many people simply list everything they’ve ever done. Convey your passion and link your strengths to measure results. Employers and interviewers love concrete data” - Marcus Buckingham

Now that you know what your strengths are, use them. Utilize them as part of your strategic plan in your daily activities as well as with prospective employers. Let the right target audience know these gifts. Communicate them effectively using every relevant resource available to you. You can use your CV to highlight your strengths, online profiles and you must unquestionably have a

personal website as your digital CV. Just remember your values and ethics when communicating to your audience. This will set you apart.

KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS ▼

We all have weaknesses, but it is not always easy to acknowledge them. It is in your best interest to be completely honest with yourself about what your limitations are or you will put yourself on the spot for major disappointments. Remember that a weakness is anything from being utterly uninterested about anything in life to having limited skills to do anything of interest.

“My attitude is that if you push me towards something that you think is a weakness, then I will turn that perceived weakness into strength” - Michael Jordan

Let's help you identify these weaknesses:

- 1. Which aspects of my career/ education that I like the least, and why?**
- 2. Am I someone who believes completely that I deserve more and better?**
- 3. Do I become debilitated by the thought of having to perform certain tasks? What sort of tasks?**
- 4. What were the low points in my career, and why?**
- 5. In a group situation, which role/s do I like the least?**
- 6. What was the least fruitful task/project I have ever worked on, and why did it fail?**
- 7. In the face of obstacles, what makes me give up?**
- 8. What is the most uninspiring subject to talk about for me?**
- 9. What do I think are my 10 weaknesses? Be honest**

with yourself.

10. As on question 9 in strengths, only substitute weakness for strength.

Do not waste your time with weaknesses that do not hinder your professional goals. Establish what limitations you can turn into strengths in order to jump-start your career. Learn the skills that will help you progress. Put yourself in uncomfortable networking situations if you need people skills for example. Remember to mainly focus on weaknesses that hold you back from achieving your potential.

Top tip: Your strengths are what gives you an edge and it is crucial that you use them to your advantage.

VALUES ▼

Knowing what your values are, is knowing who you are and what you stand for. Having strong values, help you establish and navigate your thoughts so that they are in synergy with your passion and essence. In other words, before you involve yourself in anything at all, ask yourself, “is this in sync with my values and what I stand for?”

Values are essentially a set of principles that you live by. They define the codes that determine your personality, attitude, actions, reactions and so on. Look at it this way; perhaps the reason you are unhappy at work is because your values are not allied with what you do. Having values, therefore, is standing-up for what you believe in. It is crucial

TRAINING

to align who you are with what you engage yourself in.

"Love is the expression of one's values, the greatest reward you can earn for the moral qualities you have achieved in your character and person, the emotional price paid by one person for the joy he or she receives from the virtues of another." - Ayn Rand

DEFINE YOUR VALUES ▼

There are a number of places in the internet that have great resources on how to establish your values for your personal brand. These are in a form of a list of adjectives that describes your values.

Find a list most suited for you and by a process of elimination, choose the top 5 words that rings true to you and who you are. Establish why you chose these particular words and define what they mean to you. Use them to build your personal mission statement and hold yourself accountable if you are not respecting your values. These values should be communicated in your CV, website, social media platforms and blog posts.

PASSION ▼

Have passion for what you do! That is the biggest secret. It might seem difficult to reconcile the idea of passion and work. However, do establish that which you enjoy doing. That which gives you joy. Furthermore, consider topics that fascinate you, that keep you inspired and wanting more.

If you are still confused about what your passion

might be, think about a time when you could not wait to do something or read about something. Think about the time you could not wait to get out of bed, and about the things that moved you to tears. Don't forget the projects that made feel creative and had you filled with ideas. When you feel stimulated and motivated to do something, then you are passionate about it.

Ask yourself:

What do I really like about my current job?

If I were to volunteer, which charity would you choose? Why?

What do you spend most of your time doing?

"There is no passion to be found playing small-in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living." - Nelson Mandela

Your job related interests should be in more or less of the following areas:

- Research
- Problem solving
- Analyzing
- Planning
- Managing
- Planning
- Mentoring
- Creating
- Counselling
- Coaching
- Writing
- Other ways of communication
- Listening
- Negotiating
- and many more

ATTRIBUTES ▼

What words would you use to describe yourself? Also consider the words that others might use to describe you. Deliberate on the following words

without limiting yourself; creative, thoughtful, visionary, ambitious, resourceful, risk-taker, negotiator, ethical, connected, compassionate, animated, worldly, diplomatic and so on. Find attributes that best describes your personality and use them to communicate your brand essence.

POSITIONING ▼


Once you are clear about your values, attributes and passion, it's time to now position yourself. What does that mean exactly? It simply means that you should consider how others perceive you based on your strengths, values, mission, attributes and passion. Remember, this is about authenticity. In the place of work, you have to be consistent about who you say you are. Create a positioning statement. This statement you can use during interviews as it is more powerful and fresh than going on about your monotonous career past. It captures your essence and uniqueness.

TARGET AUDIENCE ▼

At this point you should have everything you need in order to attract the right audience. You must first determine the industry in which you wish to work, then search for ideal organisations you wish to work for. Conduct an extensive research on these organisations and establish what problems they are faced with; you might be a match for them based on your unique strengths, values, passions and attributes. With your homework done, create a personal brand strategy using the keywords in job

descriptions to attract their attention. After all, they want to hire good talent and someone that matches their standards. However, remember to never give everything you have, reserve some of your good selling points for the interview. In conclusion

"In Social Media the "squeaky wheel" gets the oil. You have to put yourself out there, to find people who will relate or even debate with you, depending on what you are looking for." - Jessica Northey

Remember to stay true and be consistent with your personal brand. All the elements discussed in this article should be communicated effectively in the digital media. You should remember that in this age of information and technology, you have the power to make or break yourself. Utilise the platforms that are now available to communicate your personal brand successfully. 

My name is Lungisa Sonqishe, I am a Personal Brand, Career & Life Coach. I am based in Cape Town, South Africa. My website is <http://www.eleven11.co.za> I am known for my creative imagination, inspiring nature and assertiveness. I take joy in sharing and acquiring knowledge. Personal Branding and Life Coaching are my areas of specialty.

Please visit my website to find out more <http://www.eleven11.co.za>

What to Do When You're Stuck in a Career Rut

by Dr. Bruce A. Johnson

A job can serve a variety of purposes and for many people they accept a job offer because they are in need of the income, without necessarily thinking about their future. Others have a specific career plan and a new job may be a step towards meeting their goals. Over time a job can become a stable career, one that provides new opportunities. Stability in a career is important, but what happens when that job you value becomes stagnant and it no longer feels fresh or no longer brings out the best in your job performance? Is a change of attitude the only possible answer? ►►

Telling yourself “I love my job” is a helpful strategy but if the reality of your work responsibilities does not match those words, it won’t likely produce lasting results. It is possible that a daily job routine can become mundane so it becomes important to look for signs that you are in a rut and understand its impact on your job performance, and then look for new strategies that can change the aspects of your job and work habits that are within your control. Getting stuck in a career rut results in a negative impact on your job performance if it is allowed to continue for an extended period of time, which is something you have an ability to change.

DEVELOPING A CAREER AND A RUT ▼

When a job becomes a steady career it may be a product of longevity or a series of opportunities that creates stability. This allows a person to develop a routine, habits, and a rhythm of regular productivity. A challenge for maintaining this work pattern is that over time it can feel like more of the same - the same job but nothing new. It may be a new day but consist of the same job duties, challenges, and/or problems. It is also likely that you are no longer learning anything new. In contrast, the job may be going well but you are stuck in a mental rut, which means you’re going through the daily motions but your productivity is down. This means you have done the same thing for so long it no longer feels like you are effective in what you are doing.

A CREATIVE CAREER RUT ▼

Another type of career challenge is a creative

rut. This occurs with a job that is going well or one that has become stagnant. It is a time when a person no longer has any new ideas or simply lacks inspiration. Every job requires creativity to some extent, from the development of new product concepts to marketing new services, along with the resolution of workplace issues and meeting organizational developmental needs. Even work within the customer service field may require creativity when meeting customer needs. When you are assigned new projects and your job duties begin to result in frustration or an inability to develop innovative solutions, this may signal a time of needed change. This produces an awareness of being mentally stagnant, even if the desire to do well in your job is still there.

FEELING DOWN IN A RUT ▼

When you are stuck in a career or creative rut it is easy to feel dull, bored, anxious, or simply uninspired. It can become easy to experience a lack of enthusiasm about a particular job duty or even the job itself. People who develop these feelings often become disengaged from their job and then they start to watch the clock, looking forward to the end of the day as if they are now in bondage. What happens if this attitude or mindset is left unchanged is that personal productivity can decline as interest in the job begins to dwindle. If there is a negative impact on job performance, due to a lack of new ideas or diminished creativity, it can result in negative feedback and even missed new opportunities.

CAREER


A COMMON PROBLEM ▼

For anyone who has experienced a career or creativity rut they may wish to experience a sense of excitement, a hope for renewal, a renewed purpose for the job, fresh ideas, or time of being re-engaged in their work. What is needed at this point are new habits, a changed mindset and way of thinking, or anything else that prompts creativity and sparks new ideas, outcomes, and solutions. A problem that is associated with feeling stuck in a rut is that it can lead to long-term decline and influence a person's disposition at work, especially if they do not talk to their supervisor, colleagues, or mentor about what it is they are experiencing and ask for assistance.

GETTING OUT OF A RUT ▼

People often get into a rut when their mindset or habits do not change. It is hard to know when habits we rely on are no longer serving us well, until we reach a critical point where we are mentally or creatively stuck. Developing a creative outlet outside of work or something that sparks inspiration is a helpful approach to take. At work it can be beneficial to take on or request new job duties or tasks. This can be accomplished by not being afraid to talk to your supervisor about your job as they will likely be supportive of your success and improved job performance. On your own you can try a new routine or change how you work, becoming conscious of the rut you are in and knowing that only needs to be a temporary condition.

It is easy to stop learning when you get stuck

in a rut so another helpful strategy is to read something related to your career field, whether it is a book, magazine, or online resource. The best way to self-correct your mindset when you feel stuck in a career or creative rut is to redirect your self-development efforts and focus once again on your job duties and career plans. Break down your daily routine and find a new method of approaching your tasks, as a means of generating new thought processes. Try your best not to allow your mindset to become stagnant - even when ideas no longer occur as frequently as they should. Your personal best at work is something you need to strive to improve upon and it is something you can always manage, control, and improve upon. Everyone experiences a lull from time to time and the key to avoiding a rut is taking inspired action and redirecting your thoughts for the purpose of professional and personal self-renewal. 

Dr. Bruce A. Johnson has developed expertise with adult learning through advanced education in the field of adult education, along with his work as an instructional designer, college professor, professional writer, published author, and corporate trainer. To learn more about the books and resources related to adult education, online learning, and professional self-development that are available from Dr. J please visit: <http://www.affordablequalitywriting.com>

by George Torok

Business Lessons from Las Vegas

If you haven't been to Las Vegas recently - you must go. When you visit take good notes. Las Vegas is an inspiring business model. Las Vegas is a place to learn how to run your business. It might be called the sin city. But the real lessons of Vegas are not about gambling. It's about how to run a successful business. »

Study these important business lessons that I learned from Las Vegas. The casinos win most of the time - because they have and follow good systems. Some players think they have systems because they occasionally win. But the casinos are consistently successful because of their better systems. The Las Vegas casinos do not win every game. But they consistently win enough of the time and they are satisfied with that.

Las Vegas is a unique city and the casinos

are unique. The Luxor named after the ancient Egyptian city, is built in the shape of a pyramid. Excalibur named after the sword of King Arthur looks like the castle Camelot. New York New York makes you feel as if you are in the big apple. Las Vegas has a strong brand.

Value is in the eye of the beholder. That's why in Las Vegas one could pay hundreds of dollars for a room or \$80. That's why you can gorge at the \$5.99 all-you-can-eat buffet or dine on \$150 steak accompanied by \$300 wine.

LIFESTYLE

You can find free show tickets and free helicopter rides in exchange for attending a high pressure time share pitch. You can drink for free while you are gambling. High stakes gamblers get free room and meals.

No one needs to visit Las Vegas. No one needs to gamble. No one needs to pay \$100 for a show ticket. No one needs to ride in a Hummer. But when people want these things price becomes less important. Las Vegas knows that and they sell what people want.

What do you want? That is the real calling card for Las Vegas. What do you want? You have choices in food, gambling, entertainment, transportation, and side trips. Remember no one needs what Vegas offers but people return for the experience and the memories.


Las Vegas, the city of sin feels safe. People walked along the strip with drinks in their hand yet there was no sign of violence. And the police kept a very low profile. The street vendors always respected our signals to back off.

The streets of Las Vegas are clean. I went for an early morning run and noticed the street sweepers preparing for a new day. Even with an inordinate number of smokers I did not notice cigarettes butts on the sidewalk.

Pamper yourself at the Bellagio. Ride a gondola at the Venetian. View the city from the top of the

Stratosphere. Entertain your family at Circus Circus. Rent a limousine. Attend a meeting at the Las Vegas convention center. Marvel at a magic show. Ride the Sky Train. Walk the strip. Visit downtown.

Las Vegas is an incredible experience. It is a fabulous business model. If you haven't been to Las Vegas yet - go. Notice the details and observe how they do things. Take notes. Then re-examine and reinvent your business. Stack the odds in your favor. You'll have a winning hand.

- Offer choices
- Keep it clean
- Make people feel safe
- Create an experience
- People buy what they want not what they need
- Encourage your customers to be emotional
- "Free" fools everyone
- Offer value
- Promote your brand
- Don't be greedy
- Follow systems 

George Torok is a motivational business speaker. As host of the weekly radio show, Business in Motion, <http://www.businessinmotion.ca> - he has interviewed over 400 business leaders. To arrange a speech, executive briefing or training program, call 905-335-1997. To claim your free subscription to Power Marketing Tips or Power Presentation Tips visit <http://www.torok.com>

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