

BREAK OUT OF A CAREER CATCH-22

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IABC Communicator: 02/2005

Many people who are keen to make a career move continue to settle for less fulfillment and more job stress, because they feel constrained by paying their bills. How can you leave, yet still cover your expenses so you can do a career move to work that really suits you?

What you do as work is never your identity. But what you are doing now is probably not your full potential either. You can do so many things that bring value. Temporarily compartmentalizing 'things you do for money' and the 'career-building' process lets you take stoploss jobs while you get going on your larger goals. If you wait, you never start. Since you're human, you deeply need to take care of both your big picture and little picture needs. If you never go build the work you love, the pain could even sabotage your current ho-hum role in time.

Your new-and-better career can be rapidly built. You are the very person to build it. (I'll co-design and project-manage if you like.) But give tomorrow and today a near-equal amount of attention. You see, bringing tomorrow's goals into reality totally relies on actions today. Today is all anyone ever has. Waiting doesn't achieve much, does it? Putting off your 'real career life' till you are financially stable sounds wise but is really, well, just putting it off!

Committing to having the satisfying work life you deserve, identifying your value to others and doing some math will help you think realistically about affording a career shift.

Brainstorm 1:

How Could I Use Stoploss Work to Cover Me For a Life-Improving Career Maneuver?

- Value of my time — my usual pay per hour or per day
- Total monthly living expenses (a comfortable level)
- Per cent of my expenses I could self-fund by investing savings into my career move, having my spouse support me, selling an asset, or renting out part of my home
- Per cent of my costs I actually need to defray with stoploss work
- Money I expect to make from stoploss
- Until when might I need this interim income?
- How will I maintain my career skills, visibility in my field and progress on my goals while doing stoploss — either apply these in my stoploss work or set aside specific time for managing my career shift campaign

Brainstorm 2:

50 Things I Know How To Do...(Spend 10 minutes making a list. Go!)

- Benefits my approach always provides
- Interests/Hobbies – Movies, Gardening, Elderly
- Special Know-How
 - places lived, languages known, client types served, major life events survived
 - what I know informally from books, seminars

Brainstorm 3:

Okay, where am I needed?

- Seasonal Needs – Kids Out Of School, Tourist Season, Night Classes Start, Easter
- Special Events — CNE, Pope's Visit, Film Festival
- Freelance To Old Employers
- Ask Friends & Contacts
- Provide A Service/Make Something — If you have friends and family who want it, or a group of people you can easily get to

I'm not suggesting everyone should run out and quit. But what if the next time you said, that's it, I want out of what I'm doing now, you did these three exercises and actually got out? (I've done it and it was always a good thing I did.)

Top Overnight Work-Getting Methods

1. Keep in frequent touch with your best contacts in your field so you can go over there and help them with anything, fast!
2. Get direct introductions to owners from friends or others who meet a lot of people.
3. Call and introduce yourself to 50 managers via a voicemail commercial for what your capability does for them. Leave your number but say you'll be responsible for following up till you reach them. It may take several tries to get them but keeping the ball in your court helps them.
4. Make a one page info sheet that excludes experience beyond the scope of what you are looking for today.
5. Go to the place and ask to see a manager. Yes, this works. At the sort of place you can really help a lot, it may be worth waiting up to an hour. If you leave a document, get the general manager's/owner's business card and tell the secretary you'll be following up so it can't get discarded. Then call and discuss what you want to provide for them.
6. To apply to corporations/chains, whether they are advertising or not, send a letter that focuses them on what your work does for them rather than an applicant-style resumé and cover letter. When it's your idea, you don't have time to behave like an applicant!

Having a job you no longer enjoy and bills to pay, is only a Catch 22 if you have no career improvement underway. Committing to getting the quality of career you want, not worrying about 'how it looks,' crunching some numbers, and taking up stoploss work could change your life. But by waiting forever to start, you're probably throwing time and money away. Yes, working nights at the warehouse or painting people's dog portraits could be a fabulous tactic in actually moving your career ahead.

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