

## **Career Rx**

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### **Career Flux, Learning and Leading**

Careers are in a state of flux. Many traditionally believed they managed their career by progressively moving upward through a series of prescribed roles within an organization or a profession. This model has been shifting or breaking down for some time. Some careers are following the traditional path, others are no longer. Others are wandering on new paths of freelancing or consulting, taking on temporary jobs to stay on track with their careers. The contract between worker and organization has shifted from a commitment and loyalty to a deliverable and learning transition. Some will argue the changing economy, globalization, and technological advancement are causing these changes.

So what is holding individuals in their careers now? The career minded individual who believes in lifelong learning stays entrenched in their discipline and follows the industry and watches for opportunities. This is one who understands how to manage their own self-development plan. I am not saying this person will remain fully employed or on payroll, but will be engaged in a lifelong career – involving organizations, volunteer and life roles that engage their quest for learning and development over a lifetime. This individual may take one off jobs to cover their expenses during challenging times but will remain true to their career passion.

The individual that has multiple passions will be well served in this evolving market. Understanding your passions and applying them to industry, volunteer opportunities, and your community will open new avenues to consider along your career path – the one you own versus the traditional one the organization had in mind for you.

Think about looking for a job. Most people do not enjoy this prospect. Most individuals leave a company due to leadership or work life balance. Think about the jobs you loved. What was it about them that endeared this role to you? Was it the work? The people that you worked with? The leader of the project? Most people leave organizations due to poor leadership regardless of what is happening within the company.

When there are too many challenges to overcome, there is a buildup of frustration. This is typically when people burn out. When an individual loves what they do, they can work hour after hour without realizing how long they have been at it. When you can't get things done or you are constantly up against obstacles, this is when people leave.

As a leader of a group, watch for signs of disengagement. This is when communication becomes superficial. You are not communicating but rather talking without the connection. The employee may begin to avoid you, answer only in one form like email and be brief without further thought processes brought to the table. They may shift their work hours, coming in late or leaving early, assuming no personal matter is impacting them. Become cynical towards the organization. If this attitude is towards you as the leader, this is probably heard through second hand sources, if at all.

What do you do as a leader if you sense that an employee is getting frustrated and that you may be part of the equation? The first thing to consider is whether it is a matter of personal fit. Keep in mind that not everyone was made to work together. Another thing to consider is the person's ability and potential to do the job that they were hired to do. Life factors outside of the work environment may also be an issue. Relationships with other employees can also be a factor. Even if there are factors that do not directly relate to your management style or personality, there is always a need to consider how you may have influenced the situation as a leader in order to assess your own professional growth.

If you determine that the situation is beyond your control, consider if there are opportunities to intercede and bring about a different outcome. Don't let an opportunity to learn something about yourself and how you can positively affect those around you be missed. When it comes to dealing with people, lifetime learning is never complete.

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*Lisa's extensive human resources and coaching experience with Fortune 500 companies, small enterprises, medium-sized firms, and non-profit organizations gives her the unique ability to bring together wide-ranging perspectives on career transitions, executive and leadership development. She has consulted with a wide variety of sectors — consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, media and entertainment, pharmaceutical and life sciences, publishing, professional services, technology, and non-profit. Lisa has a passion for motivational speaking, conducts career forums, and provides executive and career coaching.*

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