



## Cathy Alfandre's E-Letter

*Create greater joy and fulfillment in your working life.*

November 2008

### **Greetings!**

"When you are on a journey, it is certainly helpful to know where you are going or at least the general direction in which you are moving, but don't forget: the only thing that is ultimately real about your journey is the step that you are taking at this moment."

--Eckhart Tolle

### ***Balancing Present and Future***

Here's a recurring theme in my coaching conversations these days: a tremendous TENSION between present reality and future aspiration. Many folks want to do a different kind of work in a different place, but are stuck for one reason or another (e.g., can't find the position they're looking for... haven't found an opportunity that pays enough yet... feel they need to stay put while the economy is so unsettled... etc.). The emotional buildup of anger, frustration, resentment, and/or sadness can be significant. If you are or have been in this situation, you know that your personal health may suffer, and coworkers and family members may bear the brunt as well.

So what can be done? How do you stay "in the moment" and enjoy each day, when your current situation is difficult and you wish you were somewhere else? How do you kindle dreams and hopes for the future when you're busy or even overwhelmed now?

I have a few ideas to offer here, in two categories.

#### **Make Some Peace with the Present**

These are things you can do *each day*.

- **Rediscover gratitude.** What are you grateful for in your current situation? Acknowledge something every day. Consider writing it down.
- **Find new things to learn.** How can you expand your horizons today, even in a small way?
- **Practice compassion and empathy for difficult co-workers.** Consider: What's it like to be that person, to walk in his/her shoes? What might be going on with him/her? What might explain some of his/her actions?
- **Take care of yourself.** Make a little time for the non-work things that make you feel good. Exercise, family time, reading a novel.... Bring a little more "life" into the work-life balance.

#### **Bring the Future to Now**

Instead of daydreaming about an alternate job (and then feeling bad that you don't have it now), start doing specific things today to create what you want tomorrow.

- **The MOST IMPORTANT thing is to set aside time** to work on it, even if you're extremely busy. I know it's hard, but the reality is that you won't make progress if you don't carve out the time. Even an hour a week can make a difference. To use the time as productively as possible, set some goals for what you'll get done in the time you have. (Following are some specific ways you might use the time.)
- **Figure out what you want to do** (if you haven't already). Decide on a specific direction that you can focus on and get excited about. If you need them, there are endless resources to help you figure out your path: assessments, books, coaches, friends, and so on. You may need to research more than one career option, which is fine. Job boards and many, many other internet research resources are out there to help you explore and get the information you need to make a decision. Please contact me if you need any guidance on finding these resources.
- **Build your skills/readiness.** What could you do now to get yourself more ready for the work you want to do in the future? Some options: read a relevant book, subscribe to a relevant magazine, take a class, join a professional association, volunteer.
- **Get your resume together.** Create or revise your resume to help position you for the direction you're going. Highlight the accomplishments most relevant to potential hiring managers. Ask others to review and give you feedback.
- **Gather information and network.** Set up informational interviews to learn more about your chosen field. Call friends and colleagues. Use online networking tools like LinkedIn to connect with people in your chosen field. Lay the foundation for future action.

I hope these ideas are helpful for you and/or people you know in alleviating the stress and tension that come from feeling trapped--neither content in the current state nor ready/able to move on. If you have additional ideas on balancing present and future, I'd love to hear from you.

Wishing you a very happy and peaceful holiday season,

Cathy

This bi-monthly e-letter is intended to offer ideas, tips, resources, and questions to ponder on careers, fulfilling work, and career-life decisions. I welcome your reactions and your suggestions for future topics.

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email: [cathy@cathyalfandre.com](mailto:cathy@cathyalfandre.com)

phone: 203-445-7906

web: <http://www.cathyalfandre.com>