



This newsletter is intended to support the work of people who are engaged in developing the careers, vocations, livelihoods, jobs and/or work of other individuals. It is our belief that everyone's work life can and should be molded and crafted to be the expression of our finest gifts and a source of great joy. Towards this end, we hope that the content of these newsletters will support you with both practical tools and inspirational ideas.

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Welcome to our FEBRUARY 2010 edition!

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Traveling Tips for the Winding Road of a Job Search - Part IV: Shifting Perspectives with Changes in the Work World

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The following message from a reader prompted the writing of what is now Part Four in a series of suggestions and perspectives on "Traveling the Winding Road of a Job Search":

Dear Denise, I found your last issue on "The Top Ten Ideas for a Strategic Job Search" very insightful and, as such, shared it with co-workers as well as the students in my Employment Prep class. Some were instantly enthused by your innovative ideas and keen to put them into practice, while others seemed skeptical and perhaps even challenged by them. I think that a lot of people (both staff and clientele) are stuck in conventional ways of viewing employment. They see the employer as the "all-powerful", they see "getting a steady job" as the only employment option, and they consider "applying for advertised openings" as the be-all and end-all of a job search. I think most people are still basing their attitudes and methods on the world of work as we knew it growing up, rather than the one that has emerged in the last few decades. Have you addressed those issues in one of your newsletters? Please keep your ideas and inspiration coming!

- Vocational Counselor and Employment Prep Instructor, South Bend, Indiana

While I have not addressed these issues in a newsletter, I have written about changes in the work world in prior publications, most pointedly in my job search curriculum entitled *Cultivating True Livelihood*. In response to this question, however, I have summarized what I consider to be the most pressing and significant of those changes. This is by no means all-inclusive of the changes taking place, nor of the far-reaching implications they hold for all of us as we attempt to make our place in the ever-changing world of work. Treat this, rather, as an entryway to the issues, or as a catalyst to a conversation about the perspectives we cling to even when the world around us warrants a shift.

Here's to change – whether we like it or not!

– Denise

[Read Denise's previous \(January 2010\) newsletter...](#)

Shifting Perspectives with Changes in the Work World

There is a great African saying, "When the music changes, so does the dance!" In terms of the work world, while the music has indeed been changing over the past two decades, we have been slow to learn the new dance. The world of work has undergone tremendous transition, and not just the kind of work that is being done, or who it is being done for, but how people are hired and paid to work, how we define success and security, and what a career looks like. In some ways the changes that have taken place do not only require new ways of working, but they invite new ways of thinking about ourselves and relating to the world in general. Among them, I would include the following Six Shifts in Perspective.

1. Changes in business priorities and hiring practices!

Old Mandate: *Maintain the status quo. The goal is to recruit, hire, train and sustain a permanent workforce.*

New Perspective: *Enable the workplace to respond quickly and easily to change, even when this means down-sizing, right-sizing or outsourcing the work. Develop a flexible, informal workforce that is contingent on the changing needs of business.*

Due in part to the onset of new technologies and a global economy, we live in a society which has made speed a top priority. Virtually every enterprise is seeking faster product development, production, delivery, information processing, and service to keep up with the rapid changes and increased competition that have arisen in the marketplace. In the last decade many industries have reengineered, reconfigured, and redesigned their work process in order to make significant savings in time and money while increasing production and profits. Many of those changes have directly affected how they hire and compensate workers and what they expect of employees. Among the most significant changes in business that have most affected employment we would have to include:

- The elimination of middle managers by giving authority and responsibility to front-line employees;
- Shortening the chains of command so that workers can make decisions more quickly;
- Transforming managers from working like supervisors to working like coaches;
- Focusing more on meeting customers' needs and less on administrative micro-management;
- Developing a network of outsourced vendors and contractors in order to build in expertise and flexibility into the company without having to hire regular employees; and,
- Allowing people to telecommute from home or abroad with the use of new technologies.

While these and other changes in the business world have wreaked havoc on the lives of many people due to massive lay-offs, it does not appear that the world is going to return to life as we once knew it.

2. Changes in how we define "job security"!

Old thinking: *Security is to be found by landing a good, solid position which will provide a safe haven in an insecure economic world. Once you've landed a job, you can rest easy. Do a good job and you will climb the corporate ladder. Your best bet is to pick a lane and stay on your career path – stay focused on "the goal" and don't get side-tracked by other possibilities.*

New Perspective: *There is no security to be found in a position, but rather, in how we position ourselves in relation to the work world! A job provides a short term solution to the ongoing challenge of making a living. All work situations are springboards for other opportunities. Cultivating one's livelihood is an ongoing process! Be open, be flexible, and do not limit your options!*

For generations, earning a regular paycheck was the most conventional route to attaining financial security. Supporting yourself and your family usually meant working for someone else. We grew up on the advice to "settle down and get a good, steady job". This advice was based on income statistics that proved right year after year. For many generations, taking the unconventional path to pursue a lifestyle of working on your own was simply not a viable route to achieving financial security. But for many, this has changed. The best route to security may not be through a "good, steady job" because many jobs are not longer good and steady! Instead, you must rely on yourself to create a way of making a living that feels good by your standards, and is as steady as your resolve and determination to make it so. For many, that will mean achieving multiple income streams, whereby one's ability to earn a living is not dependent on only one source, but on many sources.

3. Changes in how work is packaged and framed.

Old Definition: A "job" is the primary way of framing work. Jobs are defined and organized by a prescribed set of functions, duties and responsibilities which are relatively fixed and predictable. The job-holder is paid in accordance to a fixed formula or pay level, typically by number of hours, wages or salary.

New Perspective: Work is perceived as the use of one's energy, skill, or personal resources to bring about desired results and meet specified needs. It is an undertaking, enterprise, project, or endeavor in which the work may be paid in exchange for results, outcomes, or completion of an assignment, in fees, wages, or salary. The responsibilities of the worker will vary with the ever-changing needs of the workplace and must be flexible in nature.

While we many of us were raised to believe that "jobs" were the way that work has always been done, the truth is that they are a relatively new phenomenon. Before the industrial revolution people did not have "jobs", they had livelihoods. Bakers baked and shoemakers made shoes, primarily in the place where they lived and with the involvement of the entire family. People didn't get "hired" in the traditional sense, rather, they traded, bartered and earned a living by utilizing their craft or talents in a variety of ways. It was only with the Industrial Revolution that people became 'workers' and were slotted into 'jobs' categorized with specified boundaries, structures and rules. For many it was a traumatic process to cram their sense of work into the category of a job, while others today are experiencing the flip side of that trauma – learning to become comfortable working outside the frame of a job.

4. Changes in what it means to be employed.

Old Definition: To be employed means to have a permanent, steady job.

New Perspective: To be employed means having a way to earn a living and participating in the work force in one or more of a variety of ways.

Not only is it possible to earn a living without having a job, for an increasing number of people in the workforce today it has become a requirement, and for many, a preference! Many people craft together a viable livelihood by taking part in the work force in a variety of ways. Consider some of the many income streams that we have to choose from today:

- Accepting part-time or full-time employment for positions being advertised in the open job market;
- Accepting full or part-time temporary employment;
- Accepting seasonal employment;
- Doing project or piece work for other businesses;
- Doing odd jobs for people in your community, your neighborhood, or within your personal network;

- Doing freelance work;
- Offering your services as consultant to other businesses;
- Starting your own home-based business or micro business;
- Starting a small business in partnership with others; or,
- Proposing part-time or full-time employment to businesses where you know you could bring a profit or fill a need; creating your own job within an existing business or organization.

There are many new terms for the kind of career that is made up of various income streams, among them you will hear the "hybrid career", a "portfolio career", the "quilted career", a "Renaissance career" ... call it what you like – it is the fastest growing version of livelihood in the 21st century!

5. Changes in where the opportunities lie!

Old Reality: *Big corporations form the backbone of the North American economy*

New Reality: *Small businesses have been and will continue to form the foundation of our economy.*

We have long held the belief that the foundation of the work world was to be found in Fortune 500 companies and in the large bureaucracies that run our towns and cities, including our schools, hospitals, police departments, etc. Those large businesses and humungous bureaucracies do still exist, but they no longer form the backbone of the economy, nor do they provide the mainstay of new opportunities in the work world. In her keynote speech at a conference on employment, I recently heard an economist estimate that as many as 90% of all new jobs in North America for the next ten years will be in companies with less than 50 employees, and the majority of those companies will have less than 20 people!

For those with an entrepreneurial bent, this is great news because there is ample opportunity among small businesses to grow and expand their enterprises in a variety of ways! Consider the fact that virtually all small businesses have an ongoing need and use of a variety of outside services, creating employment possibilities for people who position themselves to service this sector of the economy. The kind of small-business services in high demand include:

Advertising	Mailing list services
Bookkeeping	Mediation services
Writing	Medical billing
Business networks	Medical transcription
Business Plan Writing	Professional organizer
Computer repair	Proposal and grant writing
Computer consulting	Public relations
Desktop publishing	Technical writing
Desktop video	Security services
Information brokering	Word processing and data entry
Janitorial services	Travel services

Take heart in knowing that as large businesses have down-sized, the creation of small businesses has been on the upswing! Work doesn't just go away, it changes hands!

6. Changes in how we approach the world of work.

Old Approach: *One's strategy should include:*

- *Developing a career goal and a job search plan based on short and long-term goals.*
- *Applying for openings as advertised in the open job market.*
- *Focusing on employer needs as they are defined in the position and doing one's best to compete with others for the position.*
- *Honing one's interviewing and resume writing skills.*

New Approach: *One's strategy should include:*

- *Developing a larger life plan which includes a career goal, and an initial employment plan.*
- *Specifying long-term economic goals but also identifying immediate income objectives, as well as a job search plan.*
- *Viewing the world as a market full of opportunities to be uncovered, remaining open to a variety of ways of approaching businesses to solve a problem or meet a need.*
- *Focusing not only on the immediate needs of employers, but on their unmet needs that have yet to be identified.*
- *In addition to interviewing, resume writing, and other job search skills, developing communication skills, the ability to spot opportunity and market oneself, social and networking skills, as well as the ability to manage and balance the various aspects of one's life.*

This new perspective challenges us to think of ourselves not just as "applicants" applying for openings, but as vendors or independent contractors with services to offer. It asks us to view our lives as our own micro businesses and ourselves as CEO and Board of Directors of the important enterprise that is our life! It requires us to remember that as a person with unique gifts, we are each looking for the right place to invest our time and our talents! It takes into consider that fact that our livelihood is not a destination, but an ongoing journey!

For many, this last change is the most difficult leap to make. We were raised to take a more passive approach to employers, to be subservient, and compliant with whatever is being offered to us. We were always told to be modest and to downplay our strengths lest we appear conceited and full of ourselves. Now employers want to see us take initiative, think out of the box, and show our resourcefulness and assertiveness! They want us to be team players but they also want to see independent self-starters! We need to be humble, but know how to toot our own horn! We want to be loyal to those we work for, but we also want to be loyal to ourselves. Yes, we are looking out for the good of the employer, and we are also keeping watch for our own good! This is the day of the paradox! We are being asked to show up and give our all to whatever job or project we are engaged in, but not to lose sight of the big picture and opportunities on the horizon!

Even for those who have every intention of holding out for a "regular job" as we were raised to understand it, here are a few good reasons to stay open to additional ways of making a living and entertaining the idea of creating additional income streams (e.g., offering your services as a freelancer, finding ways to capitalize on a pet project, or accepting a part-time, seasonal job, etc.):

- It will enable you to maintain some structure and a sense of control in your life while looking for regular work;
- It will provide opportunities to invest your time wisely while you are in-between jobs;
- It may provide a way of developing a network which will lead to the work you want;
- It will keep your skills honed and your confidence fresh; and,
- This just may end up being your preferred way of working!

In summary, John Lilly once suggested, "Our only security is our ability to change." While that holds true in all facets of our lives, our ability to change – to think in new ways and broaden our horizons – is certainly being put to the test in relation to work. It is a worthwhile endeavor to not only examine our actions and the results they are producing, but the perspective(s) we hold which motivate those actions. A shift in perspective can change everything – including us!

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We welcome your comments and feedback on this article!

Please consider sending us your opinions, perspectives, experiences or related resources on this topic. Unless you specify otherwise, your comments and contact information may be edited/published in a future edition of the True Livelihood Newsletter.

Email your comments on this article... TLN@diversityworld.com

Thoughts to Consider

“Chchchchanges...”

- David Bowie

“The only people who actually like change are babies with wet diapers!”

- Ashley Brilliant

“There is no security in life, only opportunity.”

- Mark Twain

“The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty: not knowing what comes next.”

- Ursula LeGuin

“Keep sowing your seed, for you never know which will grow; perhaps it all will.”

- Ecclesiastes 11:6

“All progress is inevitably accompanied by strife and shock. Evolution never happens without work and suffering. It is not enough to let oneself be borne passively along by it; man must collaborate in the event.”

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Putting it into Practice

Here are some tips for using this article with job seekers in a class, in a job club, or for individual coaching:

1. Have them read the article themselves or go through the six points one by one, using the article as your facilitator guidelines.
2. Ask the job seekers to identify which of the points they are in agreement with, and which of the points present the greatest challenge to their current thinking.
3. Have job seekers identify where they think they are in terms of the perspectives they hold in each of the six areas.
4. Emphasize the fact that what is being suggested in this article is not true or false, or right or wrong, but simply another perspective. Have them add to the list with their own ideas about changes they see in the work world and how their perspective has shifted.
5. Ask the job seekers to give examples of people in their own lives who are making a living through multiple income streams. (Most will be able to name many!)
6. Be sure to point out that following the advice in the article does not necessarily mean changing the way they are going about the job search at present, but it could add to or augment the great things they are doing!

Denise Bissonette's Publications



Denise has published several important works on topics of job development, career development, personal development and similar topics. She also has two video-based in-service training programs available. Please visit our online store, Diversity Shop, for more information on these and related products.

[Link to more information on Denise's publications...](#)

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