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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal Career Development Planning or Where Do I Go From Here?

By Barb Taylor Carpenter

Last year when I was developing a program for sales and marketing professionals, I remembered being the victim of a downsize. It's a sobering experience which can either bring out the best in you or make you run for cover. I was forced to take a long, hard look at my career direction and ask some difficult questions: Did I want to change careers? What were the skills that would propel me to the front line? Luckily, I had been changing my path for a couple of years. My experience in hospitality sales and marketing had led to a position in training and development in this area for a management company. It was, therefore, a natural segue for me to start my own company, continuing the professional training and development which I had come to love.

Now what about you? If tomorrow you were to discover that your organization was going to be merged, would you be ready with a plan guaranteeing a "place at the table"? Or would you be caught in the panic trying to figure out where you want to be and what you want to be doing? Your future is your responsibility, not your employer's. You must, therefore, think of ways to take control of your career destiny!

Some helpful tips:

Know what's new and what's next.

Keep your mind, eyes and ears open to changes and innovations which may impact you, your organization, or your customers'. Take full advantage of educational opportunities which come your way. These can develop both your individual skills and those that contribute to your organization's goals.

Follow the experts and improve on their advice.

Analyze information given by industry experts and futurists and take it one step further. Personalize it by understanding how it impacts you. If, for example, you know your customers are more technologically savvy than you are, consider

how to improve your skills. The result will be a more efficient working relationship between you and your customers.

Give value first.

Decide what "value" means to you. Analyze the overall quality of your daily interactions, determining how to increase



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