

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

December 2012

This Month's Message:

Career Self-Defense.

Paths Forward

· **Need Career Coaching?**

· **Tired of boring meetings??**

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Career Self-Defense.

After each edition of *LifeMap* goes out it is not unusual for me to receive between 100 and 200 responses; many are thank-you's for a message or thought that seems to have arrived at a particularly fortuitous time, others have ideas, suggestions and critiques. It usually takes me a couple of weeks to get

Resources

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through them and I respond to all that I can. I appreciate them all and save many of them. For starters please let me take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you who have taken the time over the past year to touch base with me or update me on your progress as you traverse your own LifeMap.

Each December, as year-end approaches, I typically review these emails for new ideas and ways to improve *LifeMap*. One criticism I receive from time to time is about what one reader characterized as my "relentless optimism"; another asked if I "ever get tired of giving everybody the benefit of the doubt" and why I don't ever suggest "pushing back against those who throw obstacles in our way". I think these are all fair observations, I appreciate each and every one, and I take no umbrage at them. In fact I think they show that a more complete explanation of my viewpoint is appropriate.

In my defense let me confess that it is not easy for me each month to share with you something of genuine value with specific, realistic suggestions (not vague truisms or banal clichés) that will only take about 5 minutes of your time. My closest friends would tell you that I am not an unbridled optimist but more of a hard-headed optimist who evaluates most new ideas and approaches with more than a fair share of skepticism. But in writing and giving advice on multiple topics in a short-form approach (such as *LifeMap*) I feel it is imperative that I focus most strongly on what *the individual* can do to take charge of a situation in order to affect a more desired outcome.

You or I may assist or motivate another person to make constructive change. But this change will come not because we try and will not come because we want it to. It will only come when the other person is ready to change and chooses to do so. And since the attitudes or behaviors *of others* are typically resistant to external change I see little utility (in the short time I have your attention) in suggesting that you bang your head on the wall.

Now that I have defended my approach about focusing on one's own reactions, choices and behavior let me also agree with those who have constructively criticized that I have not offered many tougher suggestions about how to "push back" against those who throw obstacles in our way. The questions I receive in this area primarily focus on the workplace and they break out into two categories: negative individuals and negative environments. Let's take a deep breath and move on to the Paths Forward section where I suggest two powerful resources for you to access.

Paths Forward

*** Negative Individuals.** In my 30 years of organizational consulting I have not seen that many downright evil, malevolent people. But in every organization I've ever worked in I've seen at least one person who is willing to utilize gossip, underhanded schemes, office politics or outright lies in an attempt to get ahead at the expense of others. Sometimes these folks get caught, other times they don't. But just because this kind of thing isn't all that frequent doesn't minimize the distress and pain endured by those who, even rarely, suffer such reprehensible behavior.

Trying to figure out how to combat this is difficult because the ordinary person has a hard time fathoming the why's and how's of some people are able to behave in such a unethical, back-stabbing manner. Before giving up on the situation and deciding to move on I have a resource to suggest.

[21 Dirty Tricks at Work: How to Win at Office Politics](#) by Mike Phipps and Colin Gautry (Capstone,2005)

This book was given to me by the victim of an insidious campaign by two people (one was her boss, the other was her potential replacement) to drive her from the company. She employed one of the strategies suggested therein, saved her job and shed a light on the perpetrators that eventually led them to leave the company. Do not think this book is a "how-to" book for dirty tricks; it is about how to identify them, expose the miscreant, and offers ideas to turn the situation around. Some of the examples are a bit exaggerated but the advice is practical and the tone is hopeful.

*** Negative Environments.** Some workplaces are just lousy places to work. Unless you are the organization's leader or someone directed by the leader to improve organizational climate and working conditions there is probably nothing you, as an individual, can do to change things. Once you have discovered that you're in a hostile work environment it's best to cut your losses and move on.

In my experience the vast majority of leaders want to avoid creating an unpleasant or negative work environment because it generates lousy work, increases costly turnover, makes recruiting more difficult (and expensive), is bad for public relations and lowers profits. But even if you work for a well-intentioned leader or an organization that has a reputation for enlightened management you should not be lulled into assuming that your boss or your organization has your welfare as its top agenda.

A former corporate vice president of human resources has written a book that every employee looking to increase his or

her career savvy should read.

[Corporate Confidential: 50 Secrets Your Company Doesn't Want You to Know---and What to Do About Them](#) Cynthia Shapiro (St Martin's Griffin, 2005).

Some of Ms. Shapiro's assertions are provocative and hard-nosed but most are right on target. Let me list just a few:

- No matter what they say, your job is not safe (and how you can protect it).
- Do not share personal information at work; these are not your friends, how good news in your personal life can mean bad news at work.
- How your employer gets around laws you mistakenly think protect maternity / medical leave, parents, older workers, and those with disabilities.
- Your new boss is bad news (and what to do about it).
- How your vacation time is a trap.
- Your company has a secret layoff list (and how to stay off it).
- The human resources department is there to protect the organization from you, not vice versa.

If you think these are pretty tough, I agree. And though I can't say I've seen all of these borne out in any one organization, I have seen them all demonstrated in one organization or other during my career. Ms. Shapiro shares some of the exact same career advice I give confidentially to my own clients. If you want to fireproof your job - even if you work for the best employer in the world - this book should be part of your career self-defense plan.

LifeMap is about helping you to be your own strongest advocate for all elements of a rewarding and satisfying life.

· Need Career Coaching?

The best investment you can make is in your career, your future and yourself.

email drpaul@drpaulpowers.com

· Tired of boring meetings??

Have Dr. Paul speak at your next off-site meeting or conference. Fast-moving, practical, motivating presentations from an acknowledged leader in the field of career and personal success.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/speakingschedule.html>

Resources

- Are you or someone you know job hunting or thinking about

it?

The best, concise, all-round job changing guide available.
Revised Edition [Winning Job Interviews](#) by Dr. Paul Powers.

In this easy-to-follow, step-by-step book, Dr. Paul Powers demystifies job interviewing, explains why the process actually favors the job hunter, and shows how you can dramatically improve your interview skills.

Packed with solid, practical information and laced with both humor and "kick in the pants" motivation, *Winning Job Interviews* is the book you wished you had before your last interview... and is mandatory preparation for your next one!

· Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? Order your copy of [Love Your Job!](#)
Loving the Job You Have, Finding A Job You Love by Dr. Paul.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksandarticles.html>

Have an issue or question you'd like Dr. Paul to address in a future edition? Send an email to the email address list below.

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Sincerely,

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