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Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more satisfying life.

Fall 2018

This Month's Message:

Time for Self (& Others) - Now & Later.

Paths Forward:

CAREER BEST SELLER

Tired of boring meetings??

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Time for Self (& Others) - Now & Later.

As I travel to new places and meet new people, one of the topics I speak on is planning for and living an engaged and enjoyable retirement. Some folks are already in the retirement phase; others are still in the planning stage. But in both I usually run into some resistance when I discuss planning for and engaging in the important element of one's LifeSpace that is avocational life.

What is it?

Part of this resistance is my own fault because I sometimes gloss over what avocational actually means. It isn't a word one hears that often. The dictionary tells us an avocation is something one does in addition to one's principal occupation (or vocation). It is usually done for pleasure and / or a sense of satisfaction. Retirees tell me one of the biggest surprises

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of satisfaction. Retirees tell me one of the biggest surprises they received after retirement is figuring out what to do with their time after the big trip, or after doing as much grandchild babysitting or golf as they thought they'd always want. Add to this the realization that the part of their social support network from their career is now gone because most of their work friends are either busy still working or distracted and dispersed as a result of their own retirement.

This is the reason that thoughtfully planning for and actually starting one's avocational life before retirement is so important.

So why the resistance?

At conferences and meetings I often ask working folks to raise their hands if they are actively preparing for retirement. Then I ask them to lower their hands if this primarily means saving and / or investing for retirement. Usually there is a fairly low number of hands remaining. Of course, preparing financially for retirement is essential. Since these are folks who voluntarily attended my presentation I ask why does it seem less important to think through and prepare what to actually do in this anticipated and desired element of their future life. After all in high school they prepared for college, in college they prepared for their career, and while in their career they took preparatory steps to advance upward. Why not invest time and energy in preparing for what could be the best time in their lives? Here are six themes reflected in the most frequent responses I hear:

- * I'm too busy with work.
- * I don't have the time.
- * It's years away; I have plenty of time to prepare.
- * When I have time available after work I'm rushing off to do errands or a kid's game.
- * A few of my friends who have already retired say they're as busy as ever so I guess I'll be like them.
- * I have no idea what my life will be like then so how can I know now what I'd like to be doing then?

In shorthand I post these responses as I get them and then engage the group to discuss them. Here are some thoughts for you that have come out of those discussions. I hope you find them helpful and motivating.

Paths Forward:

1. I'm too busy with work. I don't have the time.

Many retirement activities where you are interacting with other people can be useful in developing and exhibiting skills helpful to you at work. (i.e. coaching, mentoring, organizing). Read the bios of most successful executives and you will see a plethora of these types of activities. (A good place to find them is in annual reports wherein bios of executives and board members are presented.) In fact, these activities often contribute to attaining that level of success.

2. I don't have the time.

I get a lot of push back on this one but my position is that there is no such thing as time management. No one gets any

more than 24 hours a day- and no one gets any less. There is no management of the clock; there is only self-management. We make time for what we assign value to. Are you living your values?

3. Retirement is years away; I have plenty of time to prepare.

This is a variant of the one above. I would only add that anyone who is older than you will verify that as you grow older it feels like time is moving more quickly. Like the song says "... time is a riddle. Where days turn into years and years into the blink of an eye." If something is important to you the time to act is always now.

4. When I have time available after work I'm rushing off to do errands or a kid's game.

Again we get to time. Any therapist worth his or her salt will tell you that self-love must precede love for another. Self-care is the precedent of the ability to care for others. If you are constantly running on empty or near empty you don't really have much left to give. If this is a new or foreign concept for you treat yourself to [The Art of Extreme Self-Care: Transform Your Life One Month at a Time](#) by Cheryl Richardson

5. A few of my friends who have already retired say they're as busy as ever so I guess I'll be like them.

Ok, I guess this is true to the degree you and your friends share similar values, health status, financial status, likes, dislikes, hobbies, sports, interest in the arts, philanthropy, volunteering and on and on. You are probably not a carbon copy of any of your friends. Not to mention - retirement is an opportunity to develop a new and expanding set of friends. This is one of those rare opportunities to do some blue sky thinking about who you are and what it is that you most want to do. This is your time to really go for it- whatever *it* is.

6. I have no idea what my life will be like then so how can I know now what I'd like to be doing then?

I love this response because we can use it to really expand the scope of our discussion. Part of what I hear is fear and uncertainty; fear of getting old and uncertainty about what that could mean as it relates to health and financial security. Both of these emotions are driven by stereotypes. The mental image of "old" used to be the iconic 19th Century painting of "Whistler's Mother" quietly rocking away while the clock ticks and the crypt awaits. Today's image of active and engaged retirees well into their 70's and 80's can be seen on the covers of the *AARP Magazine* or *Money Magazine*. But many folks still carry the 19th century image of "oldness" and penury in their minds. As a concrete example of how stereotypes change over time, know that Anna Whistler was only 67 when her son painted her portrait! Now, if you were born after 1959, you can't even get your full social security retirement benefit until you reach 67 so don't reach for that rocking chair just yet!

Various models of adult development from Erickson, Gould, Levinson, Maslow, and Valliant theorize and discuss older life

as moving through various stages or completing certain tasks like achieving intimacy versus isolation, reaching self-actualization, realization of one's mortality and the like. I love to dig into these theories seeing how they fit me as well as those I am privileged to observe personally or through consultation.

My own theory is somewhat of an amalgamation of all these. What helped me crystallize my thinking in this area was a humorous, off the cuff comment made a few years ago by a wonderful pre-retirement counseling client who with a mischievous grin said, "I may be growing older but my wife says I'm not doing a very good job of growing up." Of course, it merited a laugh but the more I thought about it a light bulb went off in my mind. Ageing is not just about moving from one stage to another, leaving one set of tasks aside for the new, acting more maturely, taking less risks. And though it can be, much more is possible.

That night what flashed into my mind was a quote that stuck with me from Carl Jung's autobiography, which I read almost 30 years ago (and obviously need to revisit). "Sometimes I return back to the state of mind I had as a child when I believed nothing was impossible." It came to me that the goal of ageing (or retiring) is not leaving any life stage behind and nor needing to construct a whole new life structure. It is to integrate all of what has come before in pursuit of self or one's whole self or dare I say a fuller self. Consider using your own memories, dreams and reflections to integrate the amazement of your childhood, the exuberance of your youth, the curiosity and explorations of your education, the joys and losses of love, the long-road perspective gained from your middle years and, yes, the wisdom that comes from just surviving this life to be who, at long last, you want to be.

LifeMap (sm) is about using your avocations for pleasure and satisfaction during both your work and post-work life.

CAREER BEST SELLER

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