

Career Plan Resuscitation (CPR)

Breathe Some Life Back Into Your Work

By Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans



To resuscitate your career, *own it!* This attitude is key. Take steps now to plan it, build it, and strengthen it. Here's how:

- ★ Look at yourself—Examine your interests, values, and work skills. Find out, too, if others see you the way you see yourself.
- ★ Look around — Uncover trends (company/industry), learning pathways (ways to learn new skills), and multiple career options.
- ★ Look ahead—Identify goals, alliances, support. Create your plan.

Look at Yourself

What do you love to do? To create a meaningful career plan, you need to be clear about your interests (the things you like doing—ideas and activities that give fulfillment and pleasure) and your values (ideals you cherish that guide your life at work). To determine those critical variables, ask yourself:

- ★ What accomplishments at work have made me feel particularly proud?
- ★ What makes me feel unique in this organization?
- ★ What kinds of things would I do if I could create my ideal workday?
- ★ What types of work do I avoid?

The things you do well, value highly, and like doing give you a basic map for planning your career. Look for opportunities to do that *inside* your organization. Also, gather information from several willing feedback providers. Ask them:

- ★ What are my overdone strengths? (Too much of a good thing.)
- ★ What are two skills I should strengthen? How would it help me, given what I want to do?

Seek out your critics. Listen to them. Try to see yourself through their eyes. Get clear about your missing skills, or those skills you overdo.

Look Around

Once you've assessed what you need to learn, you can begin to look around your organization for trends, learning opportunities, and career options. You may be surprised to find projects, task forces, and jobs that will support your goals.

How much do you know about your organization, your industry, and your profession? If you don't know the answers to these questions, ask others:

- ★ What are the major industry, economic, political, and social changes taking place that will affect this organization?
- ★ What are the opportunities and problems ahead?

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- ★ How will my profession be different in two years? In five years?
 - ★ What counts for success here? How will that change in the future?

Not every step in a career has to be a step up. There are other options (inside the organization) to consider, too. Talk to your boss or other valued advisors to learn about these possibilities:

- ★ **Moving laterally**—a change in job, but not necessarily a change in level of responsibility
- ★ **Exploring**—testing and researching changes without permanent commitment
- ★ **Enriching**—seeding the current job with more chances to learn and grow
- ★ **Realigning**—adjusting duties to reconcile them with other priorities and future possibilities

Try to imagine at least one move you could make in each of the above directions. What would it look like? How might it match your skills, interests, and values?

Look Ahead

Use the information you now have about yourself, your company, and multiple options to develop your plan. Be ready to answer these questions:

- ★ What new skills, knowledge, or abilities do I need to achieve my goals?
- ★ What are some short-term goals (3 to 6 months) that I could start on right now?
- ★ How can I gain the new skills that will help me with my goals while in my *current* job?
- ★ What relevant experiences can I have through serving on committees and task forces?
- ★ Who in my network can help?

A clear plan of action turns goals into realities if you:

- ★ Write down your goals, exact steps and deadlines. Revise along the way.
- ★ Forge alliances with people who can help you reach your goals: managers, mentors, peers, supporters.
- ★ Seek learning. Get training and experience to help you reach your goals.

Career Plan Resuscitation (CPR) is doable if you look at yourself, look around, and look ahead. You're in charge of your career. You manage it within your company, within this economy, and with the capabilities and resources that you have.

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This is an excerpt from Love It, Don't Leave It: 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work (Berrett-Koehler, 2003) by Beverly Kaye & Sharon Jordan-Evans. Bev and Sharon are also co-authors of the best-selling Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay (Berrett-Koehler, 1999 & 2002). Bev is founder and CEO of Career Systems International, the leader in the field of talent management. Sharon is president of The Jordan-Evans Group, an executive coaching and leadership consulting firm.

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