

A Paradigm shift: the changing meaning of career success.

Like most people, over the holiday period I had time to relax and reflect. Being able to wind down to a much slower pace makes one wonder why we work so hard, creating very little space to reflect on where we are going – and the important things in life. We get so caught up in the whirl of work and trying to keep up with our commitments that we lose perspective; we lose a sense of who we are.

My reflections took me to pondering the state of the world and the current employment market and how this will affect the people I work with. I feel a whole paradigm shift going on! The credit crisis and consumerism's impact is taking us kicking and screaming to review our values, both individually and collectively. I thought about people who are making different career decisions to what they would have made in a buoyant market...

I thought about a successful business woman taking time out to complete a Fine Arts degree, a Manufacturing Manager moving back to rural Waikato to be closer to his family and to take up painting and decorating, a Service Engineer deciding to launch into a Post Graduate study and work part time, a graduate taking steps to volunteer in Africa, and a talented builder preferring to establish a Permaculture farmlet than to continue his trade. All of these decisions are by choice and in response to a global situation that is pushing us to re-evaluate what really matters.

Many people do not have this luxury of choice because of their financial pressures and our tightening employment market, however redundancy often forces choices that may not have been obvious before and a refocus on what is important. My focus, when working with people who appear to have fewer choices, is to help them to peel back the realities for **thorough** review and then to rebuild the possibilities. Often this opens new ways of looking at what is important: what must be maintained and what can be let go of.

The challenge is to adjust our view of what 'success' is; to move away from the materialistic views of success towards a measure that values wellbeing that is sustainable individually, socially and environmentally. This is easier and more directly experienced at an individual level than it is at an organisational level, however, as we have seen, ethical business practice is critical. Our organisations are being challenged to be seriously committed to sustainability.

For individuals, being resilient is about making the most of the opportunities available. Flexibility is a prerequisite meta-skill needed in such a changing and uncertain environment. Resilience is also about having awareness of self and context, challenging the assumptions we make, having the instinct to respond with integrity, having relationships that are mutually supportive, taking initiative

rather than waiting for things to happen, and being creative, not stuck in traditional ways of doing things.

There is a paradigm shift happening. It is shifting world views toward values that are focused on well-being of society and the planet and this will redefine career development, broadening its concept to include personal development and making a contribution. The tightening employment market might just channel a values revolution toward ours becoming a Post-materialistic society. The possibilities could completely change the employment proposition.

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