

Reflections on another year well spent

Margaret Beaton 22 December 2013

This is my final post for 2013. It's my opportunity to reflect on the joys of working with wonderful clients, teaching and learning through my blog, continuing to build my practice as an executive coach and being a non-executive director of two professional services firms.

Merry Christmas to all my followers. Have a restful and reflective break and return in 2014 to focus on those aspects of your life and career that are most important to you.

In doing so, please browse my favourite posts of 2014. Perhaps you'll let me know which one/s you found most useful and why. Drop me an email at margaret@beatonexecutivecoaching.com.

How often do you get lost in your work? explored those in 'flow' who are sublimely fulfilled in their life-careers. The research of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi used the 'flow' metaphor of being carried along by water to describe individuals so absorbed in single-mindedly performing a task that they are oblivious to the passage of time, bodily needs and even the environment around them.



Is fear holding you back? tackled the taboo topic of fear that distressingly pervades the corridors of too many firms. Not the fear of the common or garden variety of today's tough economic conditions, debt levels or adverse changes in the external environment. It's an unspoken fear that is more sinister and covert with which fearful individuals are left to deal themselves. It's fear related to insecurity and concerns about

due process, fairness and a feeling of not being in control.

How you can make better choices about your life and career questioned the all-too-common mistake of jumping too quickly to conclusions about your life and career because you give too much emphasis to the information immediately in front of you. I quoted Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman – author of **Thinking, Fast and Slow** – explaining the tendency to jump to conclusions in the phrase “what you see is all there is”.

Three ways relationships positively shape your career asked how much you have thought about the ways relationships can positively shape your career. It explored how relationships influence career decisions and direction drawing on **Through the Looking Glass** from the Center for Creative Leadership to explain why relationships are so important to careers: “Other people can help us see more clearly how specific activities ... or experiences fit into our career path” and offer guidance, affirmation and stretch.

Becoming an Ex wasn't about divorce; it described the process of exiting a life role. Becoming an Ex is an increasingly frequent part of life in today's world, referring to the process of both disengaging from a life or career role that is central to your sense of self and the re-establishment of a new identity in a new role. Understanding what's happening as you become an Ex prepares you for the pain – and the freedom – that the process brings.

Are you ready, willing and able to change? posed a question everyone should ask themselves about their career. Whether you are letting go to move on or stepping up into a new role, you need to be ready, willing and able to change. We all now understand nobody can or should expect to stay in the same organisation for life. If we haven't yet made one or several career moves ourselves, we know others who have.

Today there is no finish line showed how we differ from our parents in adult life. Once there were three periods each with a clear finish line: education (i.e. *development* that ended with a graduation ceremony), work (i.e. *productivity* that ended with a 'gold watch' presentation) and *retirement* (i.e. a period of leisure that ended in death). For our generation retirement isn't a period or even an event for that matter. There is no finish line that demarcates the end of work.

Stepping up requires seven shifts described stepping up from a technical or functional role into being business unit or organisational leader. There is always a significant transition when a leader takes on a new role; and the transition is biggest when it's into general management. This is the most challenging for any leader to make. Understanding the seven shifts that assure success is vital to success.

If you keep on going the way you are, you will miss the road to your future examined the thought that 'you will miss the road to your future' is taken from Charles Handy's great book *The Empty Raincoat*. Among the many gems in *The Empty Raincoat*, Handy explores one of the paradoxes of being successful. What helped you to get to where you are today is most unlikely to be what will keep you there in the future, let alone drive you to greater heights.

Break is the important part of breaking through showed when you make any significant life-career change you need to leave aspects of your past behind to move on, out or up. And when you make the break you will find new energy and creativity emerge to think and act differently. The words '*breaking up is hard to do*' in one of Neil Sedaka's great songs echo the themes of this post.

To be an authentic leader, first be true to yourself was based on a brilliant paper in *The Leadership Quarterly* shows that to be an authentic leader, you must first be true to yourself. Authentic leaders are the most influential and find their role near effortless. Authentic leaders are effective because there is full alignment between their self-identity and the leadership roles they occupy. They are resilient and have the stamina to constantly drive their organisations to higher levels.

I look forward to being back with you all on *Letting go. Stepping up.* in January.

This post was written by Dr Margaret Beaton, a director of [Beaton Executive Coaching](#) and [Beaton Research + Consulting](#). You can also find Margaret on [LinkedIn](#).