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Career Mistakes—Change Opportunities

a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

I don't mind sharing with you that I should have left a job much sooner than I did. Back in the early '80s I stayed in a position I never really liked, with an organization uninterested in growing me. Actually, I stayed three years longer than I should have stayed. It was a waste of time. The work bored me; my colleagues were difficult; my boss lacked skills for developing her staff; and nobody perceived my long term value. To say the least, those years were a struggle.

Why did I stay there? I feared change. Because of that, I sacrificed opportunities to make more meaningful contributions, achieve greater peace of mind, and participate in professional growth for "the familiar". A pretty big price to pay. Now I see how silly this kind of reasoning is. When I finally submitted my resignation, I was on my way to a stimulating, higher paying new job that launched the rest of my career. Really.

We make career mistakes all the time. Each one costs us something. Each one drains our energy, diminishes our self esteem, slices our self respect. Often these mistakes cost the company something too. The organization doesn't get the best of us, and that's unfair. We aren't as productive as we should be; relationships suffer; we fail to inspire the folks around us. We have to get clear about the changes we need to make-- whether we choose to

stay or go.

Sylvia

FEATURE ARTICLE

7 BIG CAREER MISTAKES

Many of the mistakes people make in their careers can be avoided. Do YOU see yourself in any of these below? If so, what can you do about it? What are you willing to do about it? Take a look.

1. Following mediocre performers.

Are you imitating “A” players at work or are you spending more time watching friends and acquaintances who may not be performing at an optimal level? If you’re interested in improving your current game or landing a dream promotion, you have to pay attention to the stars. Observe what they do and how they do it. Ask their advice. Follow their lead. Maybe even choose one as your mentor if that person wants to make the commitment. But stop investing in colleagues who are less than the best. If you don’t, you risk your professional future.

2. Ignoring meaningful feedback

Thinking you are above learning, developing, and growing is asking for trouble. One thing you can be sure of: anyone who excels at his/her job is taking constructive criticism to heart on a regular basis. Taking it to heart means hearing it, digesting it, integrating it, and using it to improve performance in a variety of ways. If your boss tells you that, as a project lead, you need to focus more on the details, you need to do this in order to be assigned the same level of responsibility again. Ignoring this feedback tells your boss that either you don’t care about his observations or you feel you don’t have to implement them to get expected results. Whatever the case, you communicate something negative.

3. Failing to solve problems

Problem solvers tend to keep their jobs, even in tough times. Problem solvers tend to get promotions. Why? They demonstrate enormous value to

their supervisors because problems abound in the workplace. The average employee creates or denies more problems than she solves. Become known as someone who sees problems realistically and finds different ways to resolve them. Do it frequently—and visibly. Don't be afraid to seek out your boss and say: "I've been thinking about X situation, and I have an idea about how we might deal with it so that our department maintains its credibility. Would you like to hear my thoughts?"

4. Hiding or diminishing your value

Make an assessment of how you contribute value to your workplace now. What specific skills do you offer? What personal characteristics do you have that really benefit the organization and individuals within it? What creative ideas do you have that you haven't yet shared? What suggestions could you make that would enhance the environment or culture? Now ask yourself what you are holding back and why you are allowing that. Do you fear that others may not like you? That they may envy you? That you may appear like you're trying to outshine them? If you continue to walk around with a blanket over your head at work, don't expect new opportunities to come to you.

5. Working in a vacuum

Doing your best work where you are and moving upward on your career path depends, in part, upon developing and nurturing relationships with other people. It's really difficult to thrive each day or climb the professional ladder if you shut folks out, spend most days in isolation, and behave as if you dislike the human race. Today more than ever in history work success requires partnerships and collaboration. These may be internal or external to your workplace--or both. But know that you obtain the best results when you function as a viable team player, an eager collaborator, a willing partner.

6. Avoiding risk.

Getting out of bed is a risk. Driving a car is a risk. Eating a piece of food is a risk. You could fall, crash, or choke. The message here is not to take foolish, outlandish risks that endanger our lives, jobs, or relationships. It's about knowing when to take the right risks for the right reasons to get more of what we want: superb project results, more respect from our boss and peers, additional responsibility, a bigger paycheck. Avoiding risk is sort of like avoiding life. To truly live and find fulfillment in what you are doing, you need to be open to risk-taking. Sometimes there aren't guarantees. But

to never volunteer for a unique assignment, to never speak your mind, to never ask for a promotion is to condemn yourself to a very bland existence with few rewards.

7. Staying in a job you despise

This is the career mistake that thousands make. They stay in a position with a company that stifles their creativity, demeans their worth, and kills their soul. They endure this anguish in the name of job security and all that it supposedly provides. This is a huge delusion. There is no job security. Less now than a decade ago. Know that you don't impress your boss or anyone by remaining in a job that drains your energy and robs you of your ability to do and offer your best. The more your job steals from you, the less you have to give other people. So nobody's really winning. You just think you are. Make the commitment to explore possibilities inside or outside your current career. Do it now while you still have a job.

RESOURCES

Turn Risks Into Rewards

There is a fascinating old book (published through SkillPath Publications) entitled *Risk-Taking: 50 Ways To Turn Risks Into Rewards* by Marlene Caroselli and David Harris that is a real golden nugget for anyone—even today. Content includes a brief risk-readiness assessment, lots of diverse ideas for stretching yourself in both big and small ways, and how to develop a network of supporters as you take more and more risks. Chapters are short and easy to read. The book is available for \$17.00 on Amazon.com by searching SkillPath Publications.

TIP

Your Mission: Search and Destroy A Mistake

Review the seven big career mistakes in the feature article and identify the ONE that presents the most problems for you. Why is this one such an issue? When did it first become an issue? What negative consequences are

you experiencing? How can you reduce or eliminate these negative consequences? Take one step toward less pain and greater fulfillment NOW.

Where in the World is SYLVIA?

Sylvia's latest **webinar series** looks at the "Three Moves" most of us will contemplate in our careers at one point or another: Stay in place, try for a promotion or find another position elsewhere. Recordings of the previous webcasts are still available, and it is not too late to sign up for the final live event, *Moving Out*. In fact, if you felt #7, staying in a job you despise, sounded like a mistake you are making when you read the feature article, this webcast on March 16 is for you. [Click here](#) for more information and registration.

A poorly fitting job requires a change, just like a poorly fitting pair of shoes!



Sylvia will be conducting a morning long **workshop** on Emotional Intelligence at a retreat for [Family Health Council](#) of Central Pennsylvania in Camp Hill on March 25. Contact Sylvia to discuss a customized presentation on this or another topic meaningful to your organization.

The Harrisburg Regional [Chamber of Commerce](#) is **a place** one can frequently see Sylvia. Not only is she there often for Chamber meetings and committee work, but she finds it a great place for holding private meetings and conducting other business.

About This Ezine

This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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About SYLVIA



Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on [ezinearticles.com](#). She has produced an audio CD entitled, “Making Change”, [two special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an e-book entitled, No Surprises: A Business Guide for Starting Your Coaching Practice.

More information is available at her [Launching Lives Website](#)

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives is an executive coaching company located in South Central PA. Its mission is to support persons in management positions to solve their most pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives focuses on BUILDING PEOPLE through individual, private coaching, group coaching,

specialized products, speeches, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching is the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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