GET FIRED! IT MAY BE GOOD FOR YOUR CAREER!

Early one Monday morning as I walked into my executive office after enjoying a wonderful weekend with family and friends, the owner's attorney informed me that the company I was working for had been sold and my services were no long required. The news was shocking! It was like getting hit on the chin by Mohammed Ali. It felt like a knockout punch! My character was bloodied and my self-esteem hit the floor. As I packed up my office, I realized in one brief moment, I went from CEO to CIO. From Chief Executive Officer to Career Is Over. I was 56 years old. I had been on the job for only six months. I had no idea what I would do with the rest of my life.

Over the next several weeks, my confidence slipped. I began doubting my self worth. I experienced depression and desperation. I was angry, confused, and questioned my poor choices and career decisions. I highlighted my mistakes, emphasized my shortcomings and really beat myself up. Unfortunately, our society, friends and family tend to define our worth in terms of our jobs, cars, titles, the size of our homes and other symbols of status. Many of us believe we have no need to look beyond those symbols for the truth about who we really are. Don't get caught in that trap.

If the above scenario has happened to you, for whatever reason, it's important to maintain your self-confidence. We've all had missed opportunities, challenges, failures and successes. We will continue to experience them because that's part of life's journey. So now what?

During the next several months, with love and support from family and friends, my head began to clear. I picked my self-esteem up from the floor and realized I had several choices available. I could view my new freedom as a good time to have a pity party with myself. I could update my resume and search for another "meaningful" job or I could acknowledge that out of adversity comes opportunity. I chose to see my unexpected circumstances as an opportunity.

I slowly re-wound the video of my life and began to explore my heart rather than my bank account. It became evident that most of us never have a career but rather a job. We routinely show up to collect our paycheck. We work hard fulfilling someone else's dream and give little thought to pursuing our own dreams. It was at that moment I made a decision to work for myself. I wanted to be in control of my own career, financial stability, and wellness. I decided to reinvent my life…my way. What about you?

So how does anyone reinvent themselves? I began by asking myself some of life's most basic questions: What's life all about? What's really important to me and what do I care most about? Has my previous life or jobs really had an impact on anyone? The questions came a lot easier than the answers.

I suggest you begin asking yourself many of the same questions. You can make better choices but first **you** must make a decision. Define precisely what you want to do. Create a plan. Here are some tips to help:

- Share your plan with others and solicit feedback. My first step in healing was to share my failures and disappointments with my wife. Be willing to ask for help from family, friends, and even former co-workers.
- Discover your passion. Be clear about what you want.
- Expand your horizons.
- Forget about age. Your biological age has nothing to do with what you can contribute to society.
- Take chances. Life is risky. Be open to new opportunities in front of you.
- Learn from your mistakes. You are not a victim.
- Fulfill your own dream. Do what you love. You have the power and possibility to create the future you want.
- Find a mentor.
- Take necessary action!

I know what you're thinking. How will I support myself and my family? The answer is simple but the task is not easy.

First, ask for help from those who know you best: colleagues, friends and family. What they see as your strengths and weaknesses will begin to guide you on your path to self-discovery. As your comfort level increases, the anger of losing your job will diminish. Explore your talents and skills and then develop them. Take responsibility for your life and career. Set goals and let your dreams put on work clothes. The compass for your life will begin to emerge, pointing you in the right direction.

Second, unless you've got a great severance package, you will probably have to find another job. I didn't say career, I said job. There is a difference. A job will provide the income necessary to take care of your immediate needs. A career should provide financial security, long-term growth and personal satisfaction

Third, make a personal commitment to avail yourself of a variety of resources such as business development centers, professional development seminars, and motivational books and tapes. They will open the door to new ideas as you focus your attention on your career options. Network! Network! Network! You never know whom you will meet that has the potential to connect you with someone who can help.

To create the life you deserve will require resolve, resiliency, persistence and hard work. Re-visit the lessons from your previous experiences. **Eliminate negativity from your life. People kept telling me what I couldn't do. Defining a new career is a full time job and requires a positive attitude.** This is a good time to take risks, embrace change and maintain a sense of humor. Remember your past. Trust in your future. If you're not the CEO of your life, now may be a good time to give yourself a promotion.

It's time to listen, it's time to learn, it's time to live…your life, your way. Let your "pink slip" be the magic carpet to your future career.

I welcome your comments.
Phil

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