

Holiday Reflections

For many of us, the holiday period and ensuing New Year is a time for taking stock: where are we, where have we been and where are we going.

One of our members called this week to extend holiday greetings. He had experienced a lengthy transition period that placed his family under severe financial duress. He landed eighteen months ago and it was pleasing to listen to him as he anticipated an enjoyable holiday with his family. The optimism and happiness in his voice were unmistakable and in stark contrast to his outlook two years ago.

There is no good or convenient time to be in transition, but the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Years are probably the worst time of all if you have been in transition for very long. Nonetheless, the recent series of Success Stories and increased activities should at least fortify you with renewed hope for the New Year. It is very difficult, even for the most faithful among us, to think optimistically when facing extended economic pressure added to career uncertainty. But recent chronicles of members who have landed after two and three years in transition all reveal an inner moral strength and sense of faith that have kept them going. As one of them put it, when you're tired of networking, network some more. Howard Weiner recently shared an account of TENG members, behaving as victims while interviewing with his new employer, which bear witness to the inner struggles that confront each of us. Giving up and acting as a victim are not the successful means of dealing with our issues. Career transition represents merely another challenge on our life's journey. In order to learn and grow, we must confront our challenges and work until we find ways to overcome them, not the reverse.

Many of our members will bask in the pleasure of knowing they have landed and can get on with their lives, both professionally and personally. Others will languish and wallow in self-pity, willing to take any position in desperation or completely giving up. One member just landed a desirable position after thirty-eight months in transition. He endured three holiday seasons while unemployed yet he kept the faith.

We were all socialized to believe that if we earned a college degree and worked hard at our careers, that wealth and security would naturally accrue to us over time. For some, this has been the case; but for a significant number of others, hope for a few luxuries and a comfortable retirement is bleak after spending down assets during lengthy unemployment. People are shocked to learn that they played by the rules but did not hit the jackpot they anticipated. Financial wealth and career success are not birthrights, but are moving targets influenced by many factors beyond our control. The constants of our world include change, along with integrity, diligence, ingenuity and persistence. Our world has changed but you may not have to change careers to succeed within it; rather you should be changing your expectations concerning the future of your career, how you build a flexible strategy to succeed and implement a tactical solution to meet your goals. Anyone who operates with the entitlement mentality that they put in their time, paid their dues and therefore deserves a wealthy lifestyle are deluding

themselves. As someone once said, “the definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing yet expect different results.” Corporations have bankrupted themselves by adhering to this same belief.

Not everyone understands that networking is the most essential ingredient needed to create a successful career. The wiser of our Alumni Members are aware that they must stay connected to professional colleagues. Some Alumni have already re-entered transition. Yet there exists a small but growing group of Alumni, who succeeded in changing jobs during the past year without making a stop to collect severance or unemployment. They were sought after and recruited via their network, leaving one job on Friday and starting the next on Monday. Almost without exception, they display a form of survivors’ guilt, being reluctant to share their Success Stories as if they had stolen a position from someone in transition. Yet their stories may be some of the most compelling and could serve as a source of hope to others.

This holiday period is a perfect time for you to reflect on how you have been managing your search campaign and how you will do it in the New Year to find the position you want. Beginning in about ten days, you will have the next six months to wage an intensive, full-time, non-stop career search, without any interruptions and excuses for holiday and summer slowdowns. The market is improving. You are still in control of your own campaign. Change your methods now, get off the Web and focus on networking.

If you are employed, savor your new opportunity during the holiday season and be thankful for this latest stop on your career journey, whatever its duration. Stay networked and prepare for the next one. If you are in active transition, take stock of your strengths, values, experience and education. Give thanks that you were able to earn and build upon them. Resolve to find and meet the people that need them in the New Year.

Thank you for being a member of TENG. May you have a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy and employed New Year.

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