



Article from

The Stepping Stone

August 2016

Issue 63

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

If Not Now, When?

Time to Spark Your Career Growth!

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We've all heard the expression, "If not now, when?" Perhaps it was a parent reminding you as a teenager to clean up your room, or a friend encouraging you to take a risk. My educator mother used to say it all the time, encouraging her students, her children and even herself to explore new challenges. The expression was her generation's version of "just do it!" Lately, we've seen Oprah using it as a rallying cry on commercials for Weight Watchers. No matter what the impetus, it is a good question to ask yourself periodically, especially when your growth seems to have stalled or slowed down.

As the warmer weather brings new growth all around us, it is the perfect time to ask yourself (and answer honestly):

Are you bored, frustrated, dissatisfied with your current career progress, or are you exactly where you want to be?

Do you drag yourself to work every morning and do just what is required to get by, or do you look forward to each day's challenges?

If your answer is the first part of either question, **now** is a great time to **get started**, one step at a time.

Here's how you can take a hard look at your career advancement and develop strategies to move ahead in three simple steps:

1. Before you can take action, you first need to understand **why** you feel this way and to identify the **root cause** of your dissatisfaction.
2. Knowledge is power! **What** are you going to do with this new self-awareness?
3. Now that you have developed further insights as to the direction in which you want to go, **how** do you proceed?

In this article, we will help you to uncover the "why," so that you can move forward in the right direction in Steps 2 and 3.

Let's take a look at Step 1. Before you can take action, you first need to understand **why** you feel this way and to identify the **root cause** of your dissatisfaction. Ask yourself these questions,

along with others that pop into your consciousness as you go through this exploratory phase:

- Is it the job? The boss? The company? The profession?
- How long have you been feeling this way? Is it recent or has it been ongoing for too long?
- Is the work too easy (e.g., you have become "the expert," with no room for growth)?
- Is the work extremely stressful, with too many hours and/or too long a commute?
- Are you afraid of change and uncertainty?
- Does your style and your boss's clash on a daily basis?
- Do your company's culture and strategy strongly differ from your own values?
- Do you have negative feelings about being passed over for an opportunity you thought you deserved?

Find a place away from distractions to focus on these questions and document your thoughts in a way most convenient to you—recording or writing notes on your mobile device or simple pen and paper. Even if you spend only 10 minutes a day, after a week or two, a pattern will emerge. Now step back and look at the big picture—what do you see? Better yet, ask someone you trust to take a look and tell you what they see.

Do you now have a better understanding of your **why**?

Once you do, you're ready to move on to Step 2: **What** are you going to do with this new self-awareness to better navigate your career in the right direction?

"None of us will ever accomplish anything excellent or commanding except when he listens to this whisper which is heard by him alone."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

If not now, when?

Editor's Note: Now that you've completed Step 1, join the conversation on the SOA Leadership & Development LinkedIn group forum at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4397530>, where Anne continues the dialogue with entries on Steps 2 and 3. ■



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