



Book Targeting the Job You Want

Kate Wendleton
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Recommendation

The mantra has been repeated so often that it’s become a clichŽ: Worker loyalty has disappeared, making every job temporary. Author Kate Wendleton repeats the obvious facts about the increasingly transient work force, but goes beyond the apparent as she supplies inventive ways to approach your career decisions. Her most intriguing suggestion is that you should use a "Seven Stories Approach" to develop your "Forty- Year Vision." The stories help you discover what you’re really passionate about so you can build a long-term vision to guide you meaningfully through your career. While the book is repetitious at times, it offers useful examples of job hunters who used Wendleton’s tactics to improve their careers. *BooksInShort* recommends this book to anyone who is interested in a fresh approach to career change, and to human resource professionals who want to know how applicants are (or should be) thinking.

Take-Aways

- Technology and the changing economy are making the job market more fluid.
- A recent college graduate can expect to have more than a dozen jobs in five separate careers.
- The job market constantly evolves as industries expand and retrench.
- Laid-off workers should consider looking for jobs with small companies and companies located outside of central business districts.
- Advancing in your career requires having the vision to see that you can change your life.
- A "Forty- Year Vision" helps you plan where you want to be in your career over the long run.
- A career coach can help set long-term goals and advise on negotiating salary or severance.
- Your long-term goals should focus on things that you’re good at and enjoy doing.
- Your internal issues, such as low self-esteem, can sidetrack your career.
- Longer life spans mean workers remain productive longer.

Summary

The Morphing Job Market

The changing economy and rapidly developing technology have combined to make the job market much more fluid and flexible than it was 20 years ago. The economy continues to morph, making traditional career planning techniques obsolete. Once, a loyal worker expected to stay with one employer for an entire career. But now jobs seem to be merely temporary assignments. Consider the statistics. The typical American worker has been in his or her job only four years. A recent college graduate can expect to have more than a dozen jobs in five separate careers. In 2010, half of workers will hold jobs that hadn't been invented in 2000.

“Ten years from now, half the working population will be in jobs that do not exist today.”

Want proof? In the early 1990s, few people had ever heard of industries that now employ countless people, such as health maintenance organizations, wireless communications, for-profit schools or the Internet. In 2010, half of all workers will have untraditional jobs and will not be full-timers on one employer's payroll. As a result, workers must engage in a continual job search. This concept means staying constantly aware of market forces inside and outside the organization where you work.

“Your career is not separate from your life. If you dream of living in a better place, you have to earn more money.”

Today, changing jobs is relatively easy. If you apply for a similar position at another organization, it's simple for you to display your skill and achievements. On the other hand, switching careers requires effort. If you want to switch to any industry where you have no experience, you will need to find a hiring manager who will make a leap of faith about you. To prove your interest and abilities, you can read industry trade journals, make contacts in the industry, join industry organizations and engage in activities that are relevant to the industry, such as taking courses, volunteering or getting a part-time job. Be persistent.

The Vision Thing

Finding a better job doesn't just require networking or dressing up for an interview. Advancing in your career requires a vision, which lets you see that you can change your life by setting goals and working persistently. Your life and your career are inseparably joined. A Forty-Year Vision will help you plan where you want to be and how to get there.

“People are happy when they are working toward their goals. When they get diverted from their goals, they're unhappy.”

First, determine what you want in the long run. Then, decide what you want to be able to offer employers (as opposed to what you can offer now). For instance, a secretary might have plenty of experience with phone work, but she might hate it. As a result, she should downplay that portion of her experience when looking for a new job. In general, seek jobs that allow you to use your experience and talents, while offering you room to grow.

“Studies have shown that up to 85% of all American workers are unhappy in their jobs. They feel that they would be happier elsewhere, but they don't know where.”

Workers without clear long-term goals frequently move from job to job when they're dissatisfied, but each move results in essentially the same position. Research shows that most American workers are dissatisfied with their jobs. They say they'd be happier in another job - but they're not sure what. People are generally unhappy when they get distracted from their ultimate goals and they are satisfied when they are working toward their goals.

“The economy is changing too fast for you to use the same old career planning techniques or the same old attitudes about job hunting.”

Making a forty-year vision into a reality requires research, exposure to dreams and possibilities, facts about those possibilities, learning about the skills demanded by employers, and job-search training to show you how to find the job you want.

Achieving your long-term goals requires you to master your internal issues and to deal with problems that might hold you back. This includes such concerns as a lack of self-esteem, inability to imagine a better future, lack of focus, lack of skills or no mastery of key skills, the inability to have fun, unwillingness to work hard or a conflict in values (for instance, you can't earn \$300,000 a year as a

social worker or by working two days a week).

Assessment

It's not easy to determine what sort of job would make you truly happy. No simple test delivers a clear, accurate answer. So, as a job seeker, you must think hard about what drives you. At the most superficial level, you should conduct an assessment that results in a three-part job target: how large a company do you want to work for, what is your ideal job description and where do you want to live?

“A vision helps people see ahead, and realize that they can not only advance in their careers, but they can change their life circumstances - such as who their friends are and where they live.”

On a deeper level, you can determine your true passions and goals by using the seven stories approach. Start by making a list of your accomplishments, things you enjoyed doing and that you did well. Spend a few days thinking about this, and write down specific, concrete accomplishments as they occur to you. Don't just note that you made a speech. Write that you made a presentation that won a certain contract. Don't just write that you enjoy running. Write that you won for your age group in a five-kilometer road race. Once you've compiled a list of 25 accomplishments, pick the seven that were most important to you. Then write a one-paragraph account of each of the seven accomplishments, describing the situation and what you enjoyed about the experience. After you've written your seven stories, examine them for common threads. You should find a repeated mention of motivated skills, that is, things you're good at and enjoy, activities that give you a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

“Think about the field you are in now, and how it is being affected by technology.”

This list of motivated skills will help you decide whether a certain job change is right for you. Other exercises also can help you identify your driving passions:

- Write your own obituary - See how you want to be remembered; take steps to get there.
- Invent your dream job - Name your ideal job to free yourself creatively and make it so.
- Pretend you just won \$10 million - What would you do if money didn't matter?

Ebbs and Flows

The job market is constantly changing, as industries expand and retrench, or as new technologies replace old technologies. Typewriter repairmen once had plenty of work; now that job barely exists. Bank tellers are being replaced by ATMs. Data entry, once a hot area, has lagged as those jobs move to low-wage markets. Some industries are hot at times, then cool off as workers overcrowd them. Nursing, law and engineering are among the fields that periodically face worker shortages and then have gluts as graduates flood the job market.

“Virtually every job and industry - whether it is publishing, entertainment, manufacturing, financial services or farming - is being impacted by technology and by the global marketplace. If you are not aware, you will be blind-sided.”

The worst case for the worker is to be in a retrenching industry, where there are more workers seeking jobs than there are jobs available. Often, people in retrenching industries deny that the downturn is permanent. Even top executives can be unaware of important changes, and therefore face lower-paying jobs as their skills become obsolete. A laid-off worker in a retrenching industry invariably targets that very industry in his job search. But workers in retrenching industries will find jobs more quickly if they target new industries.

“Any assignment (or job) you get is a temporary one. You're doing work, but you don't have a permanent job.”

Laid-off workers also should consider small companies and companies located outside of central business districts. While large companies do most of the downsizing in a down market, small companies frequently expand. Likewise, most new jobs are created in the suburbs, so workers should consider suburban companies in their searches.

Hot Jobs

Several technology and health care occupations are expected to be the fastest growing careers from 1996 to 2006. For example, jobs for database administrators and computer support specialists are expected to grow 118% from 1996 to 2006. Other growth occupations are computer engineers (109%), systems analysts (103%), home care aides (85%), physical therapy aides (79%), medical assistants (74%) and desktop publishing specialists (74%).

Growth Industries

While yesterday's fast-growing occupation can be outdated tomorrow, a number of industries are expected to offer strong opportunities over the long run:

- Consumer goods, particularly for marketing executives with direct-mail expertise.
- Computer software, but not hardware.
- Information technology, telecommunications and information systems.
- Publishing, particularly database marketers.
- Insurance, especially senior-level marketers with direct-mail experience.
- Pharmaceuticals and health care, especially outpatient clinics and home care.
- Engineering, especially manufacturing and software.
- Banking, particularly for credit card marketers, relationship managers and those with international experience.
- Waste management.

"In this changing marketplace, increasingly we all have to be out there selling ourselves."

No matter what industry you're in, improvements in microprocessors make it inevitable that technology will change your field. Every job and industry - whether it is publishing, entertainment, manufacturing, financial services, or farming - is being affected by technology and by globalization. Today, any job is merely a temporary post. No job is permanent - and each job should get you closer to the reality of your forty-year vision.

"If you don't decide where you want to go, you may wind up drifting from one organization to another whenever you're dissatisfied, with pretty much the same job each time."

Workers have become more transient, so retraining has grown increasingly important. People assume that retraining means teaching unskilled workers to use computers. In fact, everyone - even executives - needs constant retraining. New industries must hire workers from outside that industry, so by definition finding a job in a new field requires retraining.

Career Coaches

Few workers take advantage of career counseling, but everyone should. Just as you visit a doctor or dentist regularly, you should find a career coach or counselor who can offer check-ups on your career progress. A career coach can repair your current job problems, plan your career path, prepare your resume, plan your personal marketing effort, prepare you for a job interview, negotiate a salary or, if need be, negotiate a severance package. With an ever-shifting job base, workers must constantly market themselves. Career coaches help in this respect. Once they get to know you, coaches can warn you against making bad career decisions. But coaches aren't just for emergencies; talk to your coach often.

Careers Grow Longer

Life spans grew more in the 20th century than at any time in the past. As a result, careers are lasting longer, and people are productive and creative well into their 60s and 70s. Conventional wisdom says workers are most creative and energetic between the ages of 30 and 45. But as people live longer, they're able to enjoy multiple career peaks. For instance, Dr. Linus Pauling made a discovery while in his early 30s that earned him a Nobel Prize. In his 50s, he left science and toured the world to speak about world peace, earning a second Nobel Prize. Then he returned to science and conducted groundbreaking research on nutrition and vitamins. Many people reach peaks of achievement after 65. Unfortunately, corporate culture espouses early retirement and layoffs for managers in their 40s and 50s. Because of this sort of age prejudice, many productive older people must depend on their own skills and expertise, rather than on a corporate employer. These workers often start their own businesses or, depending on their credentials,

work independently as consultants, doctors, lawyers and writers.

About the Author

Kate Wendleton founded The Five O'clock Club in 1978 to help job hunters and career changers. Wendleton is a syndicated columnist and an expert on job searches and career development. She holds an M.B.A. and was chief financial officer for two small companies.
