

Finding the Elusive Dream Job – Tip 1

When people reach mid-career or mid-life, they often begin to notice they are having to struggle to get up in the morning to go to work, are bringing work or problems home (not a good place to do that), or are beginning to get that burned out feeling of malaise about life in general. If their *significant other* raises these issues, it sometimes leads to resentment and relationship problems.

If the above resonates with you or, as you read it, you said to yourself, “Boy, I can relate to that,” it’s time for you to take control of your career. You’ve probably heard people say “Do what you love and the money will follow,” “Make your job fun,” or “Find a job where you will be happy.” These are easy to say (they are clichés) but it is far less easy to do what they say. Rather than tell you the same thing, let me share a personal story. The name is fictional; the story is real.

Passion

Andy worked for an international media and communications company as the chief logistics person in Europe. He was always redesigning the supply chain process because the company kept coming out with new electronic *gizmos* (as he called them). He loved what he did, hated the industry, and wanted to change careers to do something that involved sailing (his passion).

I have a reasonable understanding of what’s involved in logistics for fast-moving commercial products, consider myself an expert at career strategy and making career changes but, admittedly, I know nothing about sailing. I am a Southern California native who, as a teen, occasionally stuck his toe in the ocean and got more than his fair share of sunburns at the beach.

Thinking that perhaps builders of sailboats might have a need for someone with his logistics expertise, I sent him off to research career opportunities with them. He found that they were mostly small builders who all could use his skills but didn’t have the volume of business to need or employ someone with his expertise.

We then looked at the supply chain for building sailboats. If boat builders weren’t an option, who did they purchase products from to put into customers’ sailboats? It turned out to be a combination of manufacturers and distributors.

Perseverance

Starting with manufacturers of products first, Andy found that most were small to mid-size companies, again many of them could use his skills and expertise but none were large enough to be able to employ someone like him.

We were at our last option – distributors. I was beginning to think he wouldn’t find his dream job and my reputation would soon be toast. I sent Andy out to talk to all the distributors he

could find. Sure enough, he came back that they were all small companies with owners who ran the business pretty much as a hobby business and none had any logistics expertise.

There just had to be something in this for Andy. Because I really trust my process, I debriefed with Andy again and asked about each distributor in detail. Who were they, did he ask them the questions I helped him develop? What did they say? Fortunately, Andy had taken very good notes (as I had instructed him to do).

One of the distributors turned out to be owned by two young guys (like him) who had recently started the business because they too had a passion for sailing and wanted to do something that allowed them to be close to the water.

I then sent Andy back to the boat builders to find out what types of problems they encountered before they could deliver the boats to their customers. The result was that they often were delayed because they had to wait to get equipment and other options delivered so they could install them.

Andy then went to some of the equipment and other product manufacturers to find out what problems they had with their boat builder customers. The result, as you might suspect, was that the builders waited too long before ordering the equipment and products they needed and the manufacturers often needed more lead time.

Dream Job

Andy was the solution to the problems on both sides. He went back to the two guys who started their distributorship and proposed that they hire him to be the go-between with the manufacturers and the boat builders, helping to make sure the parts suppliers delivered what the builders needed to the distributorship who would make sure they were available to the boat builders when they needed them – i.e., just-in-time inventory control. It clicked and Andy had a new job.

A couple of years later when I spoke with Andy, he admitted that he wasn't making as much as he probably would if he were still working for the electronics company but he had several sailboats that the builders let him use to show to prospective customers and the product manufacturers loaned him new versions of their products to install on the boats and show to prospective customers. They gave him an expense allowance to take people sailing and demonstrate their products.

The distributorship became the largest and most successful and Andy said he loved his new "job" so much he *almost* felt guilty getting paid for it. Neither of us imagined this job when he started his career search and it clearly demonstrated that sometimes you *really* can find your dream job if you only look hard enough and *persevere*.

Carl Wellenstein is an employment and career strategist located in Southern California and is the author of [12 Steps to a New Career](#). He helps those in mid-career facilitate career advancement, expedite job changes, and pursue new career destinies.