



John E. Long Career Coach

John is a Global Career Development Facilitator and Professional Career Coach. He works with a broad range of clients seeking assistance with career exploration, career development and career transition. John has specialty training in the interpretation of personality and career assessments, such as the MBTI®, Strong® and WPI®. He also focuses on work-life balance, time and stress management, and examining life roles.

John offers customized services to identify what motivates each client and to clarify aspirations the client can pursue with passion. Coaching is about support, encouragement, and action to meet the client's needs and achieve meaningful results.

SERVICES OFFERED

- Career Coaching
- Executive Coaching
- Outplacement Coaching
- Testing & Assessment
- Career Development
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- Training & Workshops

Contact John for a complimentary phone consultation.

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A NEWSLETTER OF PERSONAL
AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH
FROM JOHN E. LONG, GCDF, CPCC



Midlife Career Change: Overcoming the Obstacles

Midlife is a lot like being a teenager again—only with more wisdom. We may not stay out all night and run with a wild crowd, but many in their 40s and 50s experience the same restlessness and yearning for change. We're still asking questions about what we want to be when we grow up, but the questions are deeper, more profound. This time we won't settle for less than what makes us truly happy.

This is especially true for the work we do. Yes, we want to pay the bills, support a family, save for old age. But many of us now want our work to be meaningful and make a difference. We ask ourselves: if not now, then when? What better time to act on those unfulfilled dreams? Work is one of the most profound ways we live our true selves, and now is the time to start doing that.

Yet, it can seem as if there's a chasm between the knowing and the doing. We know something's not right with our job or career path, but we tell ourselves to live with it. We set goals but feel too overwhelmed with daily life to try something new. We worry that to make a change to follow a dream would be selfish, especially if it means a loss of income, or upsets our family and friends.

In fact, every person living out his or her dreams gives a gift to the world—a gift because it inspires others to do the same.

"We often hesitate to follow our hearts, to grow, because of perceived barriers," writes Carole

Kanchier in *Dare to Change Your Job—and Your Life*.

Breaking Down the Barriers

Her book is one of many resources that help break down those barriers, the two biggest of which are fear and confusion.

Fear. We think: *I'm too old to change. If I switch jobs now, I'll have to start over at the bottom. What if I fail, then what?* Fear is normal, and it's important to acknowledge it. There are numerous tactics to help you through the fear. The most powerful may be looking to others who've gone through life/career changes.

Confusion. Many of us are clearer about what we don't want than what we actually do want. We may have lived out others' expectations of us for so long that we're not even sure what actually makes us happy. Or we're not certain how to turn our many talents and skills into meaningful work.

Coaches are an excellent resource to help you ask the right questions to sharpen your focus and goals. They can guide you to imagine and create real work that isn't just a job, but a whole new life.

Whether it's a new career or small shifts in how you work, making a change in midlife can bring new energy and joy for life. Like being a teenager again—only better. ●

Top 10 Ways to Be Accountable

Unfortunately, it's all too easy to weasel out of a commitment that we make only to ourselves. Sometimes all it takes is a promise to someone else to spur us to live up to our commitments. Here are the Top 10 ways to hold yourself accountable.

1. **Ask a friend or loved one** to support your efforts.
2. **Have an accountability partner.** Perhaps someone you see at trainings or a work buddy.
3. **Set SMART goals.** Then measure your results against them.
4. **Reward yourself.** Make it really fun or pleasurable to achieve what you commit to!
5. **Work with a coach.** A coach will remind you of

your vision and commitments, and help you explore your roadblocks to action.

6. **Create or join a "nag" group** or a "dream circle"—any group of people you report to regularly.
7. **Keep accurate records and have others review them.** A bookkeeper could keep you accountable for producing monthly financials.
8. **Put money on it.** You'll get really serious!
9. **Publicly declare.** Now your public reputation is riding on your word.
10. **Establish heinous consequences.** Donate to an organization whose activities you abhor if you do NOT follow through on your commitment. ●

Self-Quiz How Well Do You Present?

Whether presenting to a group of 10 around a boardroom table or a full house of 3,000, there are a few essential skills that make the difference between an excellent and a ho-hum speaker. Take the following Self-Quiz to see how well you do.

True False

- 1. I make sure before presenting that I have energy, enthusiasm and excitement. I know that if I don't have them, no one listening will either.
- 2. Knowing that rehearsing is crucial to a great presentation, I rehearse aloud several times—at least one of which is in front of a practice audience that will give me plain, honest feedback.
- 3. If the presentation is a truly important or critical one, I memorize my script and use videotaping during my rehearsals to help me fine-tune my delivery.
- 4. Because studies have shown that using visuals has a dramatic effect on message retention, I use visuals as often as possible. However, I actually make it VISUAL (pictures, graphs, tables, props), and not just a bunch of words on a PowerPoint slide.
- 5. To establish and enhance my rapport with a large or small group, I make eye contact with as many people in the audience as I can.
- 6. I use funny anecdotes—especially ones “against” me—to help me get an audience on my side.
- 7. I make sure to vary my pitch and speed of speaking and to project to the back of the room.
- 8. I use my whole body as a dynamic tool to reinforce my rapport with the audience; my posture conveys confidence and enthusiasm.
- 9. I use my hands with purpose and intention, leaving them at my side when not gesturing.
- 10. I repeat important messages, and I keep the main messages I want to convey to no more than three.
- 11. Stories are powerful. I use them to enhance my instruction and convey my messages.
- 12. I use my breath to calm any jitters I have either before or during my presentation. I remember that the audience does not notice my nerves nearly as much as I think they do.

After a presentation, it's important to honestly evaluate it, determine what your learning is, and resolve to address any problems that came up. If you answered “true” five or fewer times, you may want to work on ways to improve and refine your presentation skills. ●



What support do you need to break through what's holding you back?

Relevant Reading

60-Minute Strategic Plan, by John E. Johnson and Anne Marie Smith

Brand It Yourself: The Fast, Focused Way to Marketplace Magic, by Lynn Altman

Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins: How to Use Your Own Stories to Communicate With Power and Impact, by Annette Simmons

The Laws of Lifetime Growth: Always Make Your Future Bigger Than Your Past, by Dan Sullivan and Catherine Nomura

Goal-Free Living: How to Have the Life You Want NOW! by Stephen M. Shapiro

“Flaming enthusiasm, backed by horse sense and persistence, is the quality that most frequently makes for success.” —Dale Carnegie

Play to Your Strengths

How often have you invested in personal growth training to try to improve things you felt you were not good at? Perhaps it was marketing, sales, personnel management or public speaking. For most of us, trying to improve our weak areas in operating our business or managing our department comes with the territory. Whatever the area, we feel as if we are required to do battle with what we don't do well.

As it turns out, the majority of people around the world feel this way. In their groundbreaking book *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, authors Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton say that across all ages and cultures, people are more concerned about their weaknesses than their strengths. We believe that our weaknesses matter more in holding us back than our strengths matter in advancing us.

That's nonsense, say the authors—widely held nonsense, but nonsense nonetheless. In their provocative theory, they suggest that the better strategy is to play to your strengths, building upon your core talents and working around your weaknesses. You can work to add skills and knowledge to increase your performance in any area, but unless you are building upon one of your innate talents, your efforts won't produce exceptional results—some results, yes, but not dramatic improvement.

"Unless you have the necessary talent, your improvements will be modest," write Buckingham and Clifton. "You will be diverting most of your energy toward damage control and very little toward real development."

The expression "damage control" is their term for trying to minimize your weaknesses—the areas where your lack of talent actually get in the way of your performance.

"Managing Around" a Weakness

Instead of trying to overcome your weaknesses by brute force—and at the expense of putting the same energy into growing your strengths—try these ways to, as the authors call it, "manage around" your weakness:

Get a little better at it. In some cases, your weakness may be only moderately impeding your peak performance in other areas. If so, then maybe damage control is the right solution.

Develop a support system. This is the proverbial string tied around the finger to remind you of something. Whether it is time management systems



for those with a talent for adaptability but not discipline, or a scheduled walk in the park for disciplined folks who neglect self-care, you can often blunt the effects of your weaknesses through such structured inputs.

Tie a weakness to a strength. If your skills tend toward the analytical and away from such talents as wooing clients or dealing directly with confrontation, then you probably ought not to be spending a lot of time in sales. But when you do have to sell something—such as one of your ideas—approach the problem analytically. Rather than agonize over your lack of salesmanship, study your prospects, dig into what makes them tick and what ideas they've accepted in the past, and let your enthusiasm for your ideas do the talking.

Find a partner. This may be the best approach for small business people and "solo" practitioners. Go into partnership discussions with a clear-eyed understanding of the strengths you bring, and the strengths you need from your partner. Don't be shy about your strengths—the whole point of this is to create a world in which you get to do what you are really good at. And be open-minded about what a partnership looks like. For some solo practitioners, an administrative assistant or a marketing consultant could be all the partnering you need.

Just (Don't) Do It. The last option, say Buckingham and Clifton, is just don't do the things you are weak at. In a corporate setting you might get away with this, particularly if you are a high-performer in the areas

of your strengths. If you're a small business owner or solo-entrepreneur, and your organizational chart has "me" written in most every box, *not* doing something may not seem like much of a choice. But keep it as a goal and continue to work toward the day when you can contribute to your business exclusively from the place of your highest strengths. ●



BEYOND the Box

The following questions are designed to broaden perspectives, to open vistas, to widen the lens. There is no one right way to approach them. You can journal about them, talk to friends, create art, ponder them while driving or working out, dance them—whatever helps you explore "outside the box."

1. What brings me joy and excitement?
2. What does it cost me to "play it safe"?
3. Whose life is it anyway?
4. What are my gifts to the world?
5. What's the relationship between accountability and success? And integrity?
6. What's my relationship with getting support?
7. What does it cost me to not follow through on my dreams/goals?
8. How much can others count on me? How much can I count on myself?
9. What's the value of rehearsing?
10. How is my tone and body language a match to my words?
11. What's the cost of trying to do it all myself?
12. What would my life be like with a powerful support system?
13. What does "life as celebration" mean to me?
14. What does stepping over my accomplishments cost me?
15. What is it to truly "savor" my successes?

Don't Miss a Step: Take Time to Celebrate

The path of a goal, whether a goal set for your personal life or in the course of business, is generally seen as having four steps: 1) assess the situation, 2) set goals for how you want it to be, 3) take steps to achieve the goals, and 4) achieve the goals (completion).

After Step 4, many people return to Step 1 with the question: "OK, what's next?" And then it's on to Step 2 and 3 and 4 again.

Hold on. Stop right there.

There is actually a very important fifth step that many of us leave out. Step 5 is where we *celebrate* our achievements! After working hard to reach our goals, taking time to celebrate gives us the opportunity to:

- **Capture the learning.** When we take stock of what we've learned along the way to our goals, we can *consciously* incorporate those lessons in the future.
- **Acknowledge our internal resources.** In achieving goals, we bring forth various internal resources, such as courage and persistence, to meet the challenges. To have others acknowledge us—and to give ourselves credit, as well—is deeply satisfying. Too often, we miss seeing these qualities in ourselves and others.



Acknowledging our strengths has the power to call us forth to use them even more.

- **Build a sense of unity.** Nothing can bond people more than striving toward a common goal and then sharing in the joy of the achievement. However, if you don't stop to appreciate the people who helped make it happen, connection and goodwill can break down. Your team will feel more inclined to go the extra mile if you give them the appreciation they deserve.

- **Send a message to the Universe.** Stopping to savor and celebrate your successes sends the message out into the Universe that you know how to appreciate

this success and that you are ready for more!

- **Have fun!** Knowing that you get to celebrate in a fun way after your goal is achieved is a great motivator. You've done a fantastic job—of course you want to be rewarded with some fun and enjoyment. *You deserve it!*

There are countless ways to celebrate and savor your successes. Whatever brings you a sense of joyous completion is the ticket. Be as creative as you can! ●

"The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet."
—Theodore M. Hesburgh

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