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INFORMED. INDISPENSABLE. IN-HOUSE.

My Rainy Days

Skills and Professional Development





A Fripp Island neighbor

This is my last column about my recent job transition. I've learned a lot from the experience, as you may have gathered from previous columns. Sooner or later, most of us will change jobs but this page is for Small Law voices, not Career Development voices.

I actually look back fondly on my seven-month hiatus from the working world. Don't get me wrong; it wasn't entirely pleasurable. I wondered (many times) whether I'd ever find another in-house position, and sometimes felt as though the silence that met most of my applications was compelling evidence of my abject unhireability. I will not miss the "How's the job search going?" and "Any good prospects?" questions from well-intentioned friends and family.¹ However, overall, I benefitted so very much from the time to pause, reflect, and regroup.

1 I'm promising right here that any urge I'm feeling at the moment to write a column about "care and feeding of your in-transition friends and loved ones" will be channeled towards my LinkedIn account or another outlet that isn't this one.

I attribute this to a combination of good fortune and preparation. I was lucky that I knew that my time at my former company (and the company itself) would likely end soon. By the time the fated day actually arrived, I'd already begun to reacquaint myself with the search process, in-house employment norms, and everything that had changed about those things over the years. I'd learned that it often took qualified candidates one or two years to find a suitable replacement for the positions they left. This helped me and my family keep heart months into the process. I sought advice from those who'd been through transitions and was heartened by the many positive outcomes shared with me.

I understood the importance of building and maintaining one's network in these circumstances. This helped me strike a healthier balance in the choices I made about what to focus on from week to week. I attended many ACC chapter events, retained a career coach, and followed up on volunteer

opportunities I'd long been curious about.

One critical component that sometimes gets overlooked during the rush to find a new job is just how to get along in the meantime. I've been a little hesitant to address this here because circumstances and options can vary so greatly between individuals, but it was so fundamental to my transition that I can't skip it. Put simply, we'd accumulated an emergency fund amounting to more than a year's net income, held in a safe, liquid account. There was no trick to getting this done. Basically, we resisted a couple of fundamental temptations, namely to move to a "nicer" home and to drive newer, more expensive vehicles.

This allowed me to enter the transition period knowing that if it lasted a couple of years, then we'd be fine. Knowing that, and based upon the experiences of many colleagues who'd gone down this path, it was unlikely that I'd need that much time. I cannot overstate how much my level of certainty about these two things aided in my ability to keep pushing forward through the transition period.

Even though I started searching for my next position before I left my last one, I still had time, and resources, to allow for a little balance, and even enjoyment. I started with a week on the beach at Fripp Island in South Carolina, a long-scheduled annual trip to catch up with old friends. I accepted a speaking engagement in Washington, DC. I attended the ACC Mid-Year Meeting in New York. I spent the better part of a week in Paris to participate in a board meeting and to experience solo overseas travel for the first time. I caught up with family on the Door Peninsula in Wisconsin. I visited Disney World² for the first time in nearly two decades. And, I finally got to see Elvis Costello³ in concert after decades of waiting. I don't mean to brag about my experiences over the past year. I would have rather been employed. But it was important to continue living in order to get back to working.

Are you ready for your next transition? Do you have the resources saved if you get a termination letter? Are you living a lifestyle that can fray at the seams if you don't get a paycheck? If not, what can you do now to get closer to being ready for your next transition?

2 If you haven't been in years, and are resisting pressure from friends or family to procure one or more Disney-themed t-shirts, know this: visitors not wearing such items now appear to be in the minority. It's a little eerie.

3 I'm happy to report that Elvis, at 63, is still very much at the top of his game.

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