

Ensuring a successful broadcast career

Consultations with several hundred industry members via the Canadian Women in Communications (CWC/AFC) nationwide career consulting program has provided an interesting, if somewhat unscientific, snapshot of what constitutes a successful and happy career in broadcasting.

The following are broad pointers to priorities that I find successful individuals in executive, regulatory, production, sales and marketing positions have foremost in their consciousness:

In order of importance:

- An awareness and real accommodation of innate and learned competencies.
- Permission (self-given) to highlight enjoyment as primary career objective.
- A dynamic work environment that allows growth and evolution.
- Significant and regular external validation of ability and achievement.
- Adequate compensation.

These points seem simple and self-evident, yet I am always startled to discover how few people actually think about them in evaluating their contribution to the industry. Most perceive themselves at the mercy of the employer with few or no creative career options after the age of 35.

I truly believe that healthy professional self-esteem stems directly from thinking of one's career as an investment of talent, ability, experience and personality. This being so, an individual will at any point in time, be able to consider subjective workplace vicissitudes in an objective fashion.

Conscious self worth will easily allow the individual to:

- Articulate/sell/market competencies and experience.
- Look for an appropriate fit as opposed to just a position.
- Differentiate individual skill-set/personality from any competition for a

position/promotion.

- Evaluate acknowledgement, salary and career advancement in line with proven excellence.
- Bypass clichéd industry myths relating to transferability to other industry areas ... Being *locked in* is a perception reinforced by non-thinking/lazy hirers and recruiters.
- Develop a network of like-minded relationships that provide validation and clues to possible next steps.

False Modesty

At this point I must discuss the concept of modesty. We Canadians are loath to toot our own horns and, indeed, often take great pride in understating who we are. The problem is we aren't always happy when we are paid or treated as less than what we are.

In an age where profiling and remote control communication is the order of the day, we would do well to remember that being able to draw the distinction between modest and false modesty.

Being able to succinctly, accurately and relevantly communicate what we can do career-wise, as well as how we expect to be recompensed, is not immodest, but rather a skill in itself!

Creative Input

Another important aspect of a career in broadcast (or any other, for that matter) is the ability to ensure our originality and creativity is accommodated. I have noticed from my interaction with CWC/AFC participants that the inability to contribute original thinking is the most common complaint regarding career evolution.

It seems to be a strange fact that, as long as things are going *lickety-split*, organizations don't really seem to care for innovative or creative input.

The onus then is on the individual to ensure that the emphasis is placed on the importance of making a creative and original input at all times. This would begin during the interview process. I see



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so many talented individuals either applying for positions that don't require this aspect of their make-up or by playing down this ability during the interview process. I have long railed in this space against those who believe template compliance as the best way of achieving career goals.

Dynamic career evolution requires:

- Willingness to pursue a position that fully utilizes who you are.
- The ability to be and communicate who you are, rather than who you are expected to be.
- Realization that who you are and what you suggest might irk lesser minds.
- Acceptance of organizational/corporate limitations that might exist... in other words be willing to make a real effort that requires *hair on your teeth* to fully invest who you are.

Employer Responsibility & ROI

Ideally corporations and organizations should be aware that an under-utilised employee is an unhappy employee. Relevant career planning that ensures the recognition and utilization of excellence will give true meaning to human capital and return on monetary, time and knowledge investment.

Can you really afford to let excellence walk out the door?

"A society which eulogizes the average citizen is one which breeds mediocrity."

—Pierre E. Trudeau