



Maryland Career Development Association

January 2021 Newsletter

In this issue:

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>A Renaissance for Career Development</i> | 1 |
| <i>Pandemic Pivot</i> | 3 |
| <i>Leading Authentically: A Coaching Framework</i> | 4 |
| <i>MCDA and PACDA Form New Partnership</i> | 7 |

A Renaissance for Career Development

You are needed now more than ever. *And this will only continue in 2021 and beyond...*

Whether you are a career counselor, coach or consultant, the data on labor markets and employment trends paints a clear picture that **ongoing** career development guidance and job search assistance will become critical in order for individuals to successfully navigate a constantly changing economic landscape and the continuous upheavals caused by technological disruption.

In 2020, we witnessed the US unemployment rate go from a historic 50 year low of 3.5% (February) to an unprecedented high of 14.7% (April). Whole industries such as leisure and hospitality were massively hit, and nearly every organization on the planet had to pivot on a dime. Currently, unemployment is at a still elevated level of 6.7% (November), and while the economy recovered better than some feared, it appears that the ultimate road to recovery is likely to be a long one. (Indeed’s Hiring Lab, a team of economists who provide global labor market insights, recently published a [report](#) reviewing the 2020 labor market and providing a forecast for 2021.)

At the same time the pandemic ravaged the economy, it also ushered in the future of work with a bang turbocharging many of the changes that were already taking place slowly but surely over the last decade. Alongside increases in remote work and gig work, BLS data reveals a steady decline in the length of tenure for employees, and increasingly so the younger the demographic, e.g. workers aged 25-34 stay with their employer an average of only 2.8 years. In addition, career paths are becoming increasingly nonlinear and “episodic” as coined by Farai Chideya, resulting not only *multiple job changes* over the course of one’s lifetime, but also *multiple career transitions*.

The World Economic Forum’s recent [Future of Jobs Report 2020](#) provides valuable data and insights in this regard. Interestingly, the number of jobs eliminated by technological change will actually be surpassed by the number of new jobs created (although in contrast to previous years the rate of job creation is slowing while the rate of job destruction is accelerating). WEF estimates that “by 2025, 85 million jobs may be displaced by a shift in the division of labour between humans and machines,

while 97 million new roles may emerge that are more adapted to the new division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms.”

So what does this all mean?

It means complacency is not an option. It means we must all embrace lifelong learning, constantly upskill and in some cases, reskill.

It means career development stands on the precipice of opportunity for a renaissance. And it means organizations like MCDA are needed now more than ever...

Professional associations such as MCDA can play a critical role in ensuring its members keep pace and stay abreast of all these changes. Take a moment and think how much the job search has changed in the last year...Virtual interviews became the norm. Social media became a crucial means for networking. Obtaining an employee referral became more important than ever given the increased competition, and LinkedIn profiles became increasingly, if not more, important, than resumes in a digital world.

Moreover, the same technological forces at play in the economy at large apply to our own field. Automation, AI and machine learning are impacting the job search at both ends of the funnel, i.e. on the employer side and on the jobseeker side. ATS's have become ubiquitous. Asynchronous interviews are on the rise. Resume optimization tools abound. Earlier this year, LinkedIn rolled out a new [AI-powered instant interview feedback tool](#) to help jobseekers.

It is not just the job search that is changing, the very nature of career development in the Fourth Industrial Revolution is fundamentally changing. Accordingly, we've seen a paradigm shift and in particular, the growing popularity of life design in two distinctly different forms - the life design counseling intervention (a narrative discourse model) developed by renowned career development scholar, Mark Savickas, which seeks to help individuals make meaning by constructing their career story, and the life design methodology created by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans of Stanford's Life Design Lab which applies design thinking (a human-centered, iterative problem solving process meant to spur innovation) to the “wicked” problem of one's career. While these approaches may seem prima facie vastly different, they actually share some important similarities, and both provide meaningful ways to help individuals navigate career transitions in an era of uncertainty and to move forward with greater confidence.

It seems as if almost everything about work is changing - not only the actual work itself, i.e. what we do, but our very relationship to work, where and how we work and increasingly, even why we work. The future of our field demands that we as career development professionals also embark on a journey of continuous learning and work to develop innovative, new tools and frameworks to assist those we serve.

MCDA is well-positioned to help lead this charge. However, MCDA is only as strong as its membership. We need your active engagement. If you are currently a member, become more involved in 2021. [Join a committee](#), recruit new members, help forge new partnerships, share your expertise by writing an [article](#) or facilitating a [webinar](#) and of course, participate in our programs. If you are not currently a member, [join our community](#) and share your knowledge, skills and talents. As we enter this new year, help us reignite the vitality of MCDA, and in turn contribute to a renaissance for career development worldwide.

Julie Neill
MCDA President



[Back to top](#)

Pandemic Pivot

By Karol Taylor



The coronavirus created a series of phrases and buzzwords now in common usage, many of them descriptive of our current situation. They include social distancing, lockdown, elbow bump, and pivot. The term “pivot” has become a buzzword referring to a significant organizational change – ranging from mild to dramatic. A pivot is usually intended to help an organization recover from a tough period, or survive after experiencing factors that make the original business model unsustainable. In other words, to pivot is to switch business models.

Early in March, many employees were asked to pivot. We were told to work from home, that there was a possibility of COVID-19 exposure if we didn't. To avoid an outbreak, access to offices was limited or denied. Suddenly our world and our routines changed. We immediately changed to a new way of conducting business. Some were ready; some were not. Each of us adjusted our patterns and behaviors, and quickly developed new ones so our work continued. We experienced the power of the pivot.

In the late 80s, Joel Barker promoted the idea of paradigm shift in his video, *The Business of Paradigms*. Barker used the example of the invention of the quartz watch. The Swiss made it and thought of it as a novelty. The Japanese saw it and incorporated it into their economy, which then thrived. Before the shift, the Swiss were known for their timepieces; with the change to quartz, it's now the Japanese who hold that spot. Barker noted the importance of pivoting (a word not used at that time) to ensure success as unexpected change takes place.

Barker makes these key observations about paradigm shifts, which seems comparable to pivots:

- (1) Paradigms are common. They apply to all areas of our lives.
- (2) Paradigms are useful. They show us what is important.
- (3) A warning: Sometimes paradigms become THE paradigm – the only way to do something. Thereafter, any new idea is rejected out of hand. The change has been so disruptive it is difficult to envision alternatives to the new ways of conducting business. Barker calls this "paradigm paralysis."
- (4) The people who create new paradigms are usually outliers. They are not part of the established community. They need not be young, but they are people who are not invested in the old paradigm.

- (5) Paradigm pioneers/pivoters must be courageous.
- (6) You can make the choice to change your paradigm – to see the world from a totally new perspective. It's up to you.

According to Barker, paradigm pioneers, who would be today's pivoters, possess these characteristics:

1. Intuition. The ability to make good decisions with incomplete information.
2. Courage. The willingness to move forward in the face of great risk.
3. A commitment of time. Paradigm pioneers/pivoters understand how much time it takes to go from a rough concept to a working paradigm.

My August article shared about the difficulty of transition our emotional responses to accommodate change. It addressed how change happens immediately, but emotional transitioning takes time and effort. Nine months into the pandemic, we have now had time to accept the change and to adjust to accommodate it. We have had time to get past our initial shock when we pivoted and now we are finding new ways of successfully completing our tasks.

Kudos to each of us for pivoting quickly, accommodating change, and finding new and effective ways to conduct business. We are safely ensconced at home, doing our jobs, and finding new ways of doing them effectively. Congratulations on a successful pivot.

Resource: http://vasthead.com/Articles/Business_of_Paradigms.html



Karol Taylor has been a member of MACD/MCA and MCDA for more than 17 years, 13 as an MCDA Board member and executive leader, and 8 on the MACD/MCA Board. Karol is an award-winning expert in the federal job search, but she also has expertise in leadership and organizational development. The emergence of COVID-19 motivated Karol to consider how people might respond in the new telework-place.

[Back to top](#)

Leading Authentically: A Coaching Framework

By Sunitha Narayanan

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Leadership is under siege in the time of COVID-19. Leaders' communications, decisions about business direction, talent management, and results are being put to the test by the enormity of this crisis. How does a leader practice authentic leadership in a landscape that is turbulent and in which

much is unknown? Leaders we work with are questioning not only how to be authentic leaders but what authentic leadership even is.

To help calm this angst and provide practical solutions, the following framework helps clients successfully reconnect with and practice behaviors that sustain a definition of leading authentically. This framework includes noticing strengths, being curious, practicing kindness, and staying connected, especially in a landscape that feels restless, uncertain, and overwhelming.

Notice Strengths

A key starting point is to help clients recognize the resiliency of their signature strengths while acknowledging that they will grow into “yet-to-emerge” talent, no matter how complicated the business situation. In fact, complicated situations are often an excellent opportunity to stretch and grow in “yet-to-emerge” ways.

Even experienced leaders sometimes do not use the full range of their talents, which can result in overuse of only a few skills in their toolkit. They might lack awareness of all their talents or even dismiss untapped skills. Help clients reconnect to inner resiliency by reflecting on these questions:

1. Where am I feeling the most vulnerable?
2. How do my three top gifts to the world help me navigate the uncertainty of today?
3. Which new-ish behaviors are helping me promote holding hope?
4. What will help me identify unused strengths?

Clients tell me that this reflection helps them harness anxiety proactively and strengthen the alignment between intention and behavior. When this alignment occurs, the chances of living wholeheartedly and leading authentically follow. In restless and uncertain times, paying attention to how vulnerability is showing up and how overusing certain strengths can cause difficulty helps minimize opportunities for derailing the success we wish to create.

For example, a client noticed how she shut down a brainstorming meeting on post-COVID scenarios by using her signature strength, analyzing pitfalls. In her words, “I felt the energy go out of the room.” High awareness around her blind spot allowed her to pay attention to misalignment between her intention (encourage ideas) and behavior (find pitfalls).

Be Curious

We are our stories. Neurologist Robert Burton (2008) explains that our brains reward us with dopamine when we recognize and complete patterns, and as a result, we may take incomplete and inaccurate stories and run with them. It is in this process that our amygdala takes over. The part of our brain responsible for survival instincts, the amygdala promotes flight, fight, or freeze responses in the face of fear and other anxiety-producing situations. With the current pandemic and economic insecurity, the amygdala of many people is likely to be fired up exponentially.

Instead of letting the amygdala jump to conclusions, clients can complete the following prompts to approach situations from a place of inquiry and curiosity:

1. I’m supposed to....
2. If only....
3. A story that could use an expiration date or a different ending is....
4. What if?

To cultivate meaning in our lives, to do the work we care deeply about, and to make a spectacular business impact, we are helped by what Brené Brown (2010) calls “the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are.” A client shared, “When I believe my answers to prompt #1, I feel overwhelmed and can’t find my way through.” Being curious about behaviors that are helping us stay open can build the practice of divergent thinking that is essential in figuring out working solutions in situations that appear unsolvable.

Be Kind

In the Sanskrit language, Maitri means unconditional friendship to oneself and to others. Unless we practice this with ourselves, we are unlikely to build empathic connection with others. Brown (2010) suggests, “When we are unwilling to accept help, we are likely to have a bias against people that do ask for help.” Imagine the consequences in leadership if we were to have this mindset. To distinguish between self-compassion and self-indulgence, encourage clients to work with these prompts:

1. What does help look like today?
2. What kind of boundaries might help to establish accountability?
3. When I am kind to myself, I notice....

When I am kind to others, I notice... Self-kindness isn’t an excuse for staying in a flip behavior—a behavior in which emotions get the upper hand. Self-kindness is working with the knowledge that, while we are all hardwired certain ways and have strong preferences, behavior is a choice. This kindness translates into mindfulness, which in turn helps model authenticity. A client reported, “When I give myself permission, when I set boundaries, when I say no, I feel I breathe easier...my team gets more oxygen.” Recognizing that the practice of kindness is within reach can help minimize harsh critical self-talk, work through temporary failure, and build an authentic leadership legacy.

Be Connected

Stellar and sustainable innovation happens with and through people. Within our diversity and divisiveness lies our humanity—our connection. In these challenging times, we have an opportunity to strengthen empathic connection. Simply put, the hurt is being felt by everyone. With our stories connected in this unique and difficult manner, we have the opportunity to build from a place of abundance. To remind clients of this remarkable opportunity, have them consider:

- Which behaviors help deepen trust building for me?
- How might I expand relationships beyond the scope of my business?
- How might I build and participate in conversations that promote the widest possible perspective?
- How might I use creativity tools to explore solutions that haven’t been explored yet?

Today’s health crisis demands we pay attention to connecting our stories for the greatest good for all. The future will emerge from within and through our capacity to use our collective imagination. Our network in the COVID-19 world, and the future that will follow, is a resource that will help us speak our truth, hear and honor an opposing truth, disagree vigorously, and, find a way forward.

Authentic Leadership—The Way Forward

Groundlessness was our reality before this crisis and will be our reality after the crisis. Career counseling or coaching, leadership, and life in general are practiced on a shifting landscape, even on days when we believe we have control. One of the best ways through, regardless of the

circumstances, is practicing behaviors that support authenticity. This is how we bring out the good in us and our clients.

Tell me, in the comments section below, how you believe that living and working from a place of authenticity is our way forward in a post COVID-19 world. I look forward to a dialogue of peers on this framework.

References

Brown, B. (2010). *The Gifts of Imperfection*. Minnesota: Hazelden.

Burton, R. A. (2008). *On Being Certain: Believing you are right even when you are not*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Sunitha Narayanan is a Certified Executive and Leadership Coach. She helps clients build an authentic life by helping them notice how they get in their own way, how they get in other people's way, and how they can honor and ask for what they need to do the work that matters deeply to them. Sunitha can be reached at narayanansunitha4@gmail.com or on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/sunitha4

[Back to top](#)

MCDA and PACDA Form New Partnership

The Maryland Career Development Association (MCDA) and The Pennsylvania Career Development Association (PACDA) recently forged an agreement to become Professional Association Partners.

MCDA and PACDA agree to promote each other's online and in-person learning opportunities, encouraging broader attendance at events for each association. This partnership enables both MCDA and PACDA to maximize their resources, avoid regional scheduling conflicts, amplify each organization's efforts, and increase event participation between neighboring state career development associations.

As part of this agreement, PACDA will offer MCDA members a discount to attend some or all their events. Additionally, MCDA will offer an event registration discount to PACDA members, where appropriate.

Julie Neill, MCDA President, will serve as the liaison with the PACDA Partnership Chair to facilitate communication and sharing of event notices. Watch for more information about PACDA events on the MCDA website.

[Back to top](#)

Newsletter Article Submissions

MCDA welcomes article submissions on topics of interest to the career practitioner community. We are seeking articles that address emerging trends, best practices (especially as we navigate these

uncertain times) and training opportunities. For best consideration, please submit articles (maximum length 700 words, although shorter is preferred) by the 15th of the month prior to the desired month of publication. The newsletter will be published monthly. The article deadline for the February issue is January 15, 2021. For article submissions or questions, please email: Rachel Loock, Editor, MCDA.Newsletter@MDCareers.org

[Back to top](#)

