

T^{Legal} Transitions

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How much do you want it?

Successful people never settle for "just okay." Keep searching until you find what truly excites you.

By David Maister

Like many people, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life when I left college. I took a job as a statistician because that's what my undergraduate degree had been in. I soon discovered that it was neither my passion nor my area of special talent. So, because I couldn't think of anything else to do, I went back to school for a Master's degree, taking a teaching job to support myself.

Bingo! I discovered (without planning it this way) that while my studies were a chore, I loved teaching and happily did that for a number of years. I was still teaching statistics, which did take the edge off my excitement a little.

I had no idea what opportunity was going to come next — I considered a lot of things, and waited, eyes open. At one point I even applied to be a radio producer at the BBC. (I didn't get the job.)

Then the chance came to do a doctorate degree course at the Harvard Business School. (I had been sent by my employer as a delegate to a course HBS was running in Europe.) I had never previously considered an academic career.

This was a big step, and one I was not sure I could pull off. Teaching in a local college is not the same as committing yourself to a career of producing original, scholarly research. I had never been top of my class in anything at any stage of my education (I still haven't been) but — well, it was worth a shot!

That's how I ended up spending the next six years as a specialist in logistics and transportation. My doctoral dissertation was about grain transportation in Canada, and I ended up writing three books on the trucking industry and one on the airline industry. Given my focus today, people are always surprised to learn about that part of my history.

Which is, of course, the point! Did I know when I started whether transportation was going to be a fulfilling field for me? No, I didn't. Did I give it my full commitment and try to make it work for me?

Absolutely. And when it became clear that this wasn't my life's calling, did I hunt around for the next chance to move on? You bet!

"Find your passion" is common career advice. But less frequently pointed out is how difficult this can be. You really need to work hard to find out what you can be passionate about. Unless you are very lucky, you may find that, like me, it takes many years to discover what really turns you on, long-term.

Successful people often appear to have had a rational career progression, with each step a seemingly sensible preparation for the next. The truth, however, is that most successful business careers have been based on experimentation and opportunism.

Did Richard Branson know he was going to found an airline or a telephone company when he started selling records? Did Bill Gates ever know what products Microsoft was going to offer in a few years' time?

To succeed, you must be prepared to keep searching until you find out what truly excites you, even though there will be temptations along the way for you to give up your search. Since even the most thrilling things become familiar after a while, passion and "engagement" will almost inevitably decline and there will be a life-long need to seek out new challenges. However, given the power of momentum, only those determined to get somewhere will actually do what it takes.

If you truly want to succeed (and many people do not want it badly enough to make it happen), then you must never settle, never give up, never coast, never just accept what is, even if you are currently performing at a high level.

If what you have now isn't what you dream (or dreamed) of, then you must keep looking, experimenting, and adapting. You must always search for the next thing you think you can feel passionate about, so that you will have a burning reason to show the discipline and drive that will distinguish you.

Once you have found something to try, you must then throw yourself into it and work at it with as much commitment as you can muster until you can answer three questions:

- Is it as exciting as I thought it was going to be?
- Is there a market for this? (Will anyone pay me to do it?)
- Can I make a contribution that others are not (yet) making?

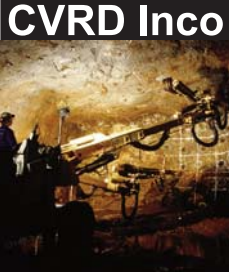
All three must be present to succeed. If any component is missing, you must move on. •

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Chrysler Financial



General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, 10-15 years, Windsor, Ont.

Chrysler Financial is actively seeking a General Counsel for its head office to become an integral part of the Canadian Leadership Team, shaping business decisions and working closely with the President and Senior Managers. You will lead the company by monitoring legislative and jurisprudential developments, managing external counsel and coordinating the internal legal group, servicing the Board of Directors and advising Chrysler Financial on all significant legal matters.

The ideal candidate will have experience in the financial services industry, possess a strong business background and be action-oriented. Bilingual candidates and those with exposure to both civil and common law are preferred. Ref#Nat 11564

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Legal Counsel, 1-5 years, Toronto, Ont.

Due to recent growth and success, Novopharm, one of Canada's largest generic pharmaceutical companies seeks to add a lawyer to its Toronto legal team. The ideal candidate will have between 1-5 years of litigation experience; a science background and/or intellectual property related experience are definite assets. In this role you will be responsible for providing legal advice on a variety of matters which will include patent litigation and general commercial law. Excellent judgment, an entrepreneurial attitude, strong interpersonal skills and an ability to work independently are an absolute must. If you enjoy sophisticated work and want to practise in an environment that combines legal skills with business acumen, then this is an opportunity you must explore. Ref#Nat 11664.

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