

YOU CAN'T GET A JOB WITHOUT EXPERIENCE;

AND

YOU CAN'T GET THE EXPERIENCE WITOUT A JOB.

One of my favorite books is Joseph Heller's CATCH 22. The title of this blog is an example of a Catch 22.

Catch 22 is Heller's name for a no-win proposition.

Here is my story about how I got out of my professional Catch 22: make the professional transition from human services to better paying job in business.

I had spent my earlier career as a clinical psychologist in a community mental health center. It was professionally satisfying and financially unrewarding. After two years, I decided it was time to make more money. I would become a business consultant.

Imagine my surprise to learn that I could not find a single business that hungered to hire me. After all, my job skills revolved around providing psychotherapy to adolescents convinced of rape and fathers convicted of molesting daughters.

Can't business see that these are transferable skills?

I was in a Catch 22.

I could not get business skills without getting hired. And I could not get anyone to hire me with the skill sets I had.

At a party I met Dr. Charles Daily, an organizational psychologist and entrepreneur. Dr. Daily was trying to market a new product to help companies make better hiring decisions.

Dr. Daily had big ideas and no money.

I saw big idea/no money as an opportunity.

I said to Dr. Daily, "I will promote your new product. I will do telemarketing for you. But I insist on being paid. Here is how I want to be paid. The first payment is a title appropriate to the job I will be doing for you. "Business Development

Associate” sounds like a good title to me. The second payment is an agreement that you will provide me with both good references and introductions to colleagues if I fulfill my end of the deal.”

For two days a week for the next 8 weeks I did the best I could to help Dr. Daily get traction for his new service. I used a telephone sales speech he constructed for me. I made hundreds of calls. I hated telemarketing but I did it. In two cases I was able to set up in-person appointments for Dr. Daily.

Sadly, I was not able to generate any revenue for his company. But Dr. Daily said my job had not been to generate revenue. My job was to aggressively make calls and get introductions for him to close deals. I had done my job. And Dr. Daily kept his end of the bargain: he introduced me to some of his colleagues.

With my new resume showing my new title, I eventually landed a job with a global talent management consulting firm that was impressed with my title and the positive reference Dr. Daily provided.

I had broken the no-win loop that imprisoned my professional life.

COMPENSATION IS ABOUT VALUE RECEIVED FOR VALUE GIVEN.

Do you think you are too old and too experienced to offer free labor just to get industry/functional experience?

Stop playing proud.

Look for companies with great ideas and no money.

The key steps:

1. Be specific about what value you will provide. For example, I wanted experience in sales/marketing of professional services. I said I would make phone calls and get appointments for Dr. Daily. I never said I would generate sales because I didn't believe I could accomplish it.
2. Be specific about time frame. For example, I said two days a week for eight weeks. Leave yourself time to continue your job search.
3. Be specific about your definition of compensation. For me, appropriate compensation was a title I could add on my resume, introduction to Dr. Daily's network, and a guaranteed good reference if I delivered on my commitment. Compensation is about value received for value given. If you are only thinking about dollars, perhaps you are thinking too narrowly.

CLIMBING LADDERS OR DANCING CIRCLES?

In the 21st Century do you STILL think that your professional life should be a one way trip up a clearly defined career ladder?

As a psychologist, my professional opinion is that this is a framework of insanity. And it will drive your family insane.

Once you think of managing your professional life as a series of circles, the idea of creating your own unpaid internship at age 35, 45, 55, or 65 will not seem strange.

I like the way poet and folk song singer Joni Mitchell puts it:

So the years spin by and now the boy is twenty
Though his dreams have lost some grandeur coming true
There'll be new dreams, maybe better dreams and plenty
Before the last revolving year is through
And the seasons they go round and round
And the painted ponies go up and down
Were captive on the carousel of time
We can't return, we can only look behind
From where we came
And go round and round and round
In the circle game

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