

Career Strategy - Presenter Notes

Nicholas Kalogirou | Mar 18 2021 | [Link to Accompanying Slides](#)

Why be strategic in your career?

- there's many reasons there could be a change, or start in your career
 - you could have personal or family health pressures
 - or your organization might not be able to handle macroeconomic pressures (eg pandemics)
 - or you may just have a drive for more impact, or to follow a calling in your career
- all this is to say that it may be hard to find a job, you may leave your job, or you may be forced out of your job
 - and find yourself in a hyper competitive market
 - and you may or may not be prepared
- strategy can help us prepare for these inevitable turning points in our lives
 - answering the career question well, is fundamental to the person who we will become
 - most of your productive waking attention is modulated by your career

Connect with your motivation

- you probably won't start with your dream job; you might not even know what that is yet
- but there's probably some drive in you somewhere to get closer to something that excites you
- there's finding YOUR authentic north star
 - emotions can't tell us exactly what to do, but they can let us know something is important
 - holding space for this and being curious is one way of finding what moves / excites you
- and once you've temporarily found some purpose, you need to be able to reorient to that purpose
 - it's all too easy to forget our purpose under pressure
 - try find for yourself the ways you connect with that caring
 - for me, this can be as simple as watching a nature documentary to reconnect

Building a strategic reserve

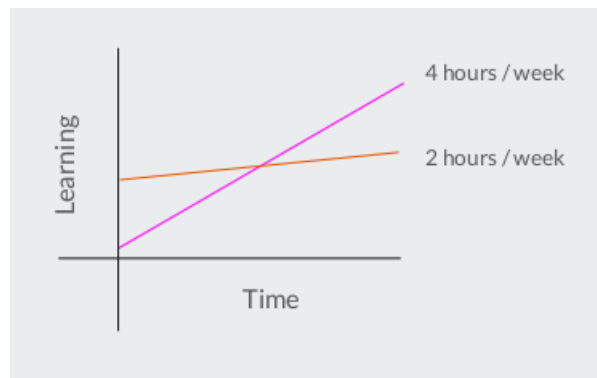
- the next step is building strategic reserves for learning
- with a strategic reserve we are trying to prioritize time and energy for helpful learning on your venture
 - keeping our eye on the horizon
 - to do doing the work of discovering new paths, new opportunities, new threats
 - building a buffer to continue broad learning
 - all while handling operational work and overload of daily information

Life integration

- finding and prioritizing time and energy is *always* going to be a challenge
 - so the more time you can find that spans multiple engagements
 - then the higher your learning rate is going to be
 - and a better ability to choose a wise path.
- You could try build your reserve...

1. within you current job, find ways to practice the skills and knowledge of your new desired career
2. go part time, and use the extra time for building reserve
3. automate / reduce responsibilities / stress in your job, so you have more energy outside of work
4. build reserve completely outside of work (your spare time)

Practical hours in a week



- personally I continually struggle to have a good work life balance, while supporting proactive learning
 - I have a standard 40 hour / week job
 - even with a decent amount of motivation, over the last year
 - I've been able to average maybe... an hour a week for a reserve
 - with large spikes around presentations like this, pushing the average up to about 2 hours
 - my learning though has been helped by the fact that
 - I was able to negotiate about 5-10% of time at my job towards vision and technology ethics
 - this 2 hours a week effectively doubled my learning rate - that makes a big difference over time

Match learning to energy

- once you have some resources dedicated to strategic learning, you have to decide what to do with it.

Right learning for right energy

- after you've had a really long day at work
 - one of the last things you want to do in the evening or weekend are certain types of career work
- I have found it helpful to always have understand the right learning, for the right energy levels
 - being skilled at motivating yourself over the long term is really valuable
 - for example.
 - feeling like passive learning?
 - great, here's the next 20 articles you can read
 - here's the next 5 books to read
 - feel like active learning?
 - here's a list of the next 3 people to bounce ideas off of
- also note that, if you were a hiring manager...
 - you wouldn't expect huge amounts of experience from someone starting a new career
 - but you probably would be impressed by seeing
 - initiative; self authorization; motivation; drive
 - these traits go a LONG way, they show character that you may demonstrate for them
 - so with your reserve - demonstrate these traits

What to do with your career learning

- learning
 - a natural starting point is the amazing amount of resources that are available to you in the internet
 - seek high quality material that motivates you
 - podcasts
 - a particular plug here - I still reference Career Tools, a podcast created almost 2 decades ago
 - with excellent very specific advice on all aspects of navigating a career
 - it's in the resource appendix.
 - list

- books / book clubs
- articles / newsletters
- courses / webinars
- podcasts
- build skills
 - you'll probably recognize the type of learning I'm doing here right now
 - having to talk with others about your ideas is an excellent way to learn
 - list
 - write in a journal / create a blog
 - synthesize your learning
 - do self projects in the area; keep list of ideas
 - public speaking / presenting / panels
 - teach others / consulting
- experience
 - there's direct experience of course
 - Usually you have to start out with volunteering your time, as you don't have the domain knowledge to be compensated yet
 - to note: startups are incredible for learning, but very resource intensive!
 - list
 - start your own startup. use your domain experience, your drive for innovation / a better way
 - warning: incredibly energy / time intensive. can be very worth the (expensive) lessons
 - volunteer for boards
 - continually look for ways for your current situation (employed / unemployed even) could overlap with where you want to go
 - don't be afraid to switch jobs - even if it's the same role at a different company.
- networking
 - networking is absolutely critical - it can be more important than experience
 - you're going to want to cultivate a wide network with a variety of experiences
 - this is all possible virtually now, but I would recommend as you are able to build relationships in person
 - list
 - meetups + community events, join local startup communities
 - be a mentor and a mentee (people you can share your ideas with)
 - continually socialize your ideas of career to others, test it on, try it on (talked about in next section)
 - interview people in the field you'd like to work in, or several fields
 - avoid the front door if you can
 - side door - know someone
 - networking
 - always try flank instead of a frontal attack; attack from ground you have an advantage from
- continually pursue jobs
 - pursuing jobs tends to be a bit more concrete than the other categories
 - you're always trying to find out what the gap is between where you are now vs where you want to go
 - you miss 100% of the shots you don't take
 - and when you are working on your resume and interviews
 - it's critical to frame your work in terms of outcomes, not just responsibilities
 - remember: anybody can have a job description. not everybody has accomplishments.
 - list
 - look for jobs even if you don't intend on getting the job; collect requirements
 - use interviews as practice rounds
 - get to know the gap between where you are now and where you want to go
 - framing your work in terms of outcomes, not just responsibilities

- think about career outcomes, and work backwards
- your resume gets boiled down to 2 responsibility bullet points, and 3-4 outcome/accomplishment bullet points
- you get 2 stories per each job you have
- work backwards from the stories
- is the extra work you're doing in your job supplementing your learning in how to get to the next step?
- always keep a list of your accomplishments on the job

General tips for helping your learning

Use social deadlines outside of yourself

- I'd say 80% of my progress comes from signing up for social deadlines
 - this presentation today, is literally part of the process of me figuring this out!
- the difference between me setting your own deadlines, and a hard deadline for presenting in front of people is huge
 - forced shifts of prioritization; this is a good thing
 - also forces higher quality thought because you are forced to simplify
- especially if you find yourself out of a job, find groups of friendly people to talk to!
 - start writing up presentations, find groups of people to present to
 - start with friends, family, then move out to interest groups, then to employers
 - trying to do this purely on internal deadlines is far less effective
 - both in terms of motivation, and in terms of quality of thought
 - give yourself social homework to engage you to get better
 - tip: teach other people. really forces you to be clear

Articulate 60% thoughts

- get used to articulating unfinished thoughts
 - if you perfectly explain something you're probably going too slow
 - it's far better to take the emotional hit to course correct faster
- emotionally, this is difficult. inviting people to tell you how you are wrong, what you missed
 - opportunity though for
 - emotional self awareness
 - communication
 - vulnerability

Generalists vs specialists

- you don't need to be a specialist to get ahead
 - use some specialization and then aim to be able to be the pivot; the communications, between the operation and the leaders. high demand to give the specialists context
- generalist vs specialists
 - if you're just into optimization, be a specialist
 - specialization. It can lead to loss of accountability and passion from the workers
 - if you're into transformation, be a generalist
 - autonomy, mastery, purpose, drive job satisfaction
 - attend to your transcendent dimension!
- specialization does not always trump generalization
 - Starting early and specializing is fashionable, but has dubious merit
 - Experimentation is as reliable a route to expertise as early specialization.
- "Range" by David Epstein

- A breadth of experience and interest drives innovation.
- Starting early and specializing is fashionable, but has dubious merit.
- Experimentation is as reliable a route to expertise as early specialization.
- One study showed that early career specialists jumped out to an earnings lead after college, but that later specialists made up for the head start by finding work that better fit their skills and personalities
 - In those domains, which involved human behavior and where patterns did not clearly repeat, repetition did not cause learning
 - Chess, golf, and firefighting are exceptions, not the rule.
 - In wicked domains, the rules of the game are often unclear or incomplete, there may or may not be repetitive patterns and they may not be obvious, and feedback is often delayed, inaccurate, or both.
 - In the most devilishly wicked learning environments, experience will reinforce the exact wrong lessons
- To be more of a generalist, you need to change your attitude toward learning and success.

1. To become excellent, don't specialize early in life, experiment with many different paths. **All of this goes to show that if you haven't yet found your life's calling, relax-experiment with many different things so you can find what's really best for you.**
2. You will be better at innovating and more successful if you have a breadth of experience.
3. The more famous you become for being an expert in one area, the more likely it is that you will be terrible at making accurate predictions about your field. Because of their narrow focus, they tend to have explicit theories about how things work, which leads them to cherry-pick evidence to support their existing beliefs.

Sometimes you will need to pull back

- sometimes you will need to pull back completely for a while - this is OK
- we can't always be journeying and have no rest
 - if it's not the time in your life to do this, listen to that.
- be gentle with yourself; it's both a meaningful and challenging journey
 - there will be enormous amount of setbacks - and that's ok
- allow these difficult emotions of angst that you are not progressing
 - let them be, and try as you are able, to gently reorient to your north star over time

Conclusion

Career strategy step 1: connect with motivation step 2: build strategic reserve - for maximum learning with limited resources step 3: match energy and time to learning type - know the different ways to learn and keep going

Tips

- use social deadlines; teach!
- articulate 60% thoughts
- specialization does not always trump generalization
- be gentle with yourself - preserve the fires within

Resources

Career Tools Podcasts <https://www.manager-tools.com/career-tools-basics#> <https://www.manager-tools.com/map-of-the-universe>

On Motivation Consolations - The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words - David Whyte
<https://davidwhyte.com/pages/consolations>

Generalists vs Specialists Range - Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World - David Epstein
<https://davidepstein.com/the-range/>

EACOS - Edmonton Advisory Council on Startups <https://www.eacos.ca> <https://edmonton-startup-slack-sign-up.herokuapp.com/>

contact / presentation / ethics resources: www.nickkal.com/ethics

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