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Have a Passionate New Year!

Every so often most of us stop at an intersection in our lives and wonder which way to turn. The new year can be just such an intersection if we're not entirely satisfied with the direction we took last year.

There are all sorts of ways to approach this intersection and the decision to go straight, take a sharp right or left, or even a u-turn. Whether you're working with a life coach, a career advisor, or just pondering the question by yourself, here are some key considerations:

- 1. What are your gifts?** We all have gifts that we've developed through our life and previous work experience. Perhaps it's an ability to motivate people; or a knack for analyzing data; or the ability to communicate verbally or visually. If you look back over your life – from childhood through school and work experiences – and consider what you've accomplished, you'll see patterns that point to your strengths. Or, you might consider taking an assessment, such as the Strengths Finder Profile, explained in *Now Discover Your Strengths*, by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton (www.strengthsfinder.com).
- 2. What is your core personality?** Some of our accomplishments in life were earned at great cost because they forced us out of the comfort zone of our core personality. While it's commendable to stretch outside our comfort zone at times, it's also important to know our natural personality strengths and recognize which occupations align well with who we are. When your occupation is a good fit with who you are, you will feel more comfortable and energized. A good way to discover your core personality is to take an assessment. A few of my favorites are the Hartman Personality Profile (www.thecolorcode.com) or the Insight Inventory (www.insightinventory.com), or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (www.myersbriggs.org).
- 3. What is your passion?** Ah, this may be the most difficult question for some of us. Whether we are just starting a career and haven't figured out which way to turn, or we're suffering from mid-career burnout, we may wonder if there's *anything* we could do for a living that would ignite passion within us. A great way to discover your passion is to keep a dream inventory. Get yourself a notebook or journal and write down 10 “dreams” each week for at least 12 weeks. These dreams are fleeting thoughts that race through our head but are rarely captured unless we're intentional about it. These might include: “I'd love to take a trip to Maui with my family.” “I'd like to refinish my basement.” “I'd like to learn how to paint.” “I'd like to write a novel.” “I'd like to train to enter the Salt Lake Marathon.” “I'd like to invent a gadget that automatically sprinkles de-icer on my front porch when it snows.”

As you can see, these dreams may not be practical or possible now or in the future, but they are tiny sparks of interest that may one day ignite passion. At the end of the 12 weeks, read back through your list and look for patterns. Which are the dreams that keep reverberating in your head throughout the week? Those that capture your imagination and scream for attention are the ones you will want to turn into goals and action plans.

The intersection where your gifts, personality, and passion meet suggests the direction you'll want to take as you navigate through your life journey. Think of it as having the right vehicle, a high quality compass (or GPS), and a full tank of the best quality fuel for your vehicle. You're ready for the road! But wait – is your destination still unclear? You need a compelling vision of your desired future, whether it's at the end of 2007 or five years out.

I start every year with an idea of where I want to be at the end of it. How, exactly, do I want my life or my work to be different a year from now? What is realistic – a comfortable destination for a year's journey? What is kick-in-the-butt motivating – an uncomfortable stretch but one that ignites passion and makes me want to work harder and smarter because the destination will be worth it? I write a paragraph describing, in present tense, how I feel and what I see at the end of the year. This becomes my navigation tool around which I can plan my trip through the year.

Where do you want to be at the end of 2007? If you (or your business) need help with planning your year, give me a call – 801-209-3062.

Have a *passionate* new year!

Sue Martin