



INSIGHTS

... for Exceptional Leaders

The Holbrow Group

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The Holbrow Group provides Executive Coaching, Organizational Team Coaching and Leadership training workshops and keynotes. The Holbrow Group is your access to an experienced pool of talented and proven coaches, group facilitators, and corporate wellness professionals.

In the coming months, we are thrilled to provide a series of INSIGHT articles from our talented Associates. The October INSIGHTS is written by Sharon Graham, Canada's leading career strategist.

To leave or not to leave, that is the question.

By Sharon Graham, Associate, The Holbrow Group

You've been a superstar, but the company has been increasingly suffering problems and another downsizing is on the horizon. For some reason, you are feeling like you are no longer in the "in crowd." Your manager seems to be avoiding you. On top of this, you're no longer invited to important business meetings. You're not privy to discussions when you think you should be. Your intuition is telling you that you need to do something right away or trouble is around the corner.

You need to take action to turn things around. There are a couple of things that you can do right away. You can fight hard to secure your position and you can, concurrently, start to transition your career towards a new position outside of the organization. If you want to ensure your best chance for success, then it's not "either/or." You should be doing both simultaneously. Fight hard to stay, but consistently work towards developing new opportunities for yourself outside the organization.

Either way, you need to remain optimistic to create a good outcome.

To stay in your existing company, there are a few things you can do:

Rehabilitate your relationships.

During tough times, rather than sulking with a negative attitude, you need to create a harmonious work environment. When the organization is going through hardships, the people who survive and thrive are the ones who create positive working relationships. Don't waste time gossiping or complaining. Instead, show thoughtful consideration of the challenges that lie ahead and escalate your efforts to help your colleagues do well. Demonstrate your ability to create synergy and motivate people to work together no matter what comes their way. Bring forth ideas and apply strategies to help your colleagues achieve team goals. This will help you to keep current with what is going on in the organization and things that may be coming down the pipeline.

Improve your internal visibility.

As organizations go through change, they also reinvent themselves. To retain your job you must demonstrate cultural fit by emphasizing the corporate values. Start to speak the new “corporate lingo” to create further bonds with your colleagues. Learn and understand the organization’s new mission and vision. Focus yourself on finding ways to help your company achieve these objectives. By doing this, you’ll show that you care about the organization’s future.

Document your achievements.

If you have been working for any amount of time, your career is rich with accomplishments. Start listing them right away. Think of some examples of how you increased revenue, slashed costs, improved profitability, streamlined operations, enhanced morale, produced clients, or achieved other business objectives. By recalling these achievements, you’ll be able to improve your own confidence. You’ll also be able to remind superiors and colleagues in the organization about those successes using the SAR (Situation, Action, Result) technique. First, describe the specific situation before you were assigned the task. Next, describe the actions you took. Then, describe the positive results you achieved. To add impact, use numbers, percentages, and dollars to quantify your results.

Enhance your personal image.

This is the time to bump up your performance. Stay late, work hard, and show that you can do more with less. Assume ownership of your job. When you believe in the work you are doing, you become more invested in it. If your duties are reducing or being eliminated, spend time doing things that need to be done. If you are interested in remaining with the organization, the phrase “that’s not in my job description” does not exist. Instead of sticking to your assigned responsibilities, act as if your life depends on the work you do and expand your job description to include new things.

Leverage organizational synergy.

Talk in terms of the organization’s future, not its past. You’ll find that people around you will notice. Show how you can do more with less. Instead of asking for more money and more resources, identify what you can streamline. By focusing on helping your organization get through hard times, your employer will find that the work you are doing is valuable and important to the organization’s future success.

No matter how things look in the company, always be prepared with a resume and job search strategy. It’s better to look for a job when you are in a job. There are many reasons for this. Employers who are recruiting new people put more value on candidates that are working. You have fewer concerns about money and resources when you are working. You have many things to keep you busy and distract you from becoming lethargic or feeling unwanted. And, in the worst case scenario, if you are let go by the company, you may be able to take advantage of outplacement funds.

To prepare to leave here is what you can do:**Create new relationships.**

The best thing you can do for your career is to build your network to include influential people. Target leaders, experts, and decision makers in your industry. You can develop relationships with influential people at industry meetings and through professional associations. If you are internet savvy, you can connect with them by responding to their blog, answering questions on an on-line forum, and even by participating on e-lists. If you make solid relationships with the right people, you will exponentially expand your network, your industry recognition, and your career opportunities.

Improve your industry recognition.

You can convert your image from “job seeker” to “industry expert” by building your online business presence and by using social networks. It is in your best interest to develop and execute an effective online strategy. To market yourself on the internet, you must deliver a consistent brand message. Start by eliminating bad press. Go through your social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace and remove all inappropriate content. Then, leverage sites like LinkedIn, VisualCV, Plaxo, and Twitter to your benefit. If your strength is in written communications, consider starting your own blog.

Prepare your documents.

In today's market, resume writing has become an art. Rather than presenting a basic resume template, create a targeted document that distinguishes you from your competitors. Strategically position all your career successes to make your best features stand out. And, don't forget to add a cover letter to every application. These days, many candidates present a portfolio, which is a package of material that is geared towards showcasing their value. You could include a wide range of creative documents such as a marketing letter, case study, business case, T-chart, and resume addendum.

Deploy your career brand.

Create your personal career brand. Flesh out your value proposition - the compelling sales pitch that you will be delivering to recruiters. This should be the same brand message as you deliver in your resume and other supporting career documents. If you create a strong, consistent message, recruiters will find and remember you among many candidates. Work on your brand identity too - the way you present yourself to others. Your work attire and documentation should present you in the very best way possible.

Leverage emerging opportunities.

Research thriving industries and join those networking groups. As you learn about these emerging markets, you'll be able to add value to the new economy. Some industries to investigate and penetrate are:

- Agri-Food
- Biotechnology, Bio-Pharma Chemicals
- Life Sciences, Medical Devices & Pharmaceutical
- Renewable Energy, Oil & Gas
- Digital Media & Online Gaming

These days, professional development and credentials are a key differentiator. We know that many baby boomers will be retiring and there will be a drain in talent. By learning new things in a market where others are stagnant, you'll distinguish yourself from others.

In today's labour market, an optimistic, future-focused outlook is imperative. If you leverage all your career options - internal and external - you'll have the best chance for career success.

Sharon Graham is Canada's Career Strategist. A recognized career transition expert, she is an Associate of The Holbrow Group, President and Principal Consultant for Graham Management Group, founder and executive director of Career Professionals of Canada, and author of Best Canadian Resumes. With multiple certifications in resume, interview, and career strategy, Sharon has elevated the industry by delivering cutting-edge innovations to resume writers and career practitioners across Canada. She assists six-figure job seekers through her consulting firm Graham Management Group, www.GrahamManagement.com. You can reach Sharon by contacting Traci Kerfont, Traci@TheHolbrowGroup.com, (905) 301-2264 or Sharon directly at info@GrahamManagement.com.

News

Colin Holbrow and Associate Executive and Team Coach, Joanne Mclean, are actively engaged in support of leadership development with senior management teams in the Environmental Services Department, Region of York as well as Public Works Department, Town of Aurora.

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To learn about Executive and Organizational Team Coaching visit <http://www.TheHolbrowGroup.com>