

Life vision: Scenic route does lead to long-term goals

Written by Julie Desmond
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"I'm right in the middle of where I'm supposed to be." The person who told me this was working his way out of multiple financial, emotional and legal crisis, and seemed to me pretty far from anywhere anyone would want to be. The difference between his view and mine, however, was vision. I saw where he was coming from; he saw where he was going.

Our sorry economy has forced many people to compromise on housing, employment and, of course, spending. I shared a St. Paul opportunity with an Eden Prairie candidate, Pat, recently and he told me the commute would be over an hour, but hey, it's a Job. If you're finding yourself in the same situation, you might wonder whether the sacrifice is worth it. After all, you were on track to meet certain lifelong goals. But that was before the layoff (or foreclosure or cancer diagnosis or whatever).

Remember, a compromise does not necessarily mean you've sold out or given up. It only means you are exploring options that you might never have considered before.

The person you are doesn't change when life throws you a curve ball. You're still you. Keep an eye on the vision you have always had for yourself. Are the goals you had a year ago still valuable to you? If so, consider ways your current situation can lead you indirectly to where you want to be. Pat's goal was to travel overseas with his family.

Between losing his job and watching his investments dwindle away, that dream seemed to be far from his reach. Not to be beat, Pat decided to take my job and its endless commute. "It will give me time to listen to language CDs and improve my Spanish," he told me. So his dream is on track after all, if only delayed for a while.

Stepping back in responsibility or compensation can be a direct ego hit to some people until they consider the possibilities. The trade-off might be a chance to expand your skill set, learn a new industry or make new connections. One step back could ultimately give you two steps forward. Use every opportunity to your advantage. If you no longer manage a staff, do you have more time to take a class, or teach a class? Sometimes growth goes out, and sometimes up. You can continue developing in your career even if the progression is not the path you first laid out for yourself.

Do not lose sight of what you want out of life. Looking out five, ten or twenty years, you will realize 2009 is only a moment in time. Consider compromise the door into the unexpected. You can achieve your vision --it must might be reached from a different direction.

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Ask your career questions live, June 9th, 2009, at 11am when Julie joins the KFAI broadcast of “Conversations with Al McFarlane” at the Minneapolis Urban League, 2100 Plymouth Avenue North, Minneapolis.