Episode 62: How to Approach Your Career Transition

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today, let's talk about career transitions. Potential clients often reach out to me, saying that they're looking for or thinking about looking for a new role. They might be between jobs, or unhappy in their current job, or their job might be "fine" and they're curious about what else might be out there.

All of these situations fall into the broad category of career transition. The good news is that there's a process and approach to career transition that can help you think about what's next with more clarity and structure.

Today, I'll share with you what I share with everyone who reaches out for career transition coaching. Because it can feel overwhelming to think about a career transition. It takes energy, it takes confidence and clarity, and it takes time.

If you are devoting time to your career transition, you probably want to feel confident that you're spending time doing things that are worthwhile and will benefit you. It's too easy to go down rabbit holes. Your time and energy are resources you want to be intentional about.

That's the goal of the approach to career transition that I'll share today.

Let's imagine that we're on a virtual call and that you reached out about coaching because you're thinking about making a career change. Here's what I'll say to you.

I think of career transition like the game of chess. If you imagine a chess board, you'll know that you have all of your chess pieces in front of you. You have different pieces, you'll likely move them all, although the order you choose to move them might be different than someone else.

It's the same with career transition. There are a number of pieces to be aware of and work through, and you might want to start with the ones that are most important to you.

Using that metaphor, let's talk through the different "chess pieces" of career transition.

For many people, the first big piece to think about is clarity. The clearer we are about what we want, the easier it is to network, search, and seek those opportunities out.

Getting clarity is a "you" thing. It takes time, reflection, and thinking through a number of questions. It's thinking about your interests and strengths. One exercise I suggest is the clone exercise. If you imagine there are 5 clones of you out in the world doing something that lights you up, what are they doing? This exercise helps invite brainstorming, humor, and imagination, which are so important. Because those help our brains relax and think more creatively.

Clarity is about answering questions like:

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If I could write my ideal job description, what would it be?

What values and purpose do I want to honor?

Who are the kinds of people I want to work with?

What kinds of environments am I looking for?

What other financial, geographic, or life priorities are important to me now?

Thinking in a methodical way and capturing insights helps people get clear. This clarity then helps with the next chess piece.

The next big piece for many people is networking, by which I mean, having conversations. Talking with other people is how we learn about companies, roles, and new ideas. It's also how we practice talking about ourselves, asking questions, and letting others see what we have to offer.

One step to start with for this piece is to make a list of everyone you know – family, friends, neighbors, people you've worked with or went to school with. When you do this, you'll likely have some intuitive hits about people to reach out to. Maybe it's someone who just changed roles, or someone you haven't talked with in a while.

Reaching out to people for conversations is best when it comes from a place of excitement, curiosity, and clarity about your goals for the networking conversation.

Which brings us to our next chess piece: the elevator pitch, also called the personal introduction. Many people hold back from networking because they're not sure what to tell others about themselves and the reason they're looking for a job.

This chess piece of elevator pitch is critical, because having an elevator pitch that is authentic and clear helps people feel more confident to reach out to others. If you need ideas for your elevator pitch, check out my previous podcast all about it. For now, here's what I'll say about your elevator pitch.

Be clear, be brief, and think of it as a way to start a conversation. That's all it is – an entrée into getting into a conversation to learn about what someone else does or what the industry landscape looks like.

The next chess piece is one that's important because it underlies all the others. This one is about your mindset, the way you're thinking and feeling about your career transition.

Our mindset – also called our perspective -- creates our reality, and being in a worried or impostor syndrome mindset will hold you back. You want to be in a mindset that will make it easier to reach out to people and easier to talk about your accomplishments.

An effective approach to career transition requires a mindset of curiosity, patience, and giving yourself permission to explore.

Too often, people in career transition talk themselves out of potential roles. They'll say, this is interesting, but I'm not qualified enough. Or, I could do that, but here are all the reasons it's too hard.

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Giving ourselves permission is the way to move forward. If you're currently in a career transition right now, and finding that you're getting in your own way, try out this tool of permission by answering this question:

What's one thing you want to give yourself permission around? Maybe it's to have awkward conversations, or to ask for help.

When your job seeking feels hard, that's your reminder to check and shift the chess piece of mindset.

The last few chess pieces are more tactical. They are: your LinkedIn profile, your resume, and preparing for interviews.

Being a job seeker can feel vulnerable. You're putting yourself on display and telling others, here's what I've done, and here's what I'm capable of doing. You're opening yourself up to be judged by recruiters and hiring managers.

What that takes is confidence and clarity about who you are and the strengths and experience you bring to the potential role.

Your resume and LinkedIn chess pieces are tools to help you feel more confident. They're ways to tell people the most important things you want them to know about you.

And that's exactly how we approach them. For both your resume and LinkedIn, start by answering the question: What do you want people to know most about you? And then include that.

Interview preparation is the same. It's an opportunity to be confident and clear in your words, tone, and body language. It's your time to share what you've done, how you approach leadership situations, how you work with others, and the value you'll bring to the new organization. Preparing for an interview takes time, reflection, and practicing out loud.

Ok, let's recap. Here are the chess pieces of career transition again: Clarity, networking, elevator pitch, mindset, resume, LinkedIn, and interview preparation.

In your career transition, which ones are most important for you to invest time and energy in?

Start with those, because putting attention to those pieces will help you move forward more easily.

Career transition – and job seeking – is a process. It's taking lots of baby steps, gathering data, and then using that data to decide which steps to take next. It's a journey of highs and lows, of frustrations and successes, and the way we navigate it most calmly and clearly is to take it one chess piece at a time.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you would like help with your career transition, please reach out. Email me at deb@debelbaum.com or go to my website debelbaum.com to schedule a consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!

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