



New Year, New You, New Work Choices

By Shahirah Hamid

“How’s work?” This simple question can be difficult to answer for some. Some may say, “Going great.” For others, it’s “so-so” or “could be better”.

Or, some could be looking for new challenges. Somehow, the new year brings an air of inspiration, and it is a good time to strategise for the future.

Here are some suggestions to help you plan for a year of fulfilling career, whatever your choice may be.

Choosing to stay

If your New Year resolution is to stick with your present job, great! There is much to be done. Staying means building on what you have done all the while. The danger, however, is complacency.

In a LinkedIn blog post by Nicole Williams, titled *New Year, New You: 5 Career Resolutions To Start The Year Strong!*, she says the best strategy is to build skills and parade them for all to see — one way to show that you are serious about your work.

She suggests that if you are not sure what new skills are going to make a difference, start by looking at your own talents or come up with a list of skills that you will need to remain competitive in your position.

Global recruitment firm Kelly Services suggests crafting a personal development plan. This is especially useful if you feel stuck at work.

Think of your personal development plan as a road map that will help define your objectives, plan the best course to reach your desired destination and make the right choices along the way.

The report suggests mastering the art of the 12 “Be’s” of effective personal development — be intentional, be grounded, be balanced, be written, be consistent, be in the present, be positive, be specific, be high enough, be flexible, be affirmed and be visual.

Choosing change

At some point, people will contemplate a career change. Some more frequently than others. Is changing jobs (or job-hopping, as it is derogatively known these days) a good thing?

“It depends,” says Anil Shivadas, executive director of People and Change Practice for PwC’s Southeast Asian Consulting Services. He adds that job-hopping can be a good thing if it helps an individual grow by exposing him to different work environments, people and culture.

However, Anil discourages people from leaving their jobs at the first sign of trouble. Instead, embrace the tough times and learn something from it, he says. It is important to change jobs for the right reasons for young aspiring individuals, he adds. A good reason to leave a job

is the lack of career progression or the companies’ values do not meet the individual’s values.

If you have decided to change jobs this year, it is likely that you will be spending more time and energy planning for that.

CAREERREALISM, an online career advice magazine, offers three tips to help you make that oft-scary career change.

First, prepare your curriculum vitae carefully so that it is easy to read and immediately shows your abilities.

Second, be certain of your career goals. If you always have this dream job in mind, it is advisable to keep yourself updated on the developments in that specific industry.

Third, job-hunters should look out for new opportunities that allow them to move up the career ladder.

Choosing to grow

Fill your spare time with activities that motivate you towards career growth. Your friends’ Facebook feed doesn’t quite do that.

One way to continuously move forward is to keep abreast of the latest trends, ideas and news about your profession. A good place to start is LinkedIn: scour it to see if there are groups that cater for your industry. Chances are, these groups exist and serve as a good channel of relevant information.

Another radical idea is to cut down on social media time. Instead, spend some time reading, thinking and doing the things you love.

Even *TIME*’s tech writer Alex Fitzpatrick is shaking off the habit of constantly going on social media while at work.

He says he had adopted the awful habit of “rewarding” himself, for every 30 minutes of work, with going on Facebook or Twitter to check for latest updates. He now sees this as a way to procrastinate, and it is hard to get jobs done on time.

Nowadays, if he needs a break, he will stare out the window for a few minutes or take a walk around the office. He hopes that by adopting this practice, it will help him lead a more productive 2015.

Choosing work-life balance

A burnt-out employee is not a useful one. There is life outside work.

To be at your best form at the workplace, think about what you do with yourself outside the office. This means maintaining good physical and mental health.

If your work seems boring, find an activity or hobby that you will look forward to doing during weekends or on your days off.

By all means, escape from work by pursuing a hobby that provides stress relief and balance, but do not neglect your work. If you are into volunteering or playing futsal or even white-water rafting, organise an outing for you and your colleagues to participate together. It will automatically foster teamwork and provide greater fulfilment at work. ■