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Career Momentum

September to October, 2010

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Managing a Skills Portfolio

By: *Lise Stransky, BA, CCDP*

Ten months ago, I left my job. By choice. Faced with an exciting new opportunity, I gave notice to my boss, packed up my desk, said goodbye to my co-workers and the cubicle world, and embarked on a new career path. I left a stable 9-5 position, one that was challenging, yet predictable; hectic, but manageable, and one that allowed me the chance to use my strengths and skills in an encouraging environment.

I didn't have much training for my new position. I received lots of advice, have many mentors, and my husband for support. But ultimately, I am navigating uncharted territory. It is even more challenging and rewarding than I could have ever imagined. My new boss is extremely demanding. He cries when he doesn't get his way. He screams when he wants something. He doesn't allow me to take proper breaks. He takes naps throughout the day, and calls me at night when he wakes up, unable to get back to sleep. He drools. He insists that I pick him up for daily cuddles. But he is one of the happiest people I have ever met, and I love working 'with' him. My new job? I became a mom.

Three months into my maternity leave, amidst the chaos of diapers, blankets, and bottles that became my office, I realized that I was developing some skills in my new job. I started thinking about how these skills would contribute to my old job once I was finished my 12 month maternity leave. How moms sometimes sell themselves short because they are not aware of the full range of skills in their portfolio. Whether they return to the work force after a mat leave, or leave the workforce for five, ten, or fifteen years, the list of skills developed during that time cannot go unrecognized.

As a career practitioner, I coach students on a variety of topics, including skills identification. I figured (once the haze had started to pass!) that I should walk the talk, and identify what I had developed in the past 12 months, both for myself and for any future 'mom' clients that I might have. Every mom owns a portfolio of skills and no matter what their goals are, they should self manage that portfolio in order to realize all that they have to offer. Especially if they are trying to market themselves back into the workforce after time away. So, in no particular order, here are a few of the skills I've developed in the past 12 months:

Networking/building relationships – I talk. To everyone. I smile. At everyone. A baby seems to give you permission to do that, breaking down social barriers and etiquette. I talk to other moms, asking them about strollers, slings, daycare and breastfeeding. I talk to librarians, grocery clerks, homeless people, and gardeners. I am constantly striking up conversations with total strangers, something I used to shy away from, and was not very good at. In my line of work, the skill of networking is important. I have been unconsciously practicing my networking skills in the past twelve months, and am bringing an enhanced skill back to the work force.

Managing a Skills Portfolio continued....

Upcoming PD Events

(For more information
please check out our
website:

[Career Development
Association of Alberta](#)

September 21, 2010 PD Evening in Edmonton

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Capital Health
Tower/Seventh Street
Plaza
10030 – 107 Street,
Edmonton

Topic:

***ALIS: New & Interactive
Features for You and
Your Clients***

Speaker:

Harina Malhotra
(see page 6 for further
details)

September 23, 2010 Ignite Your Passion Conference

8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Holiday Inn Calgary
Macleod Trail South
4206 Macleod Trail
South, Calgary

Topics:

Learn to Bounce

Keynote Speaker:

Anita Caputo

***Discover Uncharted
Entrepreneur Potential***

Speaker:

Gray Poehnell

The skill of prioritizing tasks – I had to abandon my daily practice of making lists. I always ended up with a huge list that was impossible to accomplish in a day. Instead, I created my ‘sanity list’ – the bare minimum that absolutely HAD to be done NOW and what could wait until later. When I return to my cubicle, that sanity list is going to come in handy, especially when the unexpected arises.

Balancing work and personal life – I didn’t always take that my break in my last job, but I do make every effort to now. And will continue to do that, because I’ve realized I’m more effective if I take a break. It’s not always possible, but I do my best. I stop everything, ignore my to-do list, the clutter on the floor, the pile of laundry and sit down with a cup of tea. Even if it’s just for 20 minutes, it’s amazing how much that break can recharge.

Thinking ahead and contingency planning – Whether it’s having a baby who has an unexpected diaper blowout, or a speaker who doesn’t show up for a panel presentation for an audience of 100, I’m better equipped to deal with it when I think ahead. And wow, have I ever learned to think ahead for any circumstance!

Research - There is so much to do in Calgary. While on maternity leave, I became a master of finding free activities for my son and I. Mr. Google is quite handy for this, in addition to magazines, e-newsletters, newspapers, other moms and other internet resources, all which have played a part in further developing my research skills.

Dealing with ambiguity, change and transition –Motherhood is, without a doubt, the biggest change I have ever experienced. Change is constant and not always easy. But making the transition to motherhood, dealing with the ever changing world of a baby, and accepting the ambiguity of parenthood, better prepares me for the constantly changing world of work. (I think!)

Multi-tasking and establishing achievable goals – Being a house manager and new mom with limited time and a demanding boss means this skill has become finely tuned. Finding ways to do more with less time, and to be more efficient with my time, translates into cooking dinner, unloading the dishwasher, feeding my son, and doing a load of laundry...all at the same time.

I knew I would be returning to my old job after 12 months away. And for the mom’s out there who are in the same boat, coping with sleep deprivation, dirty diapers and a drooling boss, there are many things you can do to try and keep in touch with your field, and your skills current:

1. Keep up with your industry through websites or journals.
2. Get a paper once a week.
3. Keep in touch with co-workers, by phone or email.
4. Start a blog! Develop new technical skills and hone writing skills while you are away from the work force.
5. Volunteer. At a community association, board of directors, alumni group, the library or school.
6. If you can handle it, attend a professional development conference.
7. Keep up your networks through LinkedIn, or even Facebook.

I have to break it to my new boss that I’m heading back to my old job soon. I’m sure (and hope) he’ll take it in stride, and look forward to seeing me at the end of each day for his daily cuddles.

Lise Stransky, BA, CCDP, is a new mom, and a career advisor with Career Services at the University of Calgary.

LinkedIn for High School Students?

By: Karen Girard (Copyright)

At a recent meeting, while touting the benefits of *LinkedIn* for career professionals, I was asked by colleagues about the value in introducing social networking in high school. Consensus within that group was that it was more relevant for personal networking, and then maybe for post-secondary students and beyond.

Personally, I believe there ARE benefits for high school career centers and students to learn this tool. Nielsen Online says that in “2008-2009 social networking sites...saw more time spent by users than personal email”.

High school students are online at *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Nexopia*, *Twitter*... and let's face it - we all know the type of information they are putting out there. It is now time to include “social networking” as a part of career discussions. For those of us working in high schools, instead of harping on the dangers of Internet sites and postings which we can't control, we should introduce students to the possibilities of using a site to their advantage in life.

Facebook asks for real names. I recommend that high school students use an alias here. We can then introduce them to *LinkedIn* and teach them how to create an online portfolio using their real name, developing an online presence that can be built on over time.

Ethical or not, employers and some colleges do look up prospects online. According to mashable.com, a website focused on Social Media news, “..one in five hiring managers (in the US) conduct background checks using social networks (primarily *Facebook*), while one in ten college admissions officers do the same.” Why risk what may be found in a web search?

By taking control of their online brand, high school students can mitigate the damage now. We can help them develop a good profile (much like writing a skills-based resume) and include that link right in resumes and applications.

WHAT CAN WE INTRODUCE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO ON LINKEDIN?

1. Professional networking etiquette
2. Building an online portfolio and presence that they can be proud to share
3. Conducting company research needed for preparation for interviews
4. Asking targeted questions for local specialists in your Career Center group, or for a broader perspective, in the Education and Careers “Answers” section

Using advanced search features students can also locate potential informational interview or job shadow opportunities, and conduct career research into even quite obscure areas with as little as a key word such as “baseball”. The list is far from exhaustive!

LinkedIn for High School Students? Continued...

HOW CAN YOU USE *LINKEDIN* IN YOUR CAREER CENTER?

1. Build your network, and have a forum to discuss issues and share resources with colleagues from around the globe, or set up a local group to discuss these regionally
2. Use contacts to help find potential career speakers and Career Fair presenters
3. Set up a school career center group and invite parents and students to join – then advertise upcoming post-secondary and career events, or encourage student discussions
4. Remain up-to-date with networking events and participate in free sessions and webinars that could be used for certification credits
5. Link up with credible specialists (alumni and staff in the post-secondary institutions) who can provide information on post-secondary programs internationally

THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT *LINKEDIN*, EVEN IF YOU DON'T PLAN ON INCORPORATING IT IN YOUR SCHOOL?

How about learning, and staying current on, practices that are going to become mainstream? Here is a chance to stay ahead of the curve and maintain your competitive advantage.

If you are looking for a PD opportunity, or just want to find out what *LinkedIn* is all about, check out the [LinkedIn Webinar](#) for Career Services Professionals, and join *LinkedIn's* Career Professionals Group. Add me as a connection – I would be happy to discuss this further and to help you out in any way I can. After all, that is what networking is all about! How can I help you?

Sources:

- <http://careerservices.linkedin.com>
- www.mashable.com: July 2009. [7 Secrets to Getting Your Next Job Using Social Media](#)
- Neilsenwire June 2009: How Teens use Media: A Neilsen Report on the Myths and Realities of Teen Media Trends

Karen Girard is a Certified Career Development Professional (BC), and Member of the Professional Association of Resume Writers and Career Coaches. She has been involved in Human Resources and Career Development for over 20 years, and was the Technical Editor for "Landing a Job for Canadians...For Dummies". Karen currently works as a High School Career Advisor in Alberta.

Social Networking and Career Planning... ...Really?????!!!!

By: Karen Girard (Copyright)

Are you on *Facebook*? *Twitter*? How about *LinkedIn*? Do you participate in Social Networking? Lots of us play around on them, but many of my colleagues say they are not interested, so haven't even bothered checking them out.

Computers are my hobby. If you ask any of my friends, they will tell you I am the "gadget queen" and an early adopter of most things computer. I was a *Facebook* addict while recovering from an injury, and I learned a lot about potential ethical and employment issues that can affect our clients on this site even when they believe their privacy is protected.

I have only recently, however, taken the time to learn about a more professional networking site. After attending *LinkedIn's* exclusive training for Career Services Professionals, I am a convert – and with so many of our clients using the internet for social purposes, I believe it is our responsibility to help them use these tools to their advantage.

What is *LinkedIn*, and what makes it different from something like *Facebook*? *Facebook* is a site where people share all aspects of their lives (even those you may not want to know about). *LinkedIn* is a 100% professional network, connecting people for the purpose of business and education. There are no games, no inappropriate photos. Think of it as an online portfolio.

LinkedIn's training gave insight into some of the hidden strengths of the site, and gives great ideas on how Career Professionals can use it to enhance their career center as well as help their clients.

The webinar teaches how to set up a profile, and encourages you to create a public one that you can include in your resume – basically directing employers to your "professional site" instead of leaving them to "Google" you and find your *Facebook* page. (I actually advocate that those who insist on posting *Facebook* content they don't want seen by employers, create an alias for that profile so it won't be found in a web search!)

Learning about these networks gives you the skills to educate clients on the process and etiquette of social networking. Here is a new venue to build a professional image online, research companies and career paths, explore organizations, and connect with alumni and professionals in ways that I could only imagine before this. Don't fool yourself – employers are checking people out online. Here is a chance to create a personal brand!

Professional Development Evening in Edmonton

Everyone is welcome and it's free!

When: Tuesday, September 21, 2010 (6:30 PM - 8:30 PM)

Where: Capital Health Tower/Seventh Street Plaza (10030 – 107 Street, Edmonton)

Workshop Topic:

“ALIS: New and Interactive Features for You and Your Clients”

The [Alberta Learning Information Service](#) (ALIS) website is Alberta's leading online gateway to information and services related to career planning, education and jobs. Here is an exciting opportunity to learn about the vast online information and resources available right at your fingertips. ALIS Project Coordinator, Harina Malhotra, will show you first hand interactive tools such as career planning tools, occupational videos, scholarship databases, the resume review service and help videos, to name a few. Learn about what's new with ALIS, what's in progress, and what's next.

Presenter: Harina Malhotra

Harina Malhotra is an ALIS Project Coordinator with Alberta Employment and Immigration. As a member of the ALIS Operational Team, Harina is involved in the management of the Career Planning, Education and Job content on the ALIS website and has many years of experience designing and developing web applications for educational use.

Please register by indicating your interest to attend this event in an email to the Edmonton Chapter of CDAA at: Edmonton@careerdevelopment.ab.ca.

Submissions are Welcome

The Career Momentum Team Invites Your Ideas and Submissions!

Career Momentum is YOUR newsletter!

The expertise of CDAA members spans the spectrum of the career development field within the province and beyond. Is your niche or interest being represented? The entire membership would benefit from information, awareness, and insight about the issues, trends, events and new developments in your representative fields.

Pass on your ideas for articles, or submit one! See the CDAA website for submission guidelines.

Cheryl Côté
Carolyn Jonsson
Christine Gertz
Tracey Campbell

Send Comments/Submissions to:
momentumeditor@careerdevelopment.ab.ca



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Did you Know?...

By: Paula Wischoff Yerama

Learning Clicks is an initiative of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, providing **FREE** and interactive presentation to students, parents, and adult learners throughout Alberta.

21 Post-Secondary and Adult Learning Clicks Ambassadors throughout Alberta are ready to present information, resources, and tools about the career and education planning process; post-secondary education and training options; Students Finance and Scholarships; program and course transferability; and MORE to your school, business, organization, association, or community group!

Post-Secondary Learning Clicks Ambassadors share their personal Post-Secondary experiences and knowledge about planning and preparing for Post-Secondary with junior high and high school students in **FREE** and interactive presentations, right in the classroom! They motivate students to see education and training after high school in a new light.

Adult Learning Clicks Ambassadors are available for **FREE** and interactive presentations to parents, and to adults considering a return to school themselves. They will share their experience and knowledge of Post-Secondary education and training options and provide each participant with current and relevant planning tools and resources.

All Learning Clicks presentation participants will receive current information, planning tools, and resource materials including an interactive Learning Clicks CD-ROM to assist them with their planning and preparation.

Learning Clicks Ambassadors are also available to attend conferences, career and education fairs, Post-Secondary planning nights, parent / teacher interviews, parent council meetings, etc.

For more information or to book your **FREE** Learning Clicks presentation today, please visit www.learningclicks.ca.

