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Book provides 6 important lessons to college grads seeking career advice

By Ed Brenegar

REAL LIFE LEADERSHIP

Question: I am a recent college graduate, working in my first professional job. Already, I'm finding that I don't want to follow a traditional career path. I want to make a difference and be successful, but I don't see those adding up to a career. I'm interested in doing a lot of different things. Does this make sense?

Answer: A dramatic shift is taking place in the professions. Skills required to be successful are more and more transferable from one professional arena to another.

Being a medical doctor or a lawyer requires highly specialized training, of course, but other types of skills are more transferable. Having entrepreneurial skills can be very beneficial, even if you work in a corporate environment. And many people find that the organizational skills they learned in a corporate training program are valuable for working in a nonprofit agency.

Many people are discovering that advancement in your career is not found by following a traditional path, but by working wherever you can make a difference. The shift is from a career-centric professional life to one focused on impact.

Recently, Daniel Pink published a very helpful book called "The Adventures of Johnny Bunko: The Last Career Guide You'll Ever Need." In the book, Pink uses the Japanese manga style of illustrated storytelling to tell the story of a young man who is unhappy in his career.

Pink presents six lessons for the person who is either starting his or her career or who has reached a crossroads: 1. There is no plan. 2. Think strengths, not weaknesses. 3. It's not about you. 4.

Persistence trumps talent. 5. Make excellent mistakes. 6. Leave an imprint.

These six ideas allow us to see that a career should be focused on the impact we can make. By making a difference, we find new places to serve that enhance our value to our next employer, or prepare us to venture out on our own to start our own business.

As you seek to understand what your career path means, ask these questions: What is the impact that I want to have today? Whom do I want to impact? What opportunities should come to me through this impact? What must I do to put myself in the best possible position to achieve this impact?

By asking these questions, you change your perception of what your professional career should be.

You'll begin to understand what is required to develop and sustain the level of impact you desire.

A Johnny Bunko Breakfast Group is forming to discuss these lessons. The group will meet every Tuesday for seven weeks, with the first meeting 7:30-8:20 Sept. 9 at Bruegger's Bagels in Biltmore Village, 160 Hendersonville Road. There is no fee other than the cost of coffee and a bagel. There is no sales pitch or any requirements or obligations for participating — just an opportunity to talk about the value of Bunko lessons. The first six people to show up get a free copy of Pink's book.

This is the opinion of Ed Brenegar, president of the Community of Leadership, a leadership development and transition planning consultancy. He writes the Leading Questions blog at <http://edbrenegar.typepad.com>. Send questions to him at ed@edbrenegar.com.