



REPURPOSING AND REDEFINING YOUR NATURAL 'BRAND'

What if periods of transition are opportunities to practice expressing and expanding who we are? How can you re-frame this in-between time to experience it as a gift you are giving yourself? You might find out that you are much more than your image!

During my life I have experienced many transitions. Some were *revolutionary* and some *evolutionary*. During each transition in my professional life to move to the next destination I needed to re-define my 'brand', my unique way of bringing value to clients. As my clients' needs changed so did the focus of my contribution. Who and how I have served clients as an HR generalist has been very different from functioning as an Organizational Development consultant, Career counselor, Director of Career/Culture Development (an internal consulting function) or as a Life/career/Leadership coach.

For example, after leaving my last corporate job at the end of 2006 I started coaching clients who were in some form of job transition. My clients were struggling with a very crowded job marketplace. My 'brand' became coaching clients on how to stand out, helping them to discover and articulate their unique value to their employer of choice.

Soon it became clear to me that knowing *how* to stand out is not the same as doing so effectively. Sure there were more applicants than jobs; still some people were getting jobs while others didn't. So what makes some people ace that interview while others fumble?

Our unconscious conclusions about our experiences, what we believe about ourselves and the world, in other words, our perceptions will influence how we show up at a networking event, an interview and finally on our next job. As a career/life/leadership coach I am guiding people to greater awareness of how their perception supports or sabotages their success;



and once they 'get it', they are able to take full charge of their power inside and outside their work environment with new choice of perception.

Bridging the Gap

What Image or Feelings are you aware of when you think of Transition? For most this word invokes both excitement and anxiety.

My image for *transition* is that of a bridge. I rarely feel comfortable being on one especially when I cannot see the other side. I'd rather be on solid ground and have clear view of what's ahead. I see transition as a bridge between where we have been and our next destination.

The following can help you explore your relationship with transitions:

- Think of three previous transitions in your life.
- What was most challenging for you in each transition?
- What internal and external resources have helped you through those challenges? (example for internal resource might be love of adventure; example for external resource might be a guide or mentor)
- What have you learned about yourself during these transitions? (for example, I learned to be less attached to plans and more open to the unknown.

Let's use the example of job loss to illustrate what makes transitions challenging. Most people while employed:

- Function within a clear structures: physical (their place of work), mental (what they are supposed to do), emotional (how they feel about their work, people, responsibilities etc.)
- Feel more competent some of the time, less other times
- Know their team (who is with them and who they think isn't)



- Have learned the unwritten do's and don'ts of their work culture; learned to adjust to the *box* they call their job.

Most actions are in response needs that are determined by the nature of the work they were hired to do.

If you are like most people, while employed you were busy doing your job and rarely asked deep questions about *'who am I in this environment? '*; *'what is that unique essence that only I can bring to my team? '*; *'where is the joy in that thing I do?'*

Consider the following assertions about life at work:

- Our perception of our 'job box' dictates how we adjust to its parameters: we expand or shrink to fit the size we perceive it to be.
- We are masterful figuring out criteria, context and guideposts that can help us navigate our work environment. (Just remember how you felt the last time you started a new job before you learned the lay of the land of your new universe.)
- We feel good about ourselves when we get a good grade and are devastated when we get the workplace equivalent of a D.

And when the job goes away, all these external landmarks disappear as well.

Now consider some assertions about life after job loss, while in job transition. A transition is:

1. dynamic not static. It involves constantly adjusting to a changing reality, redefining who we are, what we need and what we have to offer.
2. loss of the known. Any potential gain is yet to be discovered.
3. when you are no longer where and who you were and you haven't yet reached your destination.
4. when you have to create your own canvas: your criteria, context, guideposts to help you navigate your life. For who you are **now**.



5. an opportunity to meet yourself in a new way, repurpose, redefine yourself outside of the 'job box' you allowed to define you.
6. a fertile time to discover your unique essence and determine how you want to be present in your life, inside and outside of a work environment.
7. *revolutionary* when it starts as an event: you get laid off or fired, (or become a parent); this is often a radical, world-shattering, and innovative experience.
8. *evolutionary* when it is a process, a journey: it is the leader you have become, or the fatherhood you've grown into). You can make this type of transition into an experience of expression of growth, development and progression.

Life is an ongoing process of evolutionary transition; dotted by events that start as revolutionary, (and we are convinced were imposed by others). It is up to us to grab each opportunity so we can benefit from this fertile time and evolve our spirit, our essence.

Perception is a Choice: stories that shape our lives and inform our actions

I heard it mention that storytelling is the oldest profession. Storytelling is how we make sense of our world; it is how we relate to one another. Advertisers have long discovered that we buy with our heart not our mind. And storytelling is the shortest route to our heart. A 2007 study by [Jennifer Edson Escalas](#), a marketing researcher at Vanderbilt University, found that people had more positive reactions to advertisements that were presented in a story form than to ads that were factually straightforward about the products.

We are constantly engage in internal storytelling, most of it unconsciously! Our mind is busy throughout the day making up stories about anything and everything we experience. Yet, we are rarely aware what we are telling ourselves!

Here are a few of my assertions about stories:



1. Each of us has a select number of core stories. It is these stories that influence our perception. It is our perception that determines what and how we experience our reality.
2. In some of my core stories I get to be the hero. These stories reinforce my belief in us as decent and compassionate beings who always do the best we know how. When I am focused on this story, I acknowledge a job well done, a good deed, taking good care by eating what I believe is good for me or not eating something I believe is bad for me. I feel good when I focus on these stories.
3. In other core stories I insist on being a victim. These include stories about how I am not appreciated by others, how people are not trying hard enough to provide the best service they can or are oblivious to others' needs (for example, the person in front of me at the 12 or less checkout line with at least 20 items). Interestingly, can I be absolutely sure about how hard people try to provide service? Not really. My assessment of their efforts is purely through my perception. Yet, I feel angry and frustrated when focusing on these types of stories.
4. Both empowering and victimizing stories reinforce our existing beliefs about ourselves and our world. They reinforce our criteria for right and wrong, good and bad.
5. It is through my work with clients as a Reality Therapist that I get to observe the absurdity of our stories. I listen to a client's interpretation and witness their misery, sadness, anger, and/or assumptions of internal limitations. When I ask "are you absolutely sure that what you just told me is true" amazingly many of us will cling to our negative interpretation of events even when they make us miserable! We allow these interpretations to determine our feeling state.
6. In every situation there are many different ways to interpret what is going on. Studies show that repeated telling of stories of victimization reinforces our sense of



helplessness and disempowerment. Each telling is as if it is happening now, we feel victimized all over again, right now.

7. What we pay attention to grows. When I am looking at the world through my '*I am taken for granted glasses*' I get be right time and time again. When I am looking at the world through my *appreciation* glasses, I manifest experiences that will reinforce my belief that we are always doing the best we know how.

Repurposing and Re-defining Your Natural Brand exercise

This exercise is intended as a practice for you to express, expand and experiment with who you are now so you can redefine and repurpose your unique value. Before starting, set an intention that by the end of this exercise you will have expanded your sense of who you are.

Although you can do this by yourself, it can be more effective when you incorporate input from other people:

- Create a list of all the verbs and characteristics mentioned on your resume.
- With each item on your list, invent a variety of ways you can provide value (to an employer, your family, friends, etc.) using that particular skill, expertise and quality.
- Be imaginative and do not use your professional background as a limitation! Try **not** to be practical.
- See where this exercise takes you and how it expands and empowers you! Allow this exercise to redefine who you are becoming now.

After all, what have you got to lose but your image!