

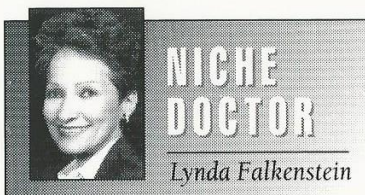
BUSINESS

Achieving career goal better than going fishing

Q: I'm going to be retiring soon as the principal in a family-owned business. Actually, the business is "retiring" too, since I can't get any of the kids to take over when I leave. And probably they're smart not to get involved. They are doing their own thing, which is what I wish I'd done many years ago.

Running this company is nothing I ever set out to do. What started innocently as helping an ailing parent turned into a lifetime job. Every time I remotely thought about doing anything different, my responsibilities had grown so much that change was less thinkable than the time before.

Now I'm finding myself faced with the freedom to choose, but ironically I'm getting more nervous every day. Maybe too much time has gone by to do what I want. Worse yet, I'm not even sure anymore what I do want. Is there hope for me? Should I just take my profits and go fishing? Help!



NICHE
DOCTOR

Lynda Falkenstein

A: Forget fishing. At least for now. If you don't achieve an intentional career goal, you'll always carry a hole — an incompleteness — with you. You might hide it from others, but you'll know it's there. Get started by describing what "your own thing" was. What was your dream? More importantly, what is your dream today? Then make a list of situations giving you greatest pleasure. When are you really happiest?

Next, begin identifying all possible work environments likely to produce

this pleasure for you. Don't expect the options to immediately jump out at you. You've been nose-to-grindstone for so long, you'll need to systematically explore the endless opportunities available today. Congratulations on your decision to live life by choice — not default.

Q: I've got a real problem, and the truth is, I don't know where to turn. It's my significant other. He doesn't like the business I'm trying to create. I think it threatens him in lots of ways beyond my control. This business endeavor is more than just money to me. It's a vital part of my life. I receive tremendous personal reward and can see great things ahead. The stress I am feeling right now from his negative support is getting to me, but the thought of having to quit the business is more than I can bear. Any suggestions?

A: Ouch! You are experiencing one of the thorniest niche problems

around. You need to determine something very important: Is your significant other really on your side? Does this person really want you to win by achieving goals important to you? If the answer is yes, do everything you can to educate him in what you are doing. Sometimes feelings of isolation and lack of information are underlying reasons for a person's apparent negativism.

If, however, you answered "no," please accept my sympathy because your significant other is a full-fledged sabotage crew instead of the vital support system you need.

Lynda Falkenstein, Ph.D., a Portland-based consultant and lecturer, is author of "Nichecraft: The Art of Being Special." Readers should address their questions to The Niche Doctor, c/o The Oregonian Business News Department, 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland 97201.