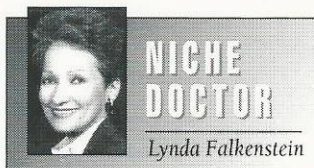


BUSINESS

Stick with your career goals — with niche glue

Q: My question is a little different from others I see in your column. I recently joined one of the national accounting firms as a junior associate. Although I know the majority of new associates wash out within two years, my goal is to make partner and stay with the firm for a long time. I want to be a real player in this company. I know I need to get a niche. The question is HOW to do it? Any ideas you have would be much appreciated.

A: The answer is become indispensable. It's as simple as that. You must be perceived as absolutely vital to your organization's existence, regardless what the economy is and regardless what job title you carry around. In fact, your importance must transcend any formal job title. One of the best strategies I've heard for achieving this is to find out what tasks others like doing least but are absolutely essential to the organiza-



tion's existence. You then become the expert at doing those things. This applies to specialized knowledge that you alone may have. Becoming indispensable, of course, means that you are going the extra mile. You are certainly not a 9-to-5 employee, around exclusively for the paycheck and bennies of the job. You always are figuring out ways to help the firm become more successful.

Most of all, you never forget that your achievements within the company cannot be a secret. You must take

responsibility for ensuring that the right people know what you are doing. Over and over again, I have seen individuals, departments and complete agencies lopped off — not because they were without value but because they operated in a vacuum. They were invisible to those who mattered. Remember: The only reason for making a niche is so that the right people can find you.

Q: I'm embarrassed writing to you, but my problem is causing me so much frustration, I'll try about anything to get it resolved. Here's the issue. I'm a 48-year old physician with a highly successful practice — in terms of dollars at least. Nevertheless, I'm beginning to think I want out. The problem is I have so much invested in all this it's almost impossible to imagine walking away. My friends tell me this is just a midlife crisis and that I should be grateful for what I've got. What do you

think? Is my niche a trench? If so, what do I do about it?

A: The first thing you do is quit listening to others. You know yourself better than anyone else. Ultimately, you have to live with yourself. My hunch is you agree with one of my recent clients who, in explaining why he had come in to see me, said simply: "I'm here because I know life is not a rehearsal." Your next step is to clearly define what you do want your life to look like so your next career will be intentional and works for you.

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.