



LCLD 2014 Fellows Third Meeting March 5-7, 2015 in New Orleans

Identifying & Avoiding Career Roadblocks: Charting Your Course to a Successful Career

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Flip Chart Notes from the Fellows Group Discussion

Roadblocks are going to appear in your path. Sometimes you will have advance notice and sometimes you won't. Quite often, there are signs that a roadblock is ahead and we simply fail to take note of the sign(s) or we fail to connect the dots when multiple, yet subtle signs appear. Discerning the signs of change in advance gives us additional time to consider options to manage the roadblock.

During the workshop the Fellows considered three different roadblock scenarios: practice group leaving your firm; a corporate reorganization; and getting pigeonholed (law firm or corporate environment).

Early Warning Signs members of your practice group may be leaving the firm:

- Increase in internal meetings/others not invited
- People are gone from the office
- Firm business is down
- Equity partners griping about compensation
- Increased focus on contacts and connections
- Consolidation of client contact - relationship partner
- Press is personal not firm oriented
- Client desires for consolidation
- Diversification of client base
- Increased loss of opportunities due to conflicts
- Accelerated/delayed deadline
- Fights for leadership

Early Warning Signs that your company is about to undergo a corporate reorganization:

- Market changes that are adverse to your company/industry
- Sudden/Significant share price shift (up or down)
- Rumors re: management changes
- Frequent/Unusual “All hands” meetings
- Explicit warnings (i.e. company announces that change/restructuring is ahead)
- Shareholder activism
- New buzz words suddenly being used in the company

Early Warning Signs that you are being pigeonholed in your professional career:

- Attempts to expand your expertise/responsibilities/variety of work are thwarted
- Career defined by others rather than by you
- Specified hire (told that you are being hired for a specific and limited purpose)
- Basic stuff sent to you so that you never move beyond the basics
- Passed over for opportunities to grow

When we don't see (or ignore) these signs, we miss the opportunity to be proactive and take control over our career. When we do see the signs there are a variety of actions we can take to find an alternative career path to avoid the roadblock. The group specifically considered alternatives in the pigeonhole example from above.

Alternative paths to avoid being pigeonholed:

- Take on less exciting projects to demonstrate skill
- Tell people what you want
- Develop internal/CLE to highlight skills
- Eliminate assumptions
- Volunteer
- Broaden skill base
- Build your confidence
- Analyze business direction – strategic focus

What alternatives can you think of when you realize members of your practice group are going to leave your firm?

What alternatives can you think of when you learn that your company is about to undergo a corporate reorganization?

It is important that you are not alone in your career journey. There are a lot of people who helped get you to this point and there are a lot of people who will be willing to help you look

down the road for the signs of trouble ahead. Many of those people will also be there to help you when you don't see the roadblock and you hit the obstacle head on.

Here are some of the people the group identified as resources to help identify potential roadblocks and recover from a crash.

Assistance - Sources

- Mentor/Sponsor
- External Network
- External/Internal Coach
- Personal Network
- People who love you
- Be truthful with yourself - what role do/did you play
- Clients and competitors

Who else may be able to assist you?

What do you need to do to enlist their assistance before you have a career crash?

What do you need to do to engage their support so that they want to support you?

Please remember to take the time during your busy career to look up and listen. The signs that roadblocks lie ahead will often be visible. Take advantage of those signs so that you can create the career that is meaningful for you. Good luck!