Reinventing Yourself Has Become a Career Necessity

Standing still is not an option.

The workplace is changing at a rapid pace and those who fail to change along with it will be left behind, stuck in the same jobs or, even worse, laid off, because they failed to adapt.

The era of working for the same employer for your entire career has long since passed. To adapt to today’s business world, employees need to know how to reinvent themselves so they can keep pace. Rather than avoiding change, they need to embrace it. Dorie Clark will tell you how.

Click here to register for Reinventing You: Define Your Brand, Imagine Your Future
12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
Thursday, March 19, 2015
Know your brand.
“It’s very important to know what your brand is and how you’re perceived by other people,” she says. To obtain a better sense of your brand, she suggests asking a half dozen friends and colleagues to write down three words that describe you. Patterns typically emerge from the process, according to Clark.

Manage your online presence.
Your personal brand is not just what people who know you think of you. If you’re trying to become known by a new group of people, much of their impression of you will be based on the information that’s available about you online.

Add content to your website or blog posts to take control of what a Google search will produce. LinkedIn now provides a professional forum for blog posts.

“When people look you up, you want them to get a smart, professional image of you,” she says.

Have a “wing man.”
Research shows that if you brag about yourself, people will tune you out. But if someone else is saying positive things about you, people will listen.

“Recruit a like-minded colleague—someone you like and trust,” Clark says. “Make a pact to support each other and look for opportunities to talk each other up.”

The days of spending a lifetime at one career are over. We need to take responsibility. We need to keep challenging ourselves.”

Reinvention may be counterintuitive, but Clark believes it’s essential for succeeding in today’s business world.

“People resist change,” she says. “It’s always a frightening prospect to jump off the pier, until you realize that the pier is on fire. Then it’s easier to do it. The rule in the professional world was that you work hard and you’ll get noticed and acknowledged, and you can keep your job forever.

Circumstances have changed. If you want to be successful today, you can’t play by the same rules and shake your fist at the sky.”

She cites Steven Rice, executive vice president of human resources at Silicon Valley’s Juniper Networks, as saying that adaptability is the key skill of the 21st century.

“He always asks how you are reinventing yourself,” Clark says. “In almost any job you have, you’re going to have to change dramatically or be left behind.”

### A Three-Step Process

So how do you reinvent yourself? Clark recommends a three-step process. First, she says it’s important to understand how you are currently perceived by others, so you can assess your strengths.

The next step is to develop a personal brand and to “determine what you want to be known for.” And third, “it’s essential to ‘live out your brand,’ by aligning your words with your actions and making sure that every aspect of your life – from whom you associate with to how you dress – is in sync.”

“It doesn’t have to be frightening process,” she says. “It should be an exciting process.”

As examples of people who have successfully reinvented themselves, she cites s, a professional bicycling advocate who lost his job when the organization he worked for closed its field office.

“This was a dream job he loved and there were not a ton of options,” Clark says.

“He and his wife had always dreamed of opening a bed and breakfast, and they bought one next to a rail trail. He was able to market it as a rail trail enthusiast. He didn’t stop there. He became a real estate agent, selling homes near rail trails.”

Working with The Murphys Realtors in Northampton, Mass., Della Pena is consistently listed among the top performing agents in the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts.

She also cited Alice Denison, who was passionate about being an artist, but worried about the lack of economic security in that profession. Instead, she built a solid professional career as a nonprofit fundraiser and became chief of staff for the head of her organization.

“She had a demanding full-time professional job that paid well,” Clark says, “but she never gave up on her dream.”

Every day she would wake up at 5 a.m. and paint before starting her job at 9 a.m. Her work improved over time, and eventually it was picked up by a gallery in Boston.

“She was reinventing herself, not in the sense of abandoning her career, but she was making space in her life for the things that mattered to her,” Clark said. “A lot of people think that’s not possible, but it’s a matter of prioritizing.

According to Clark, it helps to think like an entrepreneur.

“Whether you work for yourself or for someone else, it’s essential for professionals to think like entrepreneurs and to look beyond the immediate task at hand,” she says. “Ask yourself, ‘Is there a different and better way to do this?’ ”

When you answer that question, you can begin to reinvent yourself.

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