

Corporate loyalty

The live-to-work generation needs to make time for outside interests

One pattern well entrenched in the current generation of senior executives is corporate loyalty. If we consulted a dictionary, we would read such words as willing to do whatever it takes, devotion, faithfulness, allegiance, trustworthiness and dependability.



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My Next Season

After more than two decades of helping senior executives on the “productivity” side of the equation, Leslie and her business partner Mark Linsz have started My Next Season, a company whose purpose is to help executives transition from careers oriented around productivity to lives anchored in purpose.

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There would be pages of examples such as: working endless hours; taking calls at all hours; having phones at ears during children’s sporting events; re-routing vacation plans to accommodate key business meetings; traveling across different time zones back-to-back; and enduring stress every moment due to knowledge of confidential information.

A live-to-work generation

That loyalty came from patterns of behavior that were modeled by predecessors and conditioned over years, reinforced with pay, promotions and attaboys.

For this “live-to-work” generation, “loyalty” was a requirement to succeed at the highest levels. They define themselves by their jobs, the companies they work for and the roles they play at work.

Therefore, retirements and corporate transitions are hard. Increasingly, as more capable, young talent moves up, transitions are occurring with abbreviated lead times and less negotiation on timing. These shortened windows create abrupt endings for patterns of behavior shaped over decades.

Filling the void

One executive described his first day of retirement as “the worse day of his life.”

“The silence from having been taken off email lists, meeting requests and phone calls, while welcomed intellectually, was deafening,” he said. “I could not see

beyond my blank calendar and imagined it would remain like this for the rest of my life. I felt sick and tense from head-to-toe and began to question who I was and what I was going to do for the rest of my life.”

As a member of the live-to-work generation, removing work left a big question mark about his purpose.

In order to avoid this, a live-to-work executive needs to broaden the definition of work in the last third of his or her career. Explore and re-commit to hobbies or organizations that have no connection to your company.

Building a bridge of outside interests

Most executives spend the first half of their careers focused on learning, growing and climbing the corporate ladder — while balancing heavy home commitments of young children and family.

As work intensity increases, time for outside commitments falls. The problem is non-work (outside) commitments rarely get added back in, so when it comes time to retire, executives feel as though they have nothing to transition to.

In truth, it is these other connections that provide the islands executives bridge to. These outside areas of interest provide structure for projects and part-time engagement, while the rest of the next-season picture comes into focus.

Invite hobbies back into your life while you are still running the corporate race. Increase your time with family. Engage with a nonprofit whose cause speaks to your heart. Force yourself to expand your aperture of what defines and interests you.

It will make a difference when it comes time to make your corporate transition from productivity to purpose. While hard to imagine, the grass is greener on the other side — but you need a bridge to get there. ●



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