

Whether you want to revamp your career, finances or relationships, there's still time for you to turn 2011 into your best year yet.

It's easy to start the year full of promise. We've had time to reflect over the holidays, we make new year's resolutions and we tell ourselves that, this year, things are going to be different.

But then, before we know it, we're well into the calendar year and it's still the same daily grind, our resolutions have gone out the window and ... nothing has changed.

However, rather than accept life on the corporate treadmill, it's important to realise that it's never too late to do something about it.

That nagging feeling

Sometimes, you may not have specific goals to kick. Life might be going along swimmingly – but you just have a nagging feeling that something isn't right. Or that something is missing.

Executive and performance coach Jo Bassett from www.livingsavvy.com.au says it's important to identify the cause of this feeling. "When we feel our life is not right – whether that is a nagging dissatisfaction or even outright crisis – we can easily fall into the trap of thinking we need to make big changes, and make them quickly," says Jo. "When some clients come to me, they've often noticed that sense of uncertainty or unease, and they've decided that the only way to fix the problem is a job or career change. They want my help to push themselves through that change."

According to Jo, this may not be the right course of action at all. "I warn clients against assuming that their work is the only thing they need to change to improve their life. However, in the western world our identity is very much tied to our work. Commonly, the first question we ask a new acquaintance is: What do you do? Of course, we spend so much of our time on our work, it's only natural that it is a key area of focus."

So what should you change?

Jo suggests that before you rush headlong into a career change, it's vital to determine the areas of your life that really need the attention. "The key is quiet, conscious reflection. This is not only essential for getting clear on what areas you want to change, it's also vital to the ongoing process of testing options and taking action."

While you may already have dedicated downtime that gives you the opportunity to reflect, not all women make this a priority. "It can be incredibly difficult to set aside time each day," says Jo. "I recommend taking a very practical approach to creating a space for reflection – grab any moment that you can!"

Jo suggests this might be while exercising (without an iPod); on the train or bus (with a journal); during routine tasks such as making the bed, unpacking the dishwasher or doing the ironing; or at the beach or park. "Put down the book or magazine and simply sit quietly for a few minutes," she says. "The secret to making this approach work is to have just one question or issue that you are holding in mind for the day or week. A great place to start: What am I creating in life, right now?"

Start in the here and now

When you want to improve your life, it seems natural to dream big and identify your Big Hair Audacious Goals. But Jo suggests analysing what kind of life you're creating with

your current choices. "When thinking about life change the temptation can be to focus totally on your dreams and desires – where you want to be in your future. However, you are already making choices that are shaping the direction of your life. Now is the time to consciously recognise those choices instead of making them automatically."

Jo suggests asking yourself:

- > What is most important to me? Where do I spend most of my time? Are these two lists of activities similar?
- > Who do I enjoy spending time with? Who do I wish I could see less of?
- > How do I measure my success?
- > What makes me happy? What makes me unhappy?
- > What do I look forward to? What energises me?
- > What do I dread? What drains my energy?

Truthful answers to these questions may help you identify the areas of your life that you do need work on.

"Every woman is different, but there are three key areas that my coaching clients most often focus on to create a more joyful, fulfilling and satisfying life," says Jo.

1. WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Jo says that she's not a fan of the term "work/life balance". "I coach clients to live an integrated life, where all the pieces fit together seamlessly," says Jo. "Not all the pieces are the same size – responsibilities expand and contract on different days, at different times of the year, and at different life stages – but the goal is to design our life so all the pieces complement each other."

She says it's important to ask for and accept offers of help. "There is a misconception that asking for or accepting help is a sign of weakness or incompetence. In truth, accepting help from family and friends, or using professional support services, can be the smartest way to live a life that is fulfilling, but not stressful." ▶



Jo Bassett

How to live your
best year

GET IT



2. FIND TIME FOR SELF (WITHOUT GUILT)

Mastering the art of saying “no” is key to finding time for yourself. “Telling someone “no” with firmness and confidence can rate 10/10 for degree of difficulty,” says Jo. “However, perfecting your ‘no’ is worth the effort. The more you can comfortably say ‘no’ to others, the more you can say ‘yes’ to yourself. Yes, I will sit down for 20 minutes and read my book. Yes, I will make my massage appointment a regular commitment. Yes, I will turn off the computer at 9pm and unwind before bed.”

3. CAREER/BUSINESS CHANGE

Instead of assuming that you simply need another job, Jo suggests taking a month to evaluate and study what you think the ‘problem’ is. “Keep a daily journal answering the questions: What inspired me? What did I dislike? What was missing?” she says. “Before launching into a career change or a new business, seek the support of friends, mentors and professionals – such as a coach, a psychologist or a counsellor. Choose people who will encourage and honestly advise you, with your best interest in their hearts.”

This is not the time for a knee-jerk reaction just because you feel dissatisfied in your current job. Changing jobs or careers may not solve the problem at all. But if you can identify the issue causing you dissatisfaction, you may be able to deal with that issue without having to resign, retrain or regret a rash career decision.

Adrenalin junkies *Beware*

You can get addicted to achievement. But to “have it all”, you need to know how to manage it.

Marisa Lyons spent more than 10 years in the corporate world in a series of executive sales positions before the cracks started to show. “It was rewarding both in terms of my career and also financially,” says Marisa. “I thrived on juggling several balls in the air, loved the responsibility and challenge to be a high achiever – to really be someone important. It was addictive and, for the most part, I was running on adrenalin. But I loved it.

“I never understood why people talked about work/life balance because I absolutely loved my work. I really did. But then – even though I still enjoyed the challenge of what I did – my body just started showing some cracks. There were no major physical breaks but the stress – the constant adrenalin – started taking its toll. I started putting on weight but didn’t have the time or energy to maintain a gym membership.

“I was constantly experiencing back and neck pain, I had migraines, little sleep and, as a result, spent a ridiculous amount of money at numerous chiropractors, naturopaths, kinesiologists and physiotherapists. I guess I was buying pain relief. However, at the time, I actually believed I was looking after myself. I became mentally and physically exhausted but that was OK because the thrill of the chase back at work was all worth it. I thought: ‘This is who I am’.”

Life in the fast lane

Marisa was moody and tired but kept pushing through because she didn’t think anything was wrong with her lifestyle. “I thought that stress only happened to people who were not happy with their work or career. In the end, I was finding it really challenging just to keep focused, to maintain 14-hour days and the build up



Marisa Lyons

became too much. Mentally, I was strong enough so wondered what the hell was going wrong. I reached that point in my life when I asked: ‘Is this it? Is this as good as my life gets?’ This was a real wake up call for me. You don’t have to be unhappy or dissatisfied for this sort of thing to happen. You might convince yourself that you are doing really well but if you are actually pushing yourself too far then the consequence is burn out.”

The real cause of stress

It was time to gain some perspective. “I had put so much importance on my career that I had a great relationship with it but the turning point in my life was when I resigned and people asked the usual question: ‘What do you do?’ Wow, without a title, I was a nobody. I was just me ... and I didn’t know who that person really was anymore. Or, more important, where she had gone.”

Marisa says her ensuing period of soul-searching and reflection was worthwhile. “I realised that I needed to understand the patterns and behaviours that supported me and the ones that caused me stress and where else I play this out in my life – like at home, in relationships and with my finances.

“I learnt that stress is unrealised expectations. I have high expectations of myself and I do not want to change that, as that’s what still drives me today. I love it! Today I am more aware and I now know how to manage it.”

Since then, Marisa has begun her coaching and consulting business, Real Life Consulting (www.reallifeconsulting.com.au). She shows high achieving woman how to manage the pressure of being successful so they can avoid overwhelm and burn out while maintaining their passion and drive.



If you’ve identified the job of your dreams, you need to take action if you want it to become a reality. Kim Seeling Smith reveals the steps you need to take to make it happen.

So one of your goals is to get (or move closer to) that job. You know the one. Your dream job, your boss’s job, the next step in your career plan. That job! But how do you go about it? What do you need to do to make sure it happens?

1. FIRST TAKE A STEP BACK

Will this job really help you reach your goals? When most people plan their careers they start by asking themselves the wrong question. They ask, “What do I want to be? A butcher? A baker? Or a candlestick maker?” Instead they should be asking: “Where do I want to go? What am I trying to accomplish in both my life and my career?”

I liken this to planning a holiday and spending more time figuring out if you want to fly, take a train or drive, instead of thinking about where you want to go and what you want to do once you get there. So look at that job again. Will it help you accomplish your personal and professional goals or will it lead you down a path that looks good right now, but may take you to a place you don’t necessarily want to be later on.

Once you do determine that this really is the right job or path for you, then it’s time to get into action.

2. DETERMINE WHERE YOU’RE GOING

What skills or experience do you need to get that job? If this is the next step on your career path, this might be obvious. But if the job you’re after is a few steps down the track or onto another path altogether, you might have to do some research. Google is a great place to start, but you can also use LinkedIn to look for people with that job title. What are their backgrounds? What experience and skills do they have? It’s a great idea to then contact those people – or others you know – for their advice.

3. FIGURE OUT WHERE YOU ARE NOW

Do an honest evaluation of your current skills and abilities. What is the gap between where you are now and that job? Women tend to undervalue themselves. Don’t be modest. If you have trouble recognising your own talents and abilities, ask others.

4. MAKE A PLAN TO “MIND THE GAP”

Develop an action plan to learn those new skills or acquire that experience. Do you need additional training? What kind? Where is it offered? How much does it cost? Do you need additional experience? How will you get it? Assign time frames and treat it like a project.

5. TAKE THE FIRST STEP

You never feel as good when you reach a goal as when you are making progress towards it. So take your very first step right now. It will start the momentum you need to see it through.

6. WHIP THAT RESUME INTO SHAPE

Regardless of whether that job is six months or five years away, you want to start shaping your resume to reflect the experience and achievements that say, “I can do this job well!” The best resumes are achievement based. Start tracking what you accomplish and how it impacts your company or your team. Quantify those achievements with numbers if you can.

7. REWARD YOURSELF

If that job is still several years away, set milestones for yourself and reward yourself for achieving those. It will make it more fun to stay on track when it all seems too hard.



Kim Seeling Smith is trainer, coach and mentor on career management and employee retention issues. www.MyCriticalPath.com

Money

– yes, it matters

Is your salary package really at the level it should be? Career strategist Karen Adamedes reveals how to get paid what you're worth.

“It's not just about the money,” women all over the world say, inadvertently launching a missile directly through their salary negotiations. “Of course I want to be paid fairly,” they continue, “But I really want to do interesting work/use this job to advance my career/make a difference/feel valued”, and so on. Even if they don't make the mistake of voicing these sentiments out loud, this is often how their self-talk goes. Women often think that negotiating for themselves and their remuneration is somehow tasteless, and that being driven by such a selfish motive will lessen a decision-maker's interest in them for a job.

But, in fact, the opposite is true. By not negotiating hard enough for remuneration, women send the message that they don't have the confidence to stick up for themselves.

The money discussion is a key opportunity to demonstrate confidence in your skills, knowledge and experience, and what you believe you are worth. This is an important area of focus to ensure that you achieve the success and rewards you deserve as you develop your career.

Unless you are independently wealthy or an heiress with significant expectations, there is a pretty reasonable chance that money is one of the main reasons you work. However, there is another much more

subtle reason why the money you earn is important to your career. The business world tends to be incredibly hierarchical and the amount of remuneration that you are perceived to receive, establishes your importance on the career ladder.

Your perceived relative importance in an organisation can impact how seriously you are taken and, consequently, your potential capability to do more senior jobs. If a man perceives that he is of higher value than you because he earns more or is on a better bonus structure, even if he is more junior in rank, he may dismiss what you say. You may have to struggle to have your ideas or directions taken seriously. Salary and remuneration negotiations are critical not only to what you are paid, but also to your reputation and status.

Downplaying your monetary value diminishes you in the eyes of others, making it seem like you're not as serious, tough, skilled (at negotiations, at least) or confident. Men have significant experience at putting a dollar value on their worth and negotiating hard for themselves. Women are often concerned about looking pushy when they negotiate and may settle for less than their male counterparts. The success of men, and the relative failure of the “notice how good I am and just pay me fairly” approach of women, suggests that their strategy works better.

Negotiate for you

Regardless of what discipline or type of organisation you select, the opportunity is there for you to negotiate the best deal you can. However, women are often reluctant to do this because they:

- > are concerned about being seen as too aggressive
- > think they'll be seen as self-focused rather than business-focused
- > are uncomfortable with negotiating
- > don't know what to ask for, and
- > lack confidence.

The answer to these concerns is to learn how to negotiate for your remuneration. The first thing to find out is what you can negotiate for. Numerous items and benefits can be part of remuneration negotiations, including:

- > salary
- > performance bonus
- > flexibility – working hours or remote working arrangements
- > club or association memberships
- > study assistance
- > tools of trade – like laptops, cell mobile phones and smart phones
- > health benefits
- > shares or stock options – although you may need to be a reasonably senior Career Chick for this to be an option, and
- > parking space – ditto.

This list is not exhaustive and

only some of these things may be relevant for your organisation. Your company may offer other benefits like childcare or health cover. Find out which of these apply to your role and organisation so you can decide what you should negotiate for.

Do your research

Apart from knowing what you are able to negotiate you need to do some other background research before you start negotiating for your salary and benefits. There are lots of credible online recruitment sites where you can research your industry. Most companies have a range or guidelines on what they'll pay for a position based on an applicant's skills and experience, not to mention negotiating ability.

But there is another kind of research that men do as well. They don't just find out about the published data and guidelines. They gather stories about what is really going on. They find out what others who do the same role are paid, as well as people who do a similar role in another division of the same company, and people in similar positions in other organisations.

Men aren't embarrassed about discussing numbers. They're not afraid to ask questions. They may not come straight out with: “So, what are they paying you?”



except when their mate is telling them about his new job or promotion. Women see this kind of information as personal and private. Men don't think that way. For a man, being asked this question gives them the chance to brag and increase their status.

Men don't always ask direct questions, but they will probe to gather more information: “That's great news about the new job! Did they throw in a parking space with that? They did? Excellent. How do they pay the long-term incentive? Oh, right you're not on the incentive. Sounds like you scored big, buddy!”

Without even asking the dollar question they can find out that their mate has managed to get a parking space but isn't on the long-term incentive. They already know which level of roles get which conditions and with this information they can make some pretty accurate educated guesses about where this person is positioned and the likely value of their remuneration. This gets filed away for when they or someone else needs the information.

They won't necessarily tell each other exactly what salary someone else is on, or use it in an actual negotiation, but they will know where they fit in the scheme of things and where to pitch themselves. Your likelihood of success increases greatly with the amount of information you have and how confidently you use it.

The added extras

Apart from your salary, there may be other extras that you can negotiate for. Find out the value of the non-salary benefits so that you can quantify their value as part of your salary package negotiation.

It is now commonplace for remuneration negotiations to extend beyond salary. For instance, negotiating for a higher bonus is one way of providing a manager with a guaranteed return on investment. You agree to meet



certain performance criteria in return for a higher bonus.

When you do this you demonstrate that you are backing yourself to achieve performance targets and will reap the rewards when you do. It also gives you the opportunity to maximise your potential earnings.

When you have favourable results, the amount of your bonus to be paid is often easier to negotiate, as you have strong and relevant data as proof of your performance and contribution. But you still need to be ready, willing and able to negotiate.

When to negotiate

Opportunities to walk into the boss's office to negotiate for a raise don't happen every day. And this technique is unlikely to be the most successful negotiation tactic. Most organisations have quite strict protocols and restrict increases to the annual review process to help manage costs. But there are openings when the time is right for you to negotiate for your remuneration, such as:

- at your performance appraisal/annual salary review

- when you get a new job or promotion, or
- when you have delivered something significant to the organisation.

Annual reviews and performance discussions are obvious opportunities to talk about your salary, your bonus and other benefits.

Create the opportunity to negotiate by raising the topic with your manager two or three months out from the start of the formal process.

Put the topic on the table by asking questions like, "How is this year's salary review/bonus payment going to work?" or "Is there a way for my <<insert your most fabulous achievement in the last six months>> to be considered at bonus time?"

As you get closer to the review, put some numbers on your expectations: "Do you think that a 5 per cent increase is viable in light of my contribution during the year?"

Leave yourself some bargaining room so that you can create a win-win negotiation by appearing to compromise.

Have a plan - then implement!

A negotiation for your remuneration is exactly the same as any other business negotiation. Know your own value by keeping a scorecard of how you have contributed so you can position this in relation to the requirements of the job and what you have delivered or will deliver.

Develop a plan for your negotiation and if you are still not confident talk it through with a mentor or a trusted advisor in your network. People who support you are usually incredibly helpful when it comes to preparing for this crucial negotiation – men, in particular, because they use exactly the same approach and love to share their expertise.

Preparation gives you the confidence to represent yourself to the very best of your ability.

No matter how much planning and research you do, it all comes down to actually asking for what you want. You need to overcome any reluctance you have and just negotiate. One technique that can help is to think through the repercussions: what will happen if you are told no? How dreadful will it actually be? If you have raised the issue appropriately and demonstrated your knowledge of the market and your worth, will you really be any worse off?

There are many more likely scenarios. The answer could just be yes. Or it may be no, but for reasons your research would never have uncovered. Even if you are turned down for the most predictable reasons – cost pressures, the timing or company policy – you will not lose your reputation or credibility and you certainly won't have to go into hiding. The reality is that you will have at least opened a door for future negotiation. Or you may get part of what you ask.

At the very least, you will have demonstrated confidence in yourself and affirmed your value.

The style of how you approach these negotiations is important. You don't want to plead or beg or come across as needy, desperate or dateless. The crucial thing is to be clear and firm about what you are asking. Don't dance around

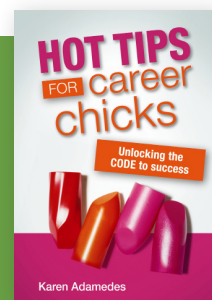
the subject. Ask for what you want, then go back and fill in the details as required. You can start with a simple comment, such as, "I'd like to talk to you about my expectations for the annual salary review," or "I know that you will be reviewing the performance bonuses over the next few weeks. I'd like to discuss mine with you." Make it clear what you want to discuss.

Once you're into the discussion, it's important that you stick to your plan. Women, once they have plucked up the courage to raise the money issue, usually state their case well. But they often accept the response and settle for whatever is offered or, worse, being told no. Women, generally speaking, back off too soon. Men push the point.

Increase your confidence by role-playing the conversation with yourself (or someone you trust) beforehand. Anticipate some of the responses you may get and formulate potential answers. Decide how far you are going to push, what you will accept and how you can bow out gracefully if you really need to!

Develop your career

Prepare, research, plan and negotiate for yourself. Call on a mentor or those that you trust in your network for help. Enhance your reputation, and increase your own confidence and the confidence of others by negotiating to earn what you are worth. L



Karen Adamedes is a career strategist, speaker, mentor and trainer in career skills.

This is an extract from her book Hot Tips for Career Chicks; Unlocking the CODE to Success. www.hottipsforcareerchicks.com

