

# Turning Points

THE HIGHLANDS COMPANY NEWSLETTER III



## Re-Energizing Your Career

Can you have a wonderful career but still feel that something is missing? Karen Eckert graduated from college with a degree in Home Economics/Consumer Services and a desire to be of service to others. After college, she took advantage of an excellent offer at a major power company, thinking that it would be a short-term position while her husband finished school. But the opportunities for growth continued, and Karen decided to stay with the company – and stay she did for the next 18 years!

In a meteoric career, Karen moved from a position in consumer education and product development, to a supervisory position, to the job of Branch Manager. She was the first woman in the company to achieve that level. She went on to become a Vice President and, ultimately, Chief

Communications Officer. Unfortunately, each step up in Karen's career came at a cost to her. With each promotion, Karen moved farther from her core values – her family, her husband, her community and her true inner self. She had lost the balance that would lead to fulfillment and satisfaction. She began feeling restless at work. She admitted, "Although I embraced each promotion, I realized that it took me further and further from the customer interaction that I enjoyed so much." At the same time, her responsibilities provided her with fewer opportunities to use her creative abilities and her finely tuned entrepreneurial skills.

Karen learned of The Highlands Program, and she participated in the Highlands process to re-assess her own career development. It was an eye-opening experience. Karen commented, "The Highlands Program was an affirmation that I could make a dramatic career change and be successful at it. It was very helpful in pinpointing the right direction for me."

As a result of the program and much soul searching, Karen left her company. She redirected her life and career and is now the president of a Foundation whose mission is to help develop the next generation of leaders in her metropolitan area. This position allows Karen to incorporate many of the values and abilities that had been lost to her – community service, direct contact with people, and a new opportunity to be creative and instrumental in development of an organization.

Equally important, Karen has been able to structure her new role to allow more time for her husband and children. She also has made time for outside activities important to her, such as becoming the President of the local Chamber of Commerce. The combination allowed her to re-establish a balance in the priorities in her life.

The whole process, according to Karen, has been re-energizing. "When I realized that I could turn loose the things that I had worked so hard to achieve without looking back, I gained so much more. My personal and professional lives have become one."

## LIVING TO WORK OR WORKING TO LIVE?

*Working Woman* and *Fast Company* are two magazines that share the same cover story, "Get a Life." The American Bar Association *Journal* has dealt with similar issues in its cover story "Dream Weavers: What attorneys at the edge of burnout and frustration are doing to regain their sparkle for being a lawyer." The Wall Street Journal carried the headline "High powered fathers savor their decisions to scale back careers."

The issues are clear. Stress is the disease of the new century, according to a Yankelovich survey. Burnout is a serious problem for senior and middle managers, and employees at all levels report feeling exhausted at the end of the work day. But the trend seems to be shifting. Increasingly, people of all ages, at varying levels of roles and responsibilities in companies ranging from Fortune 500 to family owned businesses are saying, "Enough."

Almost every magazine lately has detailed stories on individuals who are re-examining their lives and making proactive decisions about changes in their current careers. Some people decide to leave corporate America altogether for a simpler life. Far more, however, learn to make changes that allow them to balance their work goals and the personal goals important to a meaningful life.

You can achieve this balance of work and personal life – whether you are just starting your career or bringing it to an end. As little as a 10 percent shift in your focus on your roles and responsibilities, your travel schedule, your job assignments, and myriad other factors can result in a 100 percent shift in how you feel about your work and your life and the kind of balance you feel.

The key is in knowing which 10 percent to change. By learning to assess eight fundamental factors in your life, creating a personal vision based on these factors, and using this information as guidelines, you, too, can build a life of purpose, meaning, connectedness and self-expression – at work and at home.



# Values: Finding What Gives Meaning to Your Life

Most of us don't think about our careers in terms of the values we hold dear. Sure, we value money and prestige on the job, but we don't really stop to think why! In and of itself, money is not an intrinsic value, but it may represent the values of security for self and family or of independence. Experts find, though, that one of the most important elements in determining overall satisfaction, meaning and productivity is building a good match between your values and your career.

Karen Eckert (our cover story) assessed her values in making the determination to change her career. Others find that more subtle shifts incorporating their values within their current jobs can achieve the same results. The important thing is to be aware of what is important to you, to find what gives your life meaning.

Here is a simple exercise to help you look at your values. Rank the values in the chart from 1-16 according to your own priorities. Then go back again and re-list those same values based on the time you actually spent on each during the past month. For example, if health is high on your priority list, but you spent little time exercising or eating right, health would fall toward the bottom of your time-actually-spent list.

Value	Rank according to My Own Priorities	Rank according to Time Actually Spent
Security		
Monetary Success		
Family Time		
Status		
Wisdom		
Health		
Stability		
Productivity and competence		
Creative and artistic work		
Spiritual fulfillment		
Authority and decision making		
Excitement		
Innovation		
Physical challenge		
Friendship		
Change and variety		

Now, compare the two lists – what you consider your priorities vs. where you actually put your time.

How did you do? If your top priority values are low on your time-spent list, you are probably feeling stress. As you get older, attention to values plays an even more important role in the amount of stress you feel. Conversely, if your lowest priority values are high on your time-spent list, you will also experience stress.

The more and the sooner you pay attention to your values and how to bring them in sync with your careers, the more alive, productive and enthusiastic you will feel about your work.

### THE HIGHLANDS PROGRAM

*for students, adults and organizations*

#### THE HIGHLANDS ABILITY BATTERY

Discover your natural, inborn abilities – things that come naturally and easily to you

#### Personal Strategic Planning Seminar FOR ADULTS

Look at your abilities, interests, skills, personal style, values, family and goals in order to create a career vision

#### Future Directions Workshop FOR STUDENTS

Examine all the factors that go into making decisions about college and career. Create meaningful goals and plans to achieve them.

#### THE HIGHLANDS PROGRAM FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Personal Development for Managers and Executives

To complete the Highlands Ability Battery

Contact [denise@personalassessments.co.uk](mailto:denise@personalassessments.co.uk)

[www.personalassessments.co.uk](http://www.personalassessments.co.uk)