


Chapter 5

Preparing for Change



This chapter will help you manage change in your work life by enabling you to transition smoothly from the old professional niche to a new one. When life circumstances affect you, understanding the characteristics of transitions and how to move successfully from point A to point B will enable you to move forward, modify your career goals and plans, and retain control of the direction of your professional life.

As in any other career field, over your working lifetime you can expect to experience at least two major career movements or professional shifts and several minor ones. Some of the changes or shifts are typical adult experiences (promotions); others result from your planning (career mobility) or from actions initiated by others (downsizing). Change often results in uneasy feelings, even with changes you initiate or believe are positive. Movements and shifts alter established professional roles, routines, and responsibilities and can affect home and personal life as well. The future is a blank space, and you're not yet sure what shape it will assume or the direction it will take. You can ask yourself questions like these:

- Will I like the change?
- Will this shift work?
- How will I know what to do?
- Did I make the right decision?
- Will I succeed?

"Let's just accept the fact that our careers will be lived out in a state of constant transition. We should prepare for a work environment that is fluid, fuzzy, and fast. We will constantly be confronted by the 'new,' and often by the unexpected. Our standard of living will improve—dramatically. Yet we'll be surrounded by uncertainty and instability."

—Pritchett (1996, p. 25)

Change produces outcomes that need appropriate and prompt reaction. Although change is the onset of a new situation, transition brings closure to the old situation, preventing you from getting stuck and unable to advance as required. When you take responsibility for managing your responses to a change event, you have taken the first step toward experiencing success in the new work situation.

Given the demands of the workplace, you need to move effectively and efficiently from one professional place to another. Understanding the in-between role of transition in the change experience will make this time less stressful and fatiguing. Transition is a seamless interval that starts almost unnoticed—unless change has been involuntary and abrupt—and sometimes ends without acknowledgment until some point after the change has been completed.

A transition interval is a period of time to assess the impact of the change on your life; to regroup; and to develop a clearer perspective of the situation, your reactions, and needed decisions. This interval creates space for the psychological and behavioral adaptations that occur (internally and externally) during any move between significant points in your life. Transition is the emotional accommodation to change and is key to surviving change events with minimal upheaval and strain by returning harmony and balance to your life. You are able to move forward professionally and personally and involve yourself fully in your new work, either in preparation or in the actual entrance and orientation.

A transition interval consists of three phases, each of which needs to be experienced to give shape and direction to that blank space in your professional future. Change in itself is a neutral event. People looking at the same event, for example, a promotion or a layoff and its resulting changes, can view it either positively or negatively with feelings that range from excitement to apprehension. As a result, a transition varies in length, magnitude, and effect from one person to another. How you perceive a particular career move or professional shift is the critical factor in determining the ease or difficulty of saying goodbye to the old, moving on, and greeting the new.

The Three Transition Phases

To gain closure on what you have left behind, to have time to gain some distance to reflect and reenergize, and to greet the fresh beginning, the passage through a transition interval is experienced in three phases:

1. winding down: bringing closure to the old and seeing it in retrospect
2. calling time out: taking time to think about how the change will affect your life
3. taking off: welcoming and moving forward into the new professional phase.

Going through all three phases is important whether you are experiencing a major change, or a minor one. Skipping either or both of the first two phases will leave you feeling that you still have unfinished business to take care of. Even if you devote only a day to one of the phases, at least you have acknowledged it.

Phase 1: Winding Down

With any change in your life—particularly a major one—the first step is to close up your old life and pack it away as a memory. This first phase, winding down, is the time to tie up loose ends and to take leave of people, places, and things. In departing from a workplace, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, say your goodbyes to supervisors, colleagues, support staff, clients, anyone you have worked with and will miss. There may be some people you'll want to contact for help after becoming more familiar with the needs of your new work situation. These good-byes are important because they visibly and actively bring closure to present professional relationships before initiating new ones.

Remember the importance of leaving an employer on good terms (even if your departure stems from a termination). You never know when you'll need references or when you may have an opportunity to return to a former employer as a professional advancement move.

If you are moving to a new assignment within your present organization, acknowledge that your status and work associations will be different. This phase is an important declaration for your peers and associates to see and accept your new organizational role. Although some working relationships will continue, they will probably be on a different level. Other relationships will end, and new ones will be established and developed. However, for the success of the transition, you and your supervisor, staff, and colleagues need to see and accept your changed professional identity.

During this phase, review and sort work records, files, data systems, contact or networking information, mementos, and personal possessions. Decide what to get rid of, transfer to your replacement, give away to colleagues, or keep. Without cleaning and clearing, full concentration on the work and tasks ahead of you will be more difficult, particularly in a career or professional switch that truly affects your life. Unfinished business will weigh on your mind, and you will have a harder time focusing on plans for the future in phase 2.

Phase 2: Calling Time Out

A period of time must elapse before definite lines separate the old and the new. This second phase, calling time out, is for reenergizing—a time for reviewing, reflecting, planning, and refreshing your physical, emotional, and spiritual selves. Use this op-

portunity to become accustomed to and acknowledge your altered professional life and perhaps your personal life as well. Once you have started a new job or initiated other career plans, you may not have another opportunity to relax or take care of personal and family matters.

Calling time out can take place over a short time such as a weekend, or as long as several months or even a year. During this period, you truly become aware that when this second transitional phase is over, you will take on new roles and responsibilities, develop new routines, perhaps experience altered family dynamics, and so forth—in other words, changes are and will continue happening! Most important, you will recognize that your old professional identity and image are gone and will be replaced by new ones. You are willing to enter the unknown.

To approach the next professional juncture motivated, energized, and focused requires your willingness and ability to put aside time to replenish yourself, do some introspection about values and priorities, assess the status of your situation, and plan your next steps. You must begin the next phase of your professional life with an “I’m ready and able” attitude to have your best chance for success and satisfaction.

Phase 3: Taking Off

This phase begins when the change event is complete. You look forward to filling in the blank spaces in your life as you are off to a fresh new beginning. This is a time of creativity, brainstorming, high energy, motivation, and resourcefulness. Feelings exist on many levels: excitement, enthusiasm, joy, apprehension, and anxiety. Whether starting new employment, being promoted, transferring to a different geographic location, initiating a business, activating a job search, or going back to school, you face many questions, tasks, and expectations.

Concentrate on your priorities, keeping communication lines open, creating supportive relationships, acquiring needed new knowledge, and noting the benefits of the change. Take satisfaction in completing projects and solving problems. And don’t forget to celebrate in your own fashion starting a new professional situation, working through a particularly thorny issue, or checking off a difficult task. Exercise 5-1 at the end of this chapter will help you to go through the three transition phases to your new professional beginning. Although you may never get used to the disruptions and roller coast ride of change, with the proper resources, tools, and mindset, you can deal with them and look forward to your next career move or professional shift.

Work Transitions: Career Movements

Career movements are generalized and common job activities, experienced by most people in the workforce, documenting the expansion, retraction, retreat, and direc-

tion of a person's work history. Being aware of and understanding these types of work transitions are key to

- managing your professional life
- determining its direction and path
- developing a new professional niche
- selecting specific options and resources for your next step.

Most people go through several work changes in a lifetime, some of which can be experienced simultaneously, such as a promotion and a transfer, or more than once, such as a new job or a reorganization.

What are some work transition possibilities? Knowing what your options are is important in reviewing your career objectives and direction and determining your next steps. The basic profile of a work transition includes an overview of its unique or special characteristics, a description of the specific feelings or emotions it generates, and a list of frequently asked questions. Some common career movements in the WLP field include

- moving from one employer to another
- moving within your present organization
- transferring to a new geographical location
- being out of work
- making professional shifts
- retiring.

Moving From One Employer to Another

The most common work transition is moving from one employer to another. Most people will change employers or positions an average of five or six times in their work lives. Concerns expressed during these change events can include these: Will I lose contact with my former work friends? How quickly and easily will I adjust to my new position and responsibilities? Will I like and get along with my new manager, co-workers, and colleagues? More important, how will they react to me? Am I really ready for this?

Moving Within Your Present Organization

Moving up the organizational ladder is a natural and expected change event. People usually look forward to this transition, are pleased about their career progression and mobility, and believe they deserve it or are ready to move ahead. However, promotions can put people in a temporary state of anxiety in which they ask these questions: How will this new position affect my home life? Will I live up to the expectations of

my supervisor? How soon will I feel comfortable with my new status? Can I really learn what I need to learn quickly so I'm up and running as soon as possible?

These are two major types of promotions:

- **From a staff member to an administrator or supervisor position:** This transition prompts major modifications in your perspective about your professional identity and relationships with colleagues. For example, you may find yourself supervising colleagues who are friends, and you may feel uncomfortable about the altered status; or some people may not want to accept you as their supervisor. However, you may be proud and excited that your achievements have been acknowledged and that you have made the leap from staff to management. Whatever the situation, you will need time to feel comfortable with your new professional image and role and to meet your new challenges. Ask yourself these questions: What management or supervisory training do I need? What can I do to have staff acknowledge and accept me in this leadership role? Will I quickly and easily be able to adapt to my new duties and place within the department?
- **From a middle management to an executive position:** When people are clearly moving up the career ladder, it can be a dramatic transition in terms of image, responsibilities, and expectations by you and others. This promotion is probably the culmination of all your hard work, sacrifices, and efforts. If you're becoming an executive at a rather young age (before 40), reflecting during the calling time out phase is critical for continuing satisfaction in future endeavors. Whatever your age, use this phase to consider the effect this promotion will have on you. Ask yourself some of these questions: What challenges are on the horizon for me? In what ways will I leave my mark on this organization? How do I want my lifestyle to change? What do I have to look forward to in the future?

Whether you are starting with a new employer or accepting a promotion, your main focus is on the taking off phase as feelings of impatience to move on and desire to tackle the next challenge bubble to the top, which will show in your body language, voice, and expressions.

Transferring to a New Geographical Location

A transfer can happen either within your present organization or with a new employer. In a work-related move, you actually experience several transitions: a new physical living environment, a new work environment, new work responsibilities, and possibly a new organization. During this time, you and your family will make

some larger-than-usual adjustments. As you face several unknowns and risks, you and your family may experience much stress, anxiety, and possibly fear.

The calling time out and taking off transition phases are especially critical for success, but the timelines your employer sets may not allow for each phase to run its natural course. Relocating and settling into new surroundings entails much preparation and activity. You may not be able to accomplish your personal and professional to-do lists. If you have a family, they may have to stay behind temporarily to complete a school term and to separate from jobs, or you may not have been able to find new housing before your report-to-work date. If you're single, having to adjust to a new area by yourself may result in feelings of isolation and cause you to greatly miss your old friends and haunts.

A geographic move can prompt several questions: How quickly will my family and I adjust to the new situation? Will we like our new location? How quickly will I be up and running in my new position? Will I find people with interests similar to mine? What have I risked in making this move?

Being Out of Work

Unemployment is a work transition that is often very upsetting and unforgettable, particularly when unexpected and unplanned. Depending on the circumstances, people have different reactions and feelings about this change event. Regardless of the specific reasons for the situation, consider it an opportunity to take stock of your self, growing interests, and present lifestyle and to decide what action to take. The calling time out phase is critical for your future success and sense of fulfillment.

At the start of an unemployment period, a good career management strategy is to do a self-assessment and to avoid acting impulsively with a gunshot approach to finding new work. Use your unexpected freed up time to rethink career objectives and reenergize for the next professional step. Consider hiring a coach to work with you and provide support. These are some of the common questions people ask themselves: What do I truly want to do in my next job? Do I want to take a break from the corporate world? What will make me happy and content? Is this the time for a fresh start somewhere else?

There are two major types of out-of-work transitions:

- **Involuntary job loss:** This is the most traumatic transition. It creates stress, agony, and emotional upheavals in people's lives, and recovery can take some time. An involuntary job loss event has the danger of lasting too long or leaving you stuck in either the winding down or calling time out transition phase. Some people never get beyond mourning their job loss and have difficulty implementing plans or carrying out their to-do lists. In the best-case job loss

scenario, you receive sufficient notice and a severance package that allows you enough time to develop a plan of action.

- **Voluntary resignation without new employment:** In this transition, you take the initiative and control the situation. Various reasons exist for walking away from a job: burn-out, lack of balance between work satisfaction and employee benefits, a feeling of not being appreciated, lack of advancement possibilities, or desire to change your work environment. You may wonder if you made the right decision, while simultaneously feeling relieved at no longer feeling frustrated and unhappy. When you resign because of a desire to take some time to rethink career and professional goals and strategies, then the transition interval is more like the one described in the section on making professional shifts.

Making Professional Shifts

At some point as people pass from early adulthood (their 20s) to middle adulthood (their 30s–40s) and build up personal and professional experiences, they will review their lives and work history. Everyone—some to a greater extent than others—will assess where they started and where they are and then reevaluate where they want to be in the next 10 to 15 years. As a result of planned experiences and unplanned life events, people grow and develop beyond the interests and capabilities they had when beginning their professional careers, and they may, therefore, experience professional shifts. Professional shifts are more specific and narrow in scope than career movements. Such shifts refocus how, when, and where workers apply specialized knowledge and expertise and often are turning points in their career paths.

These are the five common professional shifts that many specialists in WLP consider:

1. becoming an entrepreneur
2. joining a consulting firm
3. moving from one specialization to another
4. teaching in an HRD or WLP graduate or certification program
5. entering contractual work with a temporary service agency for short-term assignments.

The calling time out and taking off phases are key in professional shifts. To develop a good career management strategy and to achieve feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction, you need a period of time to assess past and present work situations and envision your desired future. In addition, you need to consider present and future personal and family obligations and responsibilities. Carefully lay your foundation and plans for the taking off phase of your next professional stage. A key element of

being successful in making this transition is to review your present professional story and image and revise them to reflect your new and developing professional interests and direction.

For many people this a major change in their lives. These are some common questions that people ask themselves: How much am I willing to risk? Are my ideal job and work environment still the same or have they changed? Will I have the emotional support that I'll need? How clear am I about wanting to make a major professional shift?

BECOMING AN ENTREPRENEUR

For some people this is the time to make plans to start a business or a consulting practice. The idea of being your own boss is very appealing and stimulating. Taking time out can be a lengthy process because of the many activities that are involved in starting a business, such as developing business plans; setting up a financial base; conducting market research; identifying clients or customers; and creating support networks for advice, referrals, and information.

JOINING A CONSULTING FIRM

This is a viable option if you want to consult but are not ready or willing to assume all of the risk, or you need the guarantee of a minimum income level. If you have special expertise or skills, such as experience in high technology, health care, instructional design, or e-learning technology, then you may find yourself in high demand.

MOVING FROM ONE SPECIALIZATION TO ANOTHER

In this shift, you have three options: changing to or adding a new AOE or AOE's, changing your work setting within an industry, or changing the industry in which you work. To reposition yourself, you should modify your résumé to reflect how you need to tell your story now. The rebundling of your qualifications will focus on the altered direction of your WLP career.

TEACHING IN AN HRD OR WLP GRADUATE OR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Teaching full- or part-time in a WLP graduate program is an option if you have a doctorate degree and an interest in research and think you will enjoy the professorial lifestyle. Conducting certification courses is a growing arena for WLP professionals who want to give back to the profession, contribute to their colleagues' professional development, and are not interested in the academic world. Teaching is one way of using your curriculum design and delivery skills in a different work setting.

BEING AN INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR

If you want to take some time off before making a decision about what to do next or gain some specific experiences or skills, you can sign on as a contract worker with a temporary services agency specializing in short-term training and development assignments. This is a way to gain some breathing space, try out various work environments, and build up a résumé while keeping an income flow.

Retiring

Almost everyone will go through this final work transition. The most difficult part can be the winding down phase, followed by the taking off phase, particularly if ending the career was forced or mandatory and little opportunity existed to think about what to do after the separation. At such times, emotions are quite mixed. Many losses are felt, including identity, status, good friends and colleagues, and daily routines. The most common question asked under these circumstances is: What do I do now with my time and my life?

Given an opportunity for long-term planning, most people truly look forward to enjoying activities they had little or no time to experience previously. Some people will continue working in some fashion and so begin to set goals and make plans. Questions people ask themselves in these circumstances: How do I see myself at this stage of my life? Which professional skills do I want to use? Realistically, what are my options?

Thus far our discussion has focused on transitions and professional standing; however, to develop a clearer understanding of your entire work life, you should be aware of the connections between transitions and career pathing and how these connections affect professional development and direction.

The Relationship Between Work Transitions and Career Pathing

A career line illustrates your work history. The path the line takes traces the overall direction of your work activities—the unique steps, pace, and extent of your work history. Work transitions mark the specific ways and turns your WLP career develops, reflecting the pattern and the length of time taken for your adjustment to a new place in the field.

Careers can follow different paths:

- **Vertical:** The most common path moves upward, representing ambition, advancement, success, increased responsibility, and authority.

- **Horizontal:** A lateral move occurs when you have a desire for more variety in tasks, cross-functional experiences, increased breadth of experience, or new challenges without a promotion.
- **Cyclical:** A cyclical career path comprises a succession of spirals made to learn new skills or competencies to grow professionally to eventually move to new employment or make a professional shift. These spirals can go in any direction at one organization, or can move through several assignments at various organizations received through a professional temp agency. You usually return to home base—either your permanent position or the temp agency—before taking on another assignment.
- **Leveled:** A career has leveled when little or no movement takes place, when a secure position stabilizes or reaches a plateau, and you may or may not be feeling intrinsic job satisfaction. If job satisfaction is missing, you are usually considered to be in a rut or burned out.

With each new, deleted, or expanded activity that appears on your career line, a change occurs; thereby you experience a work transition. The types of career moves, how often they are made, and whether they are voluntary or forced affect the speed and magnitude of passing through the transition time interval. Your perspective on business trends, new professional developments, and the importance of professional growth; your satisfaction with your present job situation; and your feelings about your career's place in your overall life plans influence the specific career moves you make and your attitude toward the ensuing transition experience.

A career move creates a temporary blank space in your future that demands time to establish new perceptions of yourself and revise your self-image. Essentially, you are reconfiguring yourself in terms of identity, roles, relationships, and routines. Sometimes this is a complete makeover, and sometimes it is minor modifications.

Focus on how the following self-defining reference points need to be rewritten:

- **Changing identities:** Who is your professional self? How much or in what ways will this identity change? How do you think others will see you?
- **Changing roles:** What will you be doing that's new or that's the same but performed in a different way or less often? What will you give up or temporarily delegate to another colleague? How will the career move affect your involvement in home, social, and leisure activities? How do others see you functioning, according to comments or remarks that actually have been said to you?
- **Changing relationships:** In what ways will your connections or associations with people at work and/or with family and friends change?

- Changing routines: In what ways will your present home, personal, and work practices and activities be altered, readjusted, or replaced? Do you like when things remain the same or are you able to adjust to change easily?

In other words, what will your present story be? What old elements will remain relevant? What new elements need to be integrated?

Characteristics of Successful Transitions

“The trick to success sounds very simplistic, because it is simple: just begin. Take a single step, followed by another, and then another. Don’t look too far into the future, and don’t look too far back either. Stay centered in the present moment as best as you can.”
—Carlson (1998, p.7)

Thinking about your answers to the questions in the previous section helps you skillfully initiate the taking off phase. Having a positive mindset toward revising your professional image and embracing a new professional niche depends on your internal strengths and adaptive responses to change. These are six key success factors in any transition:

1. Willingness to take a risk, to take the plunge: You think positively about the outcomes, which lessens your anxiety about the risks involved.
2. Openness to facing the unknown, entering uncharted territory, dealing with changing routines and new situations: You prepare by gathering information, setting goals, and making plans.
3. Ability to direct, assess, and manage yourself: Your self-confidence and self-esteem are solid, and you are able to make decisions and prepare for changing roles and identities.
4. Acknowledgment and sharing of your feelings about change: You communicate to others that you’re ready to reestablish control over your career and your future and are looking forward to what life holds for you.
5. Development of a support system—people you can rely on for encouragement, resources, and help: You are willing to ask family, friends, and colleagues to be part of this group during your transition experience.
6. Competency to deal with stress, frustration, tension, anxiety: You use effective coping methods, that is, you stay focused, remain adaptable and flexible, and manage your time.

Different types of work transitions require different allocations of the six factors, depending on your perspective of the move or shift and your feeling regarding the change and its effect on your life. Think about how these success factors can apply to

your specific work transition interval. Ask yourself these questions: How relevant are each of these success factors to my passage through this transition? How can I assess my skills in managing each one? And, most important: Am I willing and ready to have all these factors incorporated into a strategy to competently go through my transition?

Preparation for Moves and Shifts to Other Work Arenas

Whether you are getting ready to make a career movement (for example, promotion to an executive position or transfer to a new geographical location) or a professional shift (for example, becoming an entrepreneur or joining a consulting firm), it's important to face the actuality of the change event. Even with a voluntary change, you may have some problems accepting the reality of your new situation. Perhaps you can't believe that you've been given your ideal job. Or maybe your worst nightmare has come true: You've been laid off due to reorganization. No matter the circumstances, you need to complete four actions for the passage to be completed smoothly and within a reasonable amount of time. You must

1. recognize the situation
2. accept the situation
3. disengage from the situation
4. redefine the situation.

Recognize the Situation

Whatever the context may be, the first step in dealing with any change event involves recognizing, both mentally and emotionally, the differences in your professional life and assessing present conditions and future prospects. You need to admit to yourself that the change is real and that, in small or large ways, your life will be altered. One indication that the winding down phase of the transition interval has begun is when you can express your feelings, for example, loss, fear, or gladness.

Particularly when the change event is huge or traumatic, handling your emotions in an appropriate manner—perhaps by talking to someone you are comfortable with or keeping a daily journal—helps confirm the reality of the situation. A ritual or ceremony brings actual closure to the old situation and provides a way to express feelings in an acceptable manner. You can create your own ritual or ceremony to mark a turning point in your professional life. For example, you can make a collage of photos and other mementos from your old professional setting; write your new ideal professional story and include an anecdote or two from your past that serves as the bridge to the future; and invite colleagues, friends, and family to a reading and celebration.

When you have dealt with your emotions, you can assess your present status and think constructively about the future by asking these questions: How would I rate my situation at this moment? What can I do to maintain it or improve it? Do I think I'm in a good spot emotionally? The calling time out phase of the transition interval begins with this assessment and acceptance of your situation.

Accept the Situation

Accepting the change event affirms the present as an opening to begin making plans to turn your ideal professional picture into reality and to ensure the future success of your endeavors. You will be able to think productively about your next steps or activities. Onset of the acceptance of reality coincides with calling time out—the period of renewal and self-assessment.

Regardless of what your immediate professional future will be, you must ask yourself some questions and clear up any remaining ambiguity before initiating your next career move or professional shift. Although you may have been in control of this change and most likely believe you are set to take off, make a final analysis of how the new professional experience relates to your overall career vision, goals, and plans. If you're stepping into your first management-level position, ask yourself these questions: In what ways do I want to benefit from more senior or expanded responsibilities? What do I need to do to make this happen?

If you're making a major move or shift, such as applying for a certificate program in HPI or starting your own business, these are some questions to ask yourself: What kind of benchmarks do I want to establish for myself? In what ways will this endeavor affect my family and lifestyle?

Disengage From the Situation

In managing change throughout the transition interval, you need to put distance between yourself and your old professional identity and develop a mindset in which you envision yourself on a different professional path, in a different workplace, with different tasks, in association with different people. Disengagement is the act of being less in sync with and removing yourself from the old professional identity and focusing on the new one.

At this point, you're in the midst of the calling time out phase and at the height of your self-assessment process. As you review the results of self-assessment, you make decisions about what background and professional elements you need or want to retain and what to put away. Shedding some of your old professional self and developing a different image also involves creativity and brainstorming around bringing everything together in a unified and integrated whole. Confidence is growing about the career move or professional shift, choices are more focused, plans are more detailed, and your vision of your next professional step is sharper; for all these reasons,

you're anxious to get going. These are some questions that arise: What have I learned about myself that will serve me in my next endeavor? How can I build opportunities for continued growth and learning in my work life and thus better prepare for the next change and transition? What can I do to keep focused on my professional vision and not become discouraged when things don't work out as hoped? How do I prevent myself from becoming too comfortable in this professional skin and plateau?

By the end of disengagement, you are aware of internal changes and are more positive about your ability to move forward successfully. You are ready to create a new or revised professional image and enter the taking off phase of transition.

Redefine the Situation

How strongly and enthusiastically you embrace your new job description and employment results in how clearly you can describe your present professional image, whether you are working in an organization or for yourself. To ensure your success in coming out of this transition, you must quickly become a stakeholder in the work situation you have entered. While in the taking off phase, you begin to feel comfortable with your changed circumstances. Once again you know who you are, what you're doing, and where you're going. As noted earlier, redefining your professional self occurs through changed identity, changed roles, changed relationships, and changed routines. How do you know you have completed the transition interval and are truly prepared for this move or shift? These are some clear indications:

- The new or revised professional you fits like a second skin, and everything feels natural.
- Colleagues, fellow workers, family, and friends no longer question what you do or who you are; they accept and respect the person you have become.

Transformation doesn't happen overnight or without conscious effort on your part. With a positive mindset, good strategies in place, and an awareness of the role of the transition interval and its phases, you are poised for your next professional experience to begin smoothly and effortlessly.

The next chapter presents a key component of good career management strategy: your professional design plan, which incorporates your description of fulfilling work and your ideal professional self. This is your lodestar, especially during transition, to keep you on track and focused on your future.

"Fall in love with your job, and keep the romance alive. Don't let the stress of change drive a wedge between you and your work. . . . High job commitment is a gift you should give yourself."

—Pritchett and Pound (1996, p. 28)

Exercise 5-1: Navigating the Three Transition Phases

Complete the items for each phase when you feel you are starting to move into that part of your transition interval. The time between each phase will vary from situation to situation. For example, a month may pass between phase 1 and phase 2.

Phase 1: Winding Down

Directions: Complete the following items that apply to your situation. Skip anything that is not relevant.

- A. What is the work change event that initiated this transition interval? Is the change welcomed? Why or why not?

- B. Describe your feelings about marking the end of this stage of your professional life by winding down your affairs. Are you surprised by any of your emotional reactions? Why?

- C. List the people (individually or as a group) to whom you wish or must say goodbye (for example, colleagues, clients, and friends). How do you choose to take leave of people? In a group or individually? As a planned, formal activity or an unplanned, informal activity (for example, a party or dinner, an office visit, or a phone call)?

People	In a group or individually?	Formal or informal activity? (describe)

- D. List the places you need or want to visit one more time (for example, workplace, favorite lunch eatery, neighborhood, or any special site). This is particularly important if you are geographically relocating. Would you prefer to do it alone or with someone? While you're there, would you like to do something (for example, take photos, jog or run a favorite course, or eat at a certain restaurant)?

Place	Alone or with someone?	Just visit or do something? (describe)

- E. List the work and personal items you need or want to keep, give away, or throw out (for example, work portfolio materials or records, desk items, books, or photos). If you are missing some information on a project that was a learning experience, check with a colleague before leaving. Do you have any mementos, such as a work award or achievement certificate? Why are they special? Describe your feelings about disbursing these artifacts.

Item	Disposition	Memento	Disposition

F. How do you think you will remember this transition phase?

Phase 2: Calling Time Out

Directions: Think about how you want to use this phase to relax and envision your future professional self. Answer the following questions thoughtfully and thoroughly.

A. Describe your feelings about calling time out to take it easy and put some distance between the old and the new. What is your timeframe for this phase—two weeks, three months, or a year?

B. Do you have any concerns or issues about calling time out (for example, short time available before next stage, financial or budget status, or family responsibilities)? Briefly describe them. What can you do to resolve or ease these concerns?

Concern or issue	Actions to resolve or ease it

C. What are your plans for relaxing and reenergizing? When will each activity take place (at the start, middle, or end of this phase)? How much time will you take for each activity?

Activity (describe)	When	Timeframe

D. What household projects or personal needs could you attend to during this phase? When will you take care of these projects? How much time will you allot to each one? What preliminary steps are required (for example, making a doctor’s appointment, hiring someone, or buying materials)?

Project or chore	When	Timeframe	Preparation needed

E. In what ways do you need to shift gears to begin thinking differently about your professional self and life and focus on your next career move? To make the change, think about what you need to do before entering the taking off phase. Describe yourself professionally in both the old and new settings and indicate any preparations that are needed for the transition. Explain the anticipated new career situation (new job,

(continued on next page)

Chapter 5

Exercise 5-1: Navigating the Three Transition Phases (continued)

professional shift, return to school, own business, and so forth). Circle the professional aspects listed below that are most relevant to this new situation and compare and contrast for new and old settings. Some characteristics may be similar or unchanged. Preparation can include writing a new networking event introduction, buying casual outfits if returning to school, reviewing the latest tools or products that may be useful in your new job, and hiring an accountant for your business.

Anticipated new career situation:

Professional aspect	New setting	Old setting	Preparation needed
Identity			
Role (job title)			
Responsibilities			
Relationships			
Routines			
AOEs, competencies, and skills			
Knowledge			
Personal strengths			
Other:			

F. How do you think you will remember this transition phase?

Phase 3: Taking Off

Directions: The third phase signals that the change event is complete and your life is back on track, heading toward its new destination. You are in control and ready for a new beginning. Think now about setting priorities, creating supportive relationships, establishing new communication and networking lines, and resolving any remaining concerns.

- A. How do you feel about this untried stage of your career? Does it match what you anticipated in the calling time out phase?
- B. Briefly describe any concerns or issues you have about your readiness to take off (for example, unanticipated financial needs, preparation status, needed adaptation to a new geographic area, or level of support from family or friends). What can you do to resolve or alleviate these concerns?

Concern or issue	Actions to resolve or alleviate it

- C. To begin this stage successfully, a number of elements need to be in place.
 - 1. For each of the following elements that are relevant to your situation, describe what it means to you and indicate its current status.

Element	Description	Status		
		In place	Partially in place	Not in place
Plans made				
Support of family and friends				
Adaptation to new situation				
Adaptation to new place				
Adequacy of financial situation				
Family responsibilities resolved				
Resources identified				
Modifications made in daily routines or habits				
Priorities established				
Timelines set				
Other:				

- 2. If an element is not fully in place, think about what you need to do to complete it.

Element	Tasks to put it in place

- D. How do you think you will remember this transition phase?

