

## Career renewal

**D**o you feel stagnant in your career or like you have hit a plateau? Are you no longer excited about going to work each day? Do you feel like you have stopped learning new things? Do you feel like you should get more satisfaction from your career?

No matter how successful you currently are, it is prudent to periodically assess and renew your career. You change over time, as does the organization you work for, so a conscious reevaluation is worthwhile. This evaluation should assess where you currently are and how you arrived there, as well as what you want to do during the rest of your career and how to get there. The path you took to become who you are today was not traversed overnight; true renewal is not attained quickly. You want to seek long-term happiness rather than just short-term pleasure since it is impossible to completely separate your career from your personal life.<sup>1</sup>

**Assess where you currently are.** Set aside some uninterrupted time to write down your current job responsibilities, current strengths, experiences, and other professional involvements (e.g., speaking, publishing, participating in professional organization committees or leadership positions). Identify areas for improvement. Note what you enjoy about your career or are grateful for, the less-than-desirable aspects of your career, what you are currently learning, and how you are continuing to grow as a pharmacist. List the opportunities you would like to explore with your current employer.

Ask your superior to define what he or she sees as your current strengths, areas for improvement, and future opportunities. Ask a few of the pharmacists you work with to anonymously list your

strengths, your “rough edges,” and what they would like to see you do in the future. If appropriate, ask a few of the nurses and physicians you work with to anonymously list what they appreciate about your work, what would make you more effective, and what additional responsibilities they would like to see you have in the future. Ask a few of the pharmacy technicians you regularly work with to list anonymously what they appreciate about working with you, what would make you more efficient, and what additional responsibilities they would like to see you have in the future. While others’ responses may not match your view of your performance, viewing yourself as others do will allow you to make the necessary changes to achieve your potential and have a satisfying and successful career.

**Assess how you arrived where you are.** List on paper your “career story.” Be sure to address the following:

- What you enjoyed in high school and what your dreams for your life were at that point in time (they may be an indication of your true passion and provide insight into where to look for future additional satisfaction and success),
- Why you chose pharmacy as a career and what you expected a career in pharmacy to be like,
- What you enjoyed about pharmacy school,
- What you would do differently if you could do pharmacy school over again and why,
- What you chose to do when you graduated from pharmacy school and why,



*The Success Skills column provides practical advice to help pharmacists become more effective in their professional and personal lives. Installments are contributed by and reflect the views of Sara J. White, M.S., FASHP, Pharmacy Leadership Coach, Mountain View, CA.*

## ■ Success Skills

- How your dreams for your life changed from those you had in high school when you graduated from pharmacy school, examining reasons for any changes,
- What your definition of success was as you moved into your career, and
- What pharmacist positions (and other degrees or training obtained) you have held and your major responsibilities, experience gained, and lessons learned in each position.

**Review your career story.** How has your definition of success changed over time? Have you fulfilled your dreams? Identify what has brought you the most satisfaction and what has provided you with the greatest challenge. Now ask yourself: Are you your own person, or are you trying to please others and fulfill a preconceived concept of what a pharmacist does? Have you waited to be discovered or made and seized your own opportunities to grow in your career? Have you been proactive and persistent in asking for appropriate assistance? Have you been as conscious and deliberate in managing your career as you should have been? It is never too late to change your approach to your career.

**Determine where you want to be and how to get there.** You deserve to reach your potential and become successful in your career. You need to find the right fit of strengths, passions, and people. Your options are nearly unlimited, no matter how you currently feel. And you do not necessarily have to change jobs; you can make strategic moves right from where you are. You must think of yourself as the chief executive officer (CEO) or author of your career. As an entrepreneurial CEO, you must be willing to move away from the status quo. Be decisive and willing to take some calculated risks for what you want. Do not be afraid to stretch yourself into uncomfortable areas or to think outside the box if you are not totally satisfied with your career. Do not concentrate on what you will have to give up but on the increased challenge, satisfaction, and change that is possible. Proactively seek to expand your

career opportunities by volunteering for additional projects or responsibilities, such as professional organization involvement, that expand your professional network. Always be willing to continually learn new knowledge and skills. Take full advantage of the development opportunities that your organization offers. Assemble a file that contains samples from successful projects, performance evaluations, awards, certificates, lectures or seminars attended, and anything that represents the esteem with which others regard you. If you already have such a file, review it.

You must be absolutely certain about what you desire and your definition of future career success in order to set specific goals and work on achieving them. Taking into account your analysis and suspending, for the moment, consideration of feasibility, practicality, or the possibility of failure, define the responsibilities of your ideal position, including other desired professional involvements. Such responsibilities may include planning, organizing, scheduling, oral and written communication, decision-making, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution, teamwork, team building, working with others, management, delegation, and providing feedback.

Think through whether, now or in the future, you are willing to relocate or obtain additional training, skills, knowledge, degrees, and credentials to obtain your ideal position. Determine if there is an obvious match in the current pharmacy world. To do this, make a list of all the pharmacy options available, not excluding any for feasibility or personal reasons at this point.

It is also helpful to find a mentor who has or has had as close to your ideal responsibilities as possible. Ask him or her what is needed to qualify for being successful in your ideal position. A mentor who has been active nationally (professional organizations, speaking, publishing) can likely guide you to where such positions might be. Another way to find your ideal position is to spend time observing people doing what you would

like to do and ask them how to network with others. It is a compliment to them to be asked, and they will almost always try to help.

If you cannot relocate or just want to redefine your current position, seek out a mentor in your organization, such as your superior, the director of pharmacy, or some other successful person with whom you work and ask him or her to help you get where you want to be.

You need to develop an action plan with specific steps and a timeline for achieving your ideal position and involvements now and 5 and 10 years from now, if appropriate. Clearly outline your career responsibilities or other desired career involvements at the top of a page. List the steps you need to complete to move from where you are to where you want to be, including specific dates. For example, if your ideal responsibilities are those of someone in a clinical or leadership position at your current organization, your action plan steps might be

1. Find a mentor.
2. Research the required qualifications from position descriptions or your mentor.
3. Conduct a written gap analysis of your current qualifications against those required.
4. Determine what options exist for you to achieve the required qualifications or equivalent experience.
5. Commit yourself to building the required qualifications.

A professional involvement goal might be to serve on an ASHP policy-recommending council. The action plan steps for achieving this goal might be to

1. Identify someone from your state or region who is serving or has served and contact him or her (obtain contact information from the ASHP online Section Directory, your state professional organization, or state officers).
2. Contact the person with council experience and ask how the appointment

process works and what he or she did professionally before council appointment.

3. Identify and complete the steps to put yourself in a position for a council appointment.
4. Ask your state organization for a letter of support.
5. Persist until your goal is achieved, as these positions are highly sought after.

Build into your written action plan dates to periodically assess your progress, reaffirm or change the goals, and assess action plan steps.

Keep your goals and action plans where you can see them to keep you focused and committed to achieving your goals. Once a goal is achieved, celebrate your success but immediately reassess your career and set another goal by repeating the process so you always stay challenged.

**Conclusion.** Periodic career assessment and renewal can help ensure that you are satisfied with your job and maximize your professional and personal success.

1. White SJ. Integrating your personal life and career. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 2007; 64:358-60.

### Suggested readings

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