**Is Your Career a Ladder or a Jungle Gym?**

Tired of climbing the corporate ladder? Then maybe it's time to ditch the ladder.

Here are three reasons why thinking about your career as a jungle gym could help you achieve more and improve your Return on Life.

**1. Take a big swing sideways.**

In today's job market and corporate environment, less and less people are going to start their careers on the ground floor of a company and spend decades moving up. Increased competition for top talent and decreased long-term benefits like pensions will continue to incentive the best workers to keep their options open.

Embracing those options might involve what used to be called a "sideways career move." But there's more to your job than your title. A comparable position at a different company might pay better or give you more flexibility around working from home. You might feel a stronger connection to a company's values and mission, which could decrease your workplace stress and make you feel like you're contributing more to the greater good. Perhaps you can work at a company that offers weekly allowances for volunteering or annual sabbatical time. Or, if you swing over to a company that has a strong "promote from within" culture, you might have more opportunities to jump up a level.

**2. See the next ring and leap for it.**

The recent explosion of artificial intelligence is just the latest example of how rapidly businesses can change. Today's valuable skills could be executed in seconds by tomorrow's chatbot or robotics breakthrough. And while many institutions can be slow to embrace change, individual workers who want to stay ahead of the curve can hop to companies that are preparing to ride the next wave. As you make those jumps, you'll connect with respected mentors, innovative young superstars, and professional organizations that will help you identify trends and opportunities. You'll also interact with a wider variety of people whose life and work experiences will enrich your own. And as you continue to broaden your skillset, you'll always be prepared to make the next leap.

**3. Extend your playtime.**

In previous generations, retirement at 65 was almost an automatic decision. But that's not the case anymore. As health care and nutrition continue to improve, folks are going to live longer and more active lives than their parents and grandparents probably did.

It's possible that increased longevity will also lead to longer careers. Younger workers who don’t want to focus on the corporate climb might instead view their careers as having several stages that they pass through. Many older workers will want to keep working so that they can build up their nest eggs and have a little extra security in retirement. Seniors who aren't looking forward to the "endless weekend" version of retirement will want to keep working to challenge themselves, learn new things, interact with new people, and continue contributing to their communities in meaningful ways.

Taking a more adventurous approach to your career at an early age could give you more options and more confidence to explore and grow later. Learning to embrace change rather than resist it can lead to exciting experiences that will make your work and life more fulfilling at every stage. And when you are finally ready to stop working, you can repurpose that skillset and that perspective to make retirement more fulfilling as well.

Where are you on your professional journey? Are you climbing steadily? Swinging freely? Have any of the rungs felt a little bit slippery since the pandemic shook up your profession? Are you thinking about making an unexpected jump?

Our Life-Centered Planning Process can help you keep moving in the right direction. Let’s meet and plot your updated career goals on your $Lifeline.