

## The road less travelled: Combating career tunnel vision

Author: Fadzai Danha . October 2019

During our quest for employment, we have inevitably developed a pattern of seeking or preferring safe opportunities which I will refer to as having career tunnel vision. Most of us do not even realise that there are alternative career paths that can be followed but instead tend to stick to the same old “tried and tested” ones. In a country filled with talented, educated and experienced people who are generally frustrated by the job hunt, it would lead to long term well-being and happiness if we make more creative, better choices by opening our eyes to the options in front of us.

In this article I will give examples of three types of career tunnel vision. The first being in terms of the recent graduate, the second being the person who is employed but stagnant and lastly the person who has unexpectedly lost their job.

### The Recent Graduate

There is nothing more exciting to a graduate than graduation day. This is because it symbolizes the progression in their life from student to employee. It essentially is the first step into the rest of their life. What happens next will determine how their life goes for the next 20-40 years. Although this is an exciting, welcome progression it also leads to a lot of anxiety. This is because of the nagging question all graduates deal with, “*Will I find a job when those who graduated before me are still looking?*”

Usually, all graduates get stuck in the same cycle. This is the first form of career tunnel vision. The general belief is I must look for graduate traineeship because that is all I am qualified for. But is it? It is easy to get tunnel vision, to get swept along with the career path that everyone else is on. This is because the focus would be on societal pressure and comparison between yourself and other graduates.

### What Can Be Done

There are however many job opportunities that are open at entry-level. If one just follows the following strategies they will realise that the opportunities are endless.

- **Avoid following the crowd:** As stated above following what others have done or are doing may not always be the right option for you.
- **Think seriously about your options:** Ask yourself the following questions: What sort of traineeship do you want? What areas of your professional interest you? This will help you to narrow down and pinpoint where exactly you want your career to go.
- **Keep an open mind:** The first thing then is to work out exactly what you want - if you have no

idea of where you want to go it is unlikely you'll get there

- **Extend Your Network:** You can do this by attending industry events, joining projects that require people with your skills or volunteer and collaborating with like-minded people in the same field of work will allow you to expand your network and utilize any opportunities that may come up.

## Employed but Stagnant

This person is employed but no longer feels excited or challenged. The routine is usually the same every day, you wake up, go to work, do your job and come back home. This leads to discontentedness and dissatisfaction with your job. This results in a feeling of being stuck and is the second type of career vision whereby one sticks to a job they do not love but is too afraid to look for another one.

### What Can Be Done

In order to combat this type of career vision, you should ask yourself the following questions

- **Dream Job.** What would be my dream job for this time in my life?
- **Current Reality.** What is my current reality?
- **Plan.** Given this dream job and my current reality, what are steps I can take in the direction of my dream?

## Recently Lost Job

This person has recently been laid off unexpectedly after maybe several years at the same company. They may be shocked and in disbelief. But should they not have seen it coming? When one has been in the same position for a long time they tend to become too comfortable. They experience the third type of career tunnel vision. This tunnel vision comes as a result of being isolated in your own workspace, focusing on your own specific job with no regard for changes that may be happening outside your sphere. In most cases people have insight as to what is happening inside their departments and sometimes the company but are not able to see the forces occurring outside the organisation and the impact it may have on their job.

Due to this, they are blinded to the implications of changes in the marketplace, the global workforce, shifts happening in their industry, the economy and new technologies being developed everyday which may threaten their employment. Because of the tunnel vision when this person "suddenly" loses their job they are shell shocked.

### What Can Be Done

- **Widen your focus:** This can be done by keeping up to date on articles not just those specific to

your industry or occupation. Expose yourself to information on technology, trends and the economy and see what you can learn and how it might impact your career goals.

- **Connect to people who do not share your interests:** Seek out people and networks outside of the usual group. This will give you a different insight into perspectives and ideas that can affect and change your career for the better.
- **Ask the right questions:** This will eliminate any chances of being side swept by any external issues which may have an impact on your job. You must consider changes happening in technology and workplace trends, current affairs and shifts affecting your industry and what opportunities you can take to take full advantage of your strengths.
- 

*Fadzai Danha is a Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd a management and human resources consulting firm.*

*Phone +263 4 481946-48/481950/2900276/2900966 or cell number +263 775 657 124 or email: [fadzai@ipcconsultants.com](mailto:fadzai@ipcconsultants.com) or visit our website at [www.ipcconsultants.com](http://www.ipcconsultants.com)*

<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/THE-ROAD-LESS-TRAVELLED-COMBATING-CAREER-TUNNEL-VISION>