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## Managing your career

Galway Advertiser, April 16, 2009.

**Brona O'Boyle and career coach Jackie Howell will host three one day career workshops in Galway from the end of April. For further information contact Brona at (086) 3845208 or log onto [www.bronao.com](http://www.bronao.com)**



Career Coach, Brona O'Boyle. Photo:-Mike Shaughnessy

Mary O'Connor

If you are reeling from being made redundant, having had your working hours cut or failing to land your first real job despite countless efforts you may be finding it increasingly difficult to stay positive and interested in your future.

With all the talk and evidence of doom and gloom everywhere finding any type of silver lining in this recessionary cloud is not easy.

However it is times like this which often motivate people to take action and change their lives for the better.

Local career coach and people brands consultant Brona O'Boyle says they can often be the catalyst for creating the change that leads people to greater career fulfilment now or in the future.

She quotes bestselling US author Po Bronson whose book *What should I do with my Life?* showcases the extraordinary lives of 50 ordinary people who discovered their true calling.

### Hard times

“One of the strongest recurring themes in all the stories was the hard times that prompted people to change their lives. During the good times they only talked about change in relation to their working lives. Hard times forced them to overcome doubts that normally blocked progress. Most stumbled into the life they always wanted as a result of prescient life challenges.”

She says work takes up many hours of people’s lives. Yet many plan a social event or sporting schedule with more care than they plan or manage their careers, she maintains.

“Managing a career is now a lifelong process as the world of work as we know it is changing rapidly. The need to change career three times in one’s lifetime is forecast to be the norm. The growth of the contractor, the decline of the permanent employee, and the relentless impact of technology will affect us all in both positive and negative ways. How one interprets the changing scenarios and career milestones throughout life can lead to exciting and rewarding outcomes.”

The keys to successfully planning/managing your career are self awareness, career choices and your suitability/eligibility, work sourcing strategies and management of your personal brand, according to Brona O’Boyle.

### Self awareness

“Self awareness is the much quoted mantra from American self-help books which has made its way to this side of the Atlantic and is now accepted as a major contributing factor to success in the world of work and indeed, life. One’s qualifications, technical ability and skills contribute only 14 per cent to success. It is the more invisible ‘soft skill’ as in emotional intelligence that determines success by up to 86 per cent according to tracked research at Stanford University.”

She describes “emotional intelligence” as our innate ability to understand our personal impact, influence and interpersonal skills. Key emotional intelligence measures include motivation, self awareness, stress resilience, influence, conscientiousness, decisiveness, adaptability and empathy. Together with attitude, intention and a sense of purpose these attributes are the glue that deliver the greatest returns on investment in self.

### The right career

The route to finding the right career can be one or a mix of some of the following, she says.

- \* Family tradition/parental suggestions
- \* Gut instinct – this career just feels right for me
- \* Following a passion and making a career out of it
- \* Making a career out of a favourite school subject or third level subject
- \* Influences from a favourite teacher or friends
- \* Personality type indicator such as Myers Briggs and its career suggestions by type formalised in a book called Do What You Are by Tieger and Tieger.
- \* Research job description web sites, trade/industry bodies/books on career interests
- \* Work experience during transition or a gap year abroad
- \* Work experience through sites such as [www.vocationvacation.com](http://www.vocationvacation.com)
- \* Modelling your career choice on someone you admire
- \* Networking for ideas at industry lectures while pursuing generalist training
- \* Consultation(s) with a career coach or career counsellor
- \* Attending a career workshop

She warns it is easy to make the wrong decision and spend years doing work that does not play to your strengths or that you just hate.

“It might be easier to plan at the beginning of your career and make wise investments and choices than turn around years later and start again. The reasons for this are numerous, but the top ones are fear of failure, the endless list of excuses or competing commitments as in ‘I can’t because.....’, or the lack of motivation and dynamic energy to change. However, remember, experience is never wasted.”

### Coaching success

If solo methods of career research as suggested above do not work for you a good career coach will help guide you in the right direction, she says.

“Coaching is a powerful process, which if used properly, accesses the unspoken within you which in most cases leads to very concrete solutions. However, the coaching relationship is dependent on the person being coached being fully engaged in the process.”

## A winning CV

An up-to-date CV is an essential tool in job hunting. Ensure it is well written and well presented on no more than two pages, advises the Ardrahan based career coach.

“Its purpose is to market you successfully and get you an interview. It needs to be edited according to each job so your fit is correct and it should be readable in 20 seconds.

“It needs to demonstrate career or life progression (if you are just starting out), with action verbs in a clear type face such as Times New Roman. You will also need a personalised one page covering letter highlighting at least three key skills or experiences that match the job description.”

## Interview skills

The golden rule for interviews is that the employer should do 20 per cent of the talking and the candidate do the remainder, explains Brona O’Boyle.

She estimates that only about 20 per cent of candidates go to the trouble of preparing for an interview. Yet the importance of selling yourself at this face-to-face event cannot be overstated.

“Selling yourself is not bragging - this can be a cultural issue in Ireland. Stand in the shoes of the interviewer who is desperate to find the right hire. Interviewing can be a very draining process for the employer as negative judgments about a candidate are often made in the first 30 seconds but the interview must be carried on regardless of first impressions.”

Technical competency while required and often checked at interview is really only part of the requirement, says Brona. Your emotional intelligence, personality, perceived team fit and attitude is crucial to your success.

## Work sourcing strategy

Brona outlines that 64 per cent of jobs are found through networking, especially from the age of 30 years, in the private sector.

“Networking is quite simply the art of engaging with ‘those who influence and connect’ at trade, business, sport or hobby networks or even coffee shops or the hairdressers. It is not always the obvious network or even people in the same profession who provide the contacts or initial direction.

“It is not about asking for a job but actively seeking information that will lead you to people who may be looking for you. Networking is a two way street and you have to give to receive. It is supported by sourcing work on the Internet, responding to job ads in the press, contacting recruitment consultancies, cold calling and writing to organisations on

spec. The other network is the friends you make at school and beyond and the world of work which can work for 20 to 40 years and more.”

### Managing your personal brand

Your image speaks before you do. It communicates an aura just like big brands.

“Think about the reasons for your emotional and undying loyalty to the tea or coffee you drink. Only seven per cent of communication is verbal, the remaining 93 per cent comprises appearance, tone of voice and body language. Famous people brands such as Obama, Sarkozy, Branson are consistent and aligned in the same way as Coca Cola and BMW. Obama is the new global icon for image, he inspired a nation and the world through the power of his image, entering office on 80 per cent approval rating. Image is the silent influencer.”