



Thinking of Changing Career?

THE GREAT RESIGNATION

They've been referring to it as the Great Resignation... people from all walks of life, in all kinds of roles, at all levels of an organisation, spurred on by the unease and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, changing jobs. En Masse.

Knowing this didn't make it any easier to completely change careers in my 40s. In fact, it was downright scary.

I knew a bit about their professional backgrounds. I knew what their jobs were, and enough about how to do them to make sure I was useful and could make informed decisions. I was accountable to them. I could look them in the eye after I made a decision and know if I had made the right one.

I'm sure there are other things about large organisations that the leaders in them find redeeming... but I know that, right now, that isn't for me.

Great – I'd ruled something out!

Ruling things out though, in the sea of all the possible career options that exist, wasn't going to help me find my next opportunity anytime soon!

RE-EVALUATING PRIORITIES

About a year ago, while evaluating my career to date and the things I wanted more of (and – yes – less of) from my professional life, I decided to set some wheels in motion. I arranged a few cups of coffee, sounding out a few former colleagues, mentors, old bosses. Putting feelers out like this has always served me well, and I had no reason to think otherwise.

INVITING SUPPORT

Of course, when you talk to people who care about you and your career journey, you also hear about what they think you should do... which often means they share what they would do if they were you. Several very well-meaning people decided the next step for me was a really large tier two role in a big government department. Maybe they were right. But for me at least, leadership has always been personal. I have been Chief Executive of two medium sized organisations – one charity and one Crown entity. The upside of which is that I knew all our staff. I often knew a bit about their families, their kids.

POSITIVE PAST EXPERIENCES

And then I remembered a really positive, inspiring period of my own career at the State Services Commission (now Public Service Commission) where we had done a modest piece of system leadership work drawing on the facilitation expertise of a consultancy called Tregaskis Brown.

I looked them up, and dropped a short email to the CE – Karen – with my CV attached. I didn't really expect much to come of it, but it was another iron in the fire.

HIGH-STAKES APPRENTICESHIP

The rest, as they say, is history (or herstory) and I am now three months into my new career as a consultant and partner at Tregaskis Brown. I feel like I've found my calling and my professional home. In fact, just the other day a dear friend said that my seven years as a Chief Executive was a very high-stakes apprenticeship for my real career. I like that! It's at least a little bit true.

BIG CHANGES SEEM SCARY

Still, the change was really scary. Being a CE or senior leader in an organisation has a very clear shape and set of expectations that accompany it. When people at a party inevitably ask you what you do, at least in Wellington, they know what you mean when you say CE or Dep Sec.

But management consultant? What even is that? What do you do? At best people might look at you blankly.

I spent a lot of time before I decided to make this move trying to weigh up pros and cons, and think logically about the options.

I prepared myself by imagining all the things that could go wrong...

What if I didn't like my new colleagues? Or worse, they didn't like me? What if I never had any clients? What if I wasn't any good at it? What if my skills and expertise weren't as transferable as I thought? What if...? What if...? What if...?

And then it happened.

COMING TO WORK AND FINDING HOME

I arrived at my new work on a Monday morning and met the loveliest, warmest bunch of people, passionate about making a difference, determined to help the public sector waka go faster for the benefit of Aotearoa.

I think I'm going to be good at my new job... and just as important, I really love it! It's interesting, its challenging, and every day I get to speak to people just as passionate as me about the potential for public service to do amazing things. Turns out, I needn't have worried.

Oh and my fear about not having any clients? I didn't need to worry about that either – there's plenty to be getting on with!

REACH OUT

So if, like me, you're contemplating a change in career, crack on with it! You will be scared. You will worry that you aren't good enough. Everybody does.

And then they do it anyway.

Give me a shout if you'd like to have a chat.



About the Author

Rebecca's deep experience in senior roles across the public and not-for-profit sectors underpins her ability to quickly come to grips with complex environments and develop effective strategic responses and solutions. She has exceptional relationship management skills and a strong track record of developing effective partnerships with tangata whenua.

Rebecca is an expert communicator across all levels of an organisation or a sector. She has a reputation as an effective facilitator, able to help groups of diverse stakeholders work through complex issues across multiples levels.

Rebecca's ability to apply her formidable intellect to challenging issues means she is highly sought after as a trusted advisor to boards and senior leaders.

She describes herself as an organisational performance and leadership nerd... in a good way.