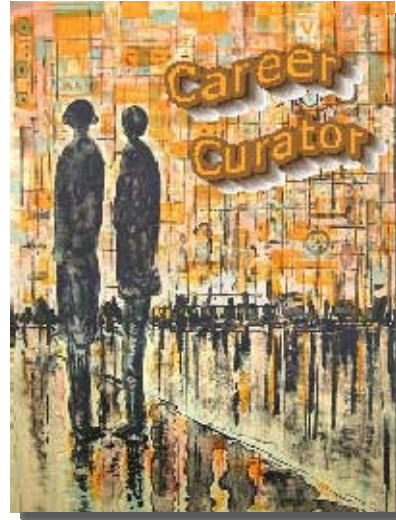


Paul Carpino



## CARS AND CAREERS

As I waited for my car to be washed the other day, I started to think about how much, time, effort and expense we allocate to our cars. Society collectively, has made a tremendous commitment to this one amenity in life, a machine.

I couldn't help but think of the similarities between our cars and our careers.

So, this month I'll take you through an exercise to create or re-create the awareness to manage your professional, personal career development. It's your path and yours alone. What you do with it and where it takes you, is 110% up to you.

All cars begin with a design concept, a thought or series of thoughts. Our career path begins with our thoughts. That one thought about your career or vocation leads to other thoughts, just as the designer takes the car from concept to the showroom.

Just as the car designer is influenced by the market, their employer, trends, costs and technology, designing our career also has its influencers. Our environment, such as family, friends, society and the economy influences our career path. Our personality influences our career development, related to our likes, dislikes and where we think we fit.

Designers work, in some cases for years to design a quality, popular selling car.

How long do we spend on designing our careers and professional development?

Designers do a good deal of research to design an appealing and effective product? How much research do we do in planning our career path?

The quality of the car's materials will determine its overall quality, durability and effectiveness. The "materials" in our career are: formal training, education, type of degree and experiential learning. Do we invest well, for the right return on that investment?

Car manufacturers thrive on innovating and creating “options” to help increase the sales/value of the car. What “options” do we bring to a potential employer that another candidate does not have? How do we create real value for our employer or profession?

Working in conjunction with the car designers is the marketing team. They promote, advertise, publicize and market the vehicle from concept car to the showroom floor. They use traditional media and new media to create awareness and attention for the new car model. How do we use marketing tools to promote and advance our careers?

Once close to the production phase, designers test the car on the track and in real world settings. We can do internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing or vocational vacations to “test drive” our career paths. We need to know what we are getting into, before we make a commitment to an employer or the particular field.

The car (our career) now finds a new home (with an employer or profession) and provides quality, value, benefits and service. However, cars need periodic maintenance such as a tune-up or oil-change. Our careers need periodic tune-ups too. That tune-up comes in the form of training, leadership development, continuing education and professional development. What have you done recently to “tune-up” your career or profession?

That car needs fuel to get from point A to point B efficiently. The “fuel” for our careers is the balance in our lives. Are we balanced physically, nutritionally, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically? If your car’s fuel is low on octane, it might be a challenge to ascend that next grade. If we do not have the right “fuel mix,” we most likely will sputter along the way. Many of us even “stall out,” on the road to success.

Is your career shiny or has it lost luster?



Does your career have adequate traction to navigate the sharp curves of today’s world of work?

As a vehicle requires insurance for the unexpected, how do you insure the condition of your career? Do you have at least 6 months of living expenses in the bank?

Some careers, as with some cars, need to be replaced before their utility has been expended. We may have made the wrong choice and need to trade that job or career in for a new model. Not every job or career is right, just because we “drive it off the lot.”

Despite all of the similarities between a car and a career, one major difference is that a car depreciates, as soon as you start the engine for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Conversely, our careers should appreciate over time. Also, we should appreciate them and they should be appreciated by others, if we execute them properly.

In closing, I offer you some popular car slogans where “My career” has been substituted for the car brand:

My career. Built for the road ahead.

My career. Built for living. Engineered to last.

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