

What Next, Barbara Moses

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What next? This question encapsulates the career dilemma faced by most clients that come to career practitioners for help. It's also a question that those practitioners may be asking themselves. What next? My organization is restructuring...how can I position myself to be one of the survivors? I'm about to graduate from university. I'm suddenly the sole supporter of my family. I'm so bored with work that it's hard to get out of bed in the morning.

What next?, Barbara Moses' most recent book (2003), is designed to help individuals, at all career stages, uncover the answer to this compelling question. Moses subtitles her book: *The complete guide to taking control of your working life*. I'm delighted to say that it lives up to her rather ambitious claim.

The book is organized into five major sections: Know yourself, find your perfect path, find great work, overcome career challenges, and boost your career intelligence (including strategies for career success). At first glance, the topics seem very standard. So, what's special about this book?

In a recent interview with Contact Point (2003), Dr. Moses is quoted as saying, "I wanted this book to capture my own voice in career counselling and to show people how to respond to every career issue and dilemma today whether it is boredom, burnout or finding their authentic path (p. 1)." Barbara's voice as a counsellor comes through in *What next?* as she shares insights and refreshing revelations about her own career highs and lows.

The layout and graphics of the book are appealing. Each section is colour-coded and numerous photographs are sure to keep readers engaged in browsing through pages. Sprinkled throughout are self-assessments and worksheets that allow lots of space for notes and personal reflections. Sidebars are used for tips, highlights from the text, case studies, quotes, and "career counsel."

In the introduction to *What Next?*, Moses says, "I hope that you will think

of this book as, in effect, your own personal career counsellor and coach." (p. 8). Through her unique style, Moses succeeds in personalizing her book. The reader is left with a clear sense of having been privately coached by one of the very best.

Two key themes, not new to Moses' work (Moses, 1998; 1999), run throughout the book: "Be who you are" and "Be a career activist." Every chapter begins with specific objectives relevant to these themes. Customized exercises are clearly identified (e.g., "If you are considering part-time work, complete the following:," Moses, 2003, p. 120). Moses peppers this book with results from her own extensive research (e.g., the eight motivational types described in the Section 1) and provides numerous case studies to illustrate key points.

Throughout the book, Moses normalizes real-life career development, acknowledging that most people move somewhat intuitively (i.e., with minimal strategic planning or external coaching) into careers that fit fairly well. Recognizing that people are more likely to seek help in times of career distress, this book is designed to walk folks through troubling or confusing times.

In Section 2 of the book, Moses describes 10 work sectors and provides tips for "decoding" an organization's culture. She profiles a variety of work options (e.g., telecommuting, self employment, and portfolio work), and provides several self-assessments to help readers determine "best fit".

In writing about "shadow careers" (p. 141), Moses helps readers to recognize possibilities that capitalize on transferable skills while making a career shift.

Although Moses (like most career counsellors/coaches) clearly states that it's never too late to change careers, she does caution readers to "be realistic about [their] prospects of success" (p. 143). Acknowledging that the best career option sometimes is to stay where you are, Moses provides compre-

hensive strategies for career enhancement. I appreciated Moses' candid and pragmatic answer to the question, "Can you have it all?" Acknowledging that we often need to make tradeoffs, she writes "You will probably be happiest if you completely meet one important need rather than living in a "gray" zone where all your needs are compromised (p. 159).

In Section 3, Moses walks readers through the process of finding and securing "great work." Acknowledging the emotional impact of job loss, she also offers specific strategies that address financial and legal concerns (e.g., developing a "leaving" story that both you and your past employer can live with). Moses advocates taking a "project management" approach to job search and "thinking like a recruiter."

What next? provides up-to-date insights about the contemporary workplace. Not surprisingly, Moses tells us "networking is one of today's most important career management skills" (p. 178). She goes on to provide concrete tips for effective marketing and also encourages job seekers to "mine" every possible source of leads. A "Career Directory" at the end of the book lists selected websites to help readers get started. As a Canadian, however, I would have liked to see a bit more balance between Canadian and American resources, particularly regarding starting a business (where considerable differences exist across borders).

Moses offers a step-by-step process for writing a targeted résumé or CV and provides annotated examples of key résumé styles. She provides detailed tips for writing personal marketing letters and offers strategies for successful interviewing and negotiation, as well as advice for completing psychological and screening assessments. Tips are provided for selecting and managing references. Moses concludes this chapter with a comprehensive (four page) worksheet to facilitate career decision-making.

Section 4 of this book is really

what sets it apart from traditional career management resources. In this section, Moses offers detailed descriptions of a variety of career crises (including dealing with difficult bosses) and tangible strategies for working through them. She admonishes her readers to “recognize today’s cult of busyness for what it really is—a destroyer of work-life balance.” (p. 279) and introduces an innovative solution, “strategic laziness.” One chapter in this section explores age-related career dilemmas, addressing concerns faced by those at the very beginning of their careers right through to those contemplating retirement.

In this section I did find myself wishing, however, that Moses would have specifically referenced relevant resources or cited well-known authors. For example, she briefly alludes to “flow” (p. 252) but many readers would be unaware of the extensive body of work on this relevant topic by Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1997).

In the final section of her book, Moses leaves the readers with her trademark tips for boosting “career intelligence” and becoming a “career activist.” Moses has never been known to promote career passivity or career dependency and this book is no exception. Ultimately, readers are forced to acknowledge that career success, to a large extent, will depend on their own proactive efforts. *What next?* provides extensive tips and tools. Activating them, however, will require focused attention and energy from individuals committed to managing their own careers.

I expect that this book will become a favourite of both career practitioners and clients—perhaps along the lines of *What Color is your Parachute?* (Bolles, 2003). It is well written, comprehensive, and based on solid research and a lifetime of experience as a career professional. I’ve already begun recommending it to my students, clients and colleagues (and even picked up a few tips for my own career!).

Works cited:

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