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**Biographical Sketch:**

Diane currently manages two major projects for the School of Engineering:

- Design, development & delivery of a Diploma in Aviation Safety Regulation for the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
- Development of the Aviation Security Training and Assessment Resources to Complement the Aviation Security Training Framework for the Department of Transport and Regional Security

She joined the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) sector in 1990 and has carried out a range of roles including teacher, course co-ordinator, industry consultant, project manager and teaching department manager.

She has accredited a number of qualifications in the aviation sector and has delivered, or managed the delivery of management training, to a number of high profile manufacturing organisations and major hospitals.

From 1980 to 1990 Diane was responsible for Broadcast Practice & Policy and Personnel, at the TEN Television Network, Australia.

Diane has Diplomas in Business Administration, Human Resource Management, Frontline Management and Teaching (Technical).

## **PREPARATION AND OPPORTUNITY AT THE CROSS-ROAD OF YOUR JOURNEY TO AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP:**

- **Identify your destination and cross-roads, eg Program Co-ordinator/Department Manager/School Director**

*The future belongs to those who prepare for it.* People have expectations about their employment life beyond the performance of their current job tasks – the possibility of reaching their career goal or destination is enhanced by preparation.

Career effectiveness and life satisfaction are now recognised as being mutually dependent to a greater degree than has been the practice in the past. Both have their origins in people's quest for liberation and satisfactory forms of personal growth. In essence it is about individual empowerment – the development of those skills and attitudes which enhance people's ability to exercise some control over their lives.

It is said that there are three kinds of organisations:

- Those that make things happen
- Those that watch things happen
- Those that wonder what happened

The same can be said about individuals. Effective planning is the tool used by “those that make things happen” and exercise some control over their lives. It creates focus, direction and energy. It is dynamic and outcome-based and helps you decide where you are going (**your destination**). You can then break the journey down into a series of achievable sectors that take you incrementally closer to achieving your goal.

My personal experience is that I determined a destination for myself of “teaching department manager”. I was a teacher at the time so the steps I identified to take me incrementally closer were “program co-ordinator/teaching department manager”. My actual journey also involved the taking of opportunity in a sideways direction to consolidate and expand knowledge, skills and experience in the form of “industry consultant” and “project manager” of fee-for-service training delivery as opposed to government funded training delivery. The benefit of taking these opportunities was that when I did achieve the role of “teaching department manager”, the transition was very smooth as I was well prepared through the experiences gained by being exposed to different sets of workplace challenges in both administration and people management. The journey from teacher to department manager spanned a 10 year period. After 5 years in a managerial position I began moving into another phase of life and, again, I was prepared and grasped the opportunity to move into a Project Management role on a 4 day a week basis that enables me in the workplace to develop others and, in my personal life, to nurture my aging mother and assist with my 4 grandchildren. Australia has a challenge in the form of an “ageing workforce”. Swinburne University of Technology acknowledges this issue and was prepared to negotiate a new way of working for me that would be mutually beneficial.

## **Prepare by assessing your strengths and weaknesses and undertaking professional development to minimise weaknesses**

For thousands of years, knowledge of the self has been considered to be at the very core of human behaviour. The ancient dictum 'Know thyself' has been variously attributed to Plato, Pythagoras, Thales and Socrates. Philip Massinger writing in the seventeenth century said in *The bondman* 'He that would govern others must first master himself'. Self management depends first and foremost on self-awareness but other skills are also closely linked to, and build upon, self-awareness. Setting personal priorities and goals, for example, helps individuals direct their own lives, and time and stress management helps individuals adapt to and organise their environments.

The identification of emotional intelligence has provided a new framework for leaders and managers to gain greater awareness of themselves and their relationships with others (Goleman, 1998).

Goleman believes emotional intelligence consists of five dimensions:

- 1 Knowing one's own emotions or self-knowledge. This is the ability to recognise and understand one's own feelings from moment to moment.
- 2 Managing emotions, or emotional self-control. This is the ability to control and keep in check both negative emotions (such as irritability, gloom and anxiety) and positive emotions (such as excitement and ecstasy) resulting from encounters or events.
- 3 Motivating oneself. This is the ability to marshal emotions in support of one's goal or desire and to delay the immediate gratification of one's desires.
- 4 Recognising emotions in others, or empathy. This is the extent to which one is in tune with the subtle social signals that others display.
- 5 Handling relationships, or social competence. This is the ability to manage others' emotions and to interact smoothly with hers.

Goleman's research adds more evidence to the proposition that the knowledge we possess about ourselves is central to improving our management skills. We cannot improve ourselves or develop new capabilities until we know what level of capability we currently possess.

There are many survey instruments available from text books or on the internet to assist you get an overall profile of your level of skill competence or, alternatively, you could seek professional assistance. If you have determined your career goal and identified the next role/s, obtain a range of position descriptions to assess whether your current qualification levels are what is required. Review the essential and desirable performance criteria for the job against your current competence – maybe your current role does not enable you to perform the tasks that need demonstrated competency.

You now have some essential information to determine the personal development that is required to be prepared for the next cross-road in your career journey.

At this point, if you have not already done so, discuss with your manager, mentor or human resources department your career goals to see if they are realistic. They may be able to provide a contribution of time release and/or money to assist you undertake additional professional qualifications. It is critical that they know your career aspirations as they may be able to provide the opportunity in your current role, or through secondments, to gain the practical management skills you've identified as a gap in your knowledge and experience. Be realistic in planning how to bridge the gap as it is important to perform effectively in your current role at the same time.

- **Apply for relevant roles until you are successful and then practice driving**

You have identified your professional qualification/skills gaps and are making progress towards minimising them. Scan your environment to identify appropriate jobs that are available and then apply for them. Focus on the roles that will be a relevant stepping stone towards the achievement of your career goal. If you are not sure of exactly what is involved, follow up with an enquiry to assess suitability. Don't apply at random, you will get a reputation for not being serious.

Prepare a blanket CV and customise the covering letter to a specific role. Have a trusted colleague or your mentor review your documentation and provide feedback. If you get an interview, list possible questions and prepare responses – practice delivery. If you are not successful, request feedback on the interview. I have found this valuable in terms of providing an opportunity to gain an insight into gaps in knowledge and skill that made me not the best candidate for the job at this particular time.

- **Minimise the “kangaroo hops” as you start driving**

The kangaroo is an Australian native animal. It has a distinctive “hop” utilising its forelegs and a large strong tail for balance. In Australia when a young adult learns to drive a manual car, it “kangaroo hops” until you get the technique to engage and let out the clutch smoothly. You may experience kangaroo hops in a new job for up to 6 months. The reasons are many and varied as follows:

- Developing inter-personal relationships with a new team and set of stakeholders
- Lack of confidence about some aspects of the job
- Difficulties with “time management” due to the number of new tasks
- Longer working days with associated family pressures due to the above
- Anxiety and/or negative feelings due to all of the above

Acknowledge the above feelings and begin to introduce strategies to minimise them. Again, information regarding various techniques is readily available from sources such as textbooks, the internet etc. Persist and these feelings will gradually dissipate over time – you will master the new job and soon you will be driving smoothly with no “kangaroo hops”.

## **Enjoy the journey, observe the scenery and talk to the people you meet along the way**

You're "driving smoothly". A new job brings a whole range of exciting opportunities in the form of your working environment (the scenery) and the people that populate it. I moved from the School of Management to the School of Engineering about 5 years ago. My personal growth and development has been challenging and interesting in that time. The wonders of new technology and working on a day-to-day basis with people with a different mind set, a gender balance heavily weighted towards males have all provided me with learning opportunities. I never would have thought that I could be so comfortable around engineers and aviators. I did experience "kangaroo hops" but I'm so glad I persisted as it's opened up a whole new world for me. I'm not suggesting everybody should make such a major change and shift in their working environment. One of the motivating factors was that my career destination was a Teaching Department Manager and there was no to minimal opportunity in the School of Management at the time I felt I was prepared enough to move into this role. I came to a "cross-road" in my career journey – the lights were stuck on red so I made a detour. This move also meant that I did not have to move away from my organisation that I was very comfortable in as its values and attitudes matched mine.

When you move into a new working environment, don't forget where you've come from. You have a whole network of people who may be able to assist you in some way in your new role. This aspect of "moving on" has proved invaluable to me. When I don't have the professional expertise to carry out a particular task, I review my network and can usually identify a work colleague that does. As a Project Manager I am often able to staff with people whose credibility in a particular area of expertise is well known to me. When they perform well, I perform well and the customer is happy.

## **When you're driving smoothly, repeat until you reach the next cross-road**

It's easy when you're "driving smoothly" to be so comfortable that you stop seeking new challenges. For some, that is probably the right thing to do – maybe the "kangaroo hops" and their implications were so severe that subjecting themselves to a similar experience is not for them – perhaps there are health or family reasons that would make the taking on of new challenges very difficult at a particular time.

There will however be those who seek individual empowerment in terms of reaching their career goal or destination. They are at the "cross-road" in their career journey and prepared and ready to take the next step. They have experienced before the challenges and anxieties of a new job. Now they can get those feelings into perspective, have strategies to minimise them and know they can regain mastery of their new environment.

Preparation and opportunity is at the cross-road of their journey to authentic leadership.

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