

# My 'Sabbatical' Plan

## How I planned for a productive job gap!

**My Attitude:** Losing my job is one of the best things that has happened to me, and it could not have come at a better time. This opportunity will allow me to discover what I can be the best in the world at, at a time when I have received the freedom to do just that.

**My Plan:** I'll define four specific areas for development, and work on them systematically during the time I look for my next career opportunity.

1. **Expand my network** – I've neglected this area in the last several years. Time to fix that.
  - a) Executives in local photonics companies – Meet the people running companies I may work at next.
  - b) Meet local contacts in business and entrepreneurship (Create my own job?)
    - Innovation Center of the Rockies – Helps commercialize university research
    - Deming Center for Entrepreneurship at University of Colorado Boulder
    - Silicon Flatirons Center at University of Colorado Boulder
  - c) Networking outside my tech discipline:
    - NewTech Boulder – Group focus is software and mobile apps. These are not my expertise, but the group is very dynamic. I may learn something and it's a great place to practice developing my 'So, what do you do?' response.
    - Keep looking for other opportunities outside my discipline – This is a great way to expand my network and find new ideas.
  - d) Re-connect with existing contacts – Leverage connections I've already made.
2. **Volunteer in the local tech community** - Colorado Photonics Industry Association (CPIA)
  - a) Was elected president within the last year. Opportunities this presents:
    - Much greater networking potential, as people will be more willing to meet with CPIA president when contacted via cold-call.
    - I can develop a vision for where I want to take the group. This could be the most productive and 'job-like' activity in my plan, and valuable to show employers.

**b) What the organization needs:**

- Transition from full-time paid Executive Director to all volunteer. Current income (primarily membership dues) is not sufficient to sustain full-time paid position.
- The group needs more of a commercial focus to sustain it. Why do companies pay for membership? What is our 'product'?
- Upgraded website – contemporary and professional look, Better updating process so current events and member news are regularly posted.

**3. Personal development****a) Development for career direction change**

- Determine my strengths (Strengthsfinder 2.0 book – gift from friend)
- Review career and identify roles and activities that worked well and those that didn't
- Research marketing and business development.
- I'm curious about web development. Might there be an opportunity for me to find a project to teach myself on?
- Consider my new brand – What do I do? What value do I bring?

**b) Writing skills**

- Start 'Scientists turned Engineers' blog – Writing practice, plus opportunity to get feedback on my ideas
- Cold-call emails – These are very challenging for me. I will focus on these and get myself to where I'm comfortable contacting someone with no introduction.
- Cover letters – Put real effort into each one. Develop a professional style and be proud of the letter, not nervous.

**c) Physical Fitness Goals**

- Trail running: Three times per week; Join Boulder Trail Runners Breakfast Club meetup – typical runs 15 miles with 2500 ft elevation climb.
- Cycling: Goal – 100 miles. Target rides – Sunrise Century and Copper Triangle

**d) New Experiences – What have I always wanted to do?**

- Rock climbing – Take a class. Three rock climbing gyms in Boulder. Check prices and reviews.
- Flying demonstration rides – I've done Cessna, glider, and helicopter. What next? Aerobatic biplane? Can I find one locally?

#### 4. Research a topic of interest

a) Topic: "How does a scientist find a rewarding career in industry?" - I have many contacts who have followed a similar path. I should speak with them and see what they've learned and what made them successful

b) Value:

- This will make a great project to discuss in interview and networking situations. It's professional in content, but fully self-directed and demonstrates creativity and initiative.
- This would be an excellent way to give back. I find it very rewarding to help others along a similar career path that I've enjoyed so much.
- Also a great networking opportunity – Good reason for someone to accept a cold-call contact request.

c) Miscellaneous thoughts:

- Could I build a speaking opportunity out of this? I've always wanted to do that.
- Could this become a semi-retirement opportunity? I never want to just retire and play golf. Not my bag. (*Pun not intended.*)

*"Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you are usually right."*

*- Henry Ford*

*"Get out and stay out of your comfort zone. Not much of significance happens when we are in it."*

*- Bob Parsons*