

Career Rx

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

*As appeared in TheAlternativePress.com on August 19th, 2009
(www.TheAlternativePress.com)*

Focus, Plan, and Explore

When you are presented with a new idea or concept, how do you respond? Do you listen and think of possibilities or do you think of obstacles that impede future discussion about the new idea? How are you perceived by others? Do friends and family engage you to brainstorm new ideas or ask you for help when venturing down a new path? Do you enjoy speaking about possibilities?

In this new marketplace, doing the same as before may not work anymore. What possibilities have you considered for your career? Are you creative in thinking outside the box?

After reading Alison Gopnik's article "Your Baby Is Smarter Than You Think" in Sunday's *New York Times*, I began to think about how adults learn relative to how babies learn. Think of babies and how they learn. The newness of exploring, having no preconceived notions on how something should function – no limitations on how to play. This gives babies a huge advantage on the learning front. In our very early learning, there is no structure – just pure experimental play. Babies explore by reaching for a new object, feel it typically through multiple senses – touch and by mouth or taste, and observe the cause and effect learning that naturally occurs. When you drop the object, what happens? Does it land with a sound? Does it bounce and come back up? Does it land and stay put? Does it make noise?

As adults, we have learned what to expect. Our paradigm(s) or structured thinking is learned and helps us to predict the consequence of dropping the object. So typically, we assume and focus on something else if there is no perceived value to "playing" with this object. How does this play into our ability to open our minds to new possibilities? To the possibility of reinventing ourselves? Trying a new career direction?

How many of us as adults experiment with new ideas? As indicated in the article, we are trained from our early years in school to "focus and plan...with an emphasis on skills to acquire or information to know...and...not be distracted by other possibilities." Have we as adults forgotten the pure joy of exploring and experimenting that comes with unstructured intentions? When was the last time you just relaxed, and let your mind play with *what if* scenarios with no limitations and think anything is possible?

As adults, we "focus on what will be most useful to us." Are we selectively limiting ourselves based on our perceived notions or paradigms? Think about your job search activity. How are you going about your search? Are you answering postings? Are you using the social media boards to help? Are you networking with others? Are you only focusing on the individuals that you perceive will be most useful to you and your goals?

As we grow older, we "absorb more evidence, certain possibilities become much more likely and more useful...we become increasingly reluctant to give these ideas up and try something new." Can you think of some new approaches you have taken since you began your job search? Or when was the last time you changed a pattern (habit) that you have been doing for some time? For example, when was the last time you tried taking an alternative route home one day to mix up the scenery? How do you keep yourself fresh? From getting into auto pilot? Are you even aware of change around you? Do you see change

coming or do you stick your head in the sand? As humans, we understand that we must evolve as there is change constantly, but how we initially react and eventually respond to the change is critical.

"Each type of intelligence has benefits and drawbacks" as Alison points out. To focus and plan your next steps help you achieve your goals considering these goals are realistic for today's market. While exploring possibilities opens us to opportunities we might not have explored if we only focus and plan. It is the delicate balance of open mindedness and understanding how to carry out potential that enables us to grow and learn.

So open your mind and think outside the box. Explore new ideas and possibilities - see opportunities as you never know where it may lead you.

This column provides thought provoking strategies for getting unstuck along your career journey. A certified Executive and Career Coach can be instrumental in guiding you in your efforts to gain a new perspective. I invite you to contact me @ Lisa@ChenofskySinger.com

Lisa Chenofsky Singer is the Managing Director of Chenofsky Singer and Associates LLC www.ChenofskySinger.com, providing Executive and Career Coaching and Human Resources Consulting.

Lisa's extensive human resources and coaching experience with Fortune 500 companies, small enterprises, medium-sized firms, and non-profit organizations gives her the unique ability to bring together wide-ranging perspectives on career transitions, executive and leadership development. She has consulted with a wide variety of sectors — consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, media and entertainment, pharmaceutical and life sciences, publishing, professional services, technology, and non-profit. Lisa has a passion for motivational speaking, conducts career forums, and provides executive and career coaching.

Lisa's greatest strength is that she enables individuals and organizations to see themselves in new ways, freeing them to achieve their goals. Lisa can be reached at Lisa@ChenofskySinger.com.