



# Illuminations

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Life Strategies Newsletter  
October, 2008

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## POINTS OF INTEREST

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## Keeping in Touch

Our theme for this newsletter is sustainability – with a dual focus on individuals and organizations. This mirrors the focus of our recent work and the Life Strategies team’s individual efforts to balance work with our other life roles while staying fully engaged in our projects.

In our corporate work, sustainability issues typically present as challenges with recruitment, retention, or employee engagement. Regardless of industry, our corporate clients are all beginning to experience the long-predicted impact of retiring baby boomers with a shortage of skilled workers to fill the gaps.

Gerry and I have travelled in China and South America over the past couple of months (I’m writing this from a hotel room with a beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Chile). It’s been fascinating to notice the difference in service and staffing in economies with low wages and an abundance of workers! In Canada, we have gradually become used to doing more with less that we now see it as normal (a frighteningly similar scenario to the “boiling frog” story where a frog placed in hot water will jump out immediately but one placed in cool water that is gradually heated to a boil will stay until it dies).

Our pattern of doing more with less, of course, results in challenges for individual sustainability as workers take on more projects, work longer hours, and can’t get the support they need, even if project budgets could accommodate more staff. A national news story recently profiled medical doctors leaving the small town of Ashcroft, BC – they had been stretched beyond their breaking point, on call 24/7, and finally saw their only option as moving on, leaving the town with no resident doctors. I believe this story represents the tip of the iceberg – individuals need more than work to sustain their wellbeing. And organizations need realistic strategies to recruit new workers and re-energize those they hope to retain.

At Life Strategies, we’ve continue to add to our team. Joanne Elliott has taken on increasing responsibilities, after starting with us as an instructor in our Career Management Professional Program. Cheryl Thom has taken on more technical support responsibilities, especially with our online courses and assessments. Because of our project-based structure, it’s relatively easy to expand our team as needed – over the past few months we’ve appreciated having several consultants and contractors supporting various projects, including Dale Cuthbertson, Gregg Taylor, and Jerry Low. Deirdre continues with her PhD (and we’re all learning lots along with her) and Fiona and Cassie have taken on prime roles on many of our projects. Gerry and I have appreciated our few days at home over the past few months but have also really enjoyed our opportunities to mix work with the travel we love to do!

As you reflect on your own sustainability, what changes might you need to put in place – at an organizational or personal level? Let us know your thoughts by joining our blog at <http://career-engagement.blogspot.com/>.

## TECHNOLOGY AND CAREER MANAGEMENT: THE BLOG

Information technologies are rapidly advancing communication and information delivery. This is increasingly true for the field of career development wherein the use of the web includes Internet research (such as for information on job listings, economics, business), email, and on-line learning (such as Life Strategies' Career Management Professional Program). Within the scope of communication and idea sharing, chat programs like MSN Messenger, Skype, and virtual classroom forum discussion threads, are all emerging as means for people to share ideas, information, and experiences. New on the block is the blog. An initial first question might be "What is a blog?" and a second question might be "Why is it relevant to career management and development?"

### What is a Blog?

The word blog is a contraction of the term "web log." A blog is like an on-line journal that is maintained regularly by an individual, group, or company. A blog is focused on a particular topic or subject. Blogs are dominantly composed of text, but can also include graphics, videos, audio, and photos. Some blogs are based on factual information (info-blogs), and others on personal perspective (like a diary). Since blogs are supported by blogging websites, they can be updated by the author and accessed by readers anytime and anywhere. In addition, readers can add comments to any particular blog, hence infusing this media with a social quality and discussion. There are many kinds of blogs ranging from Personal to Corporate to Q&A.

### Why is Blogging Technology Relevant to Career Management and Development?

Blogs have the capacity to be very current on relevant issues and information. Even so, not all blogs are equal. As with any media on the Internet, a reader has to be discerning as to which sites are of reliable quality. Once found, the reliable blogs can be like virtual office water coolers in terms of having a finger on the pulse of what's happening and providing a forum for presenting and chatting about latest topics of interest, such as interview skills, personal branding, job transitioning, trends in the workplace, and sustainability (which Roberta has already been blogging about). In addition, blogs have qualities of being both local and global, varied in topics from current news to archives of past information -- all highly relevant to career development and job-seeking.

### Who Benefits?

Everyone from the author to the reader benefits. Blogging is a great way to foster communication and share ideas. In career management, keeping up to date on things like current trends, job sites, interview skills, industries, and researching tips, is very important. Blogging is not meant to replace other information gathering strategies, like labour market newsletters, journals, government sites, and professional development workshops and courses; rather, it is a day-to-day way to connect with others in the career management field.

### Life Strategies Begins to Blog!

In addition to the various ways that Life Strategies is already using technology (e.g., MSN and Skype for connecting with team members and coaching clients, WebExOne for shared documents and calendars, e-mail, online surveys, and Moodle as a home for our e-learning courses), Life Strategies has just begun a company blog. Roberta has made the first entry on the topic of sustainability, while also interlacing this topic with global interconnectivity -- an excellent and thematic beginning to both blogging, career management, and global interconnectivity. We welcome you to check it out as more entries are written by the Life Strategies team.

### Some Resources to Start With

- ◇ Career Engagement, Life Strategies Ltd. Official Blog - <http://career-engagement.blogspot.com/>
- ◇ 7 Things You Should Know About Blogs (Educause Learning Initiative) - <http://connect.educause.edu/Library/ELI/7ThingsYouShouldKnowAbout/39383>
- ◇ HR World: Top 25 Blogs - <http://www.hrworld.com/features/top-25-blogs-121907/>
- ◇ Quintcareers Blog - [http://www.quintcareers.com/career\\_blog/](http://www.quintcareers.com/career_blog/)
- ◇ Wikipedia: Blog - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>

## BENEFITS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ONLINE LEARNING

Adults understand the value and importance of self-development and life-long learning to staying current with knowledge and skills and, sometimes, to meet accreditation requirements. People who want to attend courses or workshops might find this a challenge while doing full-time work, which makes learning online a valid option to consider. Online learning is developing constantly and rapidly to better meet the needs of the virtual classroom: the students, the instructors, the course materials, and the learning environment. These developments make online learning a viable, quality option for professional development, in particular in the lives of busy people.

### Distance Education and Online Learning Provide Quality Education and Rich Experience

Studies by universities have revealed that students in accredited online programs receive quality education. Curriculum requirements are the same, but the delivery methods vary. These studies also reveal a high level of satisfaction and performance among students (Athabasca University, 2004). In addition, the amount of interaction with fellow students and instructors is found to be higher in online programs, as group work and discussions are encouraged.

### Asynchronistic, Diversity, and Geographic Flexibility

Online learning gives opportunities to people from all around the world, remote geographic locations, and varied backgrounds to come together in the virtual classroom, when otherwise they might not have access to a particular training course or education. This diversity in background and life experiences will add richness to the discussions (Neault, 2007). Part of what makes this possible is the asynchronistic quality of students checking in on their own schedules (Neault, 2007). As such, students have time to think about their responses, to contemplate what their peers have said, to review the materials, and to respond in a thoughtful manner. In addition, references, citations, and other multi-media sources can be brought into the discussion to make a point.

### Sustainability, Retention, and Improved Morale ... and Finding a Balance in Work-Life-Study

Companies are increasingly in support of training their staff through online learning as it improves their staff's skills and qualifications, while also building morale and reducing the amount of travel time (Tampono, 2005). The costs of online learning are competitive, and do not require travel costs or time off work. A multitude of training is still done through traditional methods (often, face-to-face interactions are popular and necessary), but traditional methods are not always viable or realistic. Online learning does require planning, commitment, and self-initiative on the part of the adult learner. Once started in an online learning course, an adult learner should establish a time each day to set aside for studies; which will make the process more manageable. In doing so, she or he can maintain on-going professional development while also attending to family and life roles, and not have to quit or take time off from work (WorldWideLearn, 2008).

### Sources

- ◇ Athabasca University (2004). The Value of Distance Education - <http://www.athabascau.ca/misc/myth1.html>
- ◇ Neault, R. (2007). Learn online: Fitting professional development into lives that are already full. Powerpoint presentation at the 2007 National Consultation on Career Development Conference.
- ◇ Tampono, K. (2005). Online learning growing in prominence. The Business Journal - Central New York - <http://www.allbusiness.com/north-america/united-states-new-york/1089234-1.html>

### Congratulations

Congratulations to our recent Career Management Professional Program graduate:

Employment Facilitation / Work Search Specialist certificate - Rose Stapenhurst - Completed March 2008

Please see our [CMPP Schedule](#) for upcoming courses. To register for courses, please visit the Life Strategies' [Online Store](#)

### CMPP Orientation

Life Strategies Ltd. has designed an Orientation site for new students, that will give individuals who are new to the online learning experience the opportunity to see how our system works and how our program operates. It will also give students a chance to meet some of the Life Strategies' staff they will encounter during their time with us. We will have an Orientation session **November 10 - 14, 2008**

For more information, please contact Joanne, Life Strategies' Student Advisor at [studentadvisor@lifestrategies.ca](mailto:studentadvisor@lifestrategies.ca)

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

| WHAT   | WHEN  | FOR WHOM  | REGISTRATION DETAILS   |
|--|---|---|--|
| CPE 510 & 521  | CPE 510<br>October 15, 2008<br>CPE 521<br>November 12, 2008<br>Online | CPE 521 = Students with an undergraduate degree and CPE 510 (or a similar course) | CPE 510 - \$695.00 + GST<br>CPE 521 - \$1,250.00 + GST<br>For details, visit <a href="http://lifestrategies.ca/training.cfm">http://lifestrategies.ca/training.cfm</a>                     |
| Blueprint for Life/Work Designs Orientation                | October 22, 2008<br>Online  | HR Professionals<br>Career Practitioners<br>Teachers / Counsellors                | Materials on CD-ROM - \$179.00 + GST<br>Printed Materials - \$189.00 + GST<br>For details, visit <a href="http://lifestrategies.ca/training.cfm">http://lifestrategies.ca/training.cfm</a> |
| Scaling Down: Late Career Transitions and Early Retirement | October 25, 2008 and February 28, 2009 from 10am to 1pm at SFU Surrey | Potential Retirees<br>Individuals experiencing a late career transition           | \$75.00 + GST<br>For details visit <a href="http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/mpprog/scaling-down.htm">http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/mpprog/scaling-down.htm</a>                                     |
| CMPP Orientation   | November 10 - 14, 2008  | Prospective and new CMPP students   | Register by emailing <a href="mailto:studentadvisor@lifestrategies.ca">studentadvisor@lifestrategies.ca</a><br>Cost - Free   |
| PD Bridging Online Workshop                                | November 19 - November 25, 2008                                       | True Colors © Facilitators or MBTI © Qualified Users                              | \$299.00 + GST<br>For details, visit the Life Strategies <a href="#">Online Store</a>  |
| PD Level 1 Online Training                                 | November 19 - December 9, 2008  | HR Professionals<br>Career Practitioners<br>Teachers / Counsellors                | \$795.00 + GST<br>For details, visit the Life Strategies <a href="#">Online Store</a>  |
| NATCON 2009  | January 19 - 21, 2009<br>Toronto                                      | Individuals in the Career Development field                                       | For details, visit <a href="http://www.conferenceboard.ca/conf/jan08/natcon/">http://www.conferenceboard.ca/conf/jan08/natcon/</a>   |
| Scaling Up: Early/Mid Career Transitions                   | February 21, 2009 from 10am to 1pm at SFU Surrey                      | Recent Graduates<br>Employees in Transition                                       | \$75.00 + GST<br>For details visit <a href="http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/mpprog/scaling-up.htm">http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/mpprog/scaling-up.htm</a>   |
| CDAAC Conference 2009                                      | April 15 - 17, 2009   | Individuals in the Career Development field                                       | For details visit <a href="http://www.abcon.biz/cdaa2009.htm">http://www.abcon.biz/cdaa2009.htm</a>  |
| NCCA 2009  | Pre-Conference June 30, 2009<br>Conference July 1-3, 2009             | Career Practitioners  | For details visit <a href="http://www.ncca.org/">http://www.ncca.org/</a>  |
| Career Management Professional Program                     | Courses start every Wed. beginning in Sept. - Online                  | HR Professionals<br>Career Practitioners<br>Teachers / Counsellors                | \$329.00 + GST<br>10% discount when registering for 3 CMPP courses at once<br>For details, visit <a href="http://lifestrategies.ca/training.cfm">http://lifestrategies.ca/training.cfm</a> |
| ENET Educational Society Training Days                     | First Wed. of every month   | HR Professionals<br>Career Practitioners<br>Teachers / Counsellors                | \$20.00 - Including Tax - Members<br>\$40.00 - Including Tax - Non-Members<br>For details, visit <a href="http://www.enetsociety.com">www.enetsociety.com</a>                              |



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### ABOUT LIFE STRATEGIES

Life Strategies specializes in career management and leadership development services for individuals and organizations, psychometric assessment services, training, and e-learning initiatives. We provide professional development and train-the-trainer sessions for human resources professionals, career practitioners, career management professionals, and counsellors. In all our work we strive to build capacity within individuals and organizations through consultation, facilitation, coaching, and training.

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