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Nicole, a coach trainer and certified leadership coach, coaches emerging leaders, leaders in transition and leaders in women-serving organizations. She created Foundational Gifts LLC out of a passion to see gifted people succeed and serves as its Chief Visionary Officer.

For more than 20 years, Nicole has held executive and leadership positions in the human services arena. She is also a certified mediator and a member of the International Association of Coaches.

Those who coach with Nicole come away with clarity of purpose, well-established goals and a renewed mindset toward their personal and professional priorities.

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Empower. Enlighten. Enrich. Equip. Encourage.

A Newsletter of Personal  
& Professional Results  
from Nicole Kirksey  
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## Taking Stock of Your Work

Ancient Romans named the month of January for Janus, their god of gates, doors and beginnings. Always pictured with two faces—one looking toward the future, the other back at the past—Janus is a fitting symbol for the turning of a new year.

As we step through the doorway from one year to the next, it's natural to do as Janus does: look back and ahead. But this year, instead of just reflecting on the past year or making New Year's resolutions, consider using January to take stock of your work.

Spend some time with the questions below and, above all, tell the truth. Be honest about what you really want in your work and how you feel about it. Facing the truth may not be easy—especially if you feel entrenched in an unsatisfying line of work or as you consider practical concerns and finances—but face it nonetheless. You may have to wait to make major changes, but at least you'll know the changes you want to make. The relief that you'll feel from finally acknowledging the truth should be well worth any discomfort.

You can answer all of these or choose several that leap out at you. Also, consider answering the question to which you have the strongest negative reaction. You might be surprised by what your answer reveals.

- Does your work or business fulfill you? How or how not? What would have to change about your current work situation in order to fulfill you?
- Do you express who you really are in your work? If not, is there a way you could be more authentic? Is

there another company or career in which you could more fully express yourself?

- What is aching to be expressed through you?
- Are you achieving to the level that you want to? If not, why not?
- What do you really need and/or want?
- What unique gifts, talents and skills do you bring to the world? How are you using them at work (or not)?
- What beliefs are holding you back from advancement at the office or in your business?
- What do you want to let go of in the way you show up at work? How different would your life be if you did?
- What makes you feel great at work? What do you appreciate about your work?
- Do you work too hard? Or, do you not work hard enough?
- Design a perfect workday. Notice if it's drastically different from a normal workday. How could you bring into your current workday one aspect from your perfect day?
- In 2010, what do you most want to preserve and/or protect about your current work situation?

Now, use your answers and your insights as a solid foundation upon which to build in the New Year and beyond. ●

## Top 10 Self-Defeating Work Habits

*The following habits are like weights on wings. Imagine how high you could soar without them.*

- 1. Procrastination.** Putting off tasks produces anxiety that's often worse than the original task. Do first thing in the morning the tasks you most want to postpone.
- 2. Defensiveness.** Breathe! Consider critiques as simply information. When you take responsibility for your part in any given situation, people trust and respect you more.
- 3. Doing it all yourself.** This is the surest way to limit your progress. Focus on your strengths and create a team around you to handle the rest.
- 4. Over-promising.** Make sure your promises are realistic and attainable. And then over-deliver.

**5. Perfectionism.** "Perfect" doesn't usually get you any closer to your goals. Learn to focus on the details that really matter.

**6. Over-work.** Exhaustion and burnout can make your work, your attitude, your relationships and your health suffer. Ease up between bursts of intensity.

**7. Disorganization.** Ever spent 45 minutes looking for a single document? Enough said.

**8. Poor communication.** Strong communication skills create options, connections and clarity.

**9. Not following through.** How many dollars have you left on the table by not following through?

**10. Thinking small.** This serves no one, least of all you. ●

# Self-Quiz

## How Well Do You Manage Your Emotional Reactions at Work?

Automatic, negative responses to people or events often indicate a hypersensitivity that's referred to as "getting your buttons pushed." At work, these emotional reactions can limit your career advancement and cap the level of success you might achieve. Usually these sensitivities have their origins in hurtful childhood experiences, such as repeatedly being criticized, rejected or controlled. Because we're all human, we sometimes take them into the workplace with us. Answer the following two sets of questions to discover how well you manage your emotional reactions at work.

True False

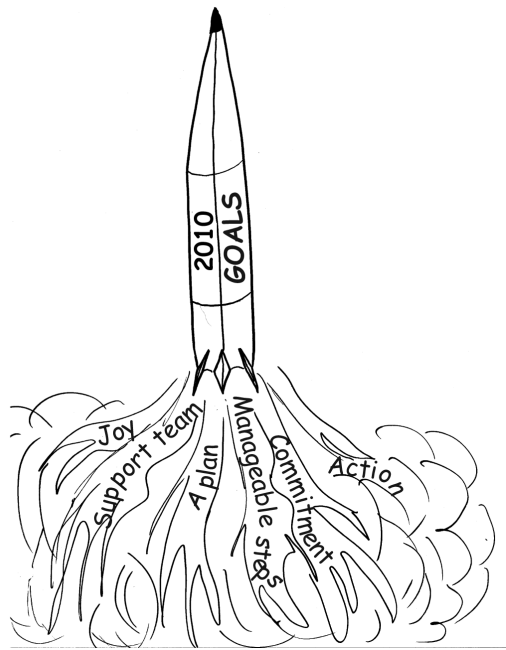
### Set 1

- 1. When anyone critiques my work—constructively or not—I tend to shut down and withdraw or feel ashamed.
- 2. When someone hurts me—for instance, if they fail to acknowledge my contribution—I lash out at them or blame myself.
- 3. I hate it when colleagues tell me I'm "too sensitive."
- 4. When a colleague says or does something that makes me mad, it takes me a long time to let go of it. I often carry a resentment.
- 5. Sometimes I have no idea why I respond to co-workers the way that I do—I just can't control myself.

### Set 2

- 1. If I feel inordinately upset or angered by something at work, rather than blaming someone for making me feel what I'm feeling, I take a deep breath and then take an honest look at myself to see what I can learn from the situation.
- 2. When I feel "triggered," I know it often has nothing to do with the person who pushed my buttons.
- 3. After I have calmed down and returned to a professional state of mind, if I find that a current situation needs to be addressed, I do so in a constructive manner.
- 4. I'm familiar with the situations to which I am most likely to overreact. I recognize more quickly now when I've been triggered, and I am less reactive.
- 5. When my buttons do get pushed now, I am able to see the unresolved personal issues needing my attention. I can then return my focus to my work.

If you answered true more often in Set 1 and false more often in Set 2, you may wish to learn how to deal more effectively with your emotional responses in the workplace. Your success depends on it! Please don't hesitate to call if you'd like to explore this issue further. ●



What fuel do you need to lift off your goals for the year?

## Recommended Reading

*Thank God It's Monday*, by Roxanne Emmerich

*The 100 Best Business Books of All Time*, by Jack Covert

*Financial Intelligence*, by Karen Berman, Joe Knight and John Case

*How We Decide*, by Jonah Lehrer

*The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team*, by Patrick M. Lencioni

*Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, new edition, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

**"The intuitive mind will tell the thinking mind where to look next."**

—Jonas Salk, medical scientist

## Too Many Passions? The Benefits of a Varied Work Life

Jeff is nearing age 50 and has followed one passion after another into a variety of careers. Although each choice made perfect sense to him, his family and friends keep telling him to stay put in one profession and rise higher.

That old saying: *Jack-of-all-trades, master of none!* reveals the bias against those who choose a varied work life rather than committing to a unidirectional path. There was a time, however, when society admired such a person. In fact, some of our greatest contributors have been talented in a variety of areas.

Leonardo da Vinci, painter of masterpieces such as the Mona Lisa, also designed and built bicycles, canals, musical instruments and flying machines. Benjamin Franklin not only helped draft the Declaration of Independence, he was also an inventor, statesman, printer, scientist, author, and student of French culture and language. More recently, Maya Angelou, best known as an author and poet, is also a successful songwriter, journalist, actress, singer, dancer, civil rights worker and professor. And she speaks eight languages!

Margaret Lobenstine, author of *The Renaissance Soul—Life Design for People with Too Many Passions to Pick Just One*, identifies five signs to help determine whether you are a “Renaissance Soul”:

- The ability to become excited by many things at once, often accompanied by difficulty choosing
- A love of new challenges; once challenges are mastered, you are easily bored
- A fear of being trapped in the same career or activity for life
- A pattern of quick, sometimes unsatisfying flings with many hobbies
- A successful career that has left you bored or restless

### There is Nothing Wrong with You

People who recognize themselves in that description often feel that something is wrong with them. They may be accused of an unwillingness to grow up. They may be called irresponsible, a dilettante, or told they have Attention Deficit Disorder.

If you fit the above criteria, take heart. It is possible to embrace your strengths and stop trying to fit into the mold of someone you are not. In fact, your traits make you an ideal candidate for work that requires flexibility, adaptability to change,

and a broad skill base. Renaissance Souls are often ideal entrepreneurs since they typically wear many hats in their own business. Public relations, marketing, consulting and project management are other good choices. Because of their multifaceted abilities, they may also adapt better in today’s shifting financial climate and global economy. What’s more, their passionate nature and curiosity are truly an asset in any arena!

### How to Handle Your Passions

In her book *Refuse to Choose: A Revolutionary Program for Doing Everything That You Love*, career counselor Barbara Sher provides dozens of tools for deal-



ing with a multiplicity of passions and also divides what she calls “Scanners” into nine categories.

“Double Agents” are torn between two interests, while “Sybils” are drawn to so many things that they’re often unable to choose anything. “Serial Specialists” and “Serial Masters” often stick with

one career or project for many years until they’ve gained all they desire from it, and then move on to master different occupations. Understanding your type can help you recognize strengths and choose work that suits you.

Along with clarifying your core values, Margaret Lobenstine’s *Renaissance Focal Point Strategy* recommends choosing a “sampler” of four interests and then rotating them. For example, you might work on a new business venture, volunteer to teach reading in your local school, take acting lessons and study Italian. If you want to, in six months you rotate some of those out and choose others. That way you’re moving out of indecision and into action, honoring your renaissance soul and accomplishing goals. A journal and 3-ring binders can help you track your numerous ideas and keep your projects organized.

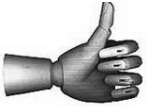
Often, all it takes is a shift of attitude to embrace your renaissance nature. Learn to honor its ways and you may find that your many talents lead you into a fulfilling, passion-filled work life. ●

## BEYOND the Box

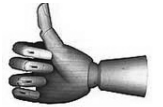
*The following questions are designed to broaden perspectives, to open vistas, to widen the lens. There is no one right way to approach them. You can journal about them, talk to friends, create art, ponder them while driving or working out, dance them—whatever helps you explore “outside the box.”*

1. What were your greatest successes in 2009? How did/could you celebrate them?
2. How has your role at work evolved over the past year? Does that role please you?
3. What is left incomplete? What do you need to do or let go of to be at peace with your work in 2009?
4. What self-defeating work habit plagues you the most?
5. Which work habit that weights your wings are you able and willing to change today?
6. What really triggers you? How could you respond differently to that trigger?
7. What of value to you has been harmed by your heated response?
8. How do you fit the “Renaissance Soul” profile?
9. How does your work suit your nature?
10. How many of your core values are fulfilled in the work you do?
11. What benefits could a business partnership offer you?
12. What vital change is required for you to meet your goals in 2010?

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# Could a Partnership Work for You?



The dawning of a new year can inspire us to consider business solutions we might dismiss at other times. One of those solutions might be joining forces with another person, organization or department for the benefit of both.

Good partnerships expand resources, influence, potential and results. But good partnerships don't just happen. For partnerships to work, the partners must be compatible in vision, approach and work processes. They must communicate well with each other. They must know when to stand firm on an issue and when compromise is appropriate. They should share risks and responsibilities, and treat each other fairly. This kind of relationship fosters trust, which in turn, is the foundation of a successful endeavor.

## What Produces a Good Partnership?

The Leader to Leader Institute described other principles of good partnership, whether in a business venture or cross-departmental:

- **Consider your partner.** In order to be successful, partners must understand not only the values, goals and constraints of the partnership itself, but also those of the other partner.
- **Create a clear, shared vision and understanding of each partner's roles.** At the start of the partnership, clarify your mission and define success and the expected results. Don't assume you're on the same page; spell it out in writing.
- **Set attainable goals.** Translate broad goals into measurable,

interim targets and time frames. Before taking the first step, be certain that all partners are committed to the objectives.

## Would Partnership Enhance Your Business?

Before aligning with a partner, it is crucial to be clear on your own ideas and vision. What do you want to achieve? And are you certain you cannot provide that by yourself?

It is also important to understand what you want and need from a partner, and what you have to offer. Consider reputation, scope of services, commitment, financial capacity, skills and resources. These questions can help you decide if an alliance would be good:

- In what ways are my company's mission and values compatible with this potential partner? In what areas might they conflict?
- Would this partnership serve my primary customers/clients? Would it generate business? Enhance my company's image? Reach new markets? Strengthen company culture?
- How would this alliance help my company further its mission?
- What assets would my company be expected to provide? What assets would it receive?
- What financial and other risks might this alliance involve? What is the benefit/risk ratio?

Finally, are any differences revealed above addressable or do they point you toward the exit? If the answers line up to a green light, your partnership might be just what business needs. ●

—Aristotle

*"Men acquire a particular quality by constantly acting a particular way...you become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions."*

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