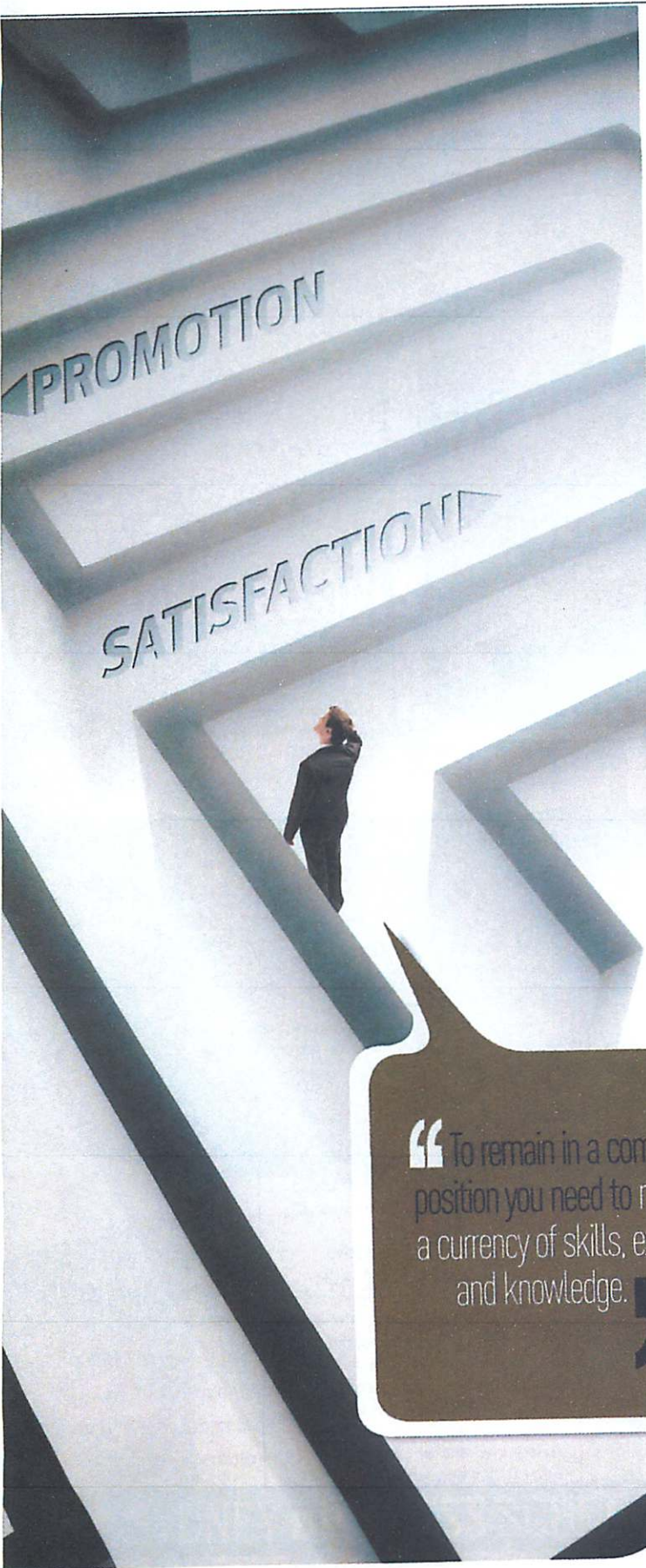


WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING TO BE PROMOTED, TO CHANGE INDUSTRIES OR TO START A BUSINESS, CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION IS THE KEY, WRITES CATHERINE MCCORMACK.

(AND HOW DO I GET THERE?)





What do I want from life? Where am I going? Is this the right job for me? At new year these pivotal life and career questions may be at the forefront of your mind. As Professor Wendy Patton, executive dean at the Queensland University of Technology and an expert in career development, suggests, "January is an ideal time to do an audit of where you are in your career, both emotionally and in terms of performance and status."

You shouldn't leave your career to chance, she advises, which means you need to stay abreast of what is happening in your field. "How long has it been since you looked at your options or did anything to advance your career?" she asks.

Continuing your education can be the key to achieving your career goals. More than just another entry on your CV, undertaking a course that is relevant to your industry and objectives can provide you with vital skills, increased knowledge and, in many cases, the confidence to move forward. It can even stir up innovative ideas and new ways of thinking.

"There's a huge amount of stimulation that comes with group work and external assignments," says Dr Darryl Cross, an organisational psychologist and leadership and careers coach, "not to mention in the classroom itself, where the students have the opportunity to interact and network."

ON COURSE FOR A PROMOTION

If your goal is to advance your existing career, or if you've been overlooked for a promotion in the past, having an extra educational qualification could make all the difference. "To remain in a competitive position you need to maintain a currency of skills, expertise and knowledge while being conversant with changes in your chosen field," Patton says.

For professionals, doing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) is an attractive option for a number of reasons, not least because the knowledge you gain is applicable across most industries and you'll get that pay rise. According to a 2008 Melbourne School of Business survey of its MBA graduates, attaining an MBA can increase your salary package by 63 per cent. The survey revealed the average starting salary package for an MBA graduate was \$133,569, which is well above the pre-MBA average salary of \$81,734.

Doing an MBA was the right choice for Geraldine Davys, group manager, brand and marketing communications, at Sensis, who undertook the degree full time in 1998 with the Australian School of Business at The University of New South Wales. A marketing professional, Davys used the postgraduate qualification to make ▶

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CAREER CHANGES

the transition to a management consultant role. After working as a consultant for two years, Davys returned to a marketing role with Westpac Bank before she joined Sensis in 2004, where she has since been promoted several times.

Today, two of the five marketing managers working under Davys are studying for an MBA part time. "Doing an MBA offered me the chance to think about things in a different way," she says. "It helped me to step outside of the everyday work situation and see things more holistically and strategically."

"The qualification is helpful for keeping up with your industry, but [to maximise its potential] I'd suggest majoring in communication and interpersonal skills during the course," Cross says. "Often, people are overlooked for a promotion because they lack basic communication skills."

ON COURSE TO CHANGE CAREERS

"If you're looking to change careers you need to do a lot of homework, whether that means doing research on the internet or going to a careers counsellor who can present you with different options," Patton says. "Also, people tend to view education as going to university or TAFE, but there are a lot of private education providers offering short courses that give you a taste of various fields, helping you to pick up skills that can direct you towards your particular goal or industry." Patton also suggests you should assess whether there is an opportunity for you to change roles, sectors or companies within your own industry before you look elsewhere.

Having worked in the wool/textiles industry for more than 20 years, rising up the ranks to factory manager, Michael Berry decided to throw it all in and follow his passion for Ducati motorcycles. "The wool processing business had taken me all over the world, but in the mid-1990s the writing was on the wall for the industry in Australia," he recalls. "So it was time for me to review where I was at in life and to work out exactly what I wanted to do."

Passionate about Ducati motorcycles since he bought his first one in 1989, Berry initially pursued a production job in the industry and soon realised that he wanted to ▶

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BEYOND THE BLACKBOARD
 Did you know that continuing your education can increase your self-esteem and boost your mental health? "One of our primary needs as individuals is to grow and develop," says organisational psychologist and leadership and careers coach Dr Darryl Cross. "When you gain skills and knowledge you feel proud of yourself and your achievements." Another by-product of further education is enhanced creative thinking. "People still tend to think that education is about regurgitating what they've been taught," Cross says. "We need to be given, or to give ourselves, permission to think outside the box. Then we can start to ask powerful questions such as, 'Is there any way this can be done differently?' and we can venture into exciting new territory."



“Life is an ongoing journey of learning and discovery, so I'm confident I'll be enrolling in other courses in years to come.”

work on the bikes themselves. He knew he needed to get technical qualifications so he enrolled in a motorcycle technician apprenticeship at TAFE NSW in 2006.

“I was apprehensive about going back to study, but it came very naturally,” he says. “I took a 50 per cent cut in my salary doing it. In my first year I was working another job at night to make ends meet; in my second year I did a journeyman machinist course and then took on a second trade course as an auto-electrician, which I'm due to finish this year.”

Graduating as a motorcycle technician and getting his Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Authority (MVRIA) licence, Berry opened his own bike repair shop, Desmo Clinic, in the Sydney suburb of Ryde last year.

“I get a lot of satisfaction repairing a bike and getting positive feedback from the owner,” he says. “My goals are to get the business up on its feet and eventually leave my thumbprint on the industry.”

ON COURSE TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

“It's not enough to say, ‘I want to set up a business,’” Patton says. “You need to have a sense of what running your own business means in relation to the financial aspects, your lifestyle, the risks involved and the security of it all.” It's also vital to have an understanding of the industry you want to work in and to identify not only where your business would sit within this landscape

but also where it would thrive.

Doing a six-month certificate in Small Business Management at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) gave Kirsten Vivian, owner/proprietor of The Cook & Grocer in Canberra, the skills and confidence she needed to open the gourmet food store she'd dreamt about for years. “I was ready for a career change when I saw the course advertised, and I thought, ‘This is the best way I can see if it's what I really want,’” she recalls.

Vivian had worked in tourism and aviation and had some knowledge of how to market her business, but the course gave her a grounding in unfamiliar areas, such as occupational health and safety and the legal side of running a business. “Also, taking the time to build a business plan was incredibly helpful,” she says. “When my husband and I met with our bank manager he was blown away by how organised we were.”

Since opening her store in 2007, Vivian continues to utilise the skills she picked up at the CIT, even returning to some of her teachers for advice. “Things change so rapidly that it's important to keep up,” she says. “The course gave me the opportunity to meet like-minded students, who have also gone on to start their own businesses. For me, life is an ongoing journey of learning and discovery, so I'm confident I'll be enrolling in other courses in years to come.”