

What's your encore?

When you exit your company, you take the best part of your success — you

Like many of your peers, the finish-line years of your corporate career have been spent leading others and managing key programs. You are at the top of the pyramid. People want to know you and care what you think. Your approval is routinely sought. You feel important because you are important. And while all of that is demanding and stressful, it is incredibly reinforcing. Some would describe it as “addictive.”

Executives like yourself are rarely alone. You are busy and in constant demand — there is always someone around to laugh at your jokes.

This changes overnight when you transition out of your company. It's a jolt that can rock your confidence, your understanding of who you are and what your life purpose now becomes. To say, “Don't worry; everyone goes through it,” doesn't make it easier.

The foundation of your success

But that jolt doesn't have to be a setback. It doesn't have to be anything more than a pause-and-redirect, just like you have done hundreds of times before. Here's the key: recognize that

while the sources of reinforcement have changed, you are taking away the best part of what prompted all of that success — you.

The person who provided wisdom, mentoring, perspective and thoughtful analysis; who offered insights to many; who lit up the room with a smile or a story; who brought out the best in people; and who started with very little, and rose through the ranks on perspirational and inspirational leadership — that person is still there, just in slightly older skin with a few more aches and pains. You haven't changed because you relinquished a title on your business card or affiliation with your company.

So, what's your encore after such a masterful performance?

Unleash your gifts in new directions

After interviewing more than 200 transitioned executives, my heart continues to be warmed when they say they took the best of themselves with them and are enjoying the chance to unleash their gifts in new areas that matter to them.

Some assume another large leadership role. Others sit on corporate or nonprofit boards. Some teach; others volunteer. Still others find themselves wearing their grandchildren's school name, cheering at sporting events — something they never could do for their own children because they were too busy.

You and your fellow leaders know “hard” and “uncertain.” You know all about taking risks and digging for inner strength. The good news is that finding your encore after that incredible performance requires many of those same capabilities.

You're not alone

Be patient with yourself, and find someone to work through it with you. Life is a team sport, and you don't need to go through this phase alone.

Talk to people who preceded you and found joy and fulfillment again. If they're honest, they'll tell you this next season of life trumps anything they knew in their busy corporate days, because they have the time to enjoy it more.

And after this encore will be another one because you are the star performer who continues to be great at whatever you do. Bravo! ●



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My Next Season: changing the way executives transition from long-standing corporate careers to their next phases of life.