



What Transitions Teach Us

Change is inevitable, but growth is choice

Sooner or later, we all transition. Whether personal or professional, transitions are about loss. We lost or chose to give up something and what will ultimately be gained hasn't yet revealed itself.

Early in my career I did a lot of interim work. I was called to step into organizations where the development effort was in transition and needed to chart a new course. I followed terminations, restructurings, resignations, retirements and, on a couple occasions, the death of a beloved development professional. Spending so much time with teams in transition, I learned three important lessons about loss.

It's supposed to feel strange. Professional transitions are like little islands halfway between the known and the unknown. You are no longer who you were, but you haven't embraced a new role; at least, not yet. They are in-between places that are both uncomfortable and, surprisingly, freeing. How we choose to function in the unknown – that place outside of our comfort zone – often reveals our true character.

Loss is often positive. Sometimes, loss follows a period of

chaos or uncertainty and there is relief in being released from the discomfort. Other times, the transition follows a period of stagnation. Stasis is not sustainable. Therefore, loss conceals a gift: it spurs momentum forward.

Transitions are necessary. Without endings there could be no new beginnings and life would become monotony. They are also essential for mastering new skills and making positive changes. When something ends it creates a natural invitation to evaluate or assess the past and choose to change as we move into the future.

At Rose City Philanthropy we are fielding more and more requests for help restructuring teams, filling positions, and coaching professionals. When I work with teams or professionals who are facing a transition, I encourage them to think about what they value and want to take forward with them. Transitions give us permission to let go of things, people or roles that don't enhance our lives. Best of all, they are temporary and will eventually evolve into the new known. Transitions really are doorways into a new and unexplored space in our lives. What appears on the other side is often much better than what was left behind.