

Windows of Opportunity by Rose Miller

In my roles as an HR professional, a critical requirement is to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of employment laws, HR best practices, and workforce stressors. It's a lot. But us HR folks are a resilient bunch. The successful ones are always ready for change. Reinvention should be embraced to prepare for change.

I was speaking with a peer group of women leaders the other day. I love this group of "power-women", who come from all walks of life and various careers. They are smart, fun, and empowered. We support each other in many ways, both personally and professionally. We understand how these things are deeply tied together.

The group's facilitator often presents topics that are thought provoking and it challenges us learn about ourselves so we can lead with more self-awareness. If you have ever worked with someone who was not at all self-aware, you would fully understand the importance of this exercise.

This month, we were asked the question, "if you could reinvent yourself or change something at this point, how or what would it be?"

It's a rare leader, who hasn't reinvented him or herself several times in their career. Look at what the last two years have done. Good or bad, we all needed to reinvent various pieces of our lives. Businesses needed to shift and pivot. We all had to flex and change to survive. Reinvention became survival.

When it was my time to answer, I began to describe my past reinventions as separate windows in time. I've had several windows of opportunity that feel so unique to its own time period. I had my window of single years where I could explore who I am and what I wanted to be. I had an educational window where I had to juggle working while going to school. Where experience cracked open a window, I found that having a good education opened up more opportunities for advancement.

I watched myself go through my career windows, which allowed me to learn and grow professionally. I had the good fortune to experience big city windows in Boston, New York City and Philadelphia. My career led me to work in large scale companies and a small startup. Then I came across a window of opportunity to buy, run and sell a business locally.

I pride myself in keeping the window wide open to learning and growing. Sometimes that means getting a new replacement window.

I always told my sons to learn as much as they could so they can keep their windows of opportunity as wide as possible. My oldest son is autistic, and I had to work hard to crack open some windows for him that would otherwise be shut without my advocacy. Successful diversity initiatives are meant to kick open some windows that have been systemically shut. Sometimes, the thing is stuck shut from old paint and out-of-date mechanisms. Tools need to be used to pry the window open.

I find leaders create their own windows of opportunity. I found the secret to growth is to keep the window always cracked open to keep the air of new ideas flowing in. Pity the owner that thinks his windows are the only windows in town and closes the window to any new ideas, new ways of doing things or new ways of thinking. Many fog up their windows with their large egos. They can't see what's

going on outside. If an owner shuts and locks up all windows, the air will become stale and the company along with its employees will feel like they are suffocating.

And I'm not suggesting that employees should try to fly out of the window the first chance they get, and especially if they haven't spent enough time sitting in the room. The grass always looks greener from a distance. And never smash a window that you don't like. You'll most likely cut yourself.

Reinvention can take many shapes and each window of opportunity can be unique to its time and place. There is nothing wrong with sitting at your favorite window and enjoying the view. That is something we all strive for.

I'm looking forward to my next window of opportunity. I'm not sure what type, shape and size it will be, but I do know it will only be a window where the fresh air of ideas is coming in and there will be an excellent view.

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