

Career cycles

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By Chad Huculak -- Sun Media

Feeling burned out at work? Not quite sure where you want to be in your career? You are not alone. Often we get so caught up in our lives that we never take a step back and try to comprehend where we are and where we're going in our careers.

CareerCycles is a unique chance to take that time to reflect and enjoy the soothing outdoors at the same time. Mark Franklin came across the idea of combining bicycle trips with career counselling on a B.C. ferry back in 2001.

"I just changed careers from engineering for 10 years to counselling," Franklin says.



"I was leading bike trips in Alberta and B.C. and there was this moment of serendipity on a B.C. ferry. I was talking to a guest and he told me how he was once a highly paid corporate lawyer and took some time off to reflect and he ended up quitting his job.

"I had a big 'a-ha' moment and thought, 'I'm the guy who likes outdoor activity and knows career counselling' and I figured I could combine outdoor activity and career renewal conversations."

Thus CareerCycles was born. After a short trial run in Cuba with a friend as a guinea pig, Franklin began his weekend outdoor getaways in 2001 and has continued with them since.

THE CYCLE OF LIFE

At a special rate, small groups of people are taken to an outdoor environment where they are led on non-grueling bicycle and hiking trips while engaging in a career renewal program that includes structured conversations through questions such as "Who am I now?" "Where would I like to go?" and "How do I take the first step?" For three days they also get to stay in an inn with meals provided as well as being able to enjoy the lush outdoors that often leads to zen moments.

"People often find it's an unusual combination," Franklin says, "but they find out it works."

Franklin claims that 72% of past participants have made a significant career change within five years of taking the program. Others reconnect with their jobs or end up seeking outside activities that help bring more of a balance to their current career.

"Being outside and tuning into nature is very therapeutic and can help people resolve problems much in the way someone will take a walk in the woods to clear their mind," Franklin says.

One component of CareerCycles consists of a non-mandatory longer bike trip. "Some people," Franklin says, "if they do a two to three-hour bike ride, then they just did a personal best. Now if a 55-year-old woman achieves a personal best, she's feeling good about herself and is so jazzed that she can do anything with her career."

According to Franklin -- who offers career counselling and workshops in his private practice as well at the University of Toronto -- people often feel that others go through a logical progression in terms of finding a career, while they just get "lucky" and have happenstance moments.

PURSUIT OF LUCK

Franklin helps these people and puts them in the way of "luck," quoting best-selling author Tom Peters and his famous saying, "There are strategies that you can pursue to lure luck out of hiding."

While Franklin believes that there is no such thing as a perfect job for someone, he does believe that some fit better than others.

"If someone feels if 90% of who they are doesn't show up to work, there are ways to change it."

CareerCycles 2006 is happening June 22-25 in Prince Edward County, 2.5 hours away from Toronto. Franklin is also available to set up private CareerCycles getaways for organizations or groups looking to re-evaluate their life choices. Visit www.careercycles.com for more information or contact Franklin at markfranklin@sympatico.ca.

"If your readers are interested in finding a career expert to help them with their career pain relief, I'm one resource, but I'm not the only one," Franklin says. "You can find a career expert through the Association of Career Professionals International, to which I belong. Members subscribe to a list of ethical practice rules."

Readers can easily look up an expert from the website www.acpinternational.org and click "Find a Career Services Expert."

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PHOTO CAPTION: Mark Franklin leads a CareerCycles group in a career conversation in the dunes of Sandbanks Provincial Park.

See <http://torontosun.jobboom.com/News/2006/06/14/1631932-sun.html>