

CAREERS & RECRUITMENT

EDITED BY ELAINE O'REGAN email: recruitment@sbpost.ie

Careering towards a better life

Employees are increasingly attracted to a work concept that allows them shape their career to their own interests and life requirements, writes Gareth Naughton

With the permanent pensionable job now a thing of the past and working life lasting longer than ever before, people are starting to turn to the portfolio career to achieve real job satisfaction.

The portfolio – or “second curve” career – is a concept identified by Irish organisational behaviour and management guru Charles Handy. The portfolio career effectively means that the individual takes control of how and who they work for.

It allows them the flexibility to pursue the career that they always dreamed of, according to Clare Mulligan, occupational psychologist.

“It used to be about finding that one dream job where you got to do the things that you loved to do and are good at with someone paying you to do it. Then you would climb the career ladder,” said Mulligan.

“With a portfolio career you don’t need that one career ladder. You can have five or six different ladders and go up and down them as you need. You can try a few things on. It is less pressure. If you keep climbing that one ladder and you get to the top, it is really hard because you can feel quite trapped. This gives you that scope.”

In practice, this can mean whatever you want it to be. It could mean leveraging the experience you have had in your career to date to take on a part-time job in a role related to your previous career while pursuing a hobby on the side. Alternatively, it might involve working on a freelance and consultancy basis with differ-

ent employers and clients. Or you could take on a full-time contract with the plan to move on to something completely different afterwards.

“Some people want it to be full time and some people want it to be about flexible hours. It is not all about making money. It is about you developing your own interests and skills and shaping that yourself,” said Mulligan.

Although the concept was created by an Irish man, it is only recently that it is beginning to gain traction here. With the trend toward contract roles and people living and working longer – while looking at pension funds that look decidedly dicey – this is a way to bring longevity to their career path that is largely absent from the permanent pensionable jobs of the past.

Mulligan, who gives one-to-one coaching and delivers courses in this area through her company Clare Mulligan Consulting, said that many of the people pursuing a portfolio career had experienced a wake-up call and realise that they want more from their work.

“We are seeing that people are simplifying a little bit after the recession and seeing that it is more important to pursue your passion rather than going for gold – it is about psychological success in your life rather than financial,” she said.

The key thing to remember is that this is career choice like any other and is not intended as a stop gap measure until something more permanent comes along.

“It is not a holding pattern. It is not about just doing this until the right job comes up. It is about getting the right portfolio for you and following your

particular path. If these are the things that you are good at and that you like to do, create a career to suit that,” said Mulligan.

It also offers you the chance to diversify and minimise your exposure to one particular company, which can help to protect you in a volatile economic environment.

“Why would you put all your eggs in one basket? You should diversify the risk and have a few things going on,” said Mulligan.

“If you have a portfolio career with four or five different things, some of it might be a bit seasonal or fluctuates, but you can build up other areas of your skillset as you need it so that you are not relying on one company.

“In all these things you are spreading your bets and, especially at this point when there is less trust in the big organisations, people are more comfortable with not relying on one income stream alone.”



Clare Mulligan, organisational psychologist and consultant

Case study: Norah Casey

Like many people who decide to change their career path, a major life event made magazine publisher and now radio and television presenter Norah Casey step back and reassess her career.

Following the death of her husband and business partner, Richard Hannaford after a short illness just over a year ago, Casey returned to work at her company Harmonia, which is the publisher of Irish Tatler, but found that it was no longer as satisfying for her as it used to be.

“I definitely did not feel like it was challenging me and the energy that it used to give me wasn’t there any more. I decided to take a few weeks out of the business to think about where I would go next,” Casey said.

“I think that just for the next chapter in my life, I felt that I was not finished doing some of the things that were for me personally as



Norah Casey: major career change

opposed to developing other people’s business ideas. I wasn’t finding it as interesting to do strategic work or to work on ways in which we could develop the business, which I had always found very fulfilling.”

As it happened, the break coincided with a call from Newstalk to step in on the Breakfast Show for a few weeks and, from TV3, to helm

the Vincent Browne Show. She was eventually offered the Newstalk job on a permanent basis and, despite the 4am starts, she decided to take on the challenge.

“It is not something that I had ever thought of as a serious career change, but I was enjoying it so much – and getting so much energy from it – that I began to think slightly differently about where I

would go next and what would I do,” she said.

The opportunity to co-present The Today programme on Friday was another departure for Casey, who said she was willing to take the risk rather than live with the regret of not having done so.

“I talk to people all the time about fulfilling their potential,” Casey said.

“Do you really want to get to retirement age thinking about all the things you thought you were going to do, but haven’t because you weren’t prepared to take the risk?”

“This has been a big risk for me. I was a successful businesswoman who people knew and respected in one scenario and I could have fallen flat on my face. I felt that I could do it and I suppose you have to have a bit of self-belief.

“You also have to accept that it won’t be the worst thing in the world if you do fall flat on your face. What would be the problem there? It would be a dent to the ego, but the downside of not doing it is that you don’t know if it is something that you would have enjoyed doing.”

An employer’s response

In the current jobs market, people have to take a much more active role in the development and direction of their career, according to Michael McDonnell, managing director of CIPD Ireland.

“The uncertainty for the individual is ‘who looks after me’ and the truth is that you have to look after yourself primarily,” said McDonnell.

“You have to begin to view yourself as a brand and you have to create a situation for yourself where you continue to be employable and someone is willing to pay you for your service.

“It is no longer being rewarded for loyalty which was the old model, now you are rewarded for the outcome. What added value can you bring?”

This not necessarily a bad thing, however, and shouldn’t be viewed with

trepidation.

“On one level, it is challenging, but on another level, it is exciting,” said McDonnell.

“You come across so many people in the past who were locked into these permanent pensionable jobs and they hated them. They were 47 or 48 and locked into a pension scheme and they felt trapped.”

Portfolio careers are going to be much more prevalent in the future, particularly with the rapid growth in contract working.

McDonnell said that companies that ignored the portfolio worker did so at their peril because they risked missing on a more innovative approach that could help to sustain their business.

“As an organisation, you have to be completely flexible in terms of your



Michael McDonnell, managing director, CIPD Ireland

structure and what you do,” he said. “The danger is that they become prisoners of their own thinking and they are unable to see changes for the future.

“If you have these portfolio workers saying that everything is up for grabs, you have a much richer conversation because they are not wedded to existing technologies. Innovation is disruptive so you need that culture to be innovative,

and portfolio workers make that possible.”

Although there may have been a time when organisations used contract working as an excuse to bring in cheaper labour with fewer legal rights, McDonnell said that we had moved into a new phase in which companies were obliged to attract portfolio workers.

This goes beyond good remuneration packages, including benefits such as pension contributions and

opportunities for personal development. This approach may be counterintuitive, however – why train an employee who is going to move on, for example? As McDonnell sees it, however, it is crucial.

“There are talent shortages in the midst of mass unemployment and talented people are going to become scarcer all the time. Therefore, the wise organisation will sit down with the portfolio worker of

the future and say ‘we are doing this five-year project and we will want you for the duration of the project and we will likely not need you after that,’” he said.

“We would like you contribute to the company over that period, but in return for that, we will give you a package of things including a good salary, contributions to a long term pension etcetera and contribute to your own personal development and growth through training”.

“This will also require a rethink when it comes to how training and development works, generally starting with a completely new

relationship between the state and the individual and when training kicks in. It is too late in the day to start investing in training when the person has already lost their job, according to McDonnell.

“Training and development should be an integral part of working life. That model won’t work in this new world. We see now that it is not working because we can see how hard it is to get people back to work.”



David Keane joins MSL Park Motors

MSL Motor Group, Ireland’s largest dealer group, is delighted to announce the appointment of Westmeath man David Keane, as Mercedes-Benz Brand Manager at MSL Park Motors, Dublin 7.

David has extensive experience in the premium segment of the motor trade having previously excelled in senior management roles at Central Garage, Capital Cars and Colm Quinn BMW.

In his new role, David will be responsible for developing the Mercedes-Benz brand at retail level in North Dublin.

MSL Park Motors are now taking orders for 2013 Mercedes-Benz and would be delighted to have the opportunity to quote for your new vehicle.

Contact David Keane today:
Phone: (01) 869 1000 or (087) 737 4498
Email: david.keane@parkmotors.ie



MSL Driving Confidence

www.msl.ie

working WEEK

Jennifer McCreery is managing director of McCreery Contract Cleaning. Founded in 2000, the company provides cleaning services to 70 businesses and private clients, including offices, restaurants, hospitals and hotels. It employs 43 people in Kilkenny, Carlow, Laois, Tipperary and Waterford and will create 25 new jobs in the south-east in the next six months.

What are the main responsibilities of your job?

Having steered McCreery Contract Cleaners through the present difficult climate, my job now is to manage the company as it takes on new staff. To remain positive, continue to take care of, appreci-

ate and respect my staff.

What motivates you?

I have always thrived on challenges and having taken the company to where it is today is a great motivator. I feel great pride in the fact that we have not only survived, but thrived. It makes it all worthwhile when customers tell me we have done a great job. My staff make all this possible every day so it is not difficult



Jennifer McCreery

to be a good, fair and caring employer.

How would you describe your work style?

I am hands-on, a perfec-

tionist, people-centred and I respect and trust in my team.

What is the most valuable professional lesson you have learned?

It is the saying: “To plan for a year, sow corn. To plan for a decade, sow trees. To plan for a lifetime, train and educate men.”

Whose career do you most admire in Ireland and why?

I admire people who believe in themselves and have the guts to see that there is always a way. There are many, but Terry Clune of Taxback.com springs to mind for his sheer tenacity. He has proven that if you can dream it, you

can do it.

What is the most valuable career advice you would offer others?

You must work smart with a motivated team.

In terms of doing business in Ireland, what do you think is the biggest challenge we face?

One of the biggest challenges facing my sector is that clients now expect to pay less for the same cleaning and maintenance services. The Ireland of today faces many challenges and our biggest one is to contribute in some way to see it through.

At McCreery Contract

Cleaning, we are making a small contribution by employing some people who are less able – nurturing, mentoring and encouraging them to get back into the workforce. This is challenging, but when you are passionate and see the results, it is wonderful and rewarding.

What is your ultimate professional goal?

I am very happy and confident in my space at the moment. I appreciate my family, friends and, of course, my staff. So, the ultimate goal would be to stay doing what I am doing, to continue to believe in myself, stay healthy and enjoy the fruits of my hard work.