Reprinted from April 10, 2017
SMART BUSINESS PITTSBURGH
Insight. Advice. Strategy.®

FROM PRODUCTIVITY TO PURPOSE | LESLIE W. BRAKSICK, Ph.D.

Reaching for the next rung

A few weeks ago, a CHRO colleague shared an analogy I have been unable to stop thinking about.

He said, "I have come to see executive transitions as being a lot like monkey bars. Executives are crossing, hand over hand, one rung to the next. There is a line of people waiting behind them. Those in line need you to keep moving, to find your next rung, so they too can keep moving and reach their next rung.

"When one person stops moving," he continued, "no longer reaching for the next rung, the whole system stops and everyone just hangs onto their rung. Worst of all, they suffer as they hang there. Their arms get tired, sore, weak and eventually they can't hold on anymore. As they weaken, they question whether they have enough momentum to reach another rung — or, in fact, if there is even another rung to reach to. They start to convince themselves that the job is to figure out how to hold on to their current rung and just not fall.

"In contrast, if they keep moving forward, stretching for the next rung — trusting there is a next rung for them, whether inside or outside their current company — progress for all continues. Having an executive stuck, stopped in the middle of the monkey bars, impacts/impedes the whole organization. It immobilizes everyone."

What I love most about Kevin's monkey bars analogy is the emphasis on three keys:

1. Momentum matters. It is important that we keep moving forward, growing, leaning in, reaching for the next rung. As soon as we stagnate or "settle in," we become weakened; we convince ourselves there is no next rung. We negatively impact those behind us, and those behind them. Others rely on our continued progress for the organization's progress, and their own.

2. Strength matters. If we stay strong and alert, we can keep moving right along, rung after rung, in ways that help our team and organization. If we allow ourselves to weaken — in reality, or in our imagination — we have already begun to lose. Our strength impacts others' success and future potential. We owe it to them to stay conditioned.

3. We may not clearly see the next rung we need to reach for. Holding onto the rung we have in hand feels secure at first. However, before long, it becomes a burden. It goes from being our pathway to what's next, to our unplanned resting place that is not so restful. Organizational growth, development, and success are underpinned by executives reaching for what's next, even when they cannot see it clearly.

It is important — especially for executives — not to stagnate in their current role because they see no next rung. There is *always* a next rung, and a *next season* for those late in their careers, whether it be with their current employer or something completely different. Stagnation does not equal security.

So, reach for your next rung. Find your next season. It matters deeply for you, and for all who follow.

LESLIE W. BRAKSICK, Ph.D.
Co-Founder & Senior Partner, leslie.braksick@mynextseason.com

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

© 2017 Smart Business Network, Inc. Reprinted with permission from Smart Business Pittsburgh. www.sbnonline.com. All rights reserved.
For more information on the use of this content, contact Wright's Media at 877-652-5295

For more information:
(412) 802-9196
mynextseason.com

mynextseason
Executives Transitioning from Productivity to Purpose

128858