

Harness your fear, Generation X

BettyJo Bouchey Workbytes

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It is with a heavy heart that I write my final column.

A couple of years ago the Times Union business editor had a great idea -- have a group of 30-somethings write about issues they face in the workplace. Since then a few of us have been on a journey that has not only allowed us to express our creativity but also to embark on a fulfilling adventure of self-discovery.

Most of us, and most certainly I, do not consider ourselves sages, merely young executives finding their way through this concrete jungle called today's workplace. We've had high and low times; but many of us have had those times in this column and we've shared our experiences with you as one part catharsis and one part professional development.

I specifically asked to write this farewell article because this kind of farewell is something you should plan for, Generation X. It may happen to you, too.

About four months ago something truly unexpected happened to me that caused me to think, really think. In the moments following this event I came to question who I had become, how I had gotten myself to that point and how I would find my way back to who I wanted to be.

It's hard when life throws you a sucker punch but sometimes that's exactly what it takes to get our attention. Once upon a time I was a thrill seeker, but the cadence of everyday, adult life had diminished this facet of my personality and I found myself living in a self-imposed comfort zone -- losing what made me shine in the process.

So what would any self-respecting thirty-something gal do? Cocktails with the girls, of course! As I detailed the horror of my status, one of my dearest friends said, "you are Bettyjo Bouchey, have you forgotten this?" Well, frankly, I had.

Her words resonated with me for days. As I struggled to recall this image, fate stepped in via a cold call from a recruiter and before I knew it I was considering uprooting my family and moving away from all that is "known" to me. I bet that is what the old Bettyjo would've done, but to be honest it scared the old, tired and lame Bettyjo witless -- still does, even as I write this from a fabulous new job in Indianapolis!

I write this not as a self-help post-mortem on finding my authentic self, but to give you that proverbial kick in the pants before someone else does, Generation X.

Don't wait until a crisis occurs and don't settle for the malaise of what is easy and comfortable

for you. The interesting thing about taking risks is that the magic happens as soon as you shed your fear of the unknown. When you face down fear you can own it, leverage it and ultimately harness it.

It's in this space that you find out what you are truly made of and realize what value that brings to those around you, professionally and personally. Truly knowing your worth, power and place in the world is all any of us can hope for, but it may be hard to do that if you've lost your luster from sitting in the corner too long. It took me far too long to realize this. Now I stare into my future with fear in my throat but with a fire in my belly that is too hot to ignore.

"Nobody puts Baby in a corner," Generation X, nobody (and yes, you probably have to be a member of Generation X to know what movie that is from).

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