Elsdon Organizational Renewal

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In This Issue

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Welcome

Welcome to this quarterly issue of Bringing Work to Life. We are pleased that our latest book, *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption*, (Praeger, 2014) has been published. Our book describes why, when, and how to create an inspiring and practical nontraditional career path from more than one source of income: http://www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?isbn=9781440831584

It complements our three existing books:

Business Behaving Well: Social Responsibility, from Learning to Doing, (Potomac Books, Inc., 2013) that provides a rationale and roadmap for organizations to incorporate socially responsible practices, building on principles of social justice:

http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Business-Behaving-Well,676586.aspx

Building Workforce Strength: Creating Value through Workforce and Career Development (Praeger, 2010) that describes the application of workforce and career development principles and practices to strengthen organizations:

http://www.abc-clio.com/ABC-CLIOCorporate/product.aspx?pc=C3236C

and *Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization* (Praeger, 2003) that describes leadership approaches to integrate the needs of the individual with the needs of the organization for the benefit of both:

http://www.abc-clio.com/product.aspx?isbn=9781567204360

This newsletter contains two articles: Sustaining a Nontraditional Career Path, and Education and Our Community.

Sustaining a Nontraditional Career Path

Ron Elsdon, Ph.D., is founder of *Elsdon Organizational Renewal*, which focuses on supporting organizations enhance effectiveness through revitalized workforce relationships and leadership practices. Prior to establishing his practice, Ron held senior leadership positions at diverse organizations. Ron is also co-founder of New Beginnings Career and College Guidance, which provides caring and personalized help to individuals and families in career guidance, coaching and college planning.

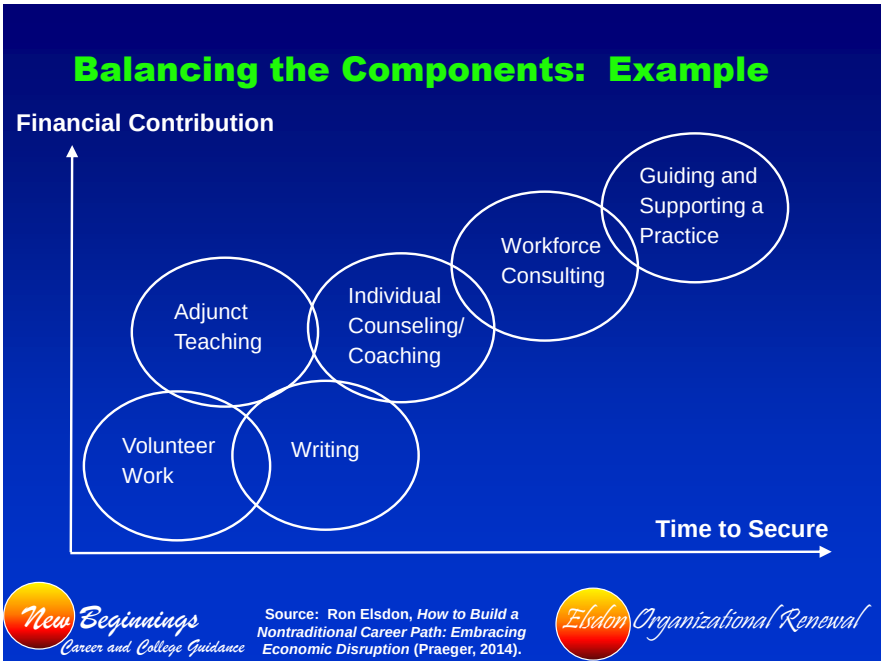
Ron is author of *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption*, which describes why, when and how to create an inspiring and practical nontraditional career path from more than one source of income; editor of *Business Behaving Well: Social Responsibility, from Learning to Doing*, which provides a rationale and roadmap for organizations

Let us take two extreme cases of career components in a nontraditional career. (As pointed out in our last newsletter, by a nontraditional career we mean one that is tailored to our individual needs and contains more than one source of income.) In one case, each career component provides only a small income but starts quickly. In the other case, each component provides major income but takes a long time to launch. What are the implications of each case? In the first case, significant time is spent in marketing and sales to constantly replenish projects or engagements, and income is low. However, there is likely continuous activity with an income base that starts quickly. In the second case, time is spent in relationship building and creating a foundation for the major projects. Preparation takes many months or years during which time there is no income.

Each of these two cases presents major problems. The first case never reaches the required income level, and the second case has such a long gestation time that it never launches. So both cases fail. However, a combination of career components from each of these two cases can provide the firm foundation needed for success. This is balance and it creates a foundation of sustainability for a nontraditional career path.

A parallel situation is that of a portfolio of research projects in an organization. Here, similar issues surface: some projects offer rapid but low financial contribution with a relatively high likelihood of success while other projects offer a major financial contribution but with a lengthy research time and much uncertainty about ultimate success. Here, too, creating a balanced combination of both types of projects leads to a sustainable blend that is superior to either extreme. Another parallel is in the financial area, where a combination of investments that balance profitability and variability offers significant advantages for long-term performance.

What does balance look like in a nontraditional career? Let us consider it from the two dimensions we have introduced, financial contribution and time to secure, illustrating this with my own nontraditional career components as shown in the following figure:



to incorporate socially responsible practices, building on real-world examples from contributing authors, and principles of social justice; editor of *Building Workforce Strength: Creating Value through Workforce and Career Development*, a book that describes the application of workforce and career development principles and practices to strengthen organizations; and author of *Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization*, a book describing leadership approaches to integrate the needs of the individual with the needs of the organization for the benefit of both. Ron holds a Ph.D. from Cambridge University in chemical engineering, an M.A. from John F. Kennedy University in career development and a first class honors degree from Leeds University in chemical engineering. With his co-author he was awarded the Walker Prize by the Human Resource Planning Society for the paper that best advances state-of-the-art thinking or practices in human resources.

There are six career components shown in the figure. Volunteer work shown in the lower left, made no direct financial contribution and started quickly. In addition to the value contributed to organizations by volunteering, it brings personal benefits of fulfillment, skill building and relationship building. Moving to the right along the time axis, we come next to adjunct teaching. It made some, though limited, financial contribution. This fit well as it was in a core area of interest and expertise and was an opportunity to contribute to students and the career development profession. It took a relatively short time to begin this work and was quite stable. On the time scale we come next to writing. In additional to being personally fulfilling writing also offered the opportunity to provide a forum for the voices of others through edited volumes and it helped build professional credibility. While those with celebrity or notoriety (or both) may generate substantial income from writing, it has been my experience that this contributes more intrinsically and to credibility rather than financially.

Moving further along the time scale, we come next to working with individuals through career counseling and coaching. As with the other components, this was meaningful and fulfilling work. It did make a financial contribution, though it would not have been sufficient to sustain us. The next item on the time line is workforce consulting. Here, credibility generated through the earlier writing component was helpful. For the first time this included engaging others on a contract basis. Projects in this component took longer to secure, now measured in months to years, but made a significantly greater financial contribution. It was also personally meaningful. At this point the nontraditional career was financially self-sustaining. The final component, guiding and supporting a practice, was also fulfilling. This entailed establishing a corporation and engaging a team of people employed by the organization. It was several years before the time was right for this. The financial contribution from this component was the largest and quite stable.

We can see how all of these components fit into a balanced whole that included smaller financial contributions secured more rapidly and larger financial contributions established over longer time periods. This portfolio proved to be enduring, sustainable, and fulfilling partly because of the balance that is inherent in it. Its strength in terms of the framework in the figure is the broad distribution of components. They are not all collected together, so the overall launch time is acceptable and the overall financial contribution is strong. Another aspect that is inherent in the component map is the ending of activities that are part of these components. Endings can range from completion of a career counseling or coaching engagement with an individual, which has a relatively small effect on the overall profile, to completion of a large workforce consulting project or completion of a book. Such project completions have significant time and resource implications. They speak to the importance of continuing to revitalize career components by introducing new projects that are differentiated as described in *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path* and mentioned in our last newsletter.

In *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path* we review dimensions of balance both practical and intrinsic. Practical aspects include financial contribution and time to secure that we have just mentioned, as well as resource commitments. Intrinsic aspects include skills, interests, and life and work integration considerations. In the book we explore how to implement concepts of balance including selecting career

components using criteria such as a weighted index of well-being. We underline the importance of on-going assessment, and adjusting and refining the components to maintain the health and vitality of a nontraditional career path. We look at questions related to balance that can help in creating a nontraditional path that meets personal needs and honors the perspectives of significant others. Addressing balance in this way helps lay the foundation for sustaining a nontraditional career path that is fulfilling, and that continuously unfolds and develops.

Parts of this article are extracted from *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption*, by Ron Elsdon (Praeger, 2014).

Education and Our Community

I remember talking with a colleague several years ago about her visit to China. This was around the time of the United States involvement in the Iraq war. She observed that her Chinese hosts were surprised at our squandering resources on such an undertaking while allowing our educational infrastructure to crumble. They, conversely, were investing heavily in education, so that even some rural communities had access to modern educational infrastructure. We should not be surprised that GDP growth in China now eclipses that of the United States.

Let us look at the benefits of our investing in education. The following table shows the estimated increase in U.S. GDP for three scenarios. First if we match OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – 34 economically advanced countries) average math and science achievement scores in our schools, second if we match Canadian average math and science achievement scores, and third if we match math and science achievement scores of the most advantaged quarter of U.S. students. Cognitive skills, such as math and science achievement scores, have been shown to directly link to economic growth and are most comparable across countries.

Improving eductational outcomes and narrowing educational achievement gaps would significantly increase economic growth and raise government revenues.

Bronze

Scenario 1: If the U.S. matches the OECD average math and science achievement score	2050	2075
GDP would be	1.7% higher	5.8% higher
The cumulative increase in present value GDP would be	$2.5 trillion	$14 trillion
The cumulative increase in present value government revenues would be	$902 billion	$5.2 trillion

Silver

Scenario 2: If the U.S. matches the Canadian average math and science achievement score	2050	2075
GDP would be	6.7% higher	24.5% higher
The cumulative increase in present value GDP would be	$10 trillion	$57.4 trillion
The cumulative increase in present value government revenues would be	$3.6 trillion	$21.5 trillion

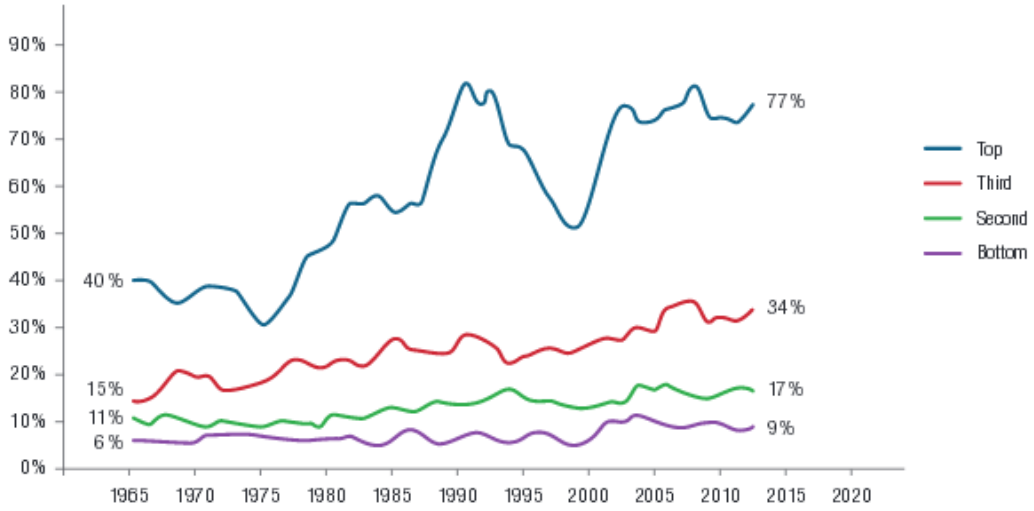
Gold

Scenario 3: If the U.S. matches the average math and science achievement score of the most advantaged quarter of U.S. students	2050	2075
GDP would be	10% higher	37.7% higher
The cumulative increase in present value GDP would be	$14.7 trillion	$86.5 trillion
The cumulative increase in present value government revenues would be	$5.3 trillion	$32.4 trillion

Source: The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Improving U.S. Educational Outcomes, Robert G. Lynch, Washington Center for Equitable Growth, January 2015.

The estimated increase in cumulative GDP ranges from $2.5 trillion to $14.7 trillion by 2050. It is worth noting that first case is comparable to the estimated cumulative loss of U.S. discretionary spending from 1990 to 2010 due to growing income inequality (Business Behaving, Well: Social Responsibility for Learning to Doing, Ron Elsdon Editor, Potomac Books, Inc., 2013, p. 187). Indeed educational inequity and income inequality are intimately interwoven. The following figure shows how those from higher income families were eight times more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree by age 24 than those from lower income families. This disparity is much greater than in the 1970s as inequality has mushroomed in our society.

Equity Indicator 5a: Bachelor's degree attainment by age 24 for dependent family members by family income quartile: 1970-2013



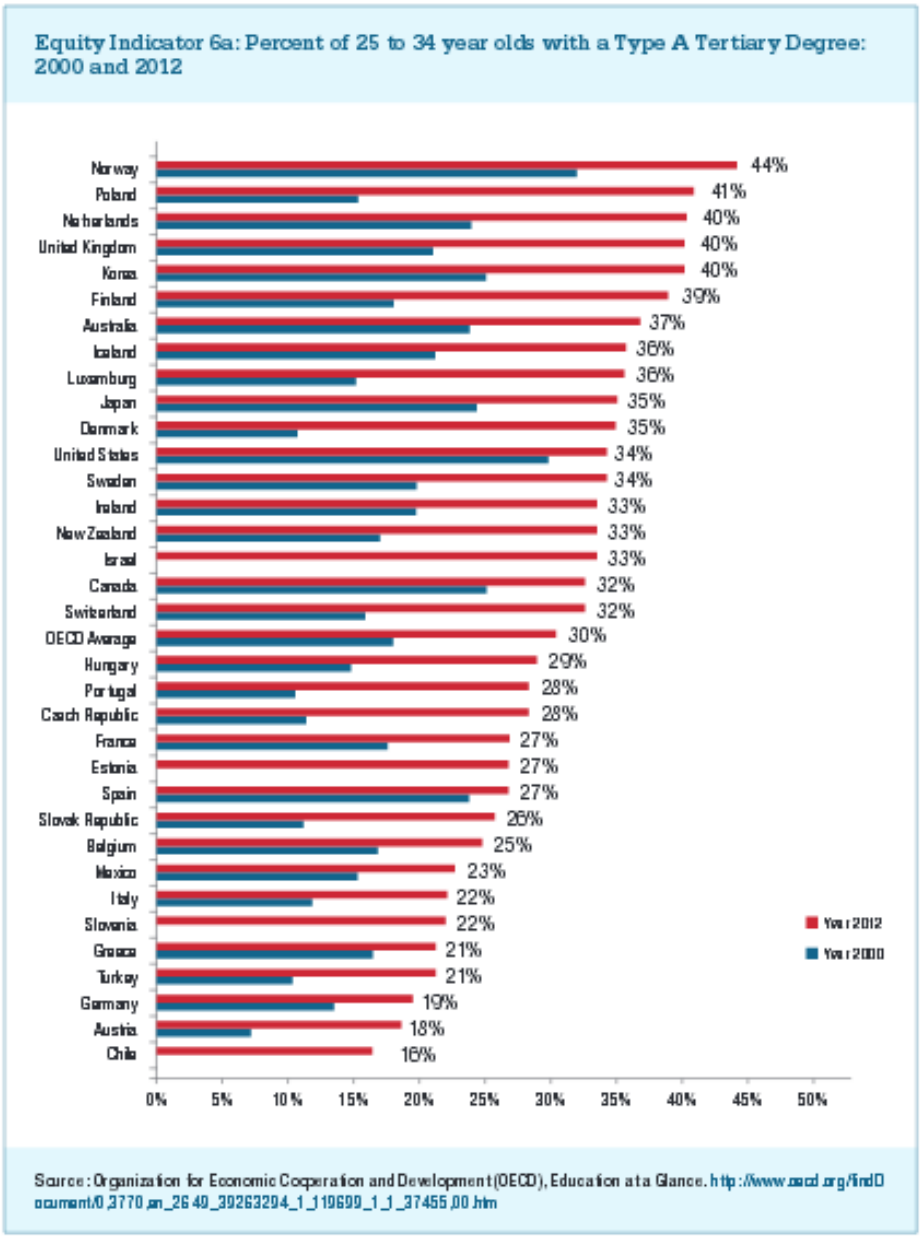
How Are We Doing? High Inequality and Widening Gap

In 2013 those from high-income families were 8 times more likely to obtain a bachelors' degree by age 24 than those from low-income families. In 1970 individuals from high-income families were 5 times more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree than those from low-income families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October Education Supplement. Data from 1970 to 1986 consider unmarried 18 to 24 year olds and data from 1987 to 2013 are based on dependent 18 to 24 year olds. We used data in Table 14 in Census Bureau P20 report on School Enrollment. After 2006, the Census Bureau no longer published Table 14. We received unpublished data. Mortenson, Thomas, 2014, "Unequal Family Income and Unequal Higher Education Opportunity, 1970 to 2013", Postsecondary Educational Opportunity, no. 267, Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Washington DC, September. http://www.postsecondary.org/

Source: Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States, 45 Year Trend Report, The Pell Institute and PennAhead, 2015.

While years of education, and degree completion, are not necessarily primary determinants of educational system effectiveneess, degree completion can provide some insights into national educational system comparisons. We see this in the following figure that points to the erosion of our global competitive position.



Source: Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States, 45 Year Trend Report, The Pell Institute and PennAhead, 2015.

Tertiary-type A programs (ISCED 5A) are largely theory-based and are designed to provide sufficient qualifications for entry to advanced research programs and professions with high skill requirements. Tertiary-type A programs have a minimum cumulative theoretical duration (at tertiary level) of three years full-time equivalent, although they typically last four or more years. These programs are not exclusively offered at universities. This degree is comparable to the BA or BS degree in the U.S. system. We present data for the population age 25 to 34 for the years 2000 and 2012.

Tertiary-type B programs (ISCED 5B) are typically shorter than tertiary-type A degrees and focus on practical, technical or occupational skills for direct entry into the labor market, although some theoretical foundations may be covered in the programs. These programs have a minimum duration of two years full-time equivalent at the tertiary level.

The blue bars show the percentage of 25 to 34 year olds with the equivalent of a three- or four-year college degree in 2000. At that time the United States was second only to Norway. The red bars show the same index in 2012. Over the twelve year period from 2000 to 2012 the United States fell from second to twelth place. Meanwhile we invested trillions of dollars in an ill-advised Iraq war, and in the early

2000s cut taxes on the wealthy, as a result diminishing resources available for societal needs such as education.

It is good to hear encouraging words from the current administration about increasing access to education. This is part of a difficult, and critical conversation about how to distribute societal resources equitably and provide for our coming generations. This needs to happen before we decend further into a feudal economy that benefits only the wealthy. Before we lose the economic and social base that many before us have built. Do we have the will to support those who advocate for all in our society, or is it already too late, and, in the words of Fran Lebowitz, "Capitalism triumphed over Democracy"?

Quote

"I have built this bridge to last forever, through the ages of the world."

Translation of an inscription by the architect Lacer, in a temple at one end of the tallest bridge in the Roman Empire crossing the Tagus river at Alcantara in Spain. 106 A.D. The Great Courses, John R. Hale, Classical Archeology of Ancient Greece and Rome.