

ICMA 101st Annual Conference

Preparing for the Next Step

Presenters: Jenny Haruyama, Jessica Cowles

Moderator: Kathy Lang



What do you really want?

In this section we talk about getting to know what you really want. We talk about the importance of doing research to get to know the details of your desired position, organization and community. We talk about the importance of knowing yourself and your preferences, biases, skills and abilities.

Here are some good questions to ask yourself:

- Do I believe I can achieve this goal?
- Am I ready to commit to this goal?
- Am I open to self-evaluation?
- Am I open to asking others to help evaluate my skills and abilities?
- Am I okay with failure as a learning tool?
- How easily can I recover from a setback?
- Have I considered what really matters to me in a new job, a new organization and a new work culture?
- Am I willing to compromise on my desired environment? How much am I willing to compromise?
- Do I have any mentors that can advise me or help me think through issues?
- Who do I know that has the job I want? Can I schedule a meeting with them?
- What are my options to get to the position I want? Have I thought about alternative routes?
- How important is work-life integration or balance? Do I know what my limitations are?
- Will my decisions affect others in my life? Am I willing to make that change?

What do I need to take it to the next level?

In this section we encourage you to explore your personal traits so that you are prepared to make the commitment to change. We talk about finding your passion and pursuing it. We discuss how your authenticity translates into credibility and highlights your uniqueness in the world. We encourage you to “go deep” and really come to terms with who you are and where you can make improvements. We mentioned the importance of finding trusted people to be your Mentors.

Here are some good questions to ask yourself:

- Do you love what you’re doing now? If not, why are you doing it?
- What is your passion and does that translate into a particular position, organization or community?
- How do others view your credibility and authenticity? This is a tough question to ask but the insight you gain is invaluable.
- How authentic are you in your interactions?
- What is your uniqueness?
- What can you tweak to be more successful? Are you willing to make that change?

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- What is your personality at work?
- What style do you use to communicate with others?
- How much of a collaborator are you?
- Do you make the right decisions when no one is looking?
- Do you have any Mentors?
- Have you started looking for Mentors prior to being out on the job market?

What's your Action Plan?

In this section we encourage you to begin thinking about how you are going to get to your destination. We discuss flexibility – knowing that there are many paths and just because the one you choose doesn't work out doesn't mean you won't still get there. We discuss building tolerance in the sense that you may have to do some preparation before you're ready to start actively seeking that new position. We encourage you to ask for help. No one can do everything on their own. Use this opportunity to network and make new friends. We also discuss the importance of getting involved at any and every level. Find a professional association in your area of expertise. Find a social or networking group or serve on a cross-department committee at work. Raise your hand when they call for volunteers.

Here are some good questions to ask yourself:

- Am I prepared to accept that I might need to change direction?
- Am I prepared to change the destination as I learn more about it?
- Am I prepared to move on when the time is right? Do I know when that time is right?
- Do I have the right experience for the job? If not, where can I get that experience?
- Am I prepared to step out of my comfort zone and step up to a new experience?
- Is it possible for me to volunteer for projects outside my normal scope of work?
- Can I ask to loan myself out to other departments or projects?
- Do I expect my supervisor to make opportunities for me? How do I take responsibility for my own personal growth?
- Am I willing to share my goals and aspirations with others? Who should know about my goals?
- Do you have someone that is your confidant?
- Am I willing to hear and accept advice and opinions from others about myself?
- Am I networking with people to gain wisdom and insight about myself or the new position or simply to promote myself?
- Have I done any sort of self-evaluation or inventory?
- Can I accept that there might be setbacks and I have to learn from those experiences?
- Do I belong to any outside organizations – for example, ICMA or PMI?
- Do I belong to social networks or organizations?
- Do I belong to any alumni associations?
- Do I volunteer to organize events for any of those organizations?
- Do I know others at my current organization who belong to the same groups as I do?

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What is the right path for me?

In this section we discuss the different paths you may take to get to your destination. You may have a graduate degree versus experience. Which is more important? You may have decided right from the beginning of your career where you are headed or you might have discovered your dream destination in mid- or late-career. We complete this discussion with ideas for how to recover from a setback.

Here are some good questions to ask yourself:

- If I am expected to get a graduate degree am I ready to make that commitment?
- What are the alternatives to a traditional college graduate degree program?
- What degree makes the most sense for me to pursue?
- I am in the early stage of my career.
 - Am I prepared to commit to one organization or should I move around to get more experience?
 - How will people perceive me if I have a lot of short term jobs?
 - Am I building a network of contacts and confidants?
 - Am I working in the right place for me or just taking a job hoping to be in the right place at the right time in the future?
 - Am I stretching myself to take on projects and responsibilities that will teach me skills for the future?
 - Am I tending to my interpersonal relationships and building a collaborative environment?
 - Am I prepared to be part of a multi-generational workforce where workstyles are not always in tune?
- I am in the mid-stage of my career.
 - Do I have the right opportunities in my current position to get the experience I need to move up?
 - Have I become stagnant in my current position and do I need to consider moving somewhere else?
 - Do I have the resources and support to return to school or train for new skills?
- I am in the late stage of my career.
 - What else do I want to accomplish before I want to retire?
 - Do I have the support, both personal and work, to make changes at this point?
 - Am I prepared to extend myself and try something new after being in this position for a while?
 - Am I prepared to be part of a multi-generational workforce where workstyles are not always in tune?

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Top 10 Key Takeaways

1. Know yourself and what you want
2. Test your assumptions
3. Hold on to your principles
4. Seek help from Mentors
5. Develop a plan
6. Follow your own compass
7. Get involved
8. Pay it forward
9. Enjoy the ride
10. Keep a positive outlook

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Resources

ICMA

- State and Local Government Management Associations (including Assistant's Associations)
 - <http://webapps.icma.org/stateassociations/>
- Alliance for Innovation
 - <http://transformgov.org/en/home>
- Women Leading Government
 - <http://icma.org/en/wg/home>
- PM Management (magazine) – some content available only to members or subscribers
 - http://icma.org/en/press/pm_magazine/current_issue

California League of Cities

- <https://www.cacities.org/>

City Manager Associations within your state

- Search “City Manager associations in . . .”

Municipal Management Association of Northern California

- <http://www.mmanc.org/>
- <http://municipalmagazine.com/>

Municipal Management Association of Southern California

- <http://www.mmasc.org/>

Project Management Institute

- <http://www.pmi.org/>
- <http://www.pmisv.org/>

Public Technology Institute

- <http://www.pti.org/>

Emerging Local Government Leaders

- <http://elgl.org/>

GovLoop

- <https://www.govloop.com/>

Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter

By Liz Wiseman

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