



Maryland Career Development Association

February 2021

In this issue:

MCDA Call for ACTION – Nominations..... 1

Member Spotlight – Karen Chopra..... 2

Three Metaphoric Strategies For Determining Career Trajectory..... 4

Happiness Factor and Life Satisfaction 6

Legislative Update..... 8

MCDA Call for ACTION – Nominations

By Karol Taylor, Past President

Have you ever been at a crossroads where you are not sure about where your next step will lead? I have and know from personal experience that the decision I make at that moment will determine the level of my success. That moment is key to the next move, but it is a decision based on faith – on trusting in the unknown.

In my opinion, MCDA is at a crossroads. Members need to decide what our next steps will be. Will we continue on as a viable organization, or will we falter? The old guard is ready to make way for the new--new ideas, new people, and new ways of doing things. MCDA needs you! We count on our members to step up and keep MCDA operating in a powerful and professional manner.

Going into the next program year MCDA will have an Immediate Past President and President in place. We need a President-Elect, and an elected Secretary and Treasurer. In order to create a leadership pipeline, we would also like to have a Secretary-Elect and Treasurer-Elect who would help the person in those slots to better understand the roles and responsibilities of those positions. Please consider your skillset and your commitment to the organization, and how your skills can fit MCDA's needs.

Additionally, next year's President will be interested in your willingness to serve as a Committee Chair. You can learn more about Committees on MCDA's bylaws at [Maryland Career Development Association - Bylaws & Minutes \(mdcareers.org\)](http://Maryland Career Development Association - Bylaws & Minutes (mdcareers.org)) on pages 7 & 8. Please send an email stating your interest to:

MCDA.PElect@MDCareers.org.

Here again are the open positions requiring membership vote:

- President-Elect
- Secretary
- Secretary-Elect
- Treasurer
- Treasurer-Elect

Please consider this letter as a call for action and search your heart. If you find that you want to pick up the gauntlet and are interested in running, email Karol Taylor, Past President, at MCDA.PPresident@MDCareers.org.

[Back to top](#)

Member Spotlight – Karen Chopra

Interview Conducted by Rachel Look

Karen Chopra, LPC, CCC, NCC is a consultant, career counselor, and therapist in private practice and has led her own private practice business for 22 years. She provides a range of consulting services to for career counselors, career coaches and independent consultants.

A trainer, presenter and workshop leader, she customizes training opportunities to help people develop necessary workplace skills, including negotiation techniques, maintaining professional boundaries, and managing up. She's also led many workshops on how to negotiate more effectively with employers and supervisors.

MCDA named Karen as their "Outstanding Career Professional" in 2013. We recently caught up with Karen Chopra for our February Member Spotlight feature.

Early in your career, your focus was on international trade. What spurred you to pivot to career counseling as a career path?

I decided to pivot when I was working for the U.S. Trade Representative's Office. I was offered a promotion and realized I didn't want to move into the position. It was the wrong ladder for me. I met with a career counselor to determine what I wanted to do. I had always loved creating training and internship programs. I realized that I could go back to school and change my career path. I decided to pursue an M.A. degree in Community Counseling from George Washington University. After graduating, I worked as a career consultant while earning my LPC license. I was certain this was the path for me as I could visualize my office and the type of work I wanted to do. I had a clear vision of having a private practice like the career counselor I met with. Especially appealing was the independence and control that would come with running my own practice.

One of your primary areas of focus is salary negotiation and you've written a book on the topic. Coaching Career Clients on Salary and Other Workplace Negotiations

<https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Coaching+Career+Clients+on+Salary+and+Other+Workplace+Negotiations&i=stripbook>

How did salary negotiation become a specialty area for you?

This ended up being a gift as I was already a trained negotiator prior to becoming a career counselor. There is endless negotiation in the workplace and not just related to salary. I relied on my experience in this area to help clients do the necessary prep work and ask good questions. A negotiation is just asking questions, and when the question is “can you do better on salary?” anyone can ask that!

What’s the most common mistake most people make when approaching the salary negotiation process?

The biggest mistake people make is a lack of preparation--specifically marching in and asking for a raise without taking the time to think it through ahead of time. Even a few minutes of preparation will improve the outcome. It’s critical to think about what the ideal outcome is, versus what you think you can get, otherwise you can easily negotiate yourself down without even realizing it.

Another area of focus of yours is helping career coaches and counselors launch their own business and consultants build and expand their business. With the world of work turned upside down as a result of the pandemic, what trends have you seen with regard to clients who want to launch their own business?

It’s run the gamut. The pandemic has ramped up the demand for career professionals in private practice. Clients have more flexibility during the day to meet with a career counselor. It isn’t the disaster we had feared it would be. A number of counselors in higher education have decided that starting a business can be a good back-up plan. I have seen a flowering of new businesses and it is a moment for entrepreneurs. As entrepreneurs the question always is, “what’s the opportunity?” The opportunity may be working virtually from home.

What would you say are the top one or two factors that holds a client back from moving forward with launching their own business, even if they think they want to do so? What strategies can help them move forward?

There are two challenges, one external and the other internal. The big external factor is access to health care. It doesn’t matter how motivated they are to start their own business. They can’t walk away from their current job if they don’t have health care. The internal factor is that, when starting their own business, people spend too much time focused on what they think people want to buy rather than on what they want to sell. My advice is to get clarity on what you love to do and who will buy that.

The pandemic has created uncertainty for many, including career coaches and counselors, with regard to their employment situation. What has grounded you in your work with clients during these uncertain and unstable times?

Staying focused on things that can get done. In the April/May 2020 timeframe, which was the manic phase of the pandemic, I created, in partnership with Janet Wall and the Career Planning Academy, the Certified Salary Negotiation Specialist (CSNS) certification
<https://careerplanningacademy.com/certifications/>

This certification course is somewhat unique in that throughout the course, participants create and build upon a case study of one of their own clients. Participants get the certification plus 20 CEUs. It was good to create this program that benefits other career professionals as a pandemic project.

Any additional insights that you’d like to share with our readers as 2021 unfolds?

The most vital thing for the 21st century is to help our clients commit to work that matters to them. Feeling competent and confident has a huge multiplier effect with a huge impact and potential to change people's lives.



For more information about Karen and the services she provides, visit her LinkedIn page <https://www.linkedin.com/in/karenchopra/> or her website <http://www.chopracareers.com/>

[Back to top](#)

Three Metaphoric Strategies For Determining Career Trajectory

By David J. Smith

Note: This article was originally published in *Forbes*, on January 4, 2021

When I meet with clients to help them on their career journeys, they often have a general idea of the direction they want to move in. But it can be imprecise and focus on broad ideas like being in business for themselves, working from home or being in a leadership position. Others, though, come to me with a specific vision in mind. I had one client recently who wanted to spend a year working in Nepal.

Regardless of the notions that clients come to me with, I start with where they are and build from there. After I get to know a client a bit, I might play devil's advocate and question whether what they are wanting is realistic or even possible given their personal circumstances. My goal is not to burst their bubble, but rather to facilitate their dreams. Together, we spend time evaluating various options, looking at their personal and financial situations and finally settling in on a strategy to bring it to fruition.

I've learned that clients have an instinctive sense of what is best for themselves. After learning what a client is good at, what moves them and where they see themselves making a difference, we often return to the original vision that clients arrived with, like traveling to Nepal. So, you might ask, what does coaching accomplish? A desired journey is not always undertaken well. We might forget to pack the right clothes for the trip or get the necessary travel documents. Going to Nepal is not a bad idea, but it could be badly executed. Here is where coaching can make a difference.

Supporting a client in the plan they set for themselves often involves three metaphoric strategies: scaffolding, creating a road map and an altitude adjustment.

Scaffolding

Most of us recognize the need for the scaffolding that is necessary in construction. Piping, wood flooring, netting and wiring are used to secure the building, but also to allow workers to get their work done efficiently and safely. If you think of yourself as a building under construction, the need to scaffold becomes apparent.

As you build yourself anew, you are vulnerable. Self-doubt may creep in. You might be uncertain about the financial tradeoffs that you will be making. This stage is fraught with vulnerability. You can benefit from well-constructed scaffolding in the way of colleagues, family, friends and peers. Confidants can provide honest advice, as well as boost your ego when it might be low. They can also offer necessary resources and support. Maybe you are attempting to break into a new city and want to spend a week there looking at career options? Do you need someplace to stay? Someone to pick you up from the airport in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal? Could use some professional introductions? This is all part of the support built into your scaffolding.

Creating A Road Map

The journey to a new career requires the right transportation and, of course, a destination in mind. This doesn't happen naturally. In this way, a coach can act as a mapmaker and travel agent. Maps change as new roads are built and new modes of travel are developed. It's important for a coach to be informed of the newest and most useful career GPS methods. A client needs to know where there are traffic bottlenecks and the best times to travel. Because I've personally experienced many of the careers that my clients aspire to, I actually can use my own maps to show them how I have "traveled."

An Altitude Adjustment

We trust that pilots are skilled at what they do. As a passenger, we are often relieved when we see the clouds clear and can see the ground and landing strip. We are often struck by the vastness of the view and the patterns we see.

This is also a way to think about one's career. Flying above the clouds prevents us from knowing what we are flying over. As such, we also don't know if landing at that time is appropriate. We just have to trust the pilot and navigation technology. For a career seeker, this can present an uncomfortable space. You are moving, but where? And am I flying over things I really need to explore?

The visibility present when approaching a landing can be fixating. We know now where we are landing and we focus on that, possibly, at the risk of dismissing other options and ideas. We just want to land and get on with it, when maybe flying a bit longer would be helpful. Are you settling because this is where you happen to be, or are you willing to keep flying a bit more to find something that is better?

Coming to a coach with an idea of where you want to go can help a coach make sure you are on the right flight and headed in the right direction. But he might also get you to think that flying a bit longer might be OK also.

A coach can play an important role in helping a client take the vision they arrive with and make it a reality, often by helping to build a good scaffolding system, designing the right map and making sure clients land at the right destination.



David J. Smith is a Rockville-based career coach working with clients looking for humanitarian, policy, government, NGO, international, social justice, and education careers. He is also adjunct faculty at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University where he offers a career seminar for graduate students. He is the author of Peace Jobs: A Student's Guide to Starting a Career Working for Peace (IAP 2016) and is a member of Forbes Coaches Council, NCDCA, and MCDA.

[Back to top](#)

Happiness Factor and Life Satisfaction

By Karol Taylor



February 2021 might be an excellent time to consider our “happiness factor.” We are now 10 months into the pandemic and many of us are establishing goals for this year using our new pandemic paradigm. Checking in with ourselves to determine our happiness and sense of wellbeing seems prudent at this time.

On December 7, Government Executive Magazine republished an article by Arthur C. Brooks from The Atlantic Magazine on happiness and wellbeing. *How and Why to Measure Your Own Happiness* <https://www.govexec.com/management/2020/12/how-and-why-measure-your-own-happiness/170453/> stated, “Within the U.S., a commonly cited data source is the [General Social Survey](#) (GSS). This has been measuring general well-being levels every one or two years going back to 1972, and since then, has always shown that the percentage of people who say they are ‘very happy’ hovers between roughly 30 and 35 percent, while the percentage of those who are ‘not too happy’ sits around 10 to 15 percent. The rest are ‘pretty happy.’”

Until this year, that is: Data collected in May 2020 show that for the first time, the unhappy people outnumber the very happy people. During the first half of this year, the ‘not too happy’ proportion climbed to 23%, while ‘very happy’ declined to 14%. It looks like 2020 has been our grouchiest year in at least the past half century.”

This GSS data was gathered in May 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, so now we have had more time for self-reflection and accommodating the change. Perhaps the numbers for the next iteration of the GSS will reflect our adjustment to our pandemic pivot. In the meantime, Brooks suggests taking the [Positive and Negative Affect Schedule](#) (PANAS) assessment on the University of Pennsylvania's Authentic Happiness site. The PANAS measures the intensity and frequency of positive and negative moods and feelings. The assessment reflects that positive and negative feelings are not incompatible, something many of us are more and more aware of these days. Reflecting on our sense of happiness in key areas of life can be difficult; especially if our life is going well overall. However, sometimes feelings of unhappiness or dissatisfaction seem to creep up on us, especially during the pandemic, and it is up to us to find out why. We do not want to fall into the doldrums, so staying mindful and taking stock of our happiness is one way to do that. If you are struggling to get to grips with feelings of unhappiness, Career Horizons is available to chat and the tools mentioned in this article are also useful.

Another helpful assessment is the [Satisfaction with Life Scale](#), a measure of how satisfied you are with your life right now. While happiness can be defined as the state of bliss in the heart or the mind, satisfaction can be defined as the state of contentment. A person who does a good job or performs well feels satisfied that he completed the task the best way possible. Satisfaction in life can clearly be a source for happiness.

How happy are you right now? Why not take these assessments as a way of checking in with yourself? Since your thoughts and ideas are the source of your responses, these questionnaires will help you to identify, clarify, and reframe your thinking. To access the assessments, you must complete a profile, but the assessments are free and there is no soliciting afterwards.

Resources:

<https://www.govexec.com/management/2020/12/how-and-why-measure-your-own-happiness/170453/>

<https://positivepsychology.com/life-satisfaction-scales/>

<https://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-happiness-and-satisfaction/#:~:text=This%20highlights%20that%20satisfaction%20is%20a%20very%20important,yo u%20tend%20to%20enjoy%20the%20experience%20with%20others>



Karol Taylor has been a member of MACD/MCA and MCDA for more than 17 years, 13 as an MCDA Board member and executive leader, and 8 on the MACD/MCA Board. Karol is an award-winning expert in the federal job search, but she also has expertise in leadership and organizational development. The emergence of COVID-19 motivated Karol to consider how people might respond in the new telework-place.

[Back to top](#)

Legislative Update

The Continuing COVID Pandemic Creates Culture Change in the State & National Legislative Process in 2021

By Natalie Kaufman

Through Facebook & Linked-In, MCDA celebrated and shared best wishes with our 188 Maryland state legislators (47 Senators & 141 Delegates) as they began the 442nd session of the Maryland General Assembly on Wednesday, January 13, 2021. Please click and review the new **Legislative Update** section on the MCDA website, <https://www.mdcareers.org/page-1707897>, to keep up-to-date with the General Assembly and US Congressional information between newsletters.

Please also note the PDFs that are available and provide state and/or national perspectives from our 3 affiliate groups, the National Career Development Association (NCDA), the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the Maryland Counseling Association (MCA).

According to the January issues of *The Baltimore Business Journal*, *The Baltimore Sun* and the League of Women Voters of Maryland, this year's state and national legislative sessions will continue to be unprecedented, anxiety-provoking, and culture changing due, in a large part, to the continuing COVID-19 Pandemic. Although all of Maryland's General Assembly sessions will be fully streamed online for the public through <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Meetings/Day/>, lobbyists, activists and the public will have to turn to new tactics to get their messages to law makers; including, at times, the return to the old fashioned phone call.

For planned state legislative **Dates of Interest**, connect to <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs-current/current-session-dates.pdf>.

For Issue Papers of our 2021 Session, connect to <http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/RecurRpt/Issue-Papers-2021-Legislative-Session.pdf>.



Natalie Kauffman, M.S., NCDA Certified Career Counselor, CSP-I, NCCC, GCDF-I, MCDA Past President (2002-2003) and MCDA Legislative Chair

For more than 35 years, Natalie Kauffman, M.S., NCDA Certified Career Counselor™, NCC, NCCC, FCD-I, GCDF-I, has been providing comprehensive individual & group career development solutions

that continually infuse the 8 domains of wellness. Across the U.S. & circling the globe, her experience has traversed business, government, education & NPO settings. Natalie has been recognized by the National Career Development Association for her exceptional performance providing career development services and received the association's Outstanding Career Practitioner Award.

[Back to top](#)

Newsletter Article Submissions

MCDA welcomes article submissions on topics of interest to the career practitioner community. We are seeking articles that address emerging trends, best practices (especially as we navigate these uncertain times), and training opportunities. For best consideration, please submit articles (maximum length 700 words, although shorter is preferred) by the 15th of the month prior to the desired month of publication. The newsletter is published monthly. The article deadline for the March issue is February 26, 2021. For article submissions or questions, please email: Rachel Loock, Editor, MCDA.Newsletter@MDCareers.org

[Back to top](#)

