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How's your headspace?

So how's your headspace these days? As a senior member of your firm it all looks fine on the outside. There's a good looking car in a reserved spot downstairs and some material comforts at home. But how are you travelling personally? Take a look through the following list and see how many apply.

Regrets, I have a few

When I look back on my career and family life, it's not all turned out as expected. I'd like to have been there more for my family along the way, that's for sure. I've made some career choices that weren't great as well. It sure would have helped to have had higher income along the way. So, I'm not in a great place in my career or as well advanced financially as others. Certainly, I'm not in a position to retire any time soon. I'll be working here for the long haul and some personal relationships may continue to drift.

I want my mojo back

I've taken some hits of late and lost some of the spring in my step as a result. I'm not as fit as I was and now I have to work around some long term injuries with any exercise program I undertake. In fact I haven't done much exercise of late as I just can't seem to shake the coughs and colds I keep getting. Sure I'm a few years older these days but I know I can operate at a higher level again. I just want to get back there and start feeling more like the old me.

There are professional variations I'd like to explore

I've been doing essentially the same thing for years and I'm pretty good at it. I've got a solid reputation and I'm very reliable. Clients and team members know I'll come through with the goods. But I'm feeling in a rut. I'm looking for something else or would like to add some new strings to the bow. Maybe I should do the AICD course and get some directorships. I don't necessarily want to stop what I'm currently doing altogether – I can't afford this in any respect. But I'm ready for something new to happen professionally!

Friend or phony?

So, you want my assistance or you'd like me to invest in your service. Well, I've been around for a while. I don't mean to be cynical but I've seen people like you before. Some associations have been good. Some I'd rather not think about – it's painful. I'm clearer about what I do and don't like these days so I'll make a decision about you early. I'm unlikely to change my mind if you make a poor first impression. I know that I need to



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collaborate with others to really get ahead. However I have super-sensitive radar when it comes to the messages you send out. So *deliver the goods and be sincere*.

It's time for more personal time

I've given it everything and I'll keep coming back for more. But you know what? I no longer want to do this all the time. A day off per week to do some exercise and to look after some personal stuff will give me a whole new lease of life. An extra 4 weeks of holiday (which I'll happily take as unpaid leave) will help me take a trip that's well overdue. This time out will make all the difference to me mentally. You'll get just as much out of me with these reduced hours as you would by chaining me to the desk. So pay attention – make some changes, move some responsibilities around, don't simply expect me to do the same workload in four days as I currently do in five. Handle me right and I'll respond brilliantly. Ignore my needs and I might just toss it all in one day.

Why aren't I there yet?

I've worked hard and I've worked long. I've done lots of things to improve the business and thrown lots of money at this along the way. I've invested in some "sure things" and some "long shots" too. Some of them have worked and others were a waste of time. People have come and gone but I'm still here. I thought I would have made it by now. What have I missed? What do I still need to do?

Boys' Own Adventure

I've been responsible for what seems like a long time. Everyone has been taken care of and even my kids seem to be on their way. Some friends have asked me to go on a bike riding trip/to do Kokoda/on a surfing safari and I've decided "Why not?" It will mean that I'll have to start training and also eating better. I'm going to go on the wagon for two months too. But that won't do me any harm. There's lots of things to get organised. I'll need to read up about all this and buy some new gear. I'm nervous and excited in equal measure. There's a smile on my face and a spring in my step. This is going to be fun!

I could retire tomorrow (but I'm not planning to go any time soon).

I've worked hard and I've done quite well financially. I'm not in a hurry to retire though – that doesn't have any great appeal right at the moment. In actual fact, I'd still like to contribute to the Firm. I think I'm needed here. I feel a sense of responsibility towards the younger partners who bought into the Firm not so long ago. Besides, I'm really quite engaged in what's happening, where the Firm is and where it should be heading. Now, if only I could do more of the rainmaking role (where I think would add a lot of value) and less of the day to day stuff (which is proving hard to shake off).



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How would I cope with retirement?

Sure, the idea of no longer working these hours and under this pressure is attractive. So too, the thought of an extended holiday sounds pretty good. The thought of golf/fishing/riding my bike more often is also quite appealing. However, I really haven't cultivated any interests which will keep me engaged when I stop work. I guess I always thought retirement was the end goal but now I'm not so sure.

How did you go? Find some situations that resonated? If you did, then that's quite OK because there are plenty of experienced practitioners in similar circumstances. Your long term well being depends upon adjusting your professional working patterns to acknowledge these personal needs and feelings.

To get the most out of life, you need good headspace. This means taking responsibility for changing less-than-optimal situations into something which suits you better. Frankly, those around you are likely to be caught up in the status quo. They have their own priorities and it's simplest for them if you just keep working away like you always have.

Of course, you'll be concerned about the impact of making changes will have on those around you. It's likely this will cause you discomfort as you are more used to being of service to others than putting yourself first.

Good communication is important throughout this process. Tell others what you seek to achieve. Be prepared to discuss the ramifications and how the changes can best be handled. It's also helpful to share your thoughts with someone who is independent of your Firm and who has worked with others in similar situations.

Scott Charlton is the author of *Your Professional Headspace*, a book aimed at helping professionals in practice achieve career success and personal fulfilment.