

Book Review –

LESSONS FROM A HEADHUNTER... WITH HEART

BY WILLIAM A. CHAMBERLAIN

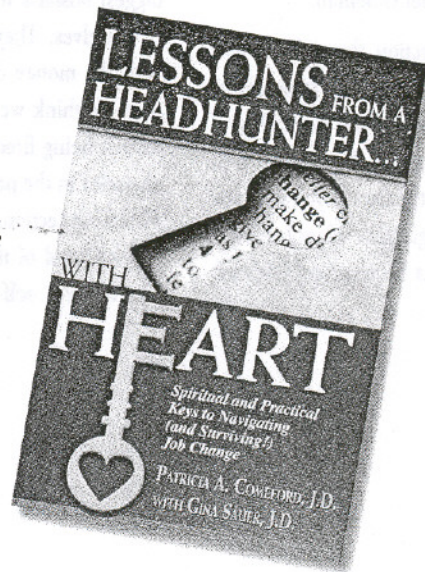
Lessons From a Headhunter... with Heart by Patricia Comeford with Gina Sauer, The Esquire Group, 2006.

I admit it. I am skeptical of anything that smacks of late-nineties feel-good new age spirituality – such as daily affirmations. Too often these are proposed as simplistic answers to complex problems. They often trivialize the problems as well as the solutions. Pat Comeford, ably assisted by NALP's own former President, Gina Sauer, however, has created a book with heart and spirituality that is honest, helpful, and true.

Part of the success of the book comes from its purpose and format. The goal of the authors is not to create yet another massive tome on "all you need to know about job searching and job transition." Instead, they have created a handy little guide to help job seekers handle the stress, the fear, the disappointment, and, finally, the rewards of a job transition. According to the introduction, this is "one of those little books you can take with you wherever you go or keep on your nightstand." The chapters are very short (two to four pages each) and can be read when one feels lost or overwhelmed by the job search. Though written by lawyers, it is intended for anyone in job transition and focuses on the emotional and spiritual aspects of the search. Each chapter concludes with a "Career Comfort," such as "I deserve the jobs that I am applying for; I am qualified and ready to make my own unique contribution."

The book is not so much about strategies and

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resources, though it provides some of those; it is more about the inner life of the job seeker in search of a job where one's interests, skills, and passions are in line with the "soul of the job," a particularly useful concept for that gut-level feeling we experience when a job is absolutely "right" for us. I remember at my first NALP conference the experience of being surrounded by people who shared my interests, values, and energy level – how refreshing and, dare I say it, empowering!

The authors group their lessons in four sections based on the four phases of the job search: "(1) *Contemplating a career change*, (2) *Overcoming* the obstacles and barriers you place in front of yourself, (3) Laying the groundwork and *planning* to start the more formal part of your job search, and then (4) *Actually doing* the things you need to do to conduct an effective search." Recognizing the interconnectedness of the lessons and that their readers may want to focus on certain themes, the authors include arrows in the text signaling that the topic is discussed further in a later or earlier lesson. At the end of each lesson, the authors include a set of useful questions that the reader should consider before moving on to the next lesson. The authors reference the work of a

Continued on page 10

number of psychologists, career consultants, and leadership coaches, including Louise Hay, Julia Cameron, and Daniel Goleman.

In the *Contemplating* section, the authors focus inward. We must listen to our own "inner career coach." We should be open to the possibility of "job-sculpting" – to propose changes to your current job to make it fit the person you now are. I liked the authors' thought that when leaving a job, one can think of it as bequeathing one's job

to the next person the job is right for. In the *Overcoming* section, the authors posit that the biggest obstacle to finding a more satisfying job is ourselves. They deal convincingly, if briefly, with the money obstacle – we can live on less than we think we can – and other truths. They discuss being fired and overcoming the different obstacles in the paths of women and men. In the *Planning* section, the authors discuss determining the "soul of the job" one is seeking. Again, this requires self-assessment as to values and

priorities. To a far greater extent than we usually allow, work should be fun. Comeford also suggests finding someone to "lean on" who will listen to you vent and will always be there for you in your search. The *Doing* part of the book presents little that is new to career counselors, but this cannot be assumed for the general reader, and we shift away from self-assessment to self-marketing. The authors discuss résumés, cover letters, networking, and informational interviewing, among other topics.

One topic that the authors deal with particularly well is handling the fear, negativity, and rejection that often accompany job transitions. They offer support to the job seeker by providing tools to get beyond the fear of leaving a job that one knows and has perhaps grown comfortable in. They point out the futility and wastefulness of engaging in negative behavior (spending time complaining about a current job) and how to turn around a negative thought and make it positive. When the inevitable rejections come, the authors are there to put everything in perspective. Their questions refocus the job seeker on self-assessment and wisely point out that "silence" can be as useful as action.

While *Lessons* is not a definitive work on job searching, nor does it try to be, it can be used as a helpful friend – as a source of support and to keep the job seeker going along on his or her intended path. It may best be used as one of an arsenal of books on the job search process. Think of it as a soft pillow that cushions your down times in the job search and, perhaps more, is a source of strength and reflection. In our fast-paced world, one can never hear too often that in order to "do," one must first "be." ■

Editor's Note: *Lessons from a Headhunter...with Heart* is now available from the NALP Bookstore.