Career Path Divergence - Navigating The Ten−Year Fork In The Road

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After working with engineers and IT professionals for over ten years, I have noticed a consistent

pattern in career paths of these types of professionals. The career paths are generally similar in that the first three years are spent breaking into their career fields, learning skills, gaining additional training, and establishing their professional reputations. Between three and seven years, they begin taking on supervisory roles such as team lead, group leader, or functional supervisor. >From seven years to around ten years (often as late as twelve years) into one specific career path, engineering/IT professionals have established their skills, and are honing their leadership skills.

Somewhere around the ten−year mark, however, they face a choice that seems to be consistent across industries. These professionals often face a choice between the skills−based side of their professions or taking the management track. This time of choice can be a very difficult period for professionals since the decision they make will directly impact the rest of their careers.

Each track offers different benefits and opportunities. The professional who chooses to take the skills−based career path would expect to advance his/her skills to the specialist/expert level. Engineers or IT professionals who take this path might eventually gain patents in their work, earn a reputation as a national expert in a particular skill or hone in on a special direction of their skills that requires advanced education. Many times, professionals who choose this track become consultants who provide special knowledge in specific skill areas.

Benefits of selecting the skills−based career path are more inwardly focused than the management track. Rewards for choosing this path include opportunities to work on the cutting edge of technology and emerging trends; opportunities to delve deeply into development of new technology; and study/research opportunities that are available only to high experts in a specific niche. Many return to academia to gain a PhD in their particular area of interest. Monetary rewards vary but are greatest in the consulting arena where specialist command very high rates for their expertise.

A good example of an engineer who chose the skills−based track is a former client of mine who designed elevators. He was an expert in elevator design, held several patents and was known well throughout the small industry of elevator companies. One of his early accomplishments included design work on the visitor center elevators of the Hoover Dam. When he came to me for services, he was transitioning from design leader to consultant in order to maximize his earning potential. He was also ready to start thinking of partial retirement and wanted to work less while still pulling in equal income.

This particular client had faced the decision around the twelve−year mark in his career to continue on the skills−based track or go toward management with one of the large elevator manufacturers. His true love was design and not managing people, so he selected the skills−based track.

The management−based career track offers different rewards and a more traditional career path. Professionals who select the management track find they move away from the day−to−day use of development skills and spend more of their time managing tasks, teams, and business operations. They lose touch with the particular skills of their industry and concentrate on bigger picture tasks. Professionals who choose this career direction often decide to obtain an MBA around the ten−year mark in order to boost their travel up the management ladder, a ladder that ends at the top of the corporate structure as CEO, CIO, or President.

The rewards of the management track are more capitalistic in that the salaries are progressively larger, the benefit packages riper, and the obtuse status positions are more obvious on the management track. Individuals who select this track tend to be less interested in "how things work" than in "winning". The management track is the most traditional and well−known, thus often is what is selected by professionals regardless of whether they have the abilities or desire to be managers.

Professionals facing this fork in the career path often experience feelings of confusion and anxiety without really knowing why. Career coaching can be very valuable at this point to professionals who are facing a change in direction and are not sure which path to select. Professionals who work with a career coach will come away with a clear view of their personal career style, their goals, and can be confident in any decision made concerning the direction of their career.

Life is full of decisions. Many have to be made on the fly, by the seat of the pants, and with fingers crossed. Career choices generally carry the luxury of advance timing and the opportunity to consider all options completely. Are you facing a fork in your career road? Take your time and consider all your options. Make your decision based on what is best for your career, your personality, and your life.

Published in 25 career books, Alesia has been cited by Jist Publications as one of the "best resume writers in North America" and quoted as a Career Expert in the Wall Street Journal. Serving as the Resume Expert for over 50+ organizations, she has numerous media appearances to her credit and is a frequent keynote speaker.

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Moving Average Convergence Divergence (MACD) Charts

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The Moving Average Convergence Divergence charts, or MACD charts for short, are a technical indicator that is derived from the more simple moving average.

The MACD charts are oscillating indicators, meaning that they move above and below a centerline or zero point. As with other oscillating and momentum indicators, a very high value indicates that the stock is overbought and will likely drop soon. Conversely, a consistently low value indicates that the stock is oversold and is likely to climb.

THE 12−DAY AND 26−DAY EMAS

The MACD charts are based on 3 exponential moving averages, or EMA. These averages can be of any period, though the most common combination, and the one we will focus on, are the 12−26−9 MACD charts.

There are 2 parts to the MACD. We will focus first on the first part, which is based on the stock's 12−Day and 26−Day EMA. The 12−Day EMA is the faster EMA while the 26−Day is slower.

The logic behind using a faster and slower EMA is that this can be used to gauge momentum. When the faster (in this case 12−Day) EMA is above the slower 26−Day EMA, the stock is in an uptrend, and vice versa. If the 12−Day EMA is increasing much faster than the 26−Day EMA, the uptrend is becoming stronger and more pronounced. Conversely, when the 12−Day EMA starts slowing down, and the 26−Day begins to near it, the stock movement's momentum is beginning to fade, indicating the end of the uptrend.

THE MACD LINE

The MACD charts use these 2 EMA by taking the difference between them and plotting a new line. Very often, this new line is depicted as a thick black line in the middle chart.

When the 12−Day and 26−Day EMA are at the same value, the MACD line is at zero. When the 12−Day EMA is higher than the 26−Day EMA, the MACD line will be in positive territory. The further the 12−Day EMA is from the 26−Day EMA, the further the MACD line is from its centerline or zero value.

THE 9−DAY EMA

This line on its own doesn't tell much more than a moving average. It becomes more useful when we take into account its 9−Day EMA. This is the third value when we talk of 12−26−9 MACD charts. Note that the 9−Day EMA is an EMA of the MACD line, not of the stock price. This EMA (the thin blue line alongside the MACD line) acts like a normal EMA and smoothes the MACD line.

The 9−Day EMA acts as a signal line or trigger line for the MACD. When the MACD line crosses above the 9−Day EMA from below, it indicates that the downtrend is over and a new uptrend is forming. Time to consider bullish strategies. Conversely, when the MACD line drops below its 9−Day EMA, a new downtrend is forming and its time to implement bearish strategies.

THE MACD HISTOGRAM

So far, we have covered the most simple form of interpreting the MACD charts. We now look at the MACD histogram. Just as the MACD line is the difference between the 12−Day and 26−Day EMA, the MACD histogram is basically the difference between the MACD line and its 9−Day EMA.

So when the MACD line crosses above its 9−Day EMA, the MACD histogram will cross above zero. In order words, a bullish signal is obtained when the MACD histogram crosses above zero, and a bearish signal is obtained when it crosses below zero.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE DIVERGENCE

The MACD histogram forms valleys and peaks. Sometimes, multiple peaks are formed, with each subsequent peak becoming lower and lower. These progressively lower peaks constitue what is known as a negative divergence. A negative divergence on the MACD histogram is an indication that the current uptrend might reverse in the near future. This could happen even though the actual stock price seems to be making higher peaks in the chart. Basically, the MACD histogram negative divergence is a warning that the stock might turn down soon.

Similarly, the positive divergence on the MACD histogram predicts the subsequent uptrend. However, sometimes these divergences can create false alarms. If we follow these signals, we could have bought into a downtrend.

As such, I would like to remind you that individual indicators such as the Moving Average Convergence Divergence (MACD) charts should not be used on their own, but rather with one or two additional indicators of different types, in order to confirm any signals and prevent false alarms.

If you would like to know more about the MACD with graphical examples, do visit:

http://www.option−trading−guide.com/macd.html

Steven is the webmaster of http://www.option−trading−guide.com If you would like to learn more about Option Trading or Technical Analysis, do visit for various strategies and resources to help your stock market investments.


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