“I’ll probably wake up at two in the morning and realize I know exactly what to do,” Tim remarked. His Career Coach was surprised. A fan of getting a good night’s sleep, she responded, “How about I just tell you what to do?” Tim had lost enough shut-eye already, worrying about his transition out of a negative big-company situation. He had so many possible paths to take, yet making the first step seemed impossible.

Transitions are terrifying right now. What if I take the wrong position? What if I get fired before I find something better? What if this dirt hole I’m working in is not really so bad? What if I make a mistake? What if you do? What if you don’t? How will you know, if you don’t at least explore your options?

The Tim-Cycle is easy to apply to many situations. It goes like this: You call someone, you get some information, you repeat. Specifically, set a goal to reach out to one person this week who does exactly what you do, but for a different company. Ask for a half hour and buy the coffee if you have to.

Ask two relevant questions and let the person you’re meeting with take it from there. Your first question can be something like, “What’s it like to work here?” Or, “How does your current role compare to other positions you’ve held/other companies you have worked for?” Your second question, since you share similar positions, is a “best practices” question: “How are you dealing with that new regulation?”

Let your new friend know you are considering making a change and ask if they know of anyone you should be talking to. Take that name and number, reach out to the next person, ask your questions, repeat.

After two cycles, you will become comfortable getting the conversation started. After three cycles, you will know where you want to work next. After six cycles, you will probably have a new job with a company where your interests, needs and values align with those of the organization. Is this a good time to transition? The Tim-Cycle is an excellent way to find out.

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