

# So, what makes your career 'sizzle'?

**Sizzle (Macquarie Dictionary):** 'to be very hot'

**Career (Macquarie Dictionary):** 'general course of action, progress through life as in a profession...'

I recently took part in my first group coaching session (also known as the 'Career Sizzle Club' pilot program). As one of a dozen librarians who teleconferenced across Australia at 5pm EST on Monday 8 November, I spent an hour discussing why I enjoy being a librarian, and listening to other librarians expressing a range of different points of view.

The group leader is a trained coach and former library professional, Geraldine Barkworth, who runs BOLD WOMEN BIG IDEAS from idyllic Byron Bay in northern NSW. She works by phone with professional women, particularly library and information professionals who want more career sizzle. Geraldine is a member of ALIA and the International Coach Federation and writes occasional articles for *inCite*. (She is also extremely articulate, professional and a pleasure to work with.) Group participants were from Sydney, Rockhampton, Townsville, regional Western Australia, Whyalla and Adelaide. We were also from a healthy mix of libraries: academic, TAFE, public, health and special.

The Sizzle Club flyer said: 'Teleconferences are a great way to learn, share ideas and connect with others all from the comfort of your own armchair. You can wear whatever you like, have a nice cup of tea and feel confident about spending an hour on the phone with other librarians around Australia also passionate about career sizzle.' As it turned out, this was a perfectly accurate description of what the session was like.

The program describes the Sizzle Club as an opportunity for library professionals to: 'be part of a low cost, dynamic forum, to kick-start sizzle strategies, create a supportive network, build self management skills to boost confidence, competence and professionalism'. Learning about yourself and your career is as close as your telephone.

How did we define 'career sizzle'? We answered ten questions about our attitudes to 'sizzle' before the teleconference. Questions included:

- Imagine one year from now without career sizzle — what will your life look like?

- Rate your current level of career sizzle and where you would like it to be in twelve months on a scale of 1 to 10 (low-high).

There were several definitions of sizzle in our group: 'Motivation, excitement, creativity'; 'Challenges, a future, energy, passion, spark'; 'being proactive'; 'being challenged'; 'being able to share your enthusiasm for your career'. When it came to rating our 'sizzle level', several of us found (rather to our surprise, I think) that it was actually quite high. And this is the first benefit that I got from this coaching session: I had an all-too-rare opportunity to stop (in the middle of a typically busy, hectic and demanding day) and ask myself questions that I normally don't have time to consider. Just how happy am I with my job and my career? What will I do to make it even better?

Geraldine then took us through some of the steps towards (re)creating our own career sizzle (or motivation, passion, excitement about your work: whatever term you want to use). She offered us two 'keys' to think about. 'One person's sizzle is another person's fizzle', so it is important to identify what you love doing. This is something I particularly identified with: going from being a bored and dissatisfied cataloguer — I am not good with rules and regulations, and AACR2 drove me crazy — to being a productive, delighted, enthusiastic reference librarian. But some of my colleagues in cataloguing really enjoy the precision, care and concentration that are needed in their work, and do not want to do the presentations and training sessions that I love. One librarian's meat is another librarian's poison!

The second 'key' is also a deceptively simple one: once you know what you really love doing, do more of it. And because this is obviously much easier said than done, Geraldine asked us to do some post-teleconference thinking: list what you love, start creating your own Career Sizzle Plan (the topic for Session 2) and take one step, however small, in the right direction between this teleconference and the next one.

For my colleagues who are reading this and thinking, 'Well, this isn't

exactly brain surgery, is it? These are very simple and obvious ideas', I agree... But if the keys to 'career sizzle' are so simple, why isn't everyone doing it already?

The great thing about the group coaching session was that it gave all of us a chance to think about these questions, to talk with one another about our careers, our motivation and our ideas. The one hour that I managed to put aside to do this was the most useful, challenging and exciting hour! I was delighted to be part of the 'Career Sizzle' pilot program. And as staff development co-ordinator at the University of Adelaide Library, I would love to find a way of introducing this kind of sizzle, enthusiasm and excitement to the wonderful people I work with!

I have now joined the 2005 Career Sizzle Club (my teleconferencing skills are improving with each meeting!). We discuss a range of issues (see the program below), do valuable pre- and post-workshop activities and enjoy one another's company. Each teleconference is designed to stand alone or be enjoyed in succession. It is proving to be an excellent opportunity for us to 'meet', talk and benefit from Geraldine's coaching skills to create our personal sense of career sizzle.

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## 2005 Career Sizzle Club program for library professionals

**April: Decision making**

**May: Self management**  
— time and priorities

**June: Goal setting and planning**

**July: Image and stereotype**

**August: Professionalism**

**September: Managing others**

**October: Marketing and promotion**

**November: Making a difference**