

Career Makeover: An inside job

The secret to his job move?

Stay put

■ Lake Orion man found his calling and remade his career without quitting DaimlerChrysler.

BY BRIAN J. O'CONNOR
The Detroit News

You don't have to tell Kevin McCormick that the more things change, the more they stay the same — he's living proof.

While some people in search of a career makeover cut all ties to their old jobs, careers and co-workers, McCormick found he could go furthest in his career change by staying in place at DaimlerChrysler AG in Auburn Hills.

"Most people say they want to be a singer, and they leave their job as an accountant to go be a singer," says McCormick, 39, of Lake Orion. "I felt fortunate that I was able to do it within the same organization. My contention was that we're big

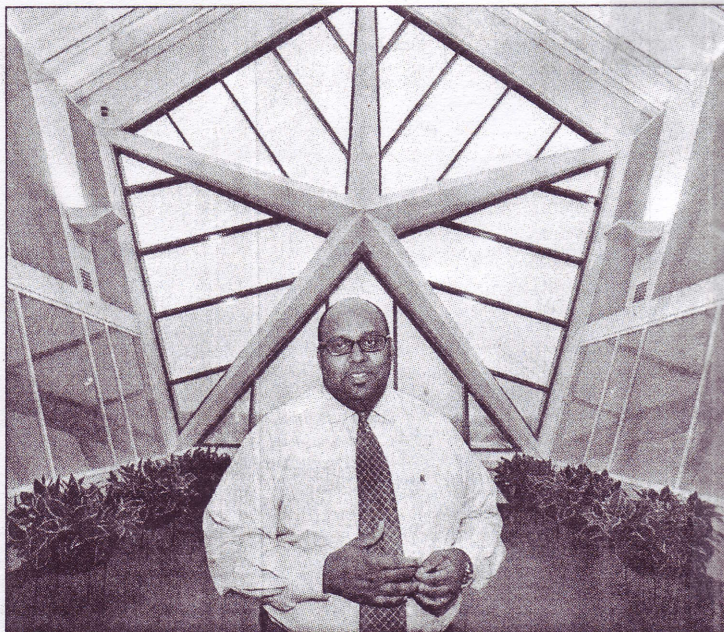
enough that I should be able to do this if I can make things work in my favor."

After years of working in vehicle logistics, figuring the most efficient routes to move finished cars and trucks from assembly plants to dealer lots, he decided that his true calling was in communications. With some research, planning and patience, he was able to move into a job in the DaimlerChrysler communications department.

In some ways, it was a small move: the same employer, the same pay level, even the same company headquarters location. But in other ways, he says, the change was huge.

His decision came in late 2002, after six years in logistics. McCormick had moved here to join Chrysler after working with Texaco in Denver, where he had some experience with transportation.

McCormick said he found logistics and the auto industry interest-



John T. Greilick

After years of working in vehicle logistics with DaimlerChrysler AG, Kevin McCormick decided his true calling was in communications.

ing after reading that 25 percent of the cost of a vehicle was wrapped up in supply-chain costs. Once he was working at Chrysler, he headed a project that applied computerized models to creating new distribution routes for finished vehicles, from design to testing to implementation.

"It was the intellectual challenge of how do we make this go from a piece of blank paper to the answer that shows we can save millions of dollars if we ship vehicles along these new routes," he recalls.

Once the project was completed and in place, though, he needed a new challenge.

"I asked myself, 'If I could do anything where money was not an object, what kind of stuff would I like to do?'"

To answer that question, he worked through the manual for job

hunters and career changers, "What Color Is Your Parachute?" and reviewed his life.

He remembered he told his father at age 15 he wanted to be a sportscaster, but had been steered into math and science. Even in college, he had initially been drawn to marketing, but had veered into business and logistics. The things that most resonated for him, he says, were communication activities: writing, producing and public speaking.

"Of course, I knew that we had a corporate communications department at DaimlerChrysler, so the next question was, can I get into that group?"

His first efforts involved learning more about public relations and communications. To get some experience, McCormick did publicity projects for his church, fraternity and even friends who ran their own small businesses.

Career tip sheet

Kevin McCormick's story is a wonderful example of "getting into action" to turn a negative work situation around,

says career coach Prudence Cole of Grosse Pointe, who runs the Web site www.beingatwork.com and is the author of



"Finding Power, Passion and Joy Being at Work." When a job or career is not working, she says, the choice is to stay with it or to find something better, to stay stuck or move forward.

Set a goal — What is it you want?

What is going to bring you the happiness you desire and joy in your work? Define your dream job and then look at what your work experiences, education and knowledge support in this new career direction. Don't throw away the past but use it to build on.

Make a plan — A goal without a plan is just a dream or wish: What steps do you need to take to get to your goal? Start from where you are today and list all the actions you need to take to realize your dream. Use your networking to connect with individuals who can support your goal.

Work the plan — Most goals are not reached overnight: They take time and effort. Keep at it. Celebrate your successes and learn from the missteps, just keep your eye on the goal. Most importantly, don't stop yourself with doubts or second-guessing.

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"I'm a big believer that, if you're interested in something, you should seek out the information you need to learn about it," he explains. "You try to do it in your spare time in order to learn how it's done in a real work environment and what kinds of obstacles you run up against."

"Then it was just a matter of convincing the people in the corporate communications department that I was someone worth taking a chance on."

That involved some informal networking, meeting and talking to people in communications and letting them know he was interested in working there. His volunteer PR work helped open doors to those conversations, and he was able to line up support from his supervisor, who mentioned his desire to executives to be in the communications group.

His goal, he said, was to land a face-to-face interview the next time a job opened up in the department. That's was the only way, he felt, that he could overcome his lack of experience and training in communications.

"I even made up a mantra for myself: Passion trumps pedigree," he said.

Had that not worked, McCormick says he would have started looking elsewhere. "In my mind I was fully prepared to leave the company to do what I wanted to do."

In January 2003, communications positions opened up, and it wasn't until the end of the summer that McCormick got the job, nine

months after he had started his career introspection.

Despite a steep learning curve and a much faster pace than the deliberative approach he'd taken in logistics, McCormick says he's done well in the job, and is the manager for global sales and service communications.

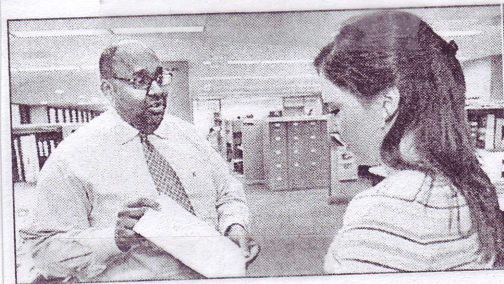
"I said I wanted a job that, when I wake up in the morning, I can't wait to get to work and do what I do," he says with a laugh. "I know it sounds corny but that funny thing is that I've hit that goal with this job."

McCormick says he's also found his story inspiring some others to rethink their options, too.

"I've had other people who heard about it in the company ask, 'How did you do that?' I hope it's inspiring to people that they can see if they can make a similar kind of switch."

"I'd love to be a role model for people to do similar things with their careers."

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Kevin McCormick speaks with Christina Blache, a communications analyst. In college, writing and public speaking interested him.

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