

Do You Have a Velveteen Career?

By Dean DeGroot

In *The Velveteen Rabbit*, a young toy rabbit feels different and less valued—less real—than the other toys in the boy’s nursery. But when the boy starts playing with him exclusively, the rabbit suddenly feels loved and appreciated. Later, however, as the boy recovers from scarlet fever, the rabbit is discarded for a newer, cleaner toy.

Luckily, a magic fairy rescues the rabbit from the trash pile and takes him to the meadow where the real rabbits live. There, she transforms him into a live rabbit, and suddenly he’s able to run, jump, and play just like the other rabbits. Finally he is *real*.

Career Lessons from *The Velveteen Rabbit*

In the current job market, it’s easy to feel like the rabbit. Maybe your company is going through a “reorganization.” Just when you’re feeling settled and loved and respected, out to the trash pile you go, replaced by a younger, fresher, less worn-out newcomer.

Like the rabbit, your task now is to become more “real”—to discover work you’re passionate about and an environment that truly suits you.

Here are three suggestions to help you in your quest:

- **Learn what’s “real” for you.** What will give you “hind legs”? A brand new career? A job that affirms your key values? Work that allows you more control or influence? Greater work/life balance?
- **Ask for help when you need it.** Tap your network. In his search for an identity, the rabbit learned from others along the way: the Skin Horse and other toys in the nursery, the boy, and the magic fairy.
- **Identify your true “clan.”** What field or work environment makes most sense for you? The rabbit never forgot his experience with the boy. But when he joined the rabbits, he knew he had found his true home.

Unlike in the story of the velveteen rabbit, there won’t be a magic fairy to rescue you, so you’ll have to engineer your own transformation. But you do have it within your power to learn what you’re made of. And if you follow your passion and connect with others who share that passion, you, too, can become more real.

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