

BIKING YOUR WAY TO THE OPTIMAL EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

By Carol Bergeron



Over the weekend I took my bike out for a spin for the first time this year. That would be my bicycle not my Harley just in case you were wondering. The sun was shining and it was cool enough so that my ride would be absent of mosquito ingestion and sunglass splatterings – a big plus.

Personally I bike because it's fun; you meet and spend time with great people; keeps you fit and exercises your senses that are virtually dormant when in a car: nature's fragrances, unfiltered vivid colors and outdoor sounds. All good stuff. My goal? Twofold: enjoy the afternoon with friends and get in 20 miles.

I invited a few friends to join me for a season's opener by riding to Kimball Farm in Carlisle where ice cream lovers unite (order the kiddie cup, trust me, it's plenty). We considered several routes and settled on a gentler, kinder one – short and flat – part bike path and part country road. I was especially fond of this choice since it had been a good six months since my last spin.

We each prepped for the trip. I dusted off my bike, filled the tires and saddled up with essentials. For this short jaunt I collected my water bottle (check), gel comfort seat (check), tire pump (check), seat pack that contained bike lock (check), change purse (check) and tire changing tools (check). I don't actually know how to change a bicycle tire, but lucky for me a friend did. I adjusted the seat height and did some stretching to prevent very unpleasant knee and neck pain later in the day.

Next? Action. Initially it was slow going until we all got reacquainted with shifting gears, etc. After that, the big hill to get in and out of my complex left no room for easing into the ride. For the next couple of hours we peddled and peddled. The trick was to maintain a steady pace despite changing conditions (hills, sharp turns, dry and wet pavement and the dreaded potholes) achieved in part by frequent gear shifting, encouraging each other and sheer determination.

When bicycling, it's important to expect the unexpected, think fast and navigate around or through it so you don't get bumped off. Constantly scanning the horizon is a must. True, there is a little luck involved like noticing a potential danger early enough to react. On the bike path we anticipated the actions of other bikers, roller bladders, runners and walkers; many accompanied by dogs or strollers; all traveling at different speeds. On the road we followed the rules of the road so that drivers could anticipate our actions. Still the biggest threat was the distracted driver who didn't see us coming. We successfully navigated these obstacles by adjusting what we were doing. We also took the time to pre-warn each other of potential hazards. The classics? Hand gestures to indicate "slowing down" and pointing to the ground to avoid more pesky potholes (they are much grander when you are on a bike).

Routing List

After ice cold drinks to quench our thirsts and bidding each other “farewell” I took a good soak to reduce the risk of knee pain (mission accomplished!). As I reflected on the day, it occurred to me how much the bike trip mirrored our professional lives. The leadership role rotated without giving it much thought as we each tapped into our strengths, skills and abilities. Whether it was deciding which route to take to get to our destination, preparing, adapting to dynamic conditions or helping each other stay out of harm’s way we accomplished our goal and had fun in the process. Now that is a recipe for a positive employment experience.

Oh, so many happy bike rides ahead. See you on the road!

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