

Are You Ready for a Milestone?

By Bobbie Stone

Webster's Dictionary defines "milestone" as a "significant event or point of development." Every RN, particularly in critical care nursing, experiences milestones in her or his career. Often times, milestones develop when nurses want to diversify into other areas of critical care or to use their skills as a stepping stone to new opportunities. Wherever you are in your nursing career, your milestone isn't too far away. *Are you ready?*

Nursing as a whole is a complex profession, and hospitals often spread critical care nurses quite thin. Similarly, a number of nurses in management stay in one department for many years—in a sort of comfort zone—and it's often not until hospital management adds more challenging responsibilities do they realize that career growth and opportunities abound.

Consider this example: We worked with an individual on a recent search engagement who had been employed in critical care nursing for more than 20 years with one organization.

About the Author

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Dismayed, our candidate decided to explore an opportunity... a milestone... where she could apply her critical care skills to new areas of interest, such as management of PACU and Special Procedures, and where she could really make a difference.



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In addition to burn out, boredom is common in nursing. Many nurses, especially baby boomers, become complacent in their current positions and need new challenges to keep their interest peaked in the profession. Some trends...and milestones...where we see growth for critical care nurses are Nursing Informatics, Legal Nurse Consulting, Education and Magnet recognition. For example, some nurses who have worked at the bedside for several years and who also have interests in computers are transitioning into Nursing Informatics, which includes formalized education and training. This trend is benefiting both Nursing and Information Systems Departments. We are also seeing the trend of a combined position of Vice President of Patient Care Services Chief Nursing Officer to include Chief Operating Officer.

Since critical care comprises many areas, from open heart to emergency services, it is fertile ground for developing one's career. Those with broad responsibilities are most poised for a milestone. The "key" to positioning yourself for a critical milestone is to:

- Assess what you like or don't like about your current position.
- Analyze whether or not your philosophy is in line with your current facility.

- Evaluate your interests.
- Expand your horizons by selectively exploring any new possibilities for growth, either within or outside of your organization.
- Determine what your preferred organization's needs are and decide how you can best help meet and exceed them.

Additionally, some organizations offer Internship Programs to both new grads and accomplished nurses. When used appropriately, an Internship Program can be an effective tool for upward mobility. If it's available in your facility, I suggest taking advantage of it.

This *Vital Signs'* Florida Focus encourages nurses to consider moving to Florida to work and play. Relocation is in itself a milestone. Many people choose Florida for the weather, to be with family or even to earn a better salary. Another perk: Florida residents pay only federal and personal taxes; no state or city taxes. Whatever the reasons, Florida indeed offers "something for everyone."

The bottom line: Critical care nurses have tremendous skills and capabilities, and are well poised to succeed. If you think you're ready for a "milestone" in your career, take my advice and JUST DO IT! You won't regret it. VS