

HOW TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU WANT TO DO WITHOUT HAVING DONE IT BEFORE



Summary: *How can you find out what you want to do without actually having done it before? Here are several ways that you can do this.*

One way to do this to begin by making lists to create an inventory about yourself, considering your values, personality, desired work environment, skills and interests. It is important to write these down because it gives you a written record of information to use later on. *Again, going through this process can often make you more aware of all the many paths you can follow to have job satisfaction. The process expands, not limits, your options.*

- Make a list of ten activities, paid or volunteer, work or leisure that you have really enjoyed. For each one listed, examine what you liked about it, whether it was working with people, having responsibility, feeling productive, being autonomous, workplace environment and any other factor that enhanced your enjoyment of the activity. Review the list to see if there are common themes or factors that are always present.
- Make a list of ten activities that you really disliked, and go through the same analysis. Examine the list to see if there are any patterns.
- Spend ten minutes writing your immediate response to the following prompt: *If I had unlimited amounts of time, resources, talents and skills and couldn't fail, I would....*
- Spend 30 seconds one night a week visualizing your ideal job. A lot of people balk at visualization, but it works for Olympic athletes—they need to really see themselves get the gold medal or it won't happen. It also works for leading social activists, CEOs, and top attorneys. If you develop a vision of where you want to go, you're more likely to get there. Conversely, if you don't know where you're going, it's pretty hard to get there.
- Write down a description of a day on your dream job, including as much detail as possible. What emerges in terms of pace, work environment, creativity, recognition, status, salary, productivity and time away from work?
- Write down how you would like your ideal obituary to read. Like the two exercises above, this is a way for you to access your identified and unidentified goals and dreams for yourself.
- Write down what you would do if you found out that you would only be able to work for five years once you graduated from school.
- Write out a budget itemizing all expenses, including your school loan payments and calculate your income needs. Be realistic. And note the difference between your wants and your needs.
- Write down a list of your successful projects. Consider if these are areas you want to pursue in greater depth or move away from. For example, if you have a background in film making, do you want to build on your expertise in this area or move into a completely different field?
- Write down which classes have been the most enjoyable. Consider if this gives you information that is helpful, i.e. if you loved accounting class, are you considering a career in tax?
- Consider which job characteristics are important to you in finding a satisfying work environment. For example, do you want to:
 - Use your creative skills?
 - Work under pressure?
 - Have a variety of tasks?
 - Have a reasonable work schedule?
 - Receive regular feedback?
 - Help people?
 - Be appreciated by your employer?
 - Feel productive?
 - Solicit and generate new business?
 - Have autonomy in your job?
- Review your Myers-Briggs Type Inventory from first year orientation. Does that provide you with information about what you are suited to do and what you would find satisfying?
- Write out your personal evaluation, in which you honestly write down your strengths and weaknesses. This may feel totally weird, but no one else needs to see this, and you should write out things like competent, energetic, hard-working, outgoing, entrepreneurial, good judgment, solid writing skills, excellent advocate, great salesperson and the like.
- Use online assessment tools. The Keirsey Temperament Sorter (similar to the Myers-Briggs) is located at www.keirsey.com; also, check out http://www.collegeview.com/career/career_planning/self_asses/assesstest.html.
- Read want ads. Whether in a particular trade journal, law newsletter or daily paper, want ads can often give you clues about what you like. Copy or clip want ads that appeal to you. Circle the descriptions that really appeal to you and note why that job interests you.
- Go through your lists, inventory, notes and ads and set priorities. If living in the northeast and earning over \$37,000 is the priority, set it out. If helping people who will be otherwise underserved by the legal system is paramount, put it at the top. If you really want a job where you constantly learn new things, have that head the list.
- Keep a journal of your progress and ideas. New ideas come all the time but can get lost in the shuffle. Don't let yours disappear. People use many methods to track career self-assessment information—computer files, hard paper files, binders, notebooks and folders. Use what works for you and what you like.
- Talk to people. It is hard to imagine the right job in a vacuum. It is much easier for some people to talk to others and find similar interests, values and lifestyles.

Take the Time to Do This Self Search Now

Even if your dream job lands in your lap this year, it may not in the future. Having done this self-assessment now will articulate you in exploring and finding another satisfying position. According to current statistics, we will each have four or five different positions during our careers. The notion that we will stay in one place for our working life is becoming increasingly unlikely.

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