



Self Assessment

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In the past, it was typical to complete a prescribed set of studies, find a job in a related field, and stay in that field until retirement. One decision and that was it! Today it is far more common for students to change majors and for workers to make several career changes in a lifetime. People change their careers for a variety of reasons. They might not have made wise choices initially, their interests or skills might have changed, or the careers they selected may no longer exist.

Making plans for your future can be difficult. Starting with the self assessment process can give you more choices and increase your confidence that you are on the right career path.

A self assessment can reveal your personal attributes, values, skills, and interest, all of which are critical in helping you make informed career choices that are appropriate for you. Looking for a relationship between these personal characteristics and the work you are considering is the most important step you can take a resume or begin the search for a job. In fact, when the time comes to write your resume and prepare for a job interview, you will find the task significantly easier if you have completed the self-assessment process first.

Start by examining your interest, strengths, and traits. Ask yourself, What do I do well? What do I enjoy doing? What do other tell me about myself? What energizes me? What am I passionate about? Answers to these questions will help you identify your strengths and make decisions around the contributions you make. Many people try to conform to jobs advertised in the newspapers or other sources. However, employers have many qualified candidates from who to choose. You will be seriously considered for a position only if you demonstrate that you know who you are, what can you offer and where are you going.

Be sure you are completing a self assessment. Although the thoughts, ideas, and opinions of others may matter a great deal to you, it is important that you articulate your personal attributes ,values, skills, and interests and how these influence your career decision-making process.

Personal Attributes

One of the most important factors in determining your happiness and success in a job is understanding your personal attributes, also referred to a as personality. Everyone has a distinct set of attributes comprised of individual traits: thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and attitudes. Are you easy going? Strong willed? Practical? Be honest when you assess your thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and attitudes.

Values

Have you ever wondered what causes someone to study for years to enter a career such as engineering or law while another person will look for the quickest way to





make money? What causes someone to become disenchanted with what he or she thought was a dream job or organization? Values often play a significant role in such cases. People often neglect to consider values when exploring viable occupations, yet values are critical to a career satisfaction and fulfillment. In fact, various studies have shown that work values more highly correlate than interests with work satisfaction: If you do not value what you do each day at your job, it is unlikely you will be happy there. It is important not only you identify, or label, your values, but also to prioritize them, since satisfaction of your core (most important) values will factor greatly into your overall career satisfaction.

Skills

A skill is a demonstrated ability to do something well. Skills can be learned and developed in a variety of ways: through academic or vocational training, selfstudy, hobbies, or on the job activities. In the labour market, skills are the currency used by workers in exchange for pay, so the more you develop your skills, the more marketable you will be. If you were asked right now list your skills, what would your list look like? It might be a short list, not because you do possess many skills, but simply because you have never been asked to identify them not accustomed to think or talking about them. Each person has approximately 700 distinct in his or her repertoire. However, most people have trouble identifying their skills and, even when able to do so, feel uncomfortable promoting them. You cannot afford this kind of modesty. Having a realistic understanding of your skills will enable you to pursue occupations that you are qualified for and that you will enjoy.

Interests

Interests are often the first factor a person thinks of when considering an occupational direction: What do like to do? Likes, dislikes, and differences regarding various occupations and career-relevant activities are indeed important determinants of career choice. Make note of what attracts your attention: What courses do you enjoy? What conversations do you find yourself listening in on? What events do you like attend? What newspapers articles grab your interest? Answers to these questions will help to give you a clearer sense of direction regarding potential occupations that relate to your interests.

Other factors to consider

Aspects beyond your personal attributes, values, skills, and interests can affect your career decision-making process. Consider what impact gender, culture, family and significant others, sexual orientation, and disability might have. A combination of factors is often at play.

Culture

Cultural values have been identified as important influences in career decision making. Although perspectives on work and making a career choice vary from culture to culture, members of some minority cultures experience greater difficulty which career planning. Perceived, as well as actual, barriers may result in lower levels of





confidence in attaining various career goals. Those who come from cultures where career decision making is a family or group process may experience more internal and external conflict. The decision maker is influenced by both family expectations and individual decision making approach prevalent in the dominant North American culture. When a decision maker has a personal desires that are in conflict with those of the family, he or she is putts off making decision. The decision maker may also be uncomfortable or unhappy with a prospective career choice, depending on whose needs are not being met through this choice.

Gender

Everyone is influenced by gender and gender expectations and, as a result, may experience internal and external barriers decisions in career decision making. Barriers for women may include difficulty in pursuing both career and family goals; male dominant in traditionally male-dominated school subjects and career fields (e.g, math and science), even if decision makers posses the skills and abilities to be successful in such fields; anticipating a low level of success in a male dominated work world; or being confronted by a discrimination in a selection and practices.

Men are also affected by gender expectations and barriers. They are expected to achieve and to be ambitious and pursue certain types of careers (often those involving much competition). Men are also often encouraged to avoid a long list of female dominated career financially, rather than through personal presence and involvement.

It is important to be aware of these potential influences and ease and to assess your personal situation carefully. Are there occupations you are drawn to feel unsure of because of gender related factors? It would be unfortunate to forego a satisfying career for reasons that might well be overcome with a little self exploration and planning.

Family and significant others

Significant others should generally be involved in the entire career planning and job search process. People who know you well can offer insight (e.g; skills they have seen you demonstrate), advice, feedback, and encouragement. They also know your self your personal style and have witnessed your accomplishments.

Depending on your family, parental over or under involvement can be problematic. Is your family open to an expression of your career views that may be different from theirs? Pressure to meet expectations regarding career choice can often be overwhelming and can result in a premature or delayed career decision.

Sexual orientation

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individuals may encounter several additional difficulties. Related issues can be internal or external. Internal issues include self stereotyping, feelings of guilt, home and career conflict, and fear of other's attitudes. External issues include stereotyping, lack of role models; lack of support from family, significantly others, co-workers, and employers; and homophobia. Coming out to oneself and to identity consideration that can cause considerable stress to university





aged students. Occupational and employer research is particularly important to avoid and overcome some of these difficulties.

Disability

People with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities or chronic medical conditions are advised, like all career decision makers, to focus on personal attributes, values, skills, and interests when choosing a career. Although it is important to consider how your disability may impact your ability to succeed in the occupations you are considering, are you limiting yourself unnecessarily?

Think now about how you may be able to overcome or compensate for any perceived or real stumbling blocks to employment. Be prepared to share your assessment with employers who may not understand what your disability involves and who may believe it to be more of a barrier than it actually is.

Pride experiences and pride stories

Developing your pride list

Considering your previous experience in all life roles (e.g. worker, volunteer, student, parent or caregiver) is a great way to uncover your skills, interests, personal characteristics, and values. Basing your self assessment on real experience is much more valid than simply selecting items from a list. In the latter case, it is far tempting too tempting and easy to select those characteristics that you wish described you rather than those that actually do.

List experiences from your past that are positive for you. These are experiences that you are proud of and make you feel energized as you recall them. Include your earliest memories. They can be anything from building a house to drawing a picture or running a race. It is only matters how you feel about them. The standard to use in choosing items for the list is your pride in feeling “I did that myself!”

Examples of pride experiences might include the following

- . Coached baseball team to a winning season
- . Created an innovative procedure and trained staff to use it
- . Designed a go-kart with 2 friends and won first in a race
- . Doubled product sales volume in a two- year period
- . Earned enough money to travel through Europe by holding three part-time jobs
- . Helped solve an important personal for an employee or neighbour
- . Initiated a program or procedure or introduced a product
- . Learned to swim and dive at age seven
- . Organized and led weekend Girl Guide camping outings
- . Raised \$1,000 organizing a school raffle





- . Remodelled and redecorated part of my house
- . Set up and ran a summer business and earned enough profit to cover my tuition
- . Successfully managed a difficult project to completion
- . Taught myself how to create a web site by studying a how-to book
- . Wrote an innovative database program too help manage research project

Writing your pride stories

If you have to, overcome your natural modesty and reluctant to blow your own horn! You may find it helpful to write these stories as if were explaining them to a child. When we speak with children, we use clear language and provide a lot of detail. Describe these experiences with words associated with all your senses: What you saw, heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. It is also helpful to describe your experiences the perspective of how you felt at the time and how you feel now as you recall them. Remember to provide details. For example, rather than write “ I was an excellent telephone customer service representative, “write” In a typical day, I responded to more than 150 customer phone inquiries using a 20 line meridian phone system. This volume was almost double what other representative handled. Based on satisfaction surveys, my customer service skills were consistently rated in the top 3 of 40 representatives. Because of my high ratings, our manager asked me to participate in the training of new recruits. I trained more than 20 new staff members who went on to receive very positive performance ratings.”

