

Chapter 4: Self Assessment

The Self-Assessment Process

Self-assessment is the foundation of your successful job search. When you take the time to look inward, you can find insights from your past experiences, identify patterns that worked well for you (or did not,) and focus on your strengths. This way you choose jobs that are right for you now, in this current stage of your career. The better you can articulate your strengths and needs, the better your choices will be, and the more focused and consistent you will come across in interviews. George Santayana once said; “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Now is the time to figure out exactly what you would like to do differently with this fresh start you have been given, and what kind of environment you need to succeed. You have the freedom to analyze your career path and assess whether or not you have been consistently improving your skills and knowledge, and to what extent you have taken on new responsibilities.



The Causes of Burn-Out

When companies are in rapid change patterns, either ramping up or downsizing, employees often find themselves



doing the jobs of three employees, or of ten. Our clients have told us stories of working 60 hour weeks for months or years at a time. Of losing their entire youth to the world of work. Of exhaustion, disillusionment, and ruined marriages. In his book *The Celestine Prophecy*, James Redfield delineates two kinds of people: those who give you energy and those who take it away. The same can be said of skills. One common cause of burnout is when people do things that they do well but do not enjoy. This takes a toll on enthusiasm, ultimately leaving the person mentally and physically exhausted. People frequently end up in this situation when they have to do the work of many, or when they have been promoted out of their chosen area.



Step One: List Your Skills

Take a minute to evaluate the list on the next two pages and mark a star next to the activities you do well. Then, put another star next to the ones that you enjoy doing, and do well. These doubled-starred items are the skills you want to emphasize. In your job search be extra careful to avoid jobs that require you to spend a large amount of time doing one-starred activities. These will make you burnt-out, and dissatisfied.

Listing Your Skills

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Financial:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Checking financial records <input type="checkbox"/> Budgeting money <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting Money <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping accurate financial records | <p><i>People-oriented/Social:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Giving advice <input type="checkbox"/> Arranging events or meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Selling a product <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking in public <input type="checkbox"/> Thriving on chaos and interruptions |
| <p><i>Organizational:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Classifying records, information <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating events <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing people and tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Managing a meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping things on track | <p><i>Administrative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Administering a program <input type="checkbox"/> Planning agendas, schedules <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing material <input type="checkbox"/> Finding information <input type="checkbox"/> Recording scientific information <input type="checkbox"/> Updating files |
| <p><i>Managerial/Leadership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confronting People <input type="checkbox"/> Dividing Responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Managing an organization <input type="checkbox"/> Critiquing/ Coaching | <p><i>Mechanical:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Repairing machines <input type="checkbox"/> Putting apparatus together <input type="checkbox"/> Constructing things, buildings <input type="checkbox"/> Operating equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Printing by hand <input type="checkbox"/> Programming a computer <input type="checkbox"/> Protecting property |
| <p><i>Checking the progress of others:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Motivating people to do something <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiating contracts <input type="checkbox"/> Enduring long hours <input type="checkbox"/> Supervising others <input type="checkbox"/> Setting standards/ goals for others | <p><i>Problem Solving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Investigating a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Locating missing information <input type="checkbox"/> Determining an effective solution <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing what's wrong <input type="checkbox"/> Doing an assessment of what's needed |

Step Two: Narrowing it Down

Now let's look at the specifics of what you need and want in your next job. Jot down some notes about the absolutes and the negotiables.

| Category | Description | Need or Want |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| Physical: Location Commute Indoors/Outdoors Move around/sit | | |
| Relationships: Manager Co-workers Subordinates Visibility Politics Social events | | |
| Mental Challenge: Creative Corrective Problem solving Components Maintenance | | |
| Personal Values: Product Integrity Management Ethics Staff treatment | | |
| Facilities & Resources: Equipment/systems Funding Procedures Workplace | | |
| Compensation & Benefits: Salary/Bonus Vacation/Time off/Flex time Health/Life/Dental Stock/Profit Sharing | | |
| Stability & Development: Opportunities: Company size Age Industry Outlook | | |

Step Three: Who the Heck Am I?



Suddenly losing your identity as a professional can wreak havoc on the old ego. After all, the question that people inevitably ask upon meeting someone new is; "So, what do you do?" Our first response now might be an embarrassed pause followed by; "Nothing... I mean I'm out of work."

Many of us identify solely with what we get paid for, and yet there are many other roles that we have in our lives that are valuable and rewarding. Take a minute and write down your other roles and responsibilities. Remember, no one ever asked to have carved on his tombstone the following epitaph: "I wish I had spent more time at work."

I am also a...

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 12. _____ |

Some of the roles I have enjoyed the most include: _____

The roles with the greatest responsibility have included: _____

Currently my most important role is: _____

Step Four: Values and Goals

Knowing your values and goals is of primary importance as you seek focus and direction. Happiness is directly related to your ability to be clear about the values that influence your goals. Not only do you need to be clear so that you plan your future, if you are not clear about what you want it will show up in an interview.

Take a few minutes and check off the relative importance of these personal values.

| Personal Values | Importance | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Most | Medium | Least |
| Achievement (feeling of accomplishment, mastery) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adventure (excitement and challenge) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Advancement (promotions, getting ahead) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Affection (love, caring) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Competitiveness (winning, taking risks) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cooperation (group projects, team-oriented success) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Creativity (imagination, innovation) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Economic security (feeling financially secure) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fame (known, well-respected, looked up to) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family happiness (satisfaction about close, personal relationships) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Freedom (independence, autonomy) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friendship (relationships with others) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health (physical, emotional, relaxation, weight control) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Helpfulness (assisting others, improving society) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Inner harmony (being at peace with values and actions) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Integrity (correlation between values and actions) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Involvement (participating with others, belonging) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Loyalty (duty, respect,) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Order (process, stability, conformity) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Personal development (use of potential, enhancement of skills) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pleasure (fun, laughs, personal enjoyment) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Power (control, authority or influence over others) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Recognition (respect from others, status, feedback) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Responsibility (accountable for results) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self-respect (pride, sense of personal identity) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spirituality (personal meaning in what you do) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wealth (making money, getting rich) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wisdom (understanding life, discovering knowledge) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

How much impact do these values have on your day to day life? How much time do you spend developing your most/least important values? How will you emphasize your values when you choose your next job?

Step Five: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Now let’s figure out more about who you are, what excites and energizes you, and how you like to communicate. An excellent way to do this is by taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This personality inventory is based on Jungian psychology, and it divides people into sixteen personality types. Once the inventory is completed and scored, you and your counselor can talk about what the results mean in terms of work; how you best like to communicate on the job, and the kinds of work environments that may best “fit” your personality type. First, some general information about the personality types.

| Extroverts | Introverts |
|---|--|
| Are energized by being around people | Are energized by spending time alone |
| Like being the center of attention | Avoid being the center of attention |
| Act, then think about it | Think, then act |
| Tend to think out loud | Think things through inside their heads |
| Are easier to read and to know: share personal information freely | Are more private; prefer to share personal information with a select few |
| Talk more than listen | Listen more than talk |
| Communicate with enthusiasm | Keep their enthusiasm to themselves |
| Respond quickly; enjoy a fast pace | Respond after taking the time to think things through |
| Prefer breadth to depth | Prefer depth to breadth |

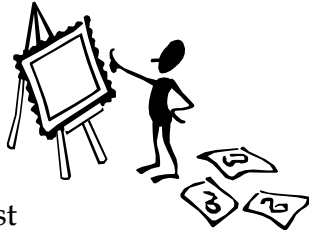
| Sensors | Intuitors |
|---|---|
| Trust what is certain and concrete | Trust inspiration and inference |
| Like new ideas only if they have practical applications | Like new ideas and concepts for their own sake |
| Value realism and common sense | Value imagination and innovation |
| Like to use and hone established skills | Like to learn new skills; get bored easily after mastering skills |
| Tend to be specific and literal; give instructions | Tend to be detailed general and figurative; use metaphors |
| Present information in a step-by-step manner | Present information through leaps, in a roundabout manner |
| Are oriented to the present | Are oriented toward the future |

| Thinkers | Feelers |
|--|---|
| Step back; apply impersonal analysis to problems | Step forward; consider effect of actions on others |
| Value logic, justice, and fairness; harmony; see the exception to the rule | Value empathy and one standard for all |
| Naturally see flaws and tend to be critical | Naturally like to please others; show appreciation easily |
| May be seen as heartless, insensitive, and uncaring | May be seen as overemotional, illogical and weak |
| Consider it more important to be truthful than tactful | Consider it more important to be tactful than truthful |
| Believe feelings are valid only if they are logical | Believe any feeling is valid, whether it makes sense or not |
| Are motivated by a desire for achievement and accomplishment | Are motivated by a desire to be appreciated |

| Judgers | Perceivers |
|---|--|
| Are happiest after decisions have been made | Are happiest leaving their options open |
| Have a work ethic: work first, play later (if there's time) | Have a play ethic: enjoy now, finish the job later (if there's time) |
| Set goals and work toward finishing them on time | Change goals as new information becomes available |
| Prefer knowing what they are getting into | Like adapting to new situations |
| Are product oriented (emphasis is on completing the task) | Are process oriented (emphasis is on how the task is completed) |
| Derive satisfaction from finishing projects | Derive satisfaction from starting projects |
| See time as a finite resource and take deadlines seriously | See time as a renewable resource and see deadlines as elastic |

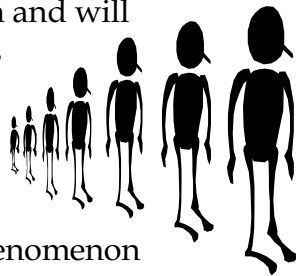
Putting It All Together

Once you know more about yourself, you will be in a better position to describe how you like to work. What we would like you to be able to do is to articulate the kind of work atmosphere you do best in. For example, some people take direction best when their managers communicate with them via e-mail. This gives them the time to reflect on the information before having to respond or leap into action. Other people need to talk ideas out with their bosses and process the information together, taking the time to really understand the new project. Yet other people do fine with voice mail, because they can leave messages quickly at any time. You need to figure out how you communicate well, and either pick a company that uses a similar style, or at least negotiate with your potential boss to communicate in a way that works for you.



You Say Tomato

Companies tend to have a particular style of interaction and will attract individuals who have personalities that are congruent with this style. This phenomenon has both strengths and weaknesses. For example a company may be composed of quick thinking and



quick-reacting people who do not need time to process information or establish rapport with coworkers. They will rush each other, interrupt each other, and forget each other's birthdays and feel fine about it. The obvious advantage of this style is that things get done quickly and efficiently. The drawback is that details may be overlooked and the larger picture may be lost. Having a more detail and process oriented person around may benefit the organization, but that employee may feel alienated and hurt by his coworkers' interactional styles. You need to be clear on exactly who you are and what kind of atmosphere you need to work in to feel the most comfortable and productive.

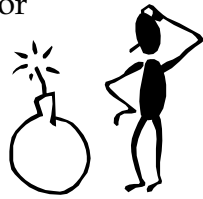
Cowboy Hats or Fedoras?

What is the personality of the company? You can often find out by walking into the building and taking a visual evaluation of what you see. When you meet with individuals from a company, try to observe their communication style and make deductions about who they are and how they like to work. Companies are known for their reputations. Some Silicon Valley companies are known as good places to work, others as sweat shops that burn people out. Some companies expect employees to hit the ground running with very little training or interaction with peers. Some companies provide a more welcoming atmosphere for individuals from diverse cultures. Some companies support very specific political causes. Ask your friends and

colleagues what they have heard about a particular company, and add your own opinions when you meet with the hiring manager. Develop the ability to analyze company personalities, and to have a seventh sense about how you will fit in there.

Take Heed

Remember, it is better to be out of work for a few more weeks or even months than to take a job that is wrong for you, and end up quitting or getting fired shortly after starting.



and it took him six more weeks to find another position.

You would be shocked at how many clients who have been laid off accept new jobs and then get summarily dismissed soon after joining the new firm. It is much better to wait for the right chemistry, the right co-workers, the right job responsibilities, than to end up getting fired or let go twice in a short period. If the job doesn't feel right, go with your gut and turn it down. Don't make a decision based on desperation. Get temporary or consulting work to take off the financial and family pressures, and actively search for the right fit.

Recently, a client in one of our workshops described an interview experience at a small company where the owner had made a negative, rude comment about the candidate's long hair. We suggested that this might indicate a fundamental difference in values and approaches and that the owner of the company might be very conservative and rigid, and that this liberal, spontaneous engineer might not fit in too well. If the owner of the company was that quickly turned off by the candidate, things would probably get worse on the job, not better. The client accepted the job despite our warnings.

Two weeks into the new job, after the engineer had received reprimands for coming into work late and for not completing priority tasks in order, he was fired with no severance. At this point, all his prior job leads were cold,