



## **Self-Assessment as a Critical Part of the Job Search Process**

With so many people unemployed, under-employed or in career transition these days, there is a growing number of resources, programs and webinars on interviewing skills, job search strategies, resume drafting, social media networking tools and related topics. Although the information covered in such programs is undoubtedly valuable and relevant in one's job search, I often find that many job seekers do not have a clear and compelling answer to a more basic question of what they are looking to do professionally and what their ideal job would look like. Granted that, in this economy, one might not have the luxury of finding her "ideal job," it is also true that "If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else" (attributed to Dr. Lawrence J. Peter). Therefore, self-exploration and assessment should be the first and most important step in one's job search process and it should determine the career direction that one chooses to pursue. There are many ways to engage in the process of self-discovery and self-assessment, and this article will provide a few tools and ideas to get you started.

An ideal career consists of all the elements essential to a person's happiness and fulfillment. These elements are like the pieces to a puzzle and, when the pieces come together, they form a whole picture. Once the elements are in place, you can design your unique life and/or career. Ask yourself what elements you want in your ideal career and consider including the following:

1. What you love to do (activities that give you a feeling of joy and fulfillment)
2. Your unique gifts and talents, your aptitudes
3. Skills that you have and wish to utilize (or further develop) in your next job
4. Fields of interest/industries in which you want to work
5. Work values (what is most important to you in your workplace?)
6. Your essence, your natural qualities
7. Life mission, vision, spiritual path
8. What kind of people do you prefer to work with/for?
9. Salary/benefits/schedule/other factors
10. Working conditions/environment/location

Here are a few specific questions and exercises in some of the categories listed above.

### **EXPLORING PERSONAL INTERESTS**

What do you enjoy doing (which projects, volunteer work)?

What were or are your favorite subjects in school?

What are your hobbies?

What kinds of books and magazines do you read?  
What types of activities do you participate in?  
Was there any activity you were involved in that you especially enjoyed?  
What are your most memorable accomplishments? What made them memorable?  
What do you like to talk to your friends about?  
Is there something you always wanted to do, but because of family, money, children, or other factors, you put it aside?

### **SKILLS AND STRENGTHS**

Take a look at your past jobs, volunteer work and hobbies. For each job or experience, list the major skills and strengths that you use (e.g., management). List the specific skills that make up that skill (e.g., leadership, conflict resolution, computer, communication, team management, etc.). What have you learned about yourself from this exercise? Are there certain trends or categories of skills that you use most often? Which skills do you enjoy using the most? The least? Which skills would like to acquire at your next job?

### **CLUES TO YOUR MISSION**

What causes/issues are you most passionate about?  
What are the 3 most important lessons you have learned in this life?  
What makes life worth living? Why do you get up every morning?  
What do you want your life to stand for?  
What are your special gifts and talents?  
What is unique about you?

In this process, it may be helpful to work with a close friend, a trusted family member or a career coach. Look at your past jobs and consider which projects and work environments you have enjoyed and why, consider which activities come naturally to you, think of professional involvements that gave you the feeling of purpose and satisfaction and explore your dreams and aspirations that never came to be, as well as those accomplishments (personal and work-related) that you are most proud of. When your list is complete, brainstorm and write down a few career options that encompass the greatest number of those ideal career elements.

Some people prefer to take a more “measured” and “scientific” approach to figuring out what they are meant to do and they may be interested in taking a standardized test. Please note that these tests, although helpful and informative, will not give you the ultimate answer to what career path YOU should pursue, but they may provide you with ideas and clues about viable career options for individuals with your traits. The New York City Bar’s “Self Assessment” web page lists a number of the popular tests and inventories along with other resources, links and books. Good luck on your journey!

*This article was written by Irina Gomelskaya, a lawyer and Certified Life Purpose and Career Coach and a member of the Committee on Career Advancement and Management at New York City Bar Association, June 2012.*