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DISCOVERING

YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF

unit ONE

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Who are you? What do you really want? Where do you want your life to go? What career areas do you want to explore? How might occupational trends affect your decision-making process? These are not easy questions to answer. In fact, your responses may change on a regular basis depending on a variety of factors—and that's okay. The primary objectives of this unit, Discovering Your Authentic Self, are to help you gain more self-awareness and to provide direction. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to actively explore careers, educational opportunities, and the changing nature of work.

Thoroughly to have known oneself, is above all art, for it is the highest art.

—THEOLOGIA GERMANICA

You will be asked to play an active role in this self-discovery process. No one knows you better than you do, so it makes sense for you to assume this role, right? In this unit, you will be building a personal portfolio of information and knowledge that you can use throughout your lifetime. **It is important to realize that career–life decision making is a process and not a one-time event.** You will revisit this process multiple times throughout your future. Therefore, it is crucial that you have a solid understanding of yourself and how to access career-related information.

The preface of this textbook mentioned that the average young American will have 10 to 14 different jobs in the 20 years after he or she graduates from high school. Many people will have three or more careers before retiring. This trend of change and transition is vastly different from previous work patterns.

In the past, many employees devoted their entire work lives to one employer—a mutually beneficial arrangement based on loyalty. Now there is a new, more short-term employment agreement that is based on the understanding that the employee will move on to new opportunities. Because you will hold numerous work positions, it is important that you have a thorough assessment of the interests, values, skills, and experiences you bring to a prospective work situation.

The portfolio that you will create as you work through this textbook is unique in several ways. This document offers at least three important traits:

- The portfolio will be flexible, dynamic, and expandable. You and the file's contents will change over time. Expect these changes, and learn from them.
- The portfolio is unique to you. You can be as creative as you wish to be.
- It is a file that you can use in many situations—including getting a job.

Your D.A.T.A.

Because the employee–employer agreement has changed, it is likely that you will work for multiple employers for shorter periods of time. But what about the jobs themselves? How will they change in the future?

William Bridges, author of *JobShift*, and a leading consultant on workplace transition issues, believes jobs have changed already and will continue to do so. According to Bridges, the world of work as we have known it in the past is no longer the same. Well-defined jobs with detailed task descriptions are fast becoming a thing of the past. Many jobs are now undefined, while others are gone completely—a process Bridges refers to as "de-jobbing." To succeed in this de-jobbed environment, we must know ourselves and what we bring to a work

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situation, and we must adjust quickly to the multitude of changes. Flexibility is vital if we are to thrive in this new work environment. Furthermore, economic recessions and challenging financial times in recent years have taught us that nothing is guaranteed.

In terms of knowing ourselves, Bridges advises us to "survey our D.A.T.A." (a comprehensive self-assessment of Desires, Abilities, Temperament, and Assets). He encourages workers to survey and recycle their D.A.T.A. on a regular basis to identify what they bring ("their product") to a prospective employer. Today's employees need to be able to identify and articulate their value (in terms of skills, experiences, services provided, and values) to those who have the power to hire them.

In this Discovering Your Authentic Self unit, you will complete several self-assessment activities so you can articulate who you are and what contributions you bring. This unit is about knowing your authentic self.

The Chapters

Career–life decision making involves cycling and re-cycling through three main steps. First, individuals must thoroughly assess themselves by examining their interests, values, skills, personality, needs, lifestyle, and experiences. Second, they must gain a solid understanding of the world of work by assessing such areas as career opportunities, education or training involved, and trends affecting the marketplace. What academic and career options are available? Finally, individuals must make decisions, set goals, and test opportunities based on the integrated information generated from steps one and two. The organization of Unit I follows this traditional and practical career–life planning model.

Look within. Within is the fountain of good, and it will ever bubble up, if thou wilt ever dig.

—MARCUS AURELIUS

Chapter 1, Know Yourself: A Self-Awareness Journey, allows you to do exercises spontaneously, without being concerned about results or performance. Through these exercises, you will discover invaluable information about yourself that will help provide direction in your life. The goal is to know yourself and find your path to fulfilling, meaningful work.

Chapter 2, Charting the Future: Goal Setting and Decision Making for Life, helps you identify your long-term life and career goals through building goals around the main areas of your life: professional, personal and social, and financial. You will also explore the issue of balance in your life roles.

Chapter 3, Researching Careers: The Changing Nature of Work, provides an opportunity to actively explore career and educational options using a variety of research tools, including the Internet. You will also learn about work environments and the importance of keeping a cautious eye on trends in the workforce.

Chapter 4, Exploring Through Experience: Learning Outside the Classroom, shows you how experiential educational opportunities, such as internships and study abroad options, can help you in your academic and professional life.

Through the exercises in this Discovering Your Authentic Self unit, you may find that you're pointed in the right direction. Or you may find that you've been traveling away from your true desires and should reevaluate your direction choice.

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It should be noted that the unit exercises serve as a catalyst for thoughtful life and career decision making. They are not intended to replace the comprehensive career and personality assessments provided by college career development centers and other professionals.

Whatever the case, be assured that all of your experiences will establish a strong base for building the future you want, deserve, and can create. So relax, complete each exercise, and allow the experience to enrich your self-awareness and understanding. Discover your direction for life.

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Bridges, W. (1994). *JobShift: How to prosper in a workplace without jobs*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

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chapter

1

Know Yourself

A SELF-AWARENESS JOURNEY

Learning Objectives

1. To understand how writing can assist you in the self-discovery process
2. To assess what you enjoy by exploring your interests and passions
3. To gain knowledge about your skills, including transferable and life skills
4. To assess the importance of values and lifestyle preferences in decision making
5. To explore how personality and "fit" can make a difference in your work

Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing.

—HELEN KELLER

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PROFILE student

Introducing Alberto. Meet Alberto, a 20-year-old a college sophomore who is making relevant decisions about his future. Like many students, he feels overwhelmed by choosing a career. Alberto is undecided about his major. He is interested in business, art, psychology, and sociology but is also considering a technical career. His adviser has encouraged him to declare a major, but he is reluctant to do so given his diverse interests. His parents are encouraging him to consider a business degree so that he can contribute to the family income.

ALBERTO'S STUDENT PROFILE:

- Alberto is starting to get involved in on-campus activities. He holds a leadership position on campus. Alberto joined a business club through the school, and he volunteers for a city arts program associated with the college.

One of the first tasks Alberto wants to address is self-awareness. He has multiple interests but is unclear about how these interests might translate into a major or career. He explains to his adviser, "I just don't know where to start."

Before moving into the rest of the chapter, consider the following questions about your situation now that you've met Alberto.

- Are you undecided about your career direction? If so, what steps might you take to help you with the career decision-making process? If you are in a major or career program, are you sure it's the best choice?
- What are some of the barriers you are facing at this time in your life? What is your biggest obstacle?
- What is the most important decision you hope to make in the next 6 to 12 months?

It took me almost three years to decide on a major. I was worried about making the "wrong" decision. Eventually, I decided on a psychology major after consulting with my academic adviser and exploring various resources. (Actually, she told me I had to make a decision now.) I encourage students to do extensive research prior to making this important decision.

—MICHAEL STEBLETON, CO-AUTHOR

There are no easy answers to these questions; however, this textbook will help with the career decision-making process.

Like Alberto, you must be an active participant in this process of career–life decision making. Ultimately, you are responsible for the direction your life takes. This is your opportunity to get to know *you*: your interests and passions, your unique skills, and how you want to live your life! Or you may have a selected a career program that you intend to pursue. Or perhaps you are at the end of your educational training. This section can help confirm your

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decision and lead you to the next steps. This process of career–life planning is NOT a one-time event; it's ongoing. Even if you plan to stay in your selected occupation for a long time, there is a good chance you will hold multiple jobs within that career. For this reason, it is important that you understand yourself. Some of the exercises may seem redundant or too fundamental, but we encourage you to complete the exercises. Again, the main goal is to confirm your career–life decisions.

How do you get to know yourself? Disconnect the phone, turn off the TV, and tell everyone to stay away for a short while. Find a quiet, peaceful place. Then, take a pen and paper and start working through the exercises in this chapter. Begin today to plan for your future.

Methods for Self-Analysis

The primary method used in this chapter for achieving self-awareness is writing. Desires, ideas, and concepts shift, disappear, and change in thought form. The act of writing puts these thoughts into a form that can be analyzed and reviewed over the years. Furthermore, writing serves as a useful reminder or confirmation of a decision you made in your life. In times of doubt, you can go back to what you were experiencing at that time and be reminded of why you made the choice you did.

You will be using the following methods to capture your reflections:

- Creating thought clusters (this approach is similar to brainstorming)
- Writing spontaneously
- Making intuitive lists of items
- Completing sentences spontaneously

Other writing strategies that you might add to the preceding list include:

- Keeping a journal of your insights
- Creating a scrapbook of writings, pictures, quotes, and other items that inspire you
- Visualizing yourself leading the career–life that you really desire and putting those images down on paper
- Completing several self-assessment inventories—including interest and personality surveys (discussed later in the chapter)

The primary methods for self-analysis used in this chapter will be reflection and writing.

Source: Shutterstock

Clustering: A Thought Picture

Because many of us have difficulty expressing ourselves articulately in writing, the clustering method has been selected to assist you with this task. You will find this technique called for throughout the text, not only to help you write but also to help you analyze a job advertisement and use other job-hunting strategies.

Clustering is similar to brainstorming in that you never rule out ideas when they come to you. No matter how crazy the idea may seem, you record it. Because clustering may be

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new to you, here are the general principles of clustering as described by Gabriele Lusser Rico in her book *Writing the Natural Way* (2000).

> To create a cluster, you begin with a nucleus word, circled, on a fresh page. Now you simply let go and begin to flow with any current of connections that come into your head. Write these down rapidly, each in its own circle, radiating outward from the center in any direction they want to go. Connect each new word or phrase with a line to the preceding circle. When something new and different strikes you, begin again at the central nucleus and radiate outward until those associations are exhausted.
>
> As you cluster, you may experience a sense of randomness or, if you are somewhat skeptical, an uneasy sense that it isn't leading anywhere. That is your logical Sign mind (left, logical brain) wanting to get into the act to let you know how foolish you are being by not setting thoughts down in logical sequences. Trust this natural process, though. We all cluster mentally throughout our lives without knowing it; we have simply never made these clusterings visible on paper.

In other words, follow these steps:

1. Begin with your central thought or theme—a word or phrase—circled in the center of the page. An example is "career interests."
2. Write down all impressions generated from this central thought.
3. Connect each impression to the central circle or an outlying circle. (See Figure 1.1 for an example.)
4. Write each impression (thought) quickly, connecting each thought to the circle that led to it.
5. When a new thought hits you, begin again at the central thought and radiate outward until all associations about this new thought are spent.
6. When you exhaust all impressions of the central thought, review your thought cluster and begin writing spontaneously.
7. You may write about all the thoughts on the page, or you may find that you want to write about only some of the ideas generated. Let the writing lead you through the cluster or off on its own.
8. After writing, read what you have written aloud. The ear hears what the eye does not see. Spend a minute or two making any changes you feel will enhance your writing.
9. Now, lay the writing aside for an hour or a day or two. Then, review it again for any changes you feel will strengthen it.

The example in Figure 1.2 is clustered using lines without circles. There is no one "right" way to cluster. Whatever seems to work best for you is what you should use. Clustering is an easy way to see your thoughts on paper. You may opt to use it to explore passions, interests, or skills that you hold, among others. It's a natural way to write, to script telephone conversations, to analyze complex writing, and to draft resumes. They're fun, and they enhance your writing.

Writing is a creative way to learn about yourself, but it is not the only method. Self-assessments and inventories also provide valuable information about yourself.

. . . we do not write in order to be understood; we write in order to understand.

—C. DAY LEWIS

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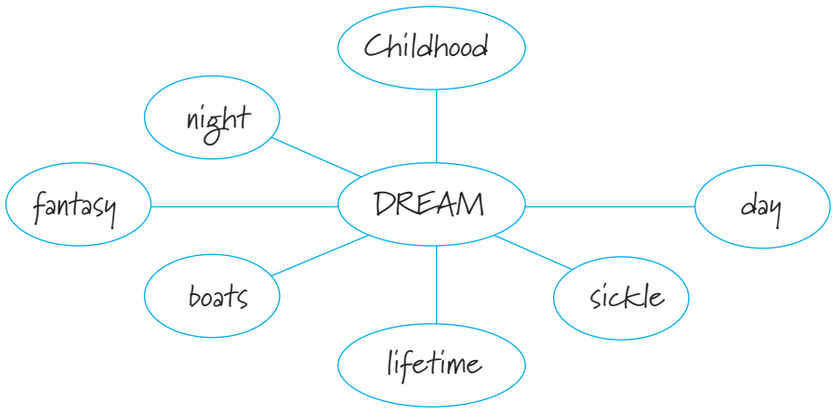
FIGURE 1.1 *Dream cluster, courtesy of a student.*



Childhood dreams—nurse, living in Africa with the wild animals, living on a ranch raising cattle . . .

Day dreams of travels, hikes, interesting conversations, quiet times . . .

Nighttime dreams of the daily living often given a strange twist.

Self-Assessments and Inventories: An Introduction

In the remainder of this chapter, you will have an opportunity to participate in numerous exercises and activities. These activities are designed to assist you with the career–life decision-making process. More formal inventories and assessments, available through a career center or career professional, serve as helpful tools. However, they will not tell you what to do or not to do with your life. Instead, they serve as catalysts for organizing information that you learn via self-reflection. The exercises are not intended to replace the comprehensive career and personality assessments provided by schools, career education centers, and other professionals.

Consider these points prior to completing the exercises and inventories:

- There are no right or wrong answers. Attempt to respond honestly to the questions. Honest responses produce more accurate and helpful information.
- Go with your first response. Your initial instinct is usually the most sincere. Try not to spend too much time overanalyzing a particular question. Move through the exercise or inventory quickly yet carefully.
- Inventories are not crystal balls. They will not tell you what you should do with your life. They will, however, provide new insights about you.
- Because each person is unique, everyone has different answers to and interpretations of the questions.

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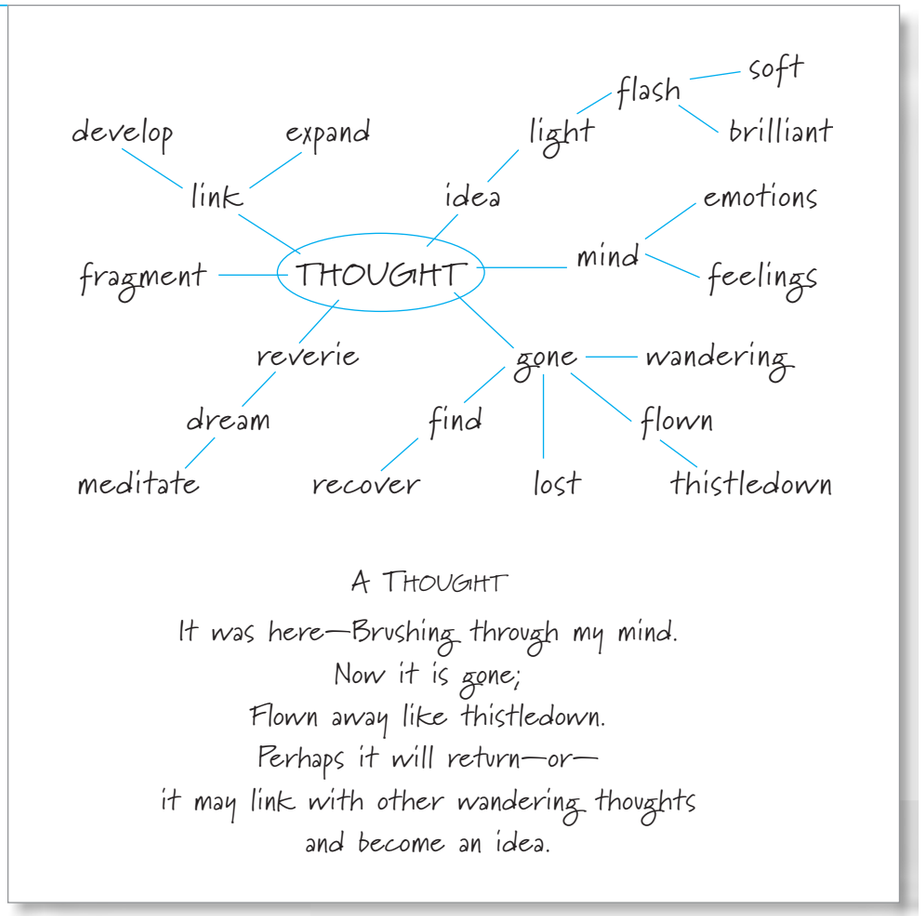
FIGURE 1.2 *Thought cluster, courtesy of Josephine Manes.*



The way you happen to feel at the time you complete a self-assessment exercise or inventory could affect the outcome. It is possible to complete an assessment on one day and then repeat it another day with contrasting results. So don't be surprised if you repeat an exercise later and the results vary.

Use Your Native Language

You may be introduced to these exercises in a language other than your native language. If this is true, do the exercises in the language that you are most comfortable working in, the language you automatically think in. Doing so keeps your answers spontaneous and helps you intuitively respond to each exercise.

The Self-Awareness Section of the Portfolio

You will use some of the exercises from Chapter 1 in your portfolio (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). You will also complete exercises directly in the textbook. You can tear out these activities and place them in your portfolio

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or leave them in the text—it is your choice. Following are some suggestions to consider:

- To keep Chapter 1 organized, make a chapter divider, and file the completed exercises behind it. You will be using your own paper to complete many of the exercises.
- Keep these exercises and similar ones in this section for future reference.
- If and when you redo these self-awareness exercises, file the new ones with the prior ones. As the years go by, it will be helpful and informative to compare the answers from a prior time to the answers of today. You may want to examine any significant changes and explore what might have contributed to those differences.
- If any portfolio section becomes large and unwieldy, put it in a separate notebook.

Good luck. Have fun. And enjoy discovering your authentic self.

Exploring Your Passions and Interests: What Do You *Really* Want?

How many times has someone asked you, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" If you are a traditional student (ages 18 to 22), you've no doubt encountered the perennial holiday dinner interrogation from visiting relatives. It goes something like this: "So what are you planning to major in?" "What kind of job can you get with that degree?" Those who are not in that traditional student age range are *still* grappling with the same initial question: "So what do I want to do when I grow up (if that ever really happens)?"

A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What one can be, one must be.

—ABRAHAM MASLOW

We, the authors of *HIRED!*, are convinced that the ongoing questioning of "what do I want to do?" is a natural component of healthy career–life development. In today's ever-changing world, you will likely face transitions where you ask yourself, "What in the world do I want to do next?" You can expect that a continual exploration of your interests and passions will be critical to your own happiness. One of the authors asked students in his career planning course why a thorough assessment of interests and passions might be helpful. Their responses included the following:

- Pinpointing certain preferences regarding a major and an occupation helps narrow down the available options.
- Identifying interests can lead to choosing more engaging and rewarding careers. (In fact, research shows that people who are interested in their work report greater satisfaction and happiness on the job. The more your interests can be incorporated into your work, the more fulfilled you will be with your career–life.)
- Identifying personal passions can be fun and perhaps financially rewarding.

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Exploring your passions and interests is a crucial part of answering the question "What do I want to do?"

Source: iStockphoto

You may be wondering what is the difference between an interest and a passion? Actually, there is considerable overlap between the two terms. *An interest is simply something you like to do or would like to explore*. It can be an activity, a hobby, or a particular discipline or occupation. *A passion is an extension of an interest—it is something that you love to do and must explore*. Some define *passion* as a compulsion—an urge or desire that one cannot turn away from no matter what the consequences. For example, think about some of your favorite musicians or performing artists—maybe a celebrity, an entertainer, or a music group that you enjoy. Do something that you love.

If you are interested in reading personal stories about passions, check out a fun book called *Roadtrip Nation*, about several recent college graduates who went on a nationwide quest to find meaningful and passionate work (Marriner, Gebhard, & Gordon, 2003; Marriner, McAllister, & Gebhard, 2005).

The Pursuit of Vocation

What do you really want to do with your life? For many people, a passion is a special "calling." They intuitively know that a certain area of work is meant for them. We often hear religious leaders, teachers, and social workers, to name a few, refer to their "vocation"—a calling that they heeded. Historically, the term *vocation* comes from the Latin *vocare*, or "to call." However, a calling is not restricted to the ministry or one of the helping professions. It refers to any area you are particularly drawn to for any reason. The following excerpt provides additional insight into the concepts of passion and vocation.

> In a culture that sometimes equates work with suffering, it is revolutionary to suggest that the best inward sign of vocation is deep gladness—revolutionary but true. If a work is mine to do, it will make me glad over the long haul, despite the difficult days. Even the difficult days will ultimately gladden me, because they pose the kinds of problems that can help me grow in a work if it is truly mine. If work does not gladden me in these ways, I need to consider laying it down. . . . (Palmer, 1998, p. 30)

What will bring you deep gladness? It could involve turning a hobby into some type of paid work. Not surprisingly, some up-and-coming businesses are owned by inspiring individuals who have a passion. Listen for that voice of vocation (Palmer, 2000).

Vocation is "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

—FREDERICK BUECHNER

Often, a passion will find you. You may have heard the advice to "follow your bliss." Simply put, it means following your heart as you make career–life decisions. Joseph

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Campbell, author and philosopher, was one of the first to use the term in his discussions on mythology and life purpose. He offers this piece of advice: "I feel that if one follows what I call one's bliss—the thing that really gets you deep in the gut and that you feel is your life—doors open. They do! . . . Put aside the passing moment that says you should live this way. Be informed and go where your body and soul want you to go" (Campbell & Moyers, 1998).

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

ARE YOU PREPARED?

Search for Your Calling

Your calling. *What do you think your bliss might be? What interests and activities might your bliss involve? What are you passionate about? Are you prepared to follow those passions?*

Does This Path Have a Heart?

by Carlos Castaneda

Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question. . . . It is this. . . . Does this path have a heart? All paths are the same. They lead nowhere. There are paths going through the brush or into the brush. Does this path have a heart is the only question. If it does, then the path is good. If it doesn't it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere, but one has a heart and the other doesn't (Castaneda, 1968).

Does the path you are pursuing have a heart?

A Closer Look at Interests

It may be helpful to assess your interests by looking at your preference for working with one or more of the following:

- Data (e.g., accounting, computers, and office practices)
- People (e.g., teaching, counseling, and sales)
- Things (e.g., machinery, working outdoors, and using tools in your work)

Many individuals prefer working with *data*. These people enjoy computing, analyzing, manipulating, or synthesizing facts and related information. Does this sound like something you would enjoy?

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Others prefer working with *people*—they want extensive interaction with others in their work, whether it is with coworkers, clients, students, or audiences. Some individuals wish to teach or serve other people in some way. Others want to negotiate, persuade, or sell products or services to clients.

The third major preference is working with *things*. Many people want to use equipment or machinery in their work, whether this involves driving a bus, operating a drill, or using a computer.

Most people enjoy a combination of working with data, people, and things. We all have our own preferences.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

GOAL SETTING

Stating Personal Preferences

Do what interests you. *In the space below, briefly describe your interests as they relate to data, people, and things. What are your personal preferences?*

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exercise

1.1 Lifelong Dreams

Dreams are the seedlings of realities.

—JAMES ALLEN, *AS A MAN THINKETH*

Childhood dreams are the fantasies you held as a child. Exploring these dreams as an adult can lead to new insights. First, look at your early years, and then proceed to the present. Using the clustering technique you learned earlier, follow these steps:

1. Label a blank page with the headings shown in Figure 1.3, and title it "Lifelong Dreams."
2. Begin clustering your early childhood dreams. Don't worry about making sense; just write as fast as you can. The goal is to be as spontaneous and creative as possible. Attempt to answer the recurring question: "What do I want to be or do when I grow up?"
3. Next, cluster the dream jobs you desired as a teenager. List all of the jobs you ever dreamed about, regardless of how foolish or unrealistic they may appear now.
4. Now, cluster the jobs you have considered as an adult. This cluster should include all of the jobs you have held and those you have considered.
5. Finally, cluster all of your fantasy jobs—anything you would like to do. Remove any limitations by including whatever you would like to do. Don't worry about whether training is required or the job is practical or whether it seems impossible.
6. Now, write a paragraph or two about your dreams. Write quickly and spontaneously, letting the cluster lead your writing. Be creative and expressive. You won't turn in this exercise, so don't be concerned about limiting your ideas. Your only audience is yourself, so don't write about what you think is important or what might impress someone else.
7. After completing the exercise, respond to these questions: What was it like to do this exercise? What did I gain from this activity?

Add this activity to your portfolio.

FIGURE 1.3

Example of Exercise 1.1, Lifelong Dreams

CHILDHOOD	Truck driver	Engineer	Police officer	Rancher	TV Star	Coach
TEEN YEARS	Guitar player	Astronaut	Computer programmer			
ADULT YEARS	Business owner	Counselor				
FANTASY JOBS	Olympic athlete	Folk singer	World traveler			

When I was a kid, I always dreamed of following in my dad's footsteps . . . he was a rancher with lots of cattle. I felt this would be a perfect life. I also dreamed of being a TV star and a police officer, among others. Now I think I'm more practical. Ranching really isn't for me. I love computers and I enjoy helping others. I enjoy working independently, and I may want to own my own business someday.

Also, I love to travel, participate in sports, and play the guitar. Maybe I can combine all these things into a career. There's so much that I could do. I'm just beginning to dream . . .

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exercise 1.2

25 Things I Love to Do

This is an opportunity to explore your passions and interests—what you really love to do. Make a list of 25 activities you really enjoy. Include activities from all arenas of your life. The exercise will not be turned in, so let the list be exactly what comes to mind. Keep going until you have at least 25 things on the list. Follow these steps:

To be successful, you must love what you do.

—DOTTIE WALTERS

1. Take a blank piece of paper, and title it "25 Things I Love to Do."
2. Begin making your list of activities. Write as fast as you can. It doesn't matter what particular activity you like to do, why you enjoy doing it, or how minor or trivial it seems to be—just write it down.
3. Keep going until you have 25 activities. It may seem like a lot, but be creative and spontaneous. If you think of more, make the list longer.
4. Don't try to list the activities in order of ability or preference. Just write as fast as you can. (The example in Figure 1.4 shows a variety of activities.)
5. After completing the list, record your feelings about this exercise.
6. Jot down your reactions to the following questions: Did you notice any themes or connections between your ideas? If so, what are the similarities? Are there any connections that you might build on in terms of career–life planning?
7. How do you think this exercise will help you with your career–life planning process? Write your answers on your sheet. What did you learn?

Add this exercise to your portfolio.

FIGURE 1.4

Example of Exercise 1.2, 25 Things I Love to Do

25 THINGS I LOVE TO DO

1. Play my guitar
2. Read science fiction novels
3. Hike in the woods
4. Ride horses
5. Browse through bookstores
6. Save money for future investments
7. Organize social events
8. Tell jokes and stories
9. Visit friends and family members
10. Go swing dancing
11. Eat my favorite foods
12. Shop at the mall
13. Watch sporting events
14. Walk in the snow
15. Help other people
16. Fish with my friends
17. Drive my car
18. Sleep in on weekends
19. Attend classes
20. Research on the Internet
21. Play board games
22. Go to the movies
23. Listen to live jazz
24. Travel to new places
25. Run with my dog

I found this exercise . . .

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If you use your skills in a satisfying and productive way, you are likely to find more happiness in your work.

Source: Shutterstock

Assessing Your Skills: What Are You Good At?

It is important to analyze your interests and passions as critical pieces in the career–life decision-making process. Perhaps equally important is an accurate assessment of your skills. (You may have the desire to be the next LeBron James or Kobe Bryant on the basketball court, but unless you have the necessary skills, it probably won't happen for you.) As with interests, if you are using your skills in a satisfying and productive way, you will likely find more happiness in your work. In other words, a "good fit" with both your interests and skills leads to greater fulfillment in your life.

Let's examine several different skill sets. First, look at *natural* skill areas. What are your natural gifts? Perhaps you have artistic abilities or mechanical skills. Genetics does play a significant role in terms of skill development. To return to the example of LeBron James, he no doubt is naturally gifted with exceptional athletic abilities. Granted, he worked diligently to develop those skills, yet genetics also played a major part in his rise to basketball stardom. You will have the opportunity to assess your own natural talents later in this chapter.

A second question to ask yourself is "What skills do I want to use?" Think back to the previous discussion about working with *data*, *people*, and *things*. Of these three primary areas, where might your skills best fit?

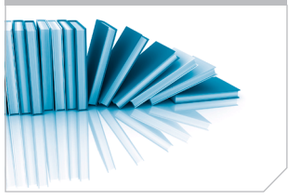
Data: Skills include analyzing, organizing, computing, managing, assessing, interpreting, manipulating, investigating, and calculating.

People: Skills include teaching, counseling, selling, negotiating, persuading, public speaking, debating, caring, treating, and entertaining.

Things: Skills include lifting, operating, drilling, cutting, driving, loading, installing, removing, building, and constructing.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

GOAL SETTING



A Look at Skills

You are skillful. *What general skills do you see yourself using? There may be other skill areas that are not listed above. Feel free to include them in your answer here.*

You may have some general ideas about what industry or business you wish to enter. It's also possible that you are considering several different industries. As part of your skill assessment, you should think about industry-specific

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skills. What skills are needed to be successful in a particular job? Do you have those skills? If not, can you gain them either before or once you enter that industry?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

DO YOU MEASURE UP?

Most successful workers can articulate the skills they need to perform their jobs successfully. What abilities do you possess? What skills are required for the occupation or career program that you have selected or are considering?

1. *List at least one occupation or industry you are considering:*

2. *Next, write down which of the three main directions (data, people, things) this industry best fits into (remember, it can be a combination of the three):*

3. *Jot down at least five skills necessary to be successful in that work:*

4. *Do you have the skills to be successful in this occupation? If not, what might you need to do to develop or hone the necessary skills? Explain.*

You Can Take Them with You: A Look at Transferable Skills

You may have read the career-planning book *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, in which the author uses a term he calls "transferable skills" (Bolles, 2009). *Transferable skills* are those abilities that you can transport from one work environment to another. More specifically, they are skills that you can use in most job positions, regardless of the industry. These skills are learned both through formal courses, such as the ones you may be enrolled in at your educational institution, and through informal learning that occurs through life experiences.

If you are a student, you are currently honing your transferable (or portable) skills. Did you ever question the benefit of a certain written project? Or did you ever pause to question the worth of that dreadful group work you had to endure last term? The good news is that you were developing your written communication and teamwork skills, respectively. Transferable skills are more important than ever in the new millennium, especially because you will enter numerous work situations throughout your lifetime.

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Your Toolkit of Skills: An Overview

- *Critical thinking and reflection skills:* the ability to use higher-level problem-solving skills to address a variety of issues and dilemmas
- *Information management skills:* the ability to organize and synthesize data and other information in order to research, present information, and solve problems
- *Interpersonal skills:* the ability to get along with people, articulate your ideas, empathize with others' points of view, and be understanding
- *Techno-literate skills:* the ability to use the Internet, use the computer for basic skills, and communicate using technology (such as e-mail, fax machines, and so forth)
- *Communication skills:* the ability to write and speak effectively (including speaking in public) and to interpret nonverbal communications from others
- *Learning to learn:* the ability to learn how you learn best in a new situation, to adapt to new learning situations, and to be flexible and open to new information and learning methods; also called "*learning agility*" (Eichinger, Lombardo, & Raymond, 2004)

Another portable skill is what we refer to as *navigational skills*. Navigational skills include the ability to become familiar with a new system in order to meet your objectives. It is the ability and resourcefulness to be able to "navigate" one's way through a bureaucracy or complex system. Navigational skills can be used in almost any daily life experience, including work. These skills are crucial as you acclimate to multiple new work environments in the future.

Finally, all individuals must develop solid *transitional and adaptation skills*. It is vital that you know how to manage your own transitions. You have to become flexible and learn how to cope with transitions in times of personal and professional change. Transferable skills are invaluable to all of us for successful employment because they serve as anchors as employees change jobs more frequently in the future.

In today's marketplace, it is important that employees know how they learn best in new work situations. Feller and Whichard (2005) refer to workers of the 21st century as "knowledge nomads," or global pioneers (p. 48).

In addition to "learning how to learn," most knowledge nomads possess several additional abilities, including:

- abstraction
- systems thinking
- experimentation
- collaboration (p. 49)

Furthermore, several character traits are typical of knowledge nomads. These include comfort with being contract workers or temporary employees, comfort with ambiguity, lifelong learning, the ability to thrive on pressure, mobility, thirst or yearning for adventure, and a propensity toward entrepreneurship and creativity in work (Feller & Whichard, 2005, pp. 50–51).

To be successful in the workplace, today's employees need to develop and practice these traits. Consider strategies that help you gain these valuable abilities (e.g., internships, volunteer experiences, and work opportunities).

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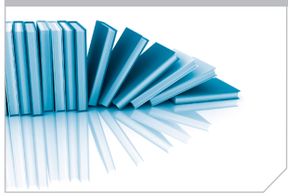
What Do Employers Want? Communication Is Key!

What do employers expect from you in terms of skills? According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook 2009, employers want new graduates to have strong communication skills—both written and verbal. In fact, since 1999, communication skills have been at the top of the list (in 2008, communication was tied for first with strong work ethic). Ironically, "communication skills" is the skill most employers say graduating college students lack. Honesty and integrity are also important attributes that employers expect from graduates.

Following are the most important skills and traits, according to the NACE report, in order of importance:

1. **Communication (written and verbal)**
2. **Strong work ethic**
3. **Teamwork skills (works well with others)**
4. **Initiative**
5. **Interpersonal skills**

PRACTICAL EXERCISE



DO YOU MEASURE UP?

Assessing Your Skills

1. *What skills are your strengths?*

2. *What skill areas need some improvement?*

3. *What can you actively do to develop these skill sets? Think about specific activities such as internships, community service, and so forth.*

You are encouraged to learn more about assessing your skills by completing Exercises 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5. Also, you may want to ask your career adviser or counselor about an assessment called *StrengthsFinder* or *StrengthsQuest*, published by the Gallup organization. This tool can be especially helpful in assisting you to identify your main strengths that you possess and how you might apply your top strengths to your work and life decisions.

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exercise

1.3 Natural Talents

What natural talents do you have? This is a question that may best be asked in your teenage years because you are more likely to select the skills most natural to you rather than choosing skills you acquire through training and education. Your natural skills are the skills you were born with. They are the skills that you most likely use well and enjoy using most. Later in life, with education and training, you acquire additional skills.

1. Imagine yourself at age 13. Remember the activities you enjoyed doing most and the games you played. Did you love to play sports? Did you sing or dance? Did you enjoy spending time on a computer or solving puzzles? The answers to questions like these will help you assess the skills that come to you naturally.
2. On a piece of paper, title this exercise "Natural Talents." Write down at least five natural talents you have. What talents have you had since you were a small child? These should be talents you've always possessed—not ones you've acquired.
3. Answer the following questions: How are you using your natural talents in your current work? How might you apply those talents to future career–life planning decisions? What skills or talents that you are not presently using could you use in the future?

Add this exercise to your portfolio.

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exercise

1.4 12 Things That I Am Good at Doing

In this activity, focus on the things that you are really good at doing—your skills. This list should include acquired skills, ones that you have learned through experience or training.

The first work of the Artist is Herself.

—LAWRENCE G. BOLDT

1. Take a piece of paper, and title it "12 Things That I Am Good at Doing."
2. Start by writing down what you do best. Your goal is to make a list of 12 things you do really well. Your list can be longer, but include at least 12 skills. Do not censor your thoughts. Write down everything you do well. (See Figure 1.5 for an example of such a list.)
3. If you have difficulty generating enough items, ask a friend, parent, sibling, teacher, or supervisor. Before asking, first make an effort to do it on your own.
4. Next, write down your reactions and feelings about this exercise. How do you think it may have benefited (or even hindered) you? Your feelings may be positive or negative.
5. If it is easier for you to do this exercise by clustering, please do so.

FIGURE 1.5

Example of Exercise 1.4, 12 Things That I Am Good at Doing

12 THINGS THAT I AM GOOD AT DOING

1. Riding and training horses
2. Telling interesting stories
3. Using the computer to find useful information
4. Playing the guitar and singing
5. Changing parts in automobiles
6. Organizing data and systems
7. Planning social activities
8. Writing short stories
9. Teaching others
10. Giving presentations in public
11. Cooking new dishes
12. Driving my sport utility vehicle

I found this exercise . . .

This is no time for modesty. In an interview situation, you must to be confident and comfortable discussing your skills and how you can contribute. Don't be shy or reticent about what you are good at. You have talents and abilities that are uniquely yours. Brag about them.

Place the results of this exercise in your portfolio.

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exercise

1.5 My Five Greatest Achievements

Another strategy you can use to assess skills and interests involves examining your greatest achievements. You used certain abilities to earn those accomplishments. By analyzing your achievements, you will be able to accurately assess what skills you possess. What is an achievement? It's an activity that gives you a sense of pride, a feeling of fulfillment. Where do achievements come from? Everywhere! Look for achievements at home, at school, on the job, through a hobby, or in a club or organization.

1. Title a piece of paper "My Five Greatest Achievements."
2. Describe five accomplishments in which you felt good about the outcome. Include the value or benefit derived from each activity. Here are some examples: helped my residence hall council reach its charity goals, improved the environment through active participation in the Sierra Club, helped serve dinner for the homeless, improved morale and production at my work site, and so forth. You get the idea.
3. Look for achievements from home, school, and community.
4. If you have worked, look for the work experiences that gave you real satisfaction.
   - Concentrate on specific projects. Spend some time writing out the details.
   - Include percentages, numbers, dollars, and dates. You want to quantify your accomplishments whenever possible. This activity will also help when it comes time to create your resume.
   - Use action verbs; be explicit.

PORTFOLIO

Place the results of this exercise in your portfolio.

After completing the exercise, record your feelings about this activity here.

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Values Assessment: What Is Important to You?

Why might it be important to examine values in this process of self-assessment? A *value* is simply defined as "that which is important to you." We all have different values, and we are all driven by a different combination of motivators. Additionally, all of us have different lifestyle preferences. A *lifestyle preference* can be viewed as an integrated component of your value system. In this section, we will explore life and career values and lifestyle preferences.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

GOAL SETTING

A Look Inward

Values. *Career counselor Howard Figler (1999) believes that "values are at the center of every career-related decision." Do you agree or disagree? Explain. What are some of your personal values?*

Career planning and management done without taking into account your life mission and values is work resting on a weak foundation.

—M. L. BURTON AND R. A. WEDEMEYER, *IN TRANSITION*

Although there is no "right" answer to this question, we agree with Howard Figler. Values are at the center of every career decision. We place varying levels of importance on a variety of values, or qualities, that are important to us. As we make decisions about entering a particular career or changing positions, we inevitably return (whether consciously or unconsciously) to our value systems, personal systems that have been shaped and reshaped over our lives. We all have been influenced by a person, a situation, or perhaps a series of events. Parents tend to be powerful influences when it comes to shaping our value systems, as in the case of Xuan.

PROFILE

Introducing Xuan. Xuan is a first-year, nontraditional student in a career program. She is 39 years old and is a single mother of two children. She is a part-time student and works 30 hours per week. She has always been an outstanding student, and she loves the legal field. She values education and learning, and she is considering a paralegal career. Where did Xuan acquire these values? She does not need to look far. Both of her parents worked in the legal profession. Her father was a corrections officer in her

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hometown, and her mother is a social worker in the prison system helping inmates with parole transitions. Xuan has been around education her entire life, and her parents emphasize the importance of a good education.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

GOAL SETTING

Do Values Really Matter?

Exploring values: Impact of the earthquake in Haiti. *The tragic earthquake that occurred in Haiti in January 2010 is still very fresh in our minds. Many people reported that the tragic day changed their lives forever. For example, a significant number of people said that they planned to make changes in their lives—including personal relationships and career decisions. Similar feelings have been inspired by the tragic events of 9/11 and the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005.*

Many people say that "doing work that is personally meaningful to me" is very important. They want to engage in work that provides them with a sense of meaning and satisfaction. How did the events of the earthquake in Haiti, Hurricane Katrina, or 9/11 affect you?

your turn . . .

Briefly respond to the following questions regarding values:

1. How important is it for you to do work that is meaningful?

2. What might you choose to do that would give you a sense of meaning and satisfaction?

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3. If you were to list your top three to five values (things that you had to have in a job), what would they be?

Some individuals place a high value on money and material possessions. Others place a low value. The following anecdote depicts one young recent college graduate and her priorities.

I'LL TAKE THE RED ONE, PLEASE

A young female college graduate in engineering is searching for her first full-time job. She is in the final stages of the interview process. At the end of the graduate's last interview, the human resources representative asks the engineer from Stanford, "What starting salary were you thinking about?" The engineer responds, "In the neighborhood of $95,000 a year, depending on the benefits package." The interviewer says, "Well, what would you say to a package of five weeks' vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, a company matching retirement fund to 50 percent of salary, and your own car, say, a black or red BMW Z3 2.3, depending on your personal preference, of course?" The engineer sits up straight in the chair and reacts instantly, "Wow! Are you kidding?" The interviewer quips, "Yeah, I am kidding, but hey, you started it."

Granted, we all like to be compensated for our good work. But there is more to the story, right? Money is one reason we work, but it isn't the only reason. For many people, in fact, the pursuit of money and material wealth is not even the primary reason for choosing a career, or for accepting a particular position, or for working so arduously. What might be other reasons?

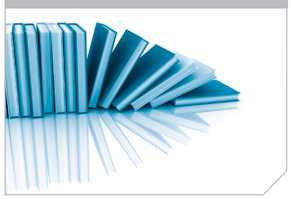
A person is rich in proportion to the number of things he (she) can do without.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

In responding to this question, consider what is most important to you in terms of work. Again, your personal value system will influence how you make career–life decisions. Work values that may be given the most attention could include creativity, independence, prestige, salary, and stability. Keep in mind that each individual is motivated by different factors. It is important that you give considerable thought to what is important to you. Not surprisingly, if you have a clear idea about your own value system, you will make future decisions more confidently.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

GOAL SETTING



What Matters to You?

What motivates you? *Take three minutes to respond in writing to the following question: What motivates you (other than the money and the red sports car)? Realize that there are no right or wrong responses to this question. Set two to three goals based on what matters to you.*

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Lifestyle preferences can include whether or not you want to travel as part of your job.

Source: Shutterstock

Taking a Look at Lifestyle Preferences

In the previous section, we discussed values as they relate to work and career. It is also important to explore lifestyle preferences, or nonwork issues. However, be careful not to view "work" issues separately from "nonwork" issues. *HIRED!* takes a holistic approach to career–life planning and acknowledges that all issues are interrelated.

Lifestyle preferences include the type of residence in which you live, the size of the location (city versus rural) where you live, the possessions you own, the climate in your part of the country, the community activities you participate in, and other aspects of your life. Your lifestyle preferences could affect the type of job you have and vice versa. Let's take a closer look at one of the lifestyle preferences mentioned—where you live. In other words, geography matters.

Your preferences regarding where you want to live are extremely important, and many young people must make this important lifestyle decision. Consider this classic study on creative, young knowledge workers, whom economist Richard Florida (2002) refers to as the "creative class." More than 40 million people work in the "creative" sector. According to Florida, individuals in the creative class tend to move to geographic areas that embrace and foster these traits, known as creative centers or creative hubs. Many individuals are also choosing a more mobile lifestyle. Despite the rise of technological advances, geography and place still matter greatly.

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exercise

1.6 Values Clarification

How do you determine what values are most important to you? You have already had the chance to complete a short inventory on lifestyle preferences. Another strategy is to do a values clarification exercise in which you assess each value in terms of its importance to you.

1. Take a piece of paper, and title it "Values Clarification." Place it lengthwise. At the top margin, from left to right, write "ALWAYS VALUED," "OFTEN VALUED," "SOMETIMES VALUED," "SELDOM VALUED," and "NEVER VALUED." Each title should have its own column.
2. Your task is to assess each value presented below and to write it under the title that seems most appropriate to you.
3. Go through the list, value by value, until all have been entered in the columns according to your personal value system.

LIST OF VALUES: WHAT DOES EACH MEAN TO YOU IN TERMS OF YOUR VALUES?

Accomplishment	Safety	Aesthetics	Cooperation	Travel
Developing New Skills	Education	Economic Return	Environment	Family
Working Outdoors	Health	Helping Others	Independence	Integrity
Community Service	Loyalty	Management	Pleasure	Power
Persuading Others	Prestige	Recognition	Teamwork	Spirituality
Raising a Family	Security	Having a Partner	Physical Fitness	Adventure
Supervising Others	Status	Ethics/Morality	Artistic Creativity	Fame
Working w/ Tools	Variety	Leisure Time	Material Wealth	Religion
Intellectual Stimulation	Respect	Challenge	Honesty	Comfort
Personal Appearance	Organization	Productivity	Time to Yourself	Patriotism
Entertaining Others	Opportunity	Freedom	Advancement	

Include other values not listed that are important to you. Address the following questions:

1. Did any of your results surprise you? Explain.
2. Do you see these values changing in the future? Which ones? How so?
3. What themes emerge from your results (e.g., valuing security and structure over change and variety)?
4. How might this exercise benefit you in your career–life decision-making process? What did you learn about yourself from this activity?
5. In 25 words or less, write a brief description of your value system.

Good work! **Place this exercise in your portfolio along with the other activities you have completed.**

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Assessing Personality and Work-Style Preferences

What work environment do you think would be ideal for you? Do you get energy from being around people or from finding more privacy? How do you best make decisions? All of these questions relate to personality preferences. Like interests, skills, and values, your personality profile is unique to you. There is no perfect or model personality type. In fact, the world would be an extremely boring place if all of us had identical personality characteristics.

To find out what is truly individual in ourselves, profound reflection is needed: and suddenly we realize how uncommonly difficult the discovery of individuality in fact is.

—CARL JUNG, PSYCHOLOGIST

Knowing your personality preferences as you progress through your lifelong decision-making process is important. Work environments vary tremendously. For instance, some work situations are extremely structured, while others are more spontaneous and fluid. Your personality preferences will help determine what environment is a good fit for you. In turn, your comfort level with the personality fit between you and the work environment will affect how happy and satisfied you are with your work.

There are many instruments used to assess personality types. The most commonly used instrument is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI). You should consider taking the MBTI at your college career center or via a career counselor. A brief overview will be presented here, but this information should not serve as a substitute for the actual assessment.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® is based on the psychological theories of Carl Jung. Isabel Myers and Katharine Cook Briggs, a mother–daughter team, constructed the instrument, which is a personality inventory based on how you fit along four dimensions:

- *Extroversion/Introversion refers to where you focus your attention.* In other words, do you get energy from being with others or from being alone?
- *Sensing/Intuition refers to how you prefer to take in information.* Individuals who prefer Sensing like to take in information that is tangible and real (i.e., through the five senses). People who prefer Intuition tend to take in information by viewing the big picture.
- *Thinking/Feeling refers to how you make decisions.* People who prefer the Thinking dimension examine the logical consequences and implications of an action or selection. Individuals who prefer Feeling in decision making tend to get others involved and make decisions based on compassion and empathy.
- *Judging/Perceiving refers to how one deals with the outer world.* Judging types prefer to live in a planned and predictable manner with a high degree of order. Perceiving types like to live in a more flexible and spontaneous way.

The MBTI scoring is based on a continuum for each scale, with an individual having a preference in one direction over the other on each dimension.

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The scoring results in a four-letter type based on the preferences (there are 16 different types). The assessment helps you understand how you function in different work environments, how you work, how you make decisions, and how you assimilate information. It does not measure interests, skills, values, or motivation to succeed. Nor does it directly recommend career fields or suitable occupations.

The MBTI is used for individual awareness as well as in team situations. Numerous organizations are using the MBTI to enhance teamwork in the workplace as they move to a team-based approach to projects.

How Does Personality Apply to Today's Workplace?

It may seem that we are belaboring the point of the changing workplace. However, it is worth mentioning again in terms of personality assessment. You will be entering multiple work situations in the future, and it is critical that you have an accurate understanding of your personality preferences and the work environments in which you will thrive.

The workplace has changed dramatically in recent years. We will address trends in more depth in Chapter 3, but consider here some of the developments in workplace environments.

- More and more employees are telecommuting; many work from homes or even from a ski lodge in the middle of the mountains.
- Work can be 24/7. Given the development of communication technology, many employees have a "virtual" office; they can work anytime and anyplace thanks to cell phones, iPhones, Blackberrys, and other devices (note: this constant work culture is **not** necessarily a welcomed change, according to Conley, 2009).
- Many workers don't have an actual office space. They are out in their respective fields attempting to serve their clients directly, on-site.
- Flattened organizational structures and smaller staffs result in more cross-functional teams.
- The "green economy" will add more jobs in the future.
- Many of an organization's services and functions are being outsourced. Many individuals are working as independent consultants (free agents) or external vendors who sell their products and services to potential employers.

Another question that you should ask yourself is, "Do I want to work in a small, medium, or large organization?" Your personality preferences will affect how you answer that question. For example, if you seek a great deal of interaction with people and see yourself thriving in a structured work environment, you may opt to work in a larger organization.

In reality, however, the number of people seeking work in smaller organizations has increased significantly. Many young graduates will not be looking for employment at Fortune 100 companies but rather at smaller and midsized organizations.

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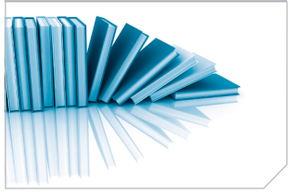
PRACTICAL EXERCISE



ARE YOU PREPARED?

Working in Different Settings

Big or small? Office, home, or virtual? *Do you think you would be more comfortable in a small, medium, or large organization? Perhaps you do not want to work directly for an organization at all but rather want to be an independent consultant. Could you see yourself telecommuting, or working in a "virtual" organization?*

Exercise 1.7, Work-Style Preferences, will help you assess your own needs and desires regarding your work situation.

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exercise 1.7

Work-Style Preferences

Your work-style preferences indicate how and where you like to work. They can include the type of structure you like to work in, the size of the organization, the number of hours devoted to work, the type of environment, whether you prefer to work alone or on a team, the flexibility of your work hours, and so forth.

This exercise on work-style preferences will help you gain an appreciation of how your personality can influence the work environment you seek. For each statement, put 1 if it is a factor you DON'T SEEK MUCH in a work situation, 2 if it is a factor that you SEEK in a work situation, or 3 if it is a factor that you SEEK VERY MUCH in a work situation.

_____ 1. Own office: Work in a setting where I have my own private office

_____ 2. Work alone: Do projects by myself, with limited contact with others

_____ 3. Set own hours: Have the flexibility to come and go as I wish

_____ 4. Work under pressure: Work under deadlines where pressure is common

_____ 5. Decision responsibility: Have to make significant hiring and firing decisions

_____ 6. Teamwork: Work on projects with team members

_____ 7. Working unplugged: Be able to work on a computer away from an office

_____ 8. Casual attire: Decide what I want to wear to work (within reason)

_____ 9. Uncertainty: Expect every day to be different; have frequent change in routine

_____ 10. Compensation: Have a stable rate of pay regardless of effort; earn no commissions

By identifying your most important and least important work-style preferences, you can focus on career directions, specific jobs, and work settings that suit your personal style. Almost as important, you will be able to eliminate those careers or work situations with which your style might conflict. As with all aspects of self-assessment, work-style preference is another piece of the overall career–life jigsaw puzzle.

follow-up questions

1. What were the items that you indicated you "SEEK VERY MUCH"?

2. What were the items that you indicated you "DON'T SEEK MUCH"?

3. How might this activity on work-style preferences help in the decision-making process for a new job or a job change?

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exercise

1.8 Analyzing the Holland Personality Types

John Holland (1997), a pioneer in the field of career development, developed a theory in which he described six different personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. He theorized that each individual has a preference for one type over another. Individuals can have a combination of preferences that is called a theme. One example of a theme is SAE, with social the most preferred, artistic second, and enterprising third. Holland also generated personality code themes for occupations. Once you know your personal theme, you can gauge your "fit" with various occupations of interest. The Strong Interest Inventory (SII) is based on Holland's personality types. You can complete the SII through your career development center or a trained career counselor.

1. Read the descriptions of each type (below). Rank the types from 1 to 6, with 1 being most like you and 6 being least like you.
2. After ranking the types, generate a code based on your top three rankings (i.e., rankings 1, 2, 3). This is your informal Holland code.
3. Now, go to your career center and inquire about computerized assessment programs, or take the SII. Obtain the results from either exercise.
4. Compare your own rankings with the results from the software program or inventory.
5. Address the Follow-Up Questions. **Place the results of this exercise in your portfolio.**

HOLLAND PERSONALITY TYPES: GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS

_____ *Realistic.* You like to work with things. You enjoy working with your hands and fixing things. You prefer things that seem real rather than ideas or concepts. You enjoy mechanical and/or athletic tasks.

_____ *Investigative.* You enjoy logical thinking and like to understand how things work. You like scientific tasks, mathematical problem solving, and research.

_____ *Artistic.* You enjoy art, dance, acting, and music. You appreciate creativity and free expression. You may oppose conformity and structure.

_____ *Social.* You enjoy working with others. You like to solve problems by talking about them. Your work with people often includes helping, counseling, and teaching.

_____ *Enterprising.* You like to lead people and are comfortable supervising others. You like to be in control and often thrive on competition. You enjoy talking, persuading, selling, and negotiating.

_____ *Conventional.* You keep things in order and appreciate rules and instructions. You tend to be good with details and are very careful and accurate with numbers, measurements, accounting, and so forth.

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follow-up questions

1. What is your three-letter theme code? How does your personal ranking compare to the assessment ranking from the software program or inventory?

2. Were you surprised at any of the results? Explain why or why not.

3. Based on these results, what careers do you plan to research more thoroughly?

4. How did the results confirm what you already knew about yourself?

5. Briefly describe how you plan to use the results of this inventory in your major and career-planning process.

What Do You Bring to a Work Situation?

The final two areas of assessment involve *experiences* and *advantages*—what you bring to a work situation. This component of self-assessment often gets overlooked because individuals don't realize its importance when looking at work opportunities.

Experiences include anything in your past that you can use to market yourself. For example, many nontraditional students have many years of work and life experience that can help them in their job searches.

Monica is a 40-year-old mother of two who is returning to college to complete her degree in psychology. Prior to returning to school, she worked for more than 15 years in a social service agency interacting with underserved clients in the inner city. Monica will market those years of learning experience to a prospective employer.

During his junior year, Mark decided to participate in his college's national student exchange program. He studied at an institution in California. During his experience, he met people from across the world. Mark gained a greater awareness of diversity issues and realized that he enjoyed working with diverse populations. During his job search, Mark should emphasize the awareness he gained through his exchange experience.

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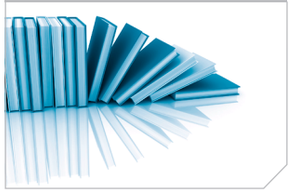
PRACTICAL EXERCISE



GOAL SETTING

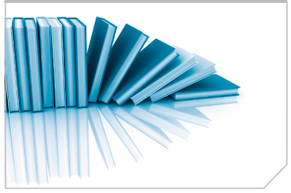
Looking at Your Experiences

Experience is a plus. *What experiences have you had that you can bring with you? Think about how you might market these experiences in an interview. Attempt to name at least three.*

You also bring **advantages** with you. Management consultant William Bridges (1994) uses the comparable term *assets*. An advantage is any characteristic, life event, or circumstance that you can use in your favor. It may not get you the job on its own, but, coupled with other highlights in your portfolio, it will give you a leg up on the competition. Consider the following types of advantages:

- *Connections*. Knowing someone at a place of employment where you wish to be hired. For example, Julia has a friend who works in the human resource division of XYZ organization.
- *Ethnicity/Culture*. For example, Juan is a multiracial graduate student. He knows three languages and hopes to work with the growing Hispanic population.
- *Special Skills*. For example, Mike, who works in the hospitality field, is looking for a part-time job to supplement his income. Mike has played the piano for 20 years. He meets a colleague who is a member of a dinner club that is looking for someone to play piano on the weekends. Mike now has a part-time job plus the chance to network.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE



WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

Identifying Your Assets and "Selling" Them

Advantage: You! *What advantages do you bring to a work situation? Think about special circumstances, skills, or life events that you could turn to your favor. Remember—the key is to market these advantages to a potential employer. Employers expect graduates to be able to articulate what they can bring to the workplace.*

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exercise 1.9

Chapter 1 Action Steps

Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.

—CONFUCIUS

1. After reading through Chapter 1, how well do you think you know yourself—that is, your interests, abilities, values, and so on?

2. What steps can you take to get to know yourself even better?

3. Briefly outline two or three concrete action steps that you intend to take within the next few months.

4. What are the obstacles or barriers toward taking these action steps and meeting your goals?

5. What might you do to overcome these barriers? Identify two or three strategies that might work.

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Summary

You have thoroughly assessed your interests, passions, skills, values, personality preferences, and other variables. You have successfully completed your first significant step in finding rewarding and meaningful work. Next, you will have the opportunity to explore goal setting and decision making in greater depth. You will have the chance to practice setting goals, including identifying potential barriers. Finally, you will be introduced to new decision-making models that will assist you.

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