

Step 1: Take Time to Self Assess

by Debbie Lousberg

Recently laid off? Unhappily employed? New to the area and looking for work? In need of a part-time job? So your first step in getting that next job is revamping your resume, right? Wrong! There's one important step ahead of that – self assessment – which is often overlooked, yet crucial to your job success and satisfaction.

Jumping into the first opportunity that comes along without evaluating your own strengths, preferences, wants and needs can lead to discontent and disillusionment at work. Take control of your search, own some power in the job search process and find a position that excites you, uses your best attributes, and provides you with meaning and satisfaction. Even if you feel that you must accept the next offer, you can ensure that at least you'll be a few steps closer to your ideal job by self assessing.

Carefully considering what you want in your next job can be as simple and quick or as in-depth and extensive as you like, depending upon your situation. Even if you need to be employed immediately, spend some time with questions such as these:

- What work-related activities are you naturally good at doing?
- What tasks have you been recognized for by co-workers and supervisors?
- What types of things do you learn quickly?
- What are some of your greatest career accomplishments?
- List your favorite aspects of your last job which you'd like to experience again.
- Define your hard and soft skills; prioritize them in order of preference.
- What adjectives and phrases best describe you? How would your colleagues describe you?
- What were outcomes of any formal career assessments you've taken?
- What did you want to be when you were in school?
- What interests and hobbies do you have now?
- List your work-related values – those things that matter most to you on the job.
- What are your personal requirements around factors such as salary, benefits, commute time, size of company, work hours, management style, company culture, and dress code?

Be sure to write your answers down. There's something very powerful about getting an idea out of your head and onto paper. This tangible document, like a Job Search Journal, creates a road map and plan for creating the kind of work life you desire. Take time to get to the bottom of these questions and see what patterns emerge. Your answers are all keys to your strengths, passions, times and places where you are happiest. There is where your work should be centered.

If you want to take this process further and have the luxury of time, and many cases, money, seek out some career exploration tools such as Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Strengthsfinder, Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory or any of the numerous interest and skills surveys available, which you can find by doing an internet search on "career assessments". Remember that one assessment's results does not give you the only answer, but rather, a few assessments, and especially your own (as outlined above) will give you a clearer picture of what career path you may be best suited for.

Self assessment provides you with information easily overlooked or forgotten and is especially important during job search. Reminding yourself of when you were at your best and performing at your highest will boost your confidence and focus your search. Your resume should clearly reflect your findings and your interviews will be filled with discussions about experiences in which you excelled. Go after not just any job, but the right job!

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