

# CAREER CORNER

#10 IN A SERIES

# Self-Assessment

## The Foundation for Your Career

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### HOW SELF-ASSESSMENT CAN HELP YOUR CAREER

Self-assessment is the first and most practical step in career planning. It is the process of gathering information about yourself in order to make informed career decisions for the future. Through self-assessment you will become more aware of your strengths and weaknesses, skills, interests, and values. As adults we may think we know ourselves well. However, life circumstances change over time, and it helps to reevaluate occasionally. The jobs and careers you choose in your lifetime depend a lot on who you are. What are your interests? What are your strongest skills? What personal values are most important to you? What is your personality type? Each of these self-assessment questions helps you identify strengths and assess weaknesses that can be improved upon. It's difficult to target your career, write a resume, or convince an employer that you are the best candidate for the job unless you have a clear understanding of what you have to offer. Self-assessment builds your confidence and allows you to clearly articulate your achievements, aspirations, and goals.

### WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

You can begin your self-assessment by examining your unique capabilities.

Review and list past experiences that provided you with a sense of satisfaction, accomplishment, or self-worth. Recall experiences that were not satisfying, so you don't repeat them. Determine which experiences were most valuable to you and those that exemplified your strongest interests. Identify the skills you employed during each of these experiences. For further self-assessment, you can also utilize career assessment tools. These are very helpful resources that can assist in your quest to enhance self-understanding. There are many online career assessment tools available on the Internet; others can be found in career guides and career books at your local library. (See Related Resources.)

### WHAT ARE CAREER ASSESSMENT TOOLS?

Career assessment tools typically evaluate some combination of your interests, personality, and values in relation to possible career choices. These tools can track the skills you have already developed and identify areas that may need improvement. Career instruments can confirm that you are currently on the right path with your educational and career plans, or they can give you ideas for career options you may not have previously considered. Overall, the key to using assessment tools is spending time rediscovering yourself, and employing that information to help direct

your future. Online career assessment tools are generally user-friendly, fully interactive, and most often do not require an extensive time commitment. Many online career assessment tools are free, while others require nominal or moderate fees. Most results and profiles are provided upon completion. Some must be printed out and scored manually. Results often yield some useful and thought-provoking information. (See Related Resources.)

It is advisable to take several career assessments to determine which tests provide the most reliable results for you. Be sure to compare the assessment profiles that are generated to see which ones might meet your needs. As you compare the results for potential career options, note any emerging patterns that provide a theme or "career snapshot." Also, trust your instincts. If a career assessment tool offers a career possibility that doesn't suit you or suggests traits that don't ring true, you should disregard that information. Or, if your career-assessment results create more confusion than clarity, you may want to talk with a professional career counselor to further review your options. These tools are not designed to provide the magic answer to attaining your career goals. Rather, they are intended to promote self-discovery, help provide guidance, and generate ideas for further research. The career choices you make should reflect who



you are. With a greater understanding of your unique characteristics, recognizing suitable career options and establishing a career plan will become an easier task.

## SKILLS, INTERESTS, AND VALUES: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THEY?

Very simply, skills are the talents, knowledge, and abilities you gain through experience and training. Some of the most important are your transferable skills. These are the general, versatile proficiencies acquired over time that can be applied to a variety of occupations. Transferable skills include those that deal with communication, leadership, management, human relations, and organization; they are the ones that employers seek, the building blocks for career success. You are the best judge of your abilities, so as you conduct your self-assessment and review your background, the areas you excel in will become prominent. It will be evident how these skills have positively impacted the career goals you have previously met and how they can contribute to future successes. You may also become more aware of the skills you would like to strengthen.

Your interests are another important area addressed through self-assessment. What are your favorite activities? What subjects do you enjoy studying? Your responses to these questions typify what grabs your curiosity and attention and point to the activities you find pleasurable. For example, you may enjoy attending the theatre or sports events. You may be interested in learning about literature, science, law, or world affairs. Your interests help to define who you are, and examining them can provide insight about potential career possibilities.

Assessing your values is another integral part of self-discovery. Developing the right career plan that leads you to meaningful work will require an insightful view of your values. Your values represent the things in life that have great worth and importance to you such as family, education, or religion. Values are personal; what has great value for one person may be of little value to another. They direct and

define who you are and how you shape your life and career. For example, a person who holds helping others as a value may choose to pursue a career in teaching or human services.

When considering your education and career goals, it is also critical to examine the rewards you want to achieve in your work and career. What is most valuable to you? It may be money, job security, creative freedom, flexible work schedule, travel, career mobility, or balance of work and family. One of these factors may be more motivational for you than another. Securing a job that is consistent with your personal values will significantly increase your chances of job satisfaction in the future.

## AN INTEGRAL PART OF YOUR CAREER

Devoting time to self-assessment is a smart investment. By completing a comprehensive self-assessment you will have an in-depth profile that will be one of your greatest resources for the future. It is also important to remember that self-discovery should be a continual experience. Just as life is ever-changing, your skills, interests, and values also evolve over time. Self-assessment is an ongoing process that can help you define and refine your most important personal attributes throughout your career and throughout your life. ■

## RELATED RESOURCES: CAREER ASSESSMENT TOOLS

### Self-Directed Search, John Holland

<http://www.self-directed-search.com/aboutsds.html>

### The Career Key

<http://www.careerkey.org>

### Transferable Skills Survey, University Of Minnesota

[http://www.d.umn.edu/student/loon/car/self/career\\_transfer\\_survey.html](http://www.d.umn.edu/student/loon/car/self/career_transfer_survey.html)

### Ansir's The 3 Sides of You® Self-Perception Profiler

<http://personal.ansir.com/test.htm>

### Workplace Values Assessment, Quintcareers.com

[http://www.quintcareers.com/workplace\\_values.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/workplace_values.html)

### Career Quiz, The Princeton Review

[http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/quiz/career\\_quiz2.asp](http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/quiz/career_quiz2.asp)

### Keirsey Temperament Sorter

[http://www.advisorteam.com/temperament\\_sorter/register.asp?partid=1](http://www.advisorteam.com/temperament_sorter/register.asp?partid=1)

### Online Career Assessment Tools Review, Quintcareers.com

[http://www.quintcareers.com/online\\_assessment\\_review.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/online_assessment_review.html)

### Career Assessment Books, Quintcareers.com

[http://www.quintcareers.com/assessment\\_books.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/assessment_books.html)

Enrolled students and alumni can access additional self-assessment resources and other career related resources at the Excelsior College Web site. Go to [www.excelsior.edu](http://www.excelsior.edu); then log in and click on the Career Resources link on your *MyEC* page, or for graduates, click on the Alumni Connection.

### Questions or comments about this article?

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