
What Do You Value?

When considering a job, how much time do you spend thinking about your values? If you're like most people not much time at all. True, just about everyone is concerned about money. Some people consider whether a company has opportunities for advancement.

But what about the things that make us feel good about our job? And by extension ourselves? The intangibles, things that are difficult to define and even trickier to measure. These are our values. And they are different for everyone.

Some people feel fulfilled when helping others. Others need the opportunity to work independently. Still others become frustrated when their job doesn't allow them to be creative. The key is identifying your values.

Few people find a job that satisfies them completely. Trying to find the perfect job is like trying to find the perfect mate. You need to know where you are willing to compromise and, maybe more importantly, where you are not.

What's Most Important?

When asked to name their values, many people immediately will say family is one of their most important values. Many people of these same people spend 30 percent to 50 percent or more time traveling for business. And they wonder why they're not happy.

Many people will say that money is not important. Not important at all. But they pine after beautiful designer clothing and are longing for the day when they can buy a boat. Not just a little boat mind you, a floating vacation home. Obviously, money has more value than they want to believe.

As you go through the exercises in this chapter, ignore that little voice reminding you of the *should's*. List what is valuable to you. Not what you think should be valuable. Not what your spouse or parents or children or whoever thinks should be important to you. There's plenty of time for that later.

Know that it's OK to want recognition for your work and expect a good salary. And you're not a bad mother if you don't want to stay home with the kids. It's not essential to have children at all. On the other hand, if you want to work part-time or be a stay-at-home Mom, that's fine too.

Money often gets a bad rap. Many of us, particularly women, are raised to believe that we need to be socially responsible. And that's a good thing. But being socially responsible can take many forms. It doesn't mean you need to work in a helping profession, unless that's what makes you happy.

Things You Love

One enlightening exercise is to make a list of the ten to 20 things you most like to do. Study the list to see if there is a pattern. Does it surprise you? Take a look at how often you do things you enjoy. Do you spend most of your life doing things you don't enjoy?

While you're at it, examine the way you like to do things. (This will give you additional insight into your personality.) Do you like to spend your time playing softball (being with a group) or curled up with a good book (being alone)? Do you prefer the excitement of downhill skiing or the relaxation of a day hiking in the woods?

Consider your answers to these questions when you are thinking about a new job or career. Imagine how you'll be spending your days on the job. Will you enjoy it?

Start by making a list of the things you most like to do. Try to come up with at least twenty. Include everything, even if it seems silly or unimportant. Here are a few from my list:

- Going to the movies and theatre
- Writing
- Reading books and magazines
- Meeting new people
- Developing new ideas
- Learning new things, taking classes
- Relaxing with my husband
- Eating pizza
- Working in the garden
- Playing with my puppy
- Taking vacations, preferably on our boat

Once you have your list, take some time to evaluate what these activities mean: Are your hobbies expensive? For example, it costs more to go skiing every weekend, than to see a movie. If most of your leisure activities involve spending money, then money may be more important to you than you think.

Are your favorite things a regular part of your life? If they're not maybe you need to rethink your schedule. If exercise is a priority, maybe you should consider working for a company with an in-house gym or health club discounts.

Take a look at each of your favorite activities. Use the following questions as a jumping off point. But be sure to add your own. Remember, you are the most important part of the equation.

- When did you last do this activity? Was it work-related?
- Are your leisure interests free or do they cost money? How much money?
- Do you do this alone or with others? If you're part of a team, are you the leader?
- Is this a fast-paced activity or a way to relax?
- Does this activity involve helping, teaching or leading others?
- Do your favorite pastimes challenge you and/or push you to be creative?
- Was there a goal associated with this pursuit? If so, what?
- Does this involve learning?
- Do you generally prefer to plan your activities, have them planned for you or go at the spur of the moment?
- Do your favorite things nourish your body, mind or spirit?

As for me, right now I don't have time for some of my hobbies. (Need to make more me time.) But, many of the things I love are part of my day-to-day life. Happily several are connected to my job. What about you?

Seeking Fulfillment

Another way to recognize what's important to you is to look at values that other people have identified as significant. Below are 25 values many people have named as important to them. Read through the list. Are any of these things important to you? Which ones?

Look at the list. Check off the statements that are most important to you. (This list is a starting point. Be sure to add anything that's important to you.)

- Achievement Having a feeling of accomplishment at the end of the day, week, or month.
- Helping Others Working with people one-on-one or in groups.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Creativity | Having the opportunity to create new policies, programs, materials. Using some of my own ideas. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Autonomy | Having control over my activities, working with little supervision. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Financial Gain | The potential to make a lot of money for my efforts. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Advancement | Knowing there is room for growth in my company, field, industry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Social Responsibility | Feeling that I am contributing, making the world a better place. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Team Work | Working with others towards a common goal. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Security | I need to know that my job will be there in five years. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Recognition | It's important to be recognized for my work, by my colleagues, my boss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Influence Others | Be in a position where I influence the opinions, attitudes and/or beliefs of others. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Social Status | Being considered important in my community. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Knowledge & Learning | My company provides ongoing training programs and tuition reimbursement. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Authority | Having the power to make decisions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Warm Environment | My coworkers are warm and friendly, we frequently have lunch together, and may socialize outside the office. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Responsibly | Supervising others, being responsible for the work of others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | High Activity | Being busy all the time, working in a fast paced environment, frequently under deadlines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Flexible Schedule | Having the option of making my own schedule. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Working Alone | Doing most of my work alone, without a lot of contact with other people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Time Off | Plenty of vacation time, Summer hours, that extra week during the Christmas holidays. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Artistic Endeavors | Using my creative talents, writing, drawing, other artistic pursuits. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Change & Variety | My duties and activities change frequently. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Adventure | My job often involves risk-taking, physical, financial, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Stability | Having a predicable schedule; I know what I'll be doing next week, next month. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Competition | My job, office, business, field is highly competitive, I enjoy competing with others |
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Choose Ten things which are most important to you. Whittle your list to five. Then consider how you might incorporate those into your next position.

Sign of the Times

It's important to note that values often change over time. When you are 25 you may value adventure and independence. Once you have a house and a couple of kids, the opportunity to travel to Europe several times a month may not be as inviting.

Values also are often dependent on your current needs. What's important to a single mom with three children to support may be different than a single woman who needs to support only herself.

On three separate occasions, I have worked full-time while going to school at night. This didn't leave much me time. On two occasions I was able to pursue what I valued because I was single. The third time, I had a supportive mate and it was easier still. However, if I had small children, I might have put off school (or taken fewer classes each semester) to spend more time with my family.

Realize that there are always trade-offs. But when you know what your values are, it's easier to work them into your life. It's also easier to come up with a happy compromise, when you know what you value most today.

Questions

Before moving to the next chapter, consider these questions from the Quick Checklist:

- How much money do you want or need to make? Does your salary validate your worth? Or are rewards less important?
- Are benefits important to you? This includes tuition reimbursement, company training, vacation time, holiday pay and medical benefits.
- In the larger scheme, what is important to you? What values or ideals would you like to further in the work that you do? This may include cleaning up the environment, making money, helping others, gaining prestige, etc. *Realize that you may be forced to choose one value over another when they conflict.*
- What hours do you want to work? Are you a 9 to 5er? Do you need a part-time, flexible schedule? What about working on the weekends?