



CHAPTER

2

SELF-ASSESSMENT:

Methods – Personal Qualities – Projects

How do I learn to know myself better?

Any major library has hundreds of books on the job hunting process. Nearly all of them recommend starting the job search with an analysis of goals. It is virtually impossible to start a journey without some idea of the destination.

Telling you to set some realistic career goals seems logical enough, but that is a long way from where you must start. How do you go about setting career goals? “To be successful in life” is just not specific enough for potential employers who want to know, “What can you do for me now?”

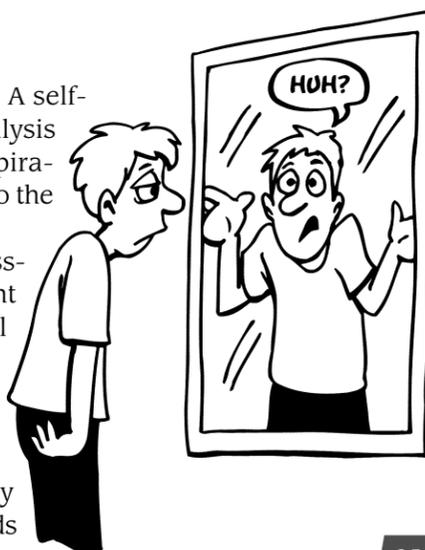
Self-Assessment

Purpose

A self-assessment is the starting point. A self-assessment is a detailed, thorough analysis of your background, interests, and aspirations. Literally hundreds of factors go into the analysis.

The reason you prepare a self-assessment is to determine the most important criteria to use in analyzing your potential career options. The goal is to arrive at an optimal (not a perfect) match between personal desires and your career alternatives.

There could reasonably be many career fields that would satisfy your needs



Personal Information Sources

- Parents
- Friends
- Employers
- Teachers
- Counselors
- References

Figure 2.1

and desires. Career planning is a decision-oriented process that proposes to rank order your list of career options. The results of your self-assessment will be used extensively in your interviews.

Definition

The self-assessment is a mental exercise. It involves putting thoughts on paper and then prioritizing them in an order that is useful in appraising future career directions.

Conducting a self-assessment is actually taking a personal inventory. First, make a list of the items in your “inventory.” Then assign a value in terms of

quantity, quality, and relative importance to each item. There are many methods that aid in this stock-taking process.

Few, if any employers hire managerial or professional applicants solely on the basis of information on resumes or application blanks. Most employers want collaborative evidence to prove that you have the ability to perform the assignment in a superior manner. Employers obtain that collaborative evidence via reference checks, personal interviews, and tests.

Employers have devised elaborate methods to determine your abilities, motivation, and potential to achieve.

Your resume helps to indicate whether or not you are qualified to do a given job.

The crucial factor they must determine is your motivation level. Will you work hard and get along well with others?

There are small clues in the education and work experience sections of your resume that reveal motivation. Usually the motivational factors are determined via personal interviews, tests, and conversations with people who know you well.

What you say about yourself in interviews is usually discounted until you support your motivational assertions with collaborating evidence from others.

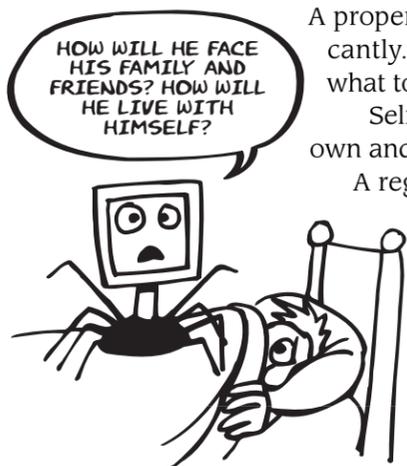
Your self-assessment is your personal balance sheet of assets and liabilities.

Reality Check

A properly performed self-assessment boosts your confidence level significantly. You feel more certain about your skills and capabilities. You learn what to say in future interviews.

Self-assessment exercises polish your awareness of the skill set that you own and develop materials you will use later in an interview presentation.

A regularly conducted self-assessment often signals to you that the time is appropriate to consider a major career or job change. It forces the employment change by alerting you to the fact that your career satisfaction should be much higher. The results assist in formulating a new direction in your life that may maximize your longer-term career satisfaction.





Goal Setting

The result of your self-assessment culminates into a statement of your goals. Before you jump into the work of conducting the self-assessment, you need to convince yourself of its value.

It is impossible to hit a target that you have not set up. Whether your goals are personal, career, financial, social, or spiritual, they cannot be achieved until you convince yourself that goal setting is important.

Goals must be written. Broad concepts in your mind cannot be translated into meaningful specifics. Goals cannot be wandering generalities if they are to be met.

Goals must be quantifiable into some specific time frame. It is best to break goals into both long-term goals and short-term goals so that incremental progress can be measured for motivational purposes.

Goal attainment needs a regular review process that can serve as a feedback vehicle to force you to stay on your tasks or allow you to reassess your goals in light of new developments.

The self-assessment concept works. Millions of people are involved in personal goal setting. Even your employer will demand adherence to organizational goals that were realistically established—perhaps with your input—over a predefined period of time. Most work goals carry annual time parameters and are evaluated regularly. Yours should, too!

Goals come
after your self-
assessment.

Smart Goals

Your self-assessment is a precursor to establishing personal goals. Your efforts make sense only to the extent that they satisfy some predefined objectives. Your mission in life should be to establish **SMART** goals.

- Smart goals are **Specific**.
General and vague goals are unacceptable.
- Smart goals are **Measurable**.
Can you tell when you have met your goals?
- Smart goals are **Attainable**.
Unrealistic goals cause a feeling of failure.
- Smart goals are **Relevant**.
Your goals must relate to what you want out of life.
What is relevant for others may not be appropriate for you.
- Smart goals are **Trackable**.
Can you observe your goals being achieved?
Is there a feeling of accomplishment as you progress?

Smart goals demonstrate your commitment to excellence. Your success relates to your ability to set and measure meaningful goals.

Figure 2.2





You may find that your various goals conflict. A resolution results after you write them down in each category, quantify them, and add the time dimension. Convincing yourself of the value of goal setting is the first step in employing the self-assessment techniques.

Self-Assessment Techniques

There is no one best way to conduct a self-assessment. Several different methods can be employed independently or in concert to reach the same conclusions.

Counselors

High school and college career counselors frequently offer personal guidance in the self-assessment. Professional private career consultants offer the same service for a fee.

These professionals supplement their first impressions by skillful probing and analyzing psychological tests. Psychological tests provide data that cannot easily be obtained in personal interviews.

Methods of Self-Assessment

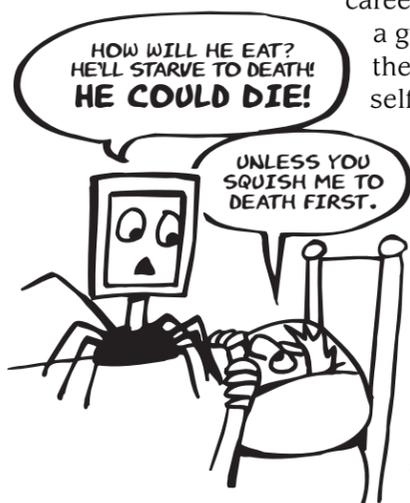
- Autobiography
- Personal Inventories
- Psychological Tests

Figure 2.3

Websites

Several professional websites offer a variety of assessment tools. Some of them require a fee. The career development approach provides a template and exercises to assist in choosing a career, beginning with self-assessment and continuing through tips for acquiring practical work experience and, finally, undertaking a job search. A career interest assessment service is usually available for a fee at

most university career service facilities. The assessment entails completion of an interest inventory, which then is matched with the interest patterns of various occupational groups to determine which career path you would be likely to enjoy. Additional services include a career success map, which is an online career focus testing profile that gives individuals and company managers a guide for career decisions, and career web assessment, which offers the job seeker career planning assistance, including a variety of self-assessment tools. The instruments are normally evaluated by a trained career professional.



U.S. News

By searching the www.usnews.com site for information on careers, colleges, graduate schools, financial aid and scholarships, and campus life you will discover more career planning ideas and a great interest and skills test. This site allows you to conduct line-by-line comparisons of schools for admissions, demographics, financial aid, and more. For those conducting job searches, the site provides hundreds of career profiles, a listing of "hot job tracks," advice on using





want ads, search engines, and headhunters. The Campbell Interest and Skill Survey is one of the best interest assessment instruments. There is also advice on resumes, cover letters, interviews, and salary negotiation.

You can use this website and others to help you interpret the results of several tests you may find available on the web.

Publications

A wide variety of publications, mostly in workbook format, are used in organizing and synthesizing data about you. With all of this help available from both professional counselors and publications, the key word to remember is “self.” A self-assessment must be conducted by you.

Self-assessment is a do-it-yourself project. The result is a very private matter. Information is drawn from a variety of reputable sources. Ideas and opinions from friends, teachers, employers, parents, neighbors, clergy, relatives, and others aid in the fact-gathering process. Inquiring offers great insights that improve the *accuracy* of the self-assessment.

The self-assessment is a writing project. It is not an exercise that can be stored in your memory in an unorganized fashion.

The self-assessment probes deeply into your inner feelings and is not a document to be shared indiscriminately with employers. It reveals your personal strengths and weaknesses.

An understanding of your liabilities is critical in sound career decision making, but it is not necessarily appropriate for the job search process. The end product of the self-assessment is a realistic self-appraisal that can be used with career information.

Self-assessment techniques fall into three categories: autobiographies, personal inventories, and psychological tests.

Autobiography

An autobiography is written in narrative form, in contrast with the outline format of a resume. It is a personal story. The usual starting point is around the age of 16 and the story continues chronologically up to the present.

Some approaches do not use a chronological pattern. Some people prefer to document their life history under such headings as family experiences, professional work activities, education, work experiences, etc. Others prefer to orient the analysis to values, interests, personal qualities, and skills.

The approach matters very little. What is important is the writing down of thoughts that relate to the past. The past is a good predictor of the future. The analysis delves into the reasons past decisions were made. Future decisions are likely to draw upon the same set of decision criteria.

Inventories

Inventories are checklists. Their value lies in the fact that they help you identify the words that best describe your values, interests, personality, skills, etc. The checklist of words or phrases help you understand the meaning of the concept. The words help jog your memory.

Your self-assessment must be written.





Psychological Tests

Type of Test

- Achievement
- Aptitude
- Interest
- Intelligence
- Personality

Measures

- Extent of knowledge in a given field
- Potential for acquiring specific types of knowledge
- Stock taking of likes, dislikes, skills
- Abstract reasoning and capacity for mastering problems
- Emotional makeup, stability, and adjustment

Figure 2.4

Career workbooks often use inventories as an aid in helping you identify factors that you feel relate to you. In addition to clarifying the meaning of the characteristic, inventories often provide a system of classifying variables.

Inventories help draw out specific strengths and weaknesses. These characteristics assist you in assessing why you behave as you do and assist in predicting your future actions.

Psychological Tests

Tests are predictors of future performance.

Another important tool used in the self-assessment is psychological testing. Psychological tests are tools used by a career counselor trained in the use of tests. Tests are measuring devices that add new bits of information that career counselors use in developing a clearer picture of you.

Test effectiveness depends largely on the counselor's knowledge of the scope and limits of the tests used.

Fees are usually associated with administration of psychological tests, and they vary widely depending upon the number and type of tests administered. It can get expensive when a counselor's time is factored into the cost.

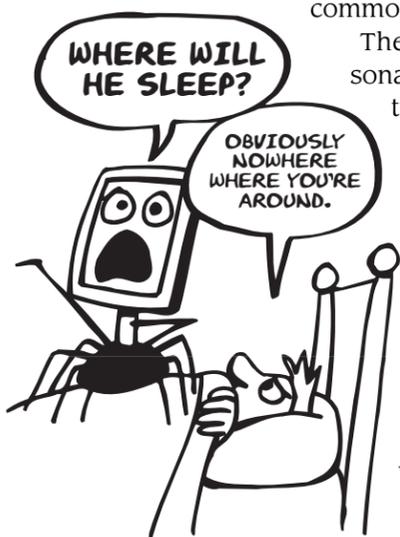
Shop around for these services. Visit websites yourself and take the more common, self-interpreted tests first.

The pretest instruction, the test administration, and an extensive personal analysis of the results can take several hours of a career counselor's time. Some professional career counselors charge \$50 to \$200 per hour for their time.

Tests are most frequently used by high school and college career counselors as an aid in career decision making. The counselor can more accurately recommend specific career fields.

The use of tests by employers for *selection* purposes appears to be growing again after a period of waning. It is expensive to prove that a given test is a valid predictor of career performance but worth the cost. Many employers use tests.

Counselors provide a professional interpretation of the results but leave the career choice decisions in your hands. Testing does not provide decisions. It provides fruitful information.





Self-Assessment Instruments

The use of interest and personality instruments by career coaches is a widespread practice. Most experts believe that personality, however defined, is an integral part of the career development process. Personality and interest are considered an important element of your self-assessment.

Assuming that your interests, personality, and other “soft” characteristics can be measured and defined, and assuming that experts can identify the most common soft competencies of successful people in their given occupations, you can intuitively evaluate how closely your characteristics compare to the characteristics of highly successful individuals in that occupation.

This does not necessarily mean that you will therefore be successful in your chosen field. Many other characteristics, not defined, will clearly influence your success. For example, your success will also relate to the culture of the employer that you choose. This only suggests that the similarities might be highly significant.

Assessment. Any assessment of your other characteristics such as values, interest, personal attributes, skills, attitudes, motivations, etc., would have to be assessed in a similar discriminating manner. No single characteristic is likely to be so all-encompassing that it will determine your career choice. These characteristics are your VIPS: values, interests, personality, and skills.

All of the assessment instruments provide pieces of information about yourself that might be helpful as you conduct your own unique evaluation. Hopefully, you will have a career coach or multiple career partners that will help interpret the results from multiple career development interests. The assessment tests can be an important aid in your career development planning process but they should never be used in a manner that blindly assumes that the results will lead you to a perfect career choice. Your judgment about the meaning is the ultimate factor in career decision making.

Career instruments only assess one or two of your VIPS. They are rarely able to consolidate multiple dimensions of your total competency set. This is why you never want to rely on the results of any single instrument. It is your analysis, working in conjunction advisers whom you respect and who know you very well, that truly must make your initial choices regarding the career options that you wish to explore in greater depth.

Exploration. The world of work is massive. Even within given occupational groups, the changes brought about due to technology, the environment, and hundreds of potential other factors can result in upheavals in many career fields. These estimates are intended to guide, provide new information, and open your horizons. They are not intended to control your career choices.

These instruments have become popular because they provide insights that might be helpful. They are nonjudgmental. Coaches might have values that they could inadvertently pass on to you. The high degree of accuracy and validity of these interests provide a credible source for you to use as you factor in your personal judgment about your perceptions of yourself and various career options.

The goal of most career professionals is to help you find a satisfying career. These professionals have studied thousands of career fields using extensive



databases of individuals working in those fields. Each career field is researched by experts who share their knowledge with others. Many career successful and satisfied individuals are administered instruments similar to those that you may take. The career professionals use your results to correlate your characteristics with characteristics of individuals successfully working in a given career field.

Correlations. Rarely is there going to be a perfect correlation. Counselors will review your values, interests, personality, skills, and other characteristics. There is a significant amount of flexibility in **defining** each of your VIPS in addition to assessing the **strengths** of your individual VIPS. This is not an absolute perfect science.

Although not a perfect science, this approach is acceptable. It clearly is superior to hit and miss approaches many people also use. This analytical approach certainly has much merit compared to the other alternatives.

Using various assessment instruments allows you to more accurately categorize your strengths and weaknesses. When coupled with an exploration of a career field, it helps you see relationships based upon realistic and relevant reviews. As you make tentative decisions and approach the job search process, you are much better able to capitalize on your strengths.

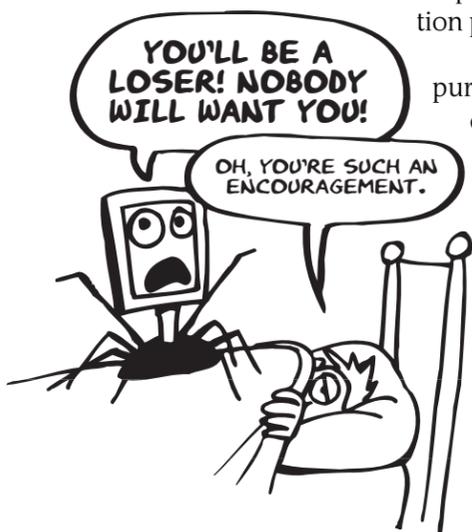
Selection Tool. Articulating your competencies accurately to an interviewer requires an ability to communicate precisely, and with a high degree of confidence, what your talents are and how closely they match the specific job opening. Most interview questions are designed to evaluate your competencies.

These assessments are important to organizations because they assist in using human resources within their company in a productive way. Managers who understand the characteristics of their staff are better able to solve problems, avoid intrapersonal conflicts, and maintain a more satisfied workforce.

Results from these instruments can help to structure task forces, build teams, create healthy relationships, and assist motivational tactics. This explains why many firms use testing instruments in their recruiting and selection efforts. They use the results to help build a highly productive workforce based upon the results of the test instruments that they use in their selection process.

The criticism is that these instruments just do not do what they purport to claim. Yet, there is a large body of scientifically developed base of knowledge to suggest otherwise. There are also the issues of discrimination, cultural bias, administration difficulties, and accurate interpretation, inappropriate use, etc. Some of this is valid and some of it is rubbish. In the final analysis, after studying the documentation, it is what **you** think that matters.

Advice. Your coach, advisor, counselor, and other career professionals who you employ in a partnership can only assist in your decision making. **Your** best judgment is what really counts!





Whatever career choices you make, they are unlikely to be lifetime binding decisions. A rapidly changing society with a growing economy will create new career endeavors and make others obsolete. You are not going to be locked into a narrow niche if you plan wisely.

Your decisions are important because each career position that you hold allows you to build additional competencies. Life is a series of learning experiences, which is what will make you unique. It is these life-learning experiences that will drive your competencies. Learning is constantly occurring on the job, in society, and in continuing formal or informal educational activities.

Your security and success is influenced more by your competencies than any single job assignment. No test instruments can guarantee that you will be successful in any given job. The culture and environment within any single employing organization could be radically different when compared to the culture of a different organization. Thus, additional variables are constantly being thrown into the total array of variables that might help influence your future success.

You are on a learning journey, not a quest for the perfect job. What makes sense for you **now**?

Flexibility. Your assessment will probably change over time. You are constantly renewing yourself and your competencies.

The assessment instruments allow you to take regular stock of your competencies. After this analysis, you can better determine whether to change careers, change jobs, or step off the career path ladder entirely and seek additional learning or renewing.

You will find many assessment instruments on the World Wide Web. Some are better oriented for employer use as selection tools and others for personal development for individuals like you. There may be some significant costs associated with each instrument, but you will also find some low-cost options on the Web also. Some require a professional for interpretation and others provide results for you to interpret. It is always wise to consult and share your ideas with your career partners who are assisting you.

Throughout this material, you will find references to many sources of inexpensive but very valuable instruments and other tools that will assist in your personal career development.

You get what you pay for is not always true. The analytical process of going through the career assessment can prove to be just as valuable as the instrument results themselves. Instruments—whether tests, worksheets, inventories, resumes, portfolios, etc.—can all be of great worth to you.

Two of the most commonly used instruments are “personality type” and “interest assessments.” Personality type almost always goes back to the original work done by the MBTI research. To avoid copyright issues, others often refer to this as “personality type.”

The **interest** instruments almost always refer back to the original work of a researcher by the name of Dr. John Holland. This is most commonly called “Holland’s Theory.”

A brief, but adequate for this purpose, description of both theories will follow later.





Types of Tests

Career counselors typically administer one or more of five major types of tests. These are summarized in Figure 2.4. These five types of tests are grouped according to the functions they perform.

Achievement tests measure mastery of a given subject such as mathematics, English, chemistry, and so forth. Achievement tests attempt to measure actual learning in a specific subject matter after a period of instruction.

They provide an objective measure of progress and thus are helpful to career counselors in assessing skill levels and abilities that might later be related to specific career endeavors.

Aptitude tests purport to measure certain personal characteristics that might indicate the capacity to acquire some specific knowledge or skill. Aptitude tests try to predict future success in a given field of study. These tests measure the capacity to acquire certain skills or proficiencies based on innate ability and past experience.

Aptitude tests are most likely to be the type an employer would use in personnel selection. Aptitude tests cover a wide range of abilities related to most work areas.

Interest inventories indicate the extent of similarity between your interests/preferences and those of persons already successfully employed in a specified occupation.

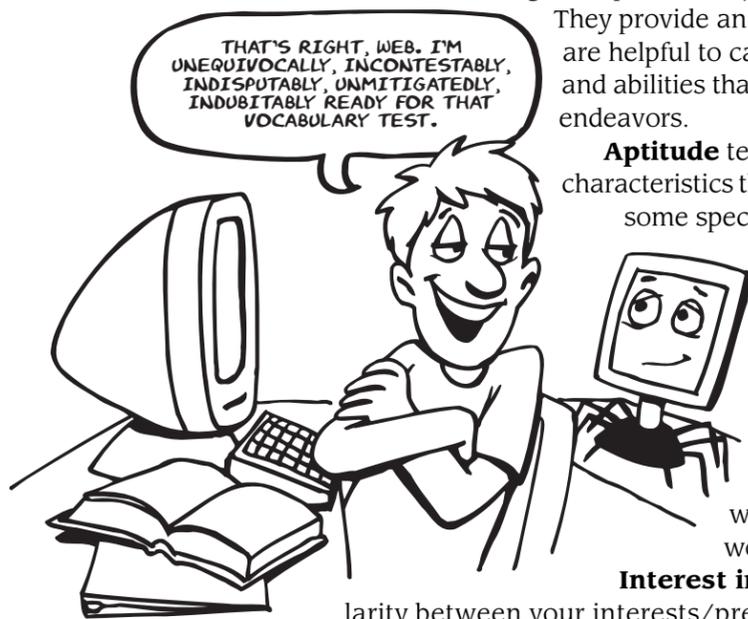
The underlying principle is that the more similar the interests, the greater your chances of work satisfaction and job success.

Intelligence tests are primarily concerned with complexity, level of difficulty, quality, and rate of mental activity. The score represents measures of intellectual functioning in an abstract reasoning manner. Intelligence tests are rarely used in career counseling or employment testing.

Personality tests measure emotional makeup, stability, and the degree of life adjustment. They are helpful in eliciting feelings, values, and motives. They measure social poise, intrapersonal characteristics, and maturity. A career counselor using personality measures must be highly trained and experienced in competently administering and interpreting these tests.

Norms are a standardized set of measurements of a person's responses to a group of tasks or questions. More general inferences can be drawn later from the measurements. Interpretation of test scores give a base that provides statistical comparisons later.

A norm is the typical score for a specified population group. For example, a mechanical aptitude score might be compared to the mechanical aptitude of a group of successful mechanical engi-





neers. Every test has a test manual and other literature that support the tests and provides information to the career counselor.

The test score is meaningful only when your results are compared to the results of individuals employed in the comparison group of successful individuals. It must be compared to an appropriate population group. When the norm concept is not properly understood, there is great risk in drawing incorrect conclusions.

In general, the population sample on which the test has been standardized should relate as closely as possible to the age, socioeconomic status, educational level, etc. of the individual being tested.

Reliability. Reliability refers to how consistently a test measures the same characteristic in successive measurements. A given individual should get approximately the same results each time the test is taken. The publishers of most commercial tests have gone to great lengths to ensure reliability within all norm groups.

Validity. Validity determines the extent to which the test measures what it purports to measure. Validity measures how well the results of the test correlate with the given criterion.

For example, an MBA aptitude test score should correlate highly with actual academic achievement. If the test predicts a high level of academic success, the later academic grades will be high if the test is valid.

Summary of Assessment Methods

There are many methods that produce accurate pictures of the characteristics making up the self-assessment. Measures of values, interests, personality, and skills are rarely precise. Experts can aid in the assessing of the measurements and can even offer suggestions on how the pieces might fit together. However, only you can legitimately pull all of the factors together and form an accurate self-assessment.

There is no method of measurement that brings all of the factors together in a nice, neat package. Your career decision will be an educated guess. The degree of risk in your career decision can be minimized by you being as objective as possible in your self-assessment interpretation. It is your life satisfactions at stake.

Personal Qualities: The VIPS

Values
Interests
Personality
Skills

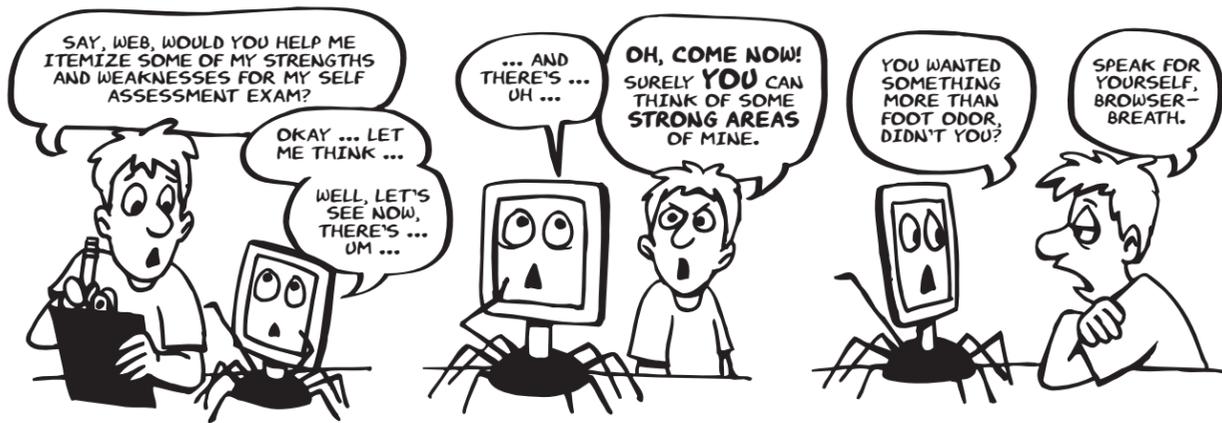
Figure 2.5

Identify Your V.I.P.S.

You may possess the same educational background and similar work experiences as others. What makes you unique are your *motivational* factors.

An evaluation of motivational factors is subjective, but these factors can make a unique fit for particular occupational fields. Thus, an assessment of them is important. They cannot be accurately identified and evaluated without your total cooperation.





Your VIPS reveal your motivations.

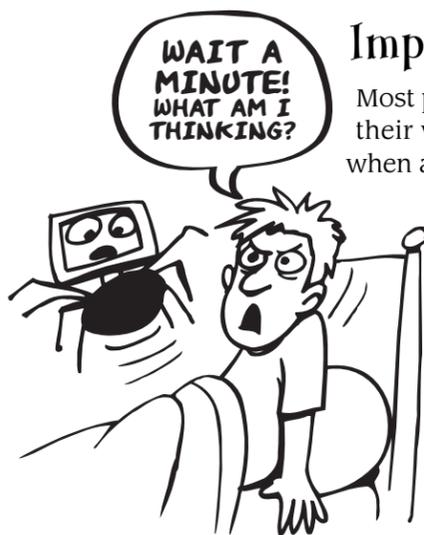
Four frequently referenced personal qualities that aid in the analysis of a realistic fit into various occupational fields are your **V**alues, **I**nterests, **P**ersonal Qualities, and **S**kills.

Starting Points

Education, work experience, family, and environment are the major factors influencing values, interests, personality, and skills (your VIPS). Education, work, family, and environment go back to very early years in your life. Early experiences shape your views of yourself. These are projected in career choices.

Once your VIPS become set, they are difficult to change. Skills can be manipulated easier, but even skills are difficult to rearrange and expand once values, interests, and personality are entrenched.

Career goal setting is the ultimate purpose of career planning. Goal setting emanates from VIPS. VIPS are then integrated with real-world career options.



Importance of VIPS

Most people find it difficult to write or speak about themselves in terms of their values, interests, personal qualities, and skills. You may stammer when asked:

- What are your values?
- What are your interests?
- Describe your personality.
- Identify your best skills.

Why are these questions so difficult? They seem quite important. They are much more important than the mundane items that appear on most resumes. They obviously have a great bearing on career planning.



Interview Validity

Directly or indirectly, employers evaluate each of the personal VIPS. Their classification schemes may be slightly different, but they are getting at the heart of the matter nonetheless. The employers' objective is to develop an accurate image of you.

College career counselors and executive search experts are in unique positions to listen in on recruiters' conversations about candidates whom they have evaluated. Their eavesdropping includes some interesting discussions about candidates' backgrounds. In many cases, candidates never think about themselves in such descriptive terms. Those descriptive terms recruiters use most frequently relate directly to the VIPS.

Employers' analyses are occasionally wrong. How valid is a job interview? Valid or not, the interview supporting test and recommendations are the basis of most employment decisions. The employer cannot afford to make many mistakes. A misinterpretation of the VIPS by you or the employer can have long-term undesirable consequences.

Education and work experiences play important roles in career selection. However, nothing plays a greater role in career selection (from either the employer's or the employee's perspective) than your personal VIPS.

No matter what the career field, there is always an oversupply of applicants seeking positions in it. Nearly every job has more than one applicant for it.

For a given opening in a technical, professional, or managerial position, chances are high that there will be several applicants with adequate education and work experience backgrounds.

How does an employer decide who gets the job? The decision is nearly always based on an appraisal of your personal VIPS. The VIPS have the most

Every job has several applicants.

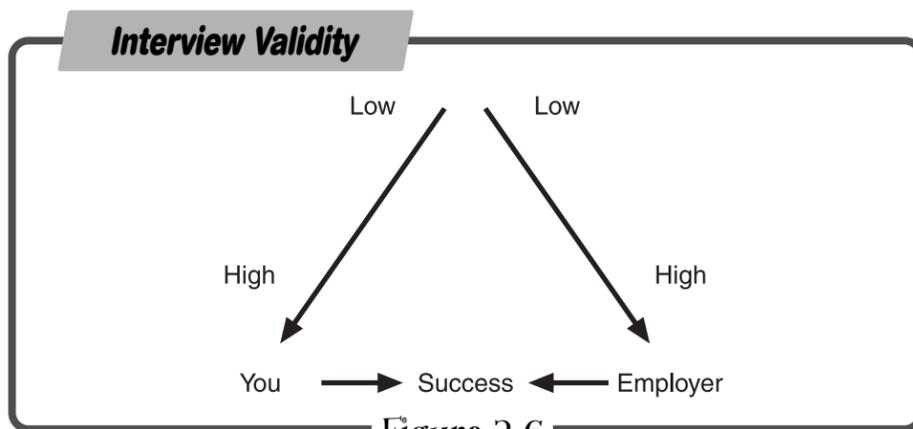


Figure 2.6



direct bearing on your ability and desire to accomplish work at the managerial, technical, and professional level.

Does every individual with great credentials get a job offer after every interview? Of course not! Some applicants get nice letters that say, "I am sorry but your qualifications and interests do not match the. . . ." Why? The reason can most often be traced to an evaluation of the VIPS.

Many people barge right into the search stage of career planning. What's wrong with that? They have failed to assess the very points that potential employers will be evaluating in the interview.

Decision Responsibility

The employer's *job* decision can become a *career* decision for you. You can easily get locked into a career or job that is not right for you.

Responsibilities and salaries tend to increase as you mature and progress. It becomes more difficult to leave a "well-paying job." Unhappiness results. Sound decisions by both you and the employer are essential.

Whether accurate or not, the employer processes information from you as truth. Through your interview comments you relay information to employers.

The employer makes decisions on the basis of the information received in the interview, on the resume, tests, and from others who know you.

You may receive turndowns from employers for jobs for which you are eminently qualified. You may have the right combination of education, experience, and the personal VIPS but yet fail to communicate an accurate picture about yourself.

Conversely, you may receive job offers and accept employment in jobs for which you are only marginally qualified. This happens when applicants transmit inaccurate pictures. Employers and employees both come out losers when these employees later fail to produce on the job.

Increasing the validity of the job interview is more important to you than to the employer. Although the employer may suffer some economic loss, you have far more to lose.

The validity of an interview for both parties is greatly increased if both parties know specifically what they are seeking.

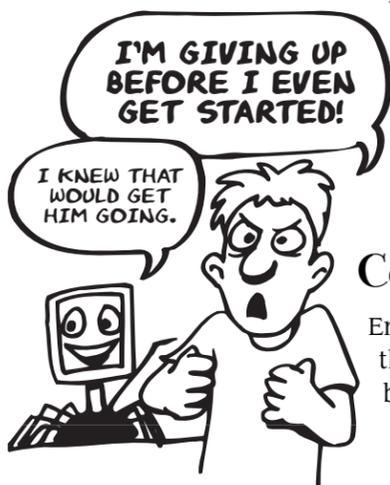
How can the validity be high if you do not really know what you want? It can't.

The self-assessment phase of career planning controls the goal direction decision. Your analysis of your VIPS starts the self-assessment.

Career Success Factors

- Know Yourself
- Know Your Options
- Set Goals
- Create a Plan
- Execute Your Plan

Figure 2.7



Communicating Your VIPS

Employers are addressing the interview validity issue. Most recruiters go through rigorous interview training programs. Trained recruiters are better at the selection process.



Communicate the truth about your VIPS.

You must also get better at packaging the truth. That is not done by interview coaching, polishing the truth, or deceptive packaging. Those things increase the ratio of offers to interviews, but they fail to increase the quality of the career decision. Superficial window dressing hurts more than it helps.

One fundamental marketing principle is that you cannot sell a product if you don't know the product and believe in it. Selling a product without a thorough knowledge of the product comes back to haunt the seller. The self-assessment is a process designed to get to know the product better.

If you know the product well, you are best able to communicate wisely in the job interview.

Skills

How proficient are you in each skill that you possess?

Skills are individual talents that enable a person to perform a given activity. Skills can be both taught and learned.

Within a skill, there are degrees of proficiency. The situation is not usually one of skill or no skill, but is one of the **degree** to which one can perform a given activity. Most skills can be greatly improved by practice. Practice builds mastery.

The range of skill ability extends from "some awareness and ability" to "excellence or mastery." Skills gained through education vary widely depending upon an extensive set of circumstances including level of education, major field of study, reputation of institution, etc.

Nearly every managerial, technical, or professional job description lists a variety of skills that the employer considers important in accomplishing an assignment.

Within a job description, employers tend to list every conceivable skill that would be helpful in completing assignments. Rarely are "all" of these skills really necessary and rarely do employers attempt to specify the degree of excellence required in every skill. Often these skill listings scare away applicants needlessly.

Lack of acceptable skills is one of the most common reasons employers give for rejecting job applicants. The truth, however, is that values, interests, and personality are the real factors that cause most employers to reject candidates.

Skill Acquisition

The required skills for any career field can be clearly determined. Any job applicant who has completed a reasonable degree of homework will know before going into a job interview whether there is or is not a "skill" match.

A carpenter does not apply for a job as a surgeon, of course. But for each position, there are degrees of expertise needed for each competency being evaluated. There are "shades of grey" on every skill. Employers seldom find perfect skill matches. You will seldom find a perfect skill match. Compromise by both parties is necessary.

Most skills are derived from education, but the level of educational attainment frequently fails to spell out the specific skills attained. For example, a

The "Perfect 10" for a job seldom occurs.



Skill Types		
People Skills.		
Mentoring	Negotiating	Instructing
Supervising	Persuading	Speaking
Data Skills.		
Synthesizing	Coordinating	Analyzing
Compiling	Copying	Comparing
Things Skills.		
Setting-Up	Controlling	Operating
Tending	Feeding	Handling

Figure 2.8

four-year liberal arts education equips an individual with hundreds of skills that are directly career relatable, yet nowhere in the description of educational background is the specific skill or the level of the skill directly articulated.

Education is not the only source of skills. Skills also come from work experience, from personal life experiences, and from play activities.

The goal is not simply to aim at the highest-level career field. The goal is to aim at the career field that best meshes with your background.

Types of Skills

Skills break down into three groups:

- Data
- People
- Things

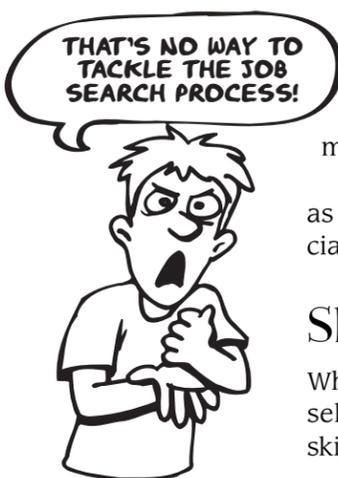
The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (U.S. Government Printing Office) is the first and last word on relating skills to specific occupations and jobs. Many of the occupational skills are found in thousands of job descriptions in all types of organizations that hire people. This should be your first introduction to a broad job description.

Many employers use a point system for specifying the skill difficulty level of the job. It is not uncommon for this point system to be used in the more sophisticated organizations for establishing salary grades.

A career position beyond your capacities is just as lacking in satisfaction as a position below your capacities. Being overemployed is not more beneficial to happiness than being underemployed. Both cause problems.

Skills Inventory

What is your current skill set? A skills inventory is an essential element in the self-assessment. Questions like "What do I have to offer?" and "What new skills do I need?" are pertinent.





A personal skill inventory requires thought and guidance. Figure 2.9 aids by identifying the skills most commonly referenced in descriptions of career fields. The overall goal is to find the career field that optimally coincides with your current and future capabilities.

An important dimension in both resume preparation and interview presentation is explaining to a potential employer your level of proficiency in

Skills Inventory for Professional Positions

Which of these skills best describe your credentials for your future job interviews? How would you convince an employer that you possess this skill?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Expediting | <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Fashioning | <input type="checkbox"/> Pushing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acquiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Following Directions | <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acting | <input type="checkbox"/> Following Orders | <input type="checkbox"/> Rapport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing | <input type="checkbox"/> Foresight | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assembling | <input type="checkbox"/> Implementing | <input type="checkbox"/> Relating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Things | <input type="checkbox"/> Informing | <input type="checkbox"/> Researching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calculating | <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating | <input type="checkbox"/> Resolving Conflicts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classifying | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovating | <input type="checkbox"/> Responding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competing | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Representing Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compiling | <input type="checkbox"/> Instructing | <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Composing | <input type="checkbox"/> Investing | <input type="checkbox"/> Selling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computing | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading | <input type="checkbox"/> Serving Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Constructing | <input type="checkbox"/> Lecturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Setting-Up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating | <input type="checkbox"/> Making Things | <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing | <input type="checkbox"/> Structuring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating | <input type="checkbox"/> Manipulating | <input type="checkbox"/> Supervising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dealings | <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandising | <input type="checkbox"/> Synthesizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Motivating | <input type="checkbox"/> Systematizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscular | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Designing | <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiating | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dexterity | <input type="checkbox"/> Number Manipulation | <input type="checkbox"/> Testing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developing Ideas | <input type="checkbox"/> Operating | <input type="checkbox"/> Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Directing | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing | <input type="checkbox"/> Verbalizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discovering | <input type="checkbox"/> Participating | <input type="checkbox"/> Visualizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Editing | <input type="checkbox"/> Persuading | <input type="checkbox"/> Working—Mental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Handling | <input type="checkbox"/> Working—Physical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating People | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Ideas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating Projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Predicting | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Examining | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling | <input type="checkbox"/> Programming | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing |

What letter grade would you give yourself on each of these skills? Can you explain how you developed the competency and your degree of proficiency?

Figure 2.9





certain basic skills. Figure 2.9 outlines many of the skills that employers try to evaluate when evaluating candidates for professional level positions.

What is your level of expertise for each skill noted? An enlightening exercise is to carefully evaluate your abilities by assigning a letter grade for yourself on each skill.

Values

Which of your personal values most often influence your behaviors? Values are feelings. Feelings relate to facts, things, people, and even broad concepts. What is important in life? Some people might say family, friends, love, security, comfort, community, and leisure. Others might say career, money, time, education, marriage, etc.

Values help people make choices. They tend to prioritize the factors in our lives. They determine the relative importance of things that impact upon daily life. We are all a little different in our value perceptions.

Values Clarification

Value specification and clarification will help you understand yourself and guide future planning. Values help you understand colleagues and friends.

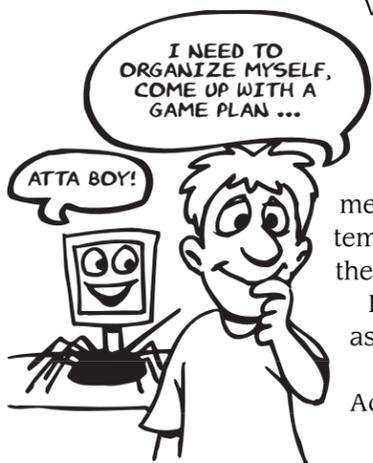
Values build meaningful relationships.

There are no right and wrong values in a free society. Values derive from the way an individual has been taught. Values create the ability to accept certain norms and accepted standards of personal and group behavior.

Defining your values helps you get a handle on your self-assessment. If decisions, especially career decisions, are based upon a value system, it is clearly important to elaborate to yourself a definitive statement of the principles that guide important decisions in your life.

Each employing organization has its own value system that is described as a "corporate culture." What is it? Would you fit in it?

The holding of certain beliefs influences your behavioral pattern. Actions may be explained by recognizing your value system. You make



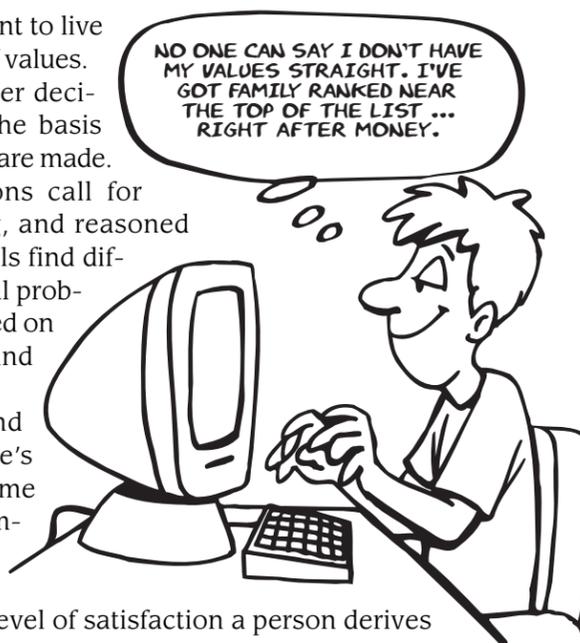
choices about how you want to live based upon your system of values.

To make a better career decision, start by clarifying the basis upon which your decisions are made.

Everyday life situations call for thought, decision making, and reasoned action. Different individuals find different solutions to identical problems. Your actions are based on your beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Attitudes, beliefs, and values impact upon people's decisions and actions. Some types of careers are incompatible with some people's values. Values help to determine the relative level of satisfaction a person derives from a career.

The global workforce in multinational organizations is changing the way work behaviors and employment decisions are made worldwide. Country by country laws relating to employment practices are undergoing extreme changes. Discrimination on the basis of race, religion, age, sex, etc., is changing employment practices nearly everywhere.



Rank order your top ten values.

How well do your values coincide with others in your work group?

Classifying Values

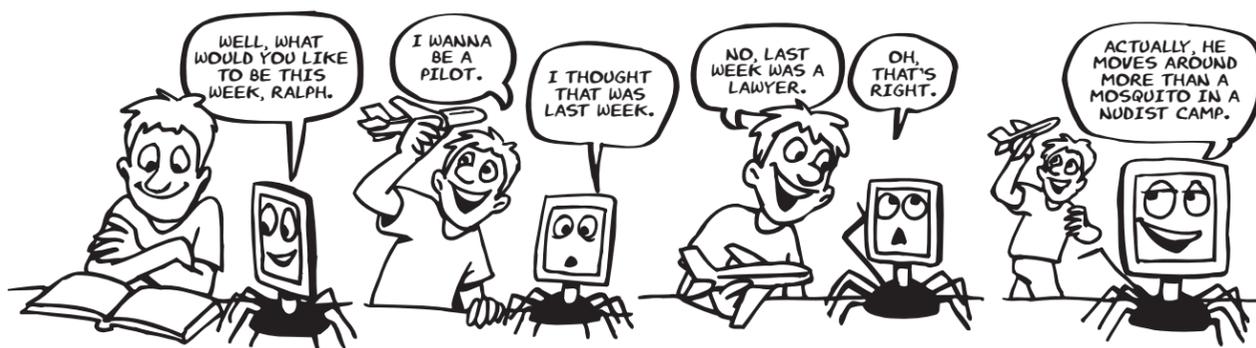
Figure 2.10 identifies an array of values. Values take on added meaning when one begins to classify them. Each item in the list could be placed on a personal like/dislike continuum. They could also be ranked in order of importance to you. The list is certainly not all-inclusive, but it is representative of values that many people regard as important.

One way to get a handle on the self-assessment is to first ask the question "How important is (this value) to me?" A one-line written statement is an adequate response. By the end of that brief exercise, you will begin to see how you make decisions.

Values Appreciation

It is not necessarily imperative that people who share common working hours and similar types of jobs maintain the same value structure. It is important, however, that work partners be tolerant of each other's values. Otherwise, the ensuing discord could have major disruptive effects on work performance.

Success is a main concern in career planning. Becoming involved in an unpleasant work situation is not a sound idea, especially if the situation can be avoided. Although you might be very tolerant of another person's viewpoints, they might not be tolerant of yours.



An example of this conflict can be found in the case where a “black/white mentality” locks horns with a “laissez-faire mentality.” Each party believes his or her point of view is the proper one. Why should you get boxed into that corner when proper career planning can help avoid such unpleasant work situations?

Interests

Interests are the things you like or dislike doing. Interests usually spring from a person’s underlying value set. People attach more value to things they like to do and less value to things they do not like to do.

Values tend to be very stable over a lifetime, and interests change slowly. The range of interests a person may have is nearly unlimited. What is enjoyable in one period of life is not necessarily enjoyable in later periods of life. There is much evidence that your interests stabilize in your early twenties and change slowly over time.

Your interests may change over the years.

Interests Influence Decisions

Current interests should not be quickly turned off in a self-assessment because they are less permanent. What you like to do in the short-run has a major bearing on what you are willing to do in the long-run. Careers change as interests change.

Interests profoundly influence career choice. You want to enjoy the work you are doing. Meaningful employment is a major contributor to career satisfaction. Interests may be less profound and esoteric than values, but they nonetheless influence which position you are willing to accept. You probably prefer to be associated with colleagues who share interests similar to yours.



Prioritizing Interests

For each of the activities listed in Figure 2.11, you could assign a high/low numeral to denote your personal interest. Some people have a very wide variety of different interests, whereas others have a great depth of interest in only a few activities.

“Work Values–Happiness Is . . .”

Which work values would bring you the most happiness? How important are these factors to you?

Achievement	Food	Quality
Advancement	Friends	Race Discrimination
Adventure	Health	Recognition
Aesthetics	Hobby	Religion
Affluence	Home	Rules
Art	Honesty	Security
Association	Importance	Sex
Authority	Independence	Social Good
Autonomy	Intelligence	Solitude
Avocation	Involvement	Sports
Beauty	Leadership	Stability
Career	Leisure	Status
Challenge	Location	Study
Change	Love	Subjectivity
Comfort	Marriage	Teamwork
Commitment	Money	Time
Community	Morality	Tradition
Computers	Music	Travel
Creative	Objectivity	Truth
Culture	Pace	Understanding
Dependence	Personality	Variety
Education	Physical Appearance	War/Peace
Esteem	Politics	Wealth
Ethics	Possessions	Welfare
Excellance	Precise	Work Ethics
Family	Pressure	
Flexibility	Prestige	

Which values best satisfy you?

Figure 2.10

The variable that narrows interests for most people is time. Time forces you to pick and choose among a variety of interests. You might enjoy boating, tennis, and football equally well, but due to only 2 to 3 hours of available playing time each day, you must choose only one of the activities per day.

Career interests and personal interests jell frequently. As Mark Twain suggested, “Why can’t a person do for a living what he would otherwise do for a summer vacation?” Although play and work occasionally conflict, they frequently complement each other as well.



Interests

Which work values would bring you the most enjoyment as you move through a full day of work?

Acting	Gaming	Relating
Analyzing Numbers	Helping Others	Relaxing
Athletics	Hobbies	Singing
Avocations	Leading	Solving Problems
Being Alone	Listening	Solving Puzzles
Being with Others	Managing	Speaking
Challenging Limits	Meeting People	Sports
Competing	Moving	Technology
Controlling	Organizing	Traveling
Coordinating	Outdoor Activities	Working
Creating Concepts	Planning	Working with Hands
Creating Things	Playing	Working with Mind
Deciding	Reading	Writing

Testing instruments can help you identify and rank order these.

Figure 2.11

Career planning means coming to grips with your interests. One can improve his or her chances for career satisfaction if there is a logical, reasoned relationship between interests and career. Self-assessment involves determining the degree of your interests in various activities.

Interest Instruments: Your Analysis

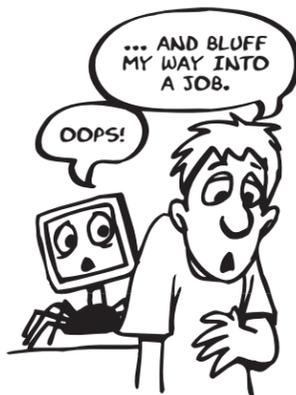
The trademarked Strong Interest Inventory (Strong) is one of the most widely used interest tests. Years of sophisticated research suggests that when results are interpreted by you, with professional career guidance, your level of career exploration activity increases significantly. With a solid understanding of your interests defined in an organized way, you should be able to make wiser career choices when you start researching additional career information.

This and related instruments relate your interest to the six theme model invented by Dr. John Holland—RIASEC. When you take the test, your results will show the strengths of your scores on each of these six interest areas.

If you assume that the six factors are indicators of your interests and that the test is valid, you will discover that the results will lead you to investigate related career options.

Ranking Your Interests

Your highest ranked interest areas will lead you to rank order the six broad occupational themes. Within each theme, you are introduced to job titles (and





subsequently to job descriptions). Based upon your awareness of your many other unique characteristics, (your VIPS), you will, in due process, either expand your view of your career options from a narrow perspective to three to five real-world options or narrow your career investigation from unlimited possibilities to a realistic three to five career options.

The goal is to get you to focus on a few occupations, rather than the entire world of work, so that you can next proceed to more career specificity. Once you are down to a realistic number of choices, you can investigate these fewer fields in depth and eventually move yourself to the actual job search.

This is a journey, not an event that occurs only when you have completed a formal educational experience. This assessment and career exploration should occur at periodic points in your life. These interest instruments are designed to help you in your focusing analysis.

Interest tests, or any test designed to assess your competencies (VIPS), are guides, not decision makers. They are maps that route you to career options that appear to suit someone with your characteristics. Your own decisions, with this help, will guide you to actual job selections, which can also be influenced by the existing job market conditions for your job choice.

The results of your interest instruments will give you a score for each of Dr. Holland's six interest areas. You should rank them and further investigate related occupations in the areas where your interests are highest.

Your advisers will help you focus any conflicting choices into a few realistic career options.

Although the Strong instrument is the most researched and widely used, there are several other instruments that you can take that will narrow your interest down to the six themes created by Dr. Holland.

Regardless of your results, no one believes that any one of the six types will fit any one person or one occupation exactly. This is akin to trying on shoes to get a "nice" fit, not always a "perfect" fit. It is not an exact science.

You will likely be combining two to three themes from your results to related occupational areas later as you further narrow your occupational area





down to specific job descriptions and specific job openings when you start your job search.

Career Comparisons

Your results are being compared to the interests of career-satisfied people employed for several years in a wide variety of over 100 occupations.

Many career experts argue that interests, not skills, form the foundation for a successful career. This is not to say that you cannot be successful in a career where your interests are counter to your professional colleagues. It does suggest that you are likely to be more satisfied with your job if you are doing something that you not only are “good” at but also where you have work colleagues with similar interests.

The more you have in common with your work colleagues, the more likely you are to enjoy your work and thus be satisfied.

For example, you can possess the skills to be an accountant and you could do that job well but still not enjoy your work. Your degree of happiness is more likely to rise if you have the skills but also love your work and the people you interact with on a regular basis. Interest analysis gets at that relationship.

Your highest degree of job satisfaction will occur, according to the theory, when there is harmony between a combination of your values, interests, personal characteristics, and your skills. Can you find that Golden Nugget (job) that uses your competencies to the highest possible level? Sometimes, you must just find that “route” because your ideal job may require several years of experience in a loosely defined career progression ladder.

Your rewards from your job and career field are things like job security, prestige, financial gain, power, influence, altruism, recognition, etc. Your skills like leadership, analytical ability, knowledge, communication ability, organizational skills, management capabilities, etc., must somehow be combined into a real-world job.

Job titles can be misleading. What is the real job description? One must eventually go beyond that title and look at the organization’s culture to find that ideal, perfect assignment, if it really exists. The more you know about your competencies and can articulate them in an interview, the higher the probability of an appropriate self and career match.

It is all about “fit.” The results of your interest inventory will assist you in making that fit. Otherwise, the employer will use your resume, interview results, professionally administered tests, references, and other tools, to make that “fit” description for you. Employers use a wide variety of selection tools in the hiring process that are covered later in this material.

You should be the one making the proper fit decision, not a third party who is never as interested in your life happiness as you are.



Test Interpretation

What are the results of your interest instruments? Do you have a resource for taking the test? Later, we will discuss several websites that will help you find a source for taking the test if your career professional does not have access to an interest instrument.





Review your results and assess them against the Holland scheme. What is your RIASEC?

Most experts recommend that you first take the tests, like an interest or personality type test, and then allow a trained career counselor to walk you through the results. There are many universities, community colleges, and private career assessment firms that will assist you in locating these instruments. You will find several of them on the World Wide Web and most of them will require some nominal expenditure.

What do your results mean? Let's look at Dr. Holland's RIASEC themes together.

Realistic. If you have a high realistic score, you are more interested in action rather than analysis and thought. You want to get things done efficiently and soon. You prefer to deal with things compared to concepts and people issues.

You may not feel comfortable in communicating your feelings to others. You like the outdoors and when working inside of the building work environment, it would be less comfortable for you. You enjoy using machines, tools, and other precision instruments including gadgets. You like to better create with your hands in contrast to using only your mind to create.

You tend to be a practical, reliable, realistic, common-sense, straightforward person, and dislike rhetoric and beating around the bush. You would prefer to organize and manage things rather than people. Your preferred work environment is more likely to be a practical work setting. You would prefer to fix or make things at work.

Some of the occupations that foster this interest area would include mechanical engineers, technology assignments, teaching people who work outdoors, paramedical, agriculture, construction activities, etc.

Investigative. If you have a high investigative score, your interest is more likely to be of a scientific nature. You tend to be task oriented and enjoy working by yourself, although you can do both. You enjoy solving abstract problems but have a need to understand the physical world.

You enjoy thinking through problems instead of just rushing into a solution. As a rule, you do not like highly structured situations with many rules. You prefer to create original concepts especially in scientific areas.

You tend to be inventive, curious, logical, precise, and reserved about your opinions. There is a strong detective side to your interests.

You have a need to understand things thoroughly, solve difficult problems, and can get absorbed in thinking things out. You like to read about subjects that arouse your curiosity. You enjoy intellectually stimulating conversation as well as just sitting and thinking.

The career positions that score high in this interest theme are most engineers, scientists, many types of analysts, laboratory technicians, computer systems analysts, veterinarians, doctors, etc.

Artistic. If you have a high artistic score, you like to work in settings that offer options for self-expression. You have very little interest in solving problems that are highly structured. You prefer to express yourself in artistic media



and rarely enjoy activities that require use of physical effort. You often prefer to work alone due to your need for individualistic expression.

You have a great imagination and love to create new ideas. You tend to be expressive at work with your moods, emotions, and feelings. You do not want to conform and be just like everyone else. You enjoy being viewed as a different type of person. You can get totally absorbed in creating to the extent of letting everything else go.

You tend to do things by intuition and innovating as necessary. You really prefer an unstructured work environment. You would describe yourself as independent, original, unconventional, expressive, and sensitive.

The occupational choices of individuals who show this artistic interest include teachers of the arts, poets, cartoonists, composers, conductors, actors, artists, writers, musicians, designers, advertisers, etc.

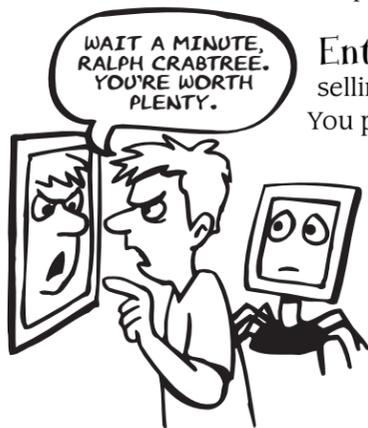
Social. If you have a high score on the social interest theme, you prefer to solve problems by discussions with others. You enjoy arranging relationships with others. You have very little interest in activities that involve a physical activity, especially if it is done alone.

You have that sense of perceiving when others want or need to talk to someone. You feel an obligation to help others develop their talents and deal with any personal or professional issues. As problems develop in a relationship, you will try to keep resolving it peacefully. You do not like conflict. You will go out of your way to help someone you know with a problem due to your very sincere caring attitude and nature.

Your friends and acquaintances tend to turn to you to tell you about their problems. You will pay attention and help solve issues in a comforting manner.

Friends would tend to describe you as very understanding, fair, empathetic, helpful, trustful, kind, and caring. Others see you as service oriented, generous with time and resources, and skilled with the use of comforting words. You could be described as one who really likes to work with people in educating, training, or counseling them. You would probably describe yourself as cheerful, popular, a leader, and as a person that others turn to when they need help.

People who score high in social tend to be employed as social workers, marriage counselors, teachers, career counselors, therapists, nurses, law-enforcement, criminal justice, environmental protectionists, managers of nonprofit groups, educational leaders, etc.



Enterprising. If you have a high enterprising score, your interests are in selling, persuading, managing people and projects, and leadership activities. You prefer environments where you can assume leadership and supervise people. You enjoy persuading others to your viewpoints. Personal, financial, and career risk taking are not frightening and can be enjoyable.

Most people who know you well would describe you as success oriented, an initiator, and a follow-through type of person. You get things done through your popularity and organizing skills. Others like to be around you and enjoy working with you. They can count on you to make the decisions in a prompt, well-thought-through, responsible manner.



You tend to value success, financial gains, power, high status, and control. You enjoy leading, selling, motivating others, and producing results in a timely way. You take pride in what others think about you, but getting the job done efficiently, accurately, and quickly are also high priorities in your mind.

You have a very strong competitive spirit. You like to get events and activities started and then manage others who get the details accomplished. The competitive spirit is exciting and it complements your desire to bargain, influence, and praise others.

Individuals who have scored high on enterprising can be found in government, nonprofits, service organizations, etc., but the majority work in private enterprise. They tend to be business owners, corporate executives, and managers of projects and work in many types and sizes of organizations and departments.

They are often found in finance, marketing, sales, advertising, and managing a project or operation. Job titles might include attorney, judge, manager, owner, president, project director, project planner, consultant, management analyst, etc.

You will find them at all levels of management and administration in all types of organizations from small groups to large government agencies and corporations. They may be managing real estate, financial services, manufacturing operations, service organizations, and anywhere else where managing people and resources might be needed.

Other job titles might include buyer, account representative, customer service, human resources, international finance manager, international trade representative, business manager, etc.

Conventional. If you score high on the conventional interest theme, you would likely be found in organizations doing nonmanagement activities. You tend to be very effective at doing well-defined tasks involving analyzing, coordinating, facilitating, and organizing. You will pay attention to detail and get the task completed with a high degree of accuracy, efficiency, using your considerable skill set.

Managers tend to turn to you to accomplish a mission well. You usually don't seek a leadership status but can handle tasks involving others well. You have a reputation for getting things done. You are the "go to" person.

You are very comfortable in working in any well-established chain of command structure. You like to know exactly what is expected of you and how you will be evaluated.

You might describe yourself as stable, orderly, and totally dependable. You get much satisfaction in doing a task carefully and completely and being recognized immediately for your accomplishment. You carefully organize everything you can think of before you start a project. You do things in an orderly step-by-step systematic way. You tend to be the person who reads directions before starting to assemble or use something new.

Occupational preferences of people with high conventional interest scores would include individuals in the finance function of banks, public accounting firms, government agencies, small and midsize businesses, large corporations, health care, insurance, real estate management, and not-for-profit organizations. The financial titles might include accountant, a CPA, auditor,





tax expert, financial budgeting, financial planning, investment analyst, security analyst, financial analysts, credit manager, etc.

Other business functions might include job titles such as analyst, coordinator, manager, inventory management, facility management, transportation management, etc. Often these very important controlling jobs are doing behind-the-scenes work that is extremely essential in making organizations successful.

You would find these conventional interest people in positions where accurate, honest, ethical, order, and perseverance are essential job characteristics. Facilitating, coordinating, managing, analyzing, etc. are the tasks that conventional people do as they prepare for higher-level management assignments later in their careers. Many also have high enterprising interests.

Administration and Interpretation

With knowledge about these six themes, you now need to turn your attention to taking the test and preparing for the interpretation.

There are many sources of taking interest inventories that will provide a RIASEC score. The websites that are referenced in this book will introduce you to some of the issues but your best source is your College Career Services Office. There is some disagreement among vendors about who has the most accurate instrument or inventory.

Dr. John Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS) test is the granddaddy of all test instruments. It has been taken by millions of people. Several look-alike tests will give you similar results, perhaps at lesser cost, but the SDS fee is under \$10 so most professional advisers suggest that you take it at this URL.

www.self-directed-search.com

The SDS is a great introduction into starting an analysis of your interests.

The total value is not only in the accuracy of the results. The process of the analysis may be a more important dimension for you. There are often several ways to a destination. Much is often gained just by researching the various routes to your destination on your own map.

Thus, the most important activity is to start completing one of the interest instruments. The recommendation of your career adviser is most important. The adviser should be familiar with the instrument. Recognize that there may be some expense involved with its taking but often your university will absorb these minor expenses. Work with these professionals first.

One website that offers you the Strong Interest Instrument is listed below. There is a minor cost and it will give you accurate results and assist in the analysis. The U.S. News magazine incorporates this into their web site to help you with your career analysis. The Strong will give you a much more thorough analysis than the Holland SDS.

www.USNews.com

Another site is listed below and it may also have a nominal fee. This site will provide you some evaluation assistance as well as linking other U.S. government sites, which will show you the most extensive collection of career information available anywhere.



**www.icpac.indiana.edu**

You are encouraged to follow the directions of your career counselor but these sites, among others, that you may surf will give you very similar results. Later in this book, several career projects will be described that will allow you to leverage the results of these interest test results.

CareerLeader Assessments

If you already know that you are interested in a business career, you might want to take an interest instrument from a website called CareerLeader.com. Two former faculty members at the Harvard Business School developed his instrument for use with entering MBA students.

Dr. Jim Waldroop and Dr. Tim Butler compiled three instruments that they developed to evaluate interests, work reward values, and abilities into one instrument. Merging all three of these elements together provides a fairly comprehensive picture.

For a small fee, you can access this test at the URL below. Your college career services office, especially if business oriented, might have purchased some administrations, which drastically reduces or eliminates the cost for you.

www.careerleader.com

Besides the uniqueness of combining the three dimensions, it goes further and, using the results, takes you to a series of business profiles that match the results. The copyrighted program will provide several sample reports that are listed below.

Executive Summary: Initial Report

Career paths: matches you with business careers.

Cultural match: moves a step forward to an organizational match; not just career fields match.

Interest pattern comparison: compares your profile against other individuals working in the matched fields who have indicated a high degree of job satisfaction.

Values: Management and Professional Rewards Profile (MPRP) results provide details on what values you hold true.

Interests: Business Career Interest Inventory results (BCII).

Abilities: Management and Professional Abilities Profile (MPAP) results detail your skills and abilities.

Given your scores on each scale, you can download guides that help you interpret the printed results that will take you to more detailed career information called business career profiles. These career profiles help you narrow your career choices and facilitate the next step, which is a job search.

www.careerleader.com Developed by former Directors of the MBA Career Development at the Harvard Business School, CareerLeader offers a complete online business career self-assessment program. The fee for this service is about \$100, with discounts available to alumni of participating schools. Tools at this site include analysis of the goodness of fit between your interests, work values and abilities and various corporate





cultures; rating of your entrepreneurial attributes; and assessment of your career weaknesses. The site offers follow-up personal career counseling for subscribers for an additional fee.

Summary. Whether you use CareerLeader or any of the other available instruments to assess your VIPS, it is important that you evaluate, analyze, and discuss your results with others, preferably a career professional. Part of the value in these exercises is in the process of evaluating results that open up new horizons that make more sense for additional investigation.

These instruments will lead you to further career exploration. The ideal outcome is a narrowing of career options into a given field, which allows you to make tentative career choices. Eventually, you must start a job search.

A job search and positive interview results depend on successfully merging the results of to your self-assessment together with the results of your career exploration so that you can develop a tentative career objective. The interview process, when incorporated with an organization's culture, will further refine your job objective.

Much of your future success on the job will depend largely on the results of your integration between your self-assessment and your career exploration activities. For a more complete listing of a career testing tool websites, please refer back to Figure 1.6.

Personal Qualities

How do you measure your personal qualities?

Judgments about people influence employment decisions. These judgments impact career decision making. You must assume that judgments about your personal qualities are reasonable, justified, honest, and motivated by a desire to see you succeed in a given career field.

Subjective Factors

In spite of the many laws designed to protect certain classes of employees, subjective factors still play a major role in hiring decisions. You must assume that there are valid supportable facts for using subjective factors in employment decisions.

Subjective factors influence employment decisions. It would be foolhardy to ignore the fact that personality is a key variable in the decision of whether to enter a career in the performing arts or a career in marketing. Certain personality types have a better chance of success in a given career field than other personality types.

Measuring personality is a very complicated process. Very expensive and elaborate tests have been developed to define, describe, and evaluate personality patterns. It often takes an expert to provide an accurate appraisal of personality variables.

For most career decisions, an in-depth personality analysis is not necessary. But a realistic understanding of your personal qualities helps in the evaluation process.



Personal Descriptors

How would individuals who know you well describe you when asked to do so on these characteristics?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achiever | <input type="checkbox"/> Disciplined | <input type="checkbox"/> Kind | <input type="checkbox"/> Secure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Active | <input type="checkbox"/> Discreet | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledgeable | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-confident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptable | <input type="checkbox"/> Do Gooder | <input type="checkbox"/> Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reliant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Doer | <input type="checkbox"/> Lively | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-starter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alert | <input type="checkbox"/> Domineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Logical | <input type="checkbox"/> Selfish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aloof | <input type="checkbox"/> Driver | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyal | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambitious | <input type="checkbox"/> Effervescent | <input type="checkbox"/> Mature | <input type="checkbox"/> Serious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical | <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodical | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharp Dresser |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animated | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional | <input type="checkbox"/> Meticulous | <input type="checkbox"/> Shy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Noncommittal | <input type="checkbox"/> Sincere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attractive | <input type="checkbox"/> Enterprising | <input type="checkbox"/> Observant | <input type="checkbox"/> Singable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beautiful | <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Optimist | <input type="checkbox"/> Skillful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bold | <input type="checkbox"/> Expressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Organized | <input type="checkbox"/> Sociable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bright | <input type="checkbox"/> Extrovert | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizer | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Talker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Original | <input type="checkbox"/> Sophisticated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carefree | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Overweight | <input type="checkbox"/> Speaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Follower | <input type="checkbox"/> Patient | <input type="checkbox"/> Stable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certain | <input type="checkbox"/> Follows Through | <input type="checkbox"/> Perceptive | <input type="checkbox"/> Striver |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenger | <input type="checkbox"/> Forceful | <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionist | <input type="checkbox"/> Superficial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging | <input type="checkbox"/> Free | <input type="checkbox"/> Personable | <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Persuasive | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clever | <input type="checkbox"/> Gentle | <input type="checkbox"/> Pessimist | <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cocky | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving | <input type="checkbox"/> Pleasant | <input type="checkbox"/> Tactful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competent | <input type="checkbox"/> Glib | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenacious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Gregarious | <input type="checkbox"/> Pragmatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Thin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confident | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Precise | <input type="checkbox"/> Tolerant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conforming | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Tough |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conscientious | <input type="checkbox"/> Honorable | <input type="checkbox"/> Punctual | <input type="checkbox"/> Traveler |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled | <input type="checkbox"/> Humorous | <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Imaginative | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Trusting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courteous | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent | <input type="checkbox"/> Rambler | <input type="checkbox"/> Wise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Ingenious | <input type="checkbox"/> Rational | <input type="checkbox"/> Workaholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative | <input type="checkbox"/> Realistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Writer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable | <input type="checkbox"/> Youthful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determined | <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed | <input type="checkbox"/> Zestful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dignified | <input type="checkbox"/> Introvert | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diplomatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Intuitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Respectful | |

After a job interview, could a recruiter accurately evaluate and accurately describe you on these dimensions? How would you behave and relate in the interview to help assure an accurate evaluation?

Figure 2.12



Personal Descriptors

You should try to evaluate your personal qualities. Figure 2.12, “Personal Descriptors,” offers an excellent aid in assisting you in identifying the most important variables to review.

Regardless of the career field, every interviewer completes some sort of evaluation form after an interview. Rarely is an employment decision made without an interview. The resume and application blank usually adequately describe your work history and educational level. The interviewer’s role is to describe your skills and personal qualities.

Time limits the extent of an interview write-up and evaluation. The majority of interviewers quickly jot down key words that appear descriptive of the person.

Hopefully, what is written is accurate and valid. Fortunately, you are in charge, not the interviewer. The impression left in the interviewer’s mind comes directly from you. The interviewer’s write-up can be greatly influenced by you.

Every interviewer fills out an evaluation form on you that describes your personal qualities.

Communicating Personal Qualities

As a serious career planner, you want the truth written down. Before a true description can be relayed, you must have a plan as to what information you want to transmit. If garbage is transmitted, garbage will be written down and decisions will be made (by both parties) on invalid information.

The personal quality component of the self-assessment plays a major role in the hiring decision. Even assuming a perfect combination of education, experience, and skills, a job offer in a career field is not assured.

An employer’s assessment of personal qualities is a key factor in the employment decision. Some experts suggest that this assessment is 90 percent of the decision.

You must have a firm grasp on your personal qualities. Are your personal qualities consistent with those of the majority of people currently in the profession? How would you know if you had not assessed your own personal qualities and knew what information to share with an interviewer in order to obtain a fair and accurate employment decision?

What personal qualities appear to be desirable in specific career fields? There is little information available due to the subjective nature of the topic. It is difficult to find this data written in books, the web, or pamphlets.

Several psychological test publishers and university researchers have done extensive study in this area. Analysis of the norm groups of the tests forms the best single source of information.

One other good source is people who are currently working in the career field. For the average person, informational interviewing is probably the best way to obtain personality profiles.

Observation and probing questions can provide fairly accurate pictures.

But do not base your assumed profile on only one or two informational interviews. You need a variety of collaborative data on each occupational area that you are considering.



You must influence the employer’s evaluation of your personal qualities.





Are your personal qualities consistent with others working in the field?

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The MBTI mother/daughter team divided personality into four different types. What do these four types mean?

Extraversion—Introversion: Where do you get your energy? You may get your energy from the outer world of people and external activities. You may get your energy from your inner world of ideas and personal experiences. This is a scale from high extraversion to high introversion. You should be careful about assuming that you are one way or another. You may have only a slight preference for one way.

If you score high on extraversion, your source of personal energy is from the external world. You tend to communicate more by talking rather than reading. You need to actually experience something in order to best understand it. Action and variety would be used to describe your focus.

You are interested in meeting others and learning more about them. You enjoy constantly being around others and learn best by talking things out.

The introversion type focuses more on the inner self. You prefer to work quietly without interruptions. You usually need time to reflect before you act. You can work on a project for long periods of time without people interruptions. You tend to learn best by reading before talking or experiencing. You are not impulsive and tend to think before responding or acting. You can be happy working alone and dislike frequent interruptions.

Sensing—Intuition: How do you absorb information? You may lean to the sensing side where you learn best by experiencing the present. If you lean towards intuition, you tend to better learn through imagining future possibilities.





Be careful in analyzing yourself because everyday meanings of the terms can be different from the meanings in the MBTI definitions. Read the MBTI type meanings carefully after you receive your scores.

If you are strong in sensing, you learn by relying on what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. You tend to be practical, like specific details, trust your own experiences, and enjoy using skills you learn. You like concrete information and search for facts and details that support your information.

If you are strong on the intuition scale, you learn by looking for patterns, meanings, and relationships. You generally look at the big picture rather than the details. Others would describe you as theoretical and one who looks at meanings in the details rather than the details themselves.

You tend to focus on improving things rather than accepting what works now. You desire to constantly learn new skills and dislike repetition. You follow hunches and are prone to act without fully thinking out a plan.

Thinking—Feeling: How do you use information to make decisions? If you base your decisions on logical analysis, objective criteria and real consequences, you lean to being a thinker. You solve problems through careful analysis. You are good at predicting logical outcomes.

If you make decisions on the basis of fairness to others, you are described as a feeling person. Your decisions rely on what is important to you and others and you are guided by their impact on others. Feeling preferences are driven more by subjectivity in decision making more than by objectivity. Human values tend to influence your decisions. You find it hard to be detached without inserting your personal view of fairness to others into their decision process.

Feeling types tend to be sympathetic and dislike revealing unpleasant things. Pleasing everyone is important and showing an interest in the activities of others is genuine.

Thinking types tend to be good at bringing order to everything. You may be firm and tough-minded and inadvertently hurt the feelings of others without knowing it.

Judging—Perceiving: How do you prefer to live everyday and deal with the external world? Many experts will caution you from using the everyday meaning of the words judging and perceiving. In your life activities and decisions, how would someone describe you? Do you prefer structure or spontaneity?

If you are high on the judging scale, you feel much more comfortable when things are settled and organized. You like to know the objectives before activity takes place. You see yourself as organized with fairly predictable work habits. You like to plan, come up with an organized structure, and then relax in a predictable life. You tend to finish your plans before the deadline.

If you are high on the perceiving scale, you tend to take your time in decision making and accumulate as much information as possible. Perceivers like to stay flexible and keep all of their options open. You may change your mind frequently and adapt well to changes. You get a lot done at the last minute. Others might describe you as having trouble making decisions because you always want more information.





Analyzing MBTI Results The MBTI may help you understand your own preferences and those of others if they share them with you. It is not about good and bad nor does it explain everything about personality. MBTI is about preferences.

These four scales give eight preferences. The degree of preference on each of your four scales can vary in strength, depending on your answers to the questions.

When you combine these four preferences and assign a letter to each preference, you have sixteen possible type combinations.

When you combine these four letters into one of the sixteen types, no two people are exactly alike given the degree of their preferences on each scale. The interaction of these four letters is important. Much has been written that describes, in a general way, what each of the 16 four-letter preferences mean.

The real value is that the words that describe the 16-four letter preferences help us learn about ourselves, our motivations, behaviors, and areas for growth. It can help you better understand yourself and enhance your communication and understanding with others.

The results give you a tool that you can use to communicate better, understand and resolve conflicts more efficiently, build trust in others, and strengthen relationships with peers, supervisors, and others that you deal with in your personal life or the workplace. It helps you understand the differences in people.

You should review the meaning of the four-letter results from several different sources. You will find these described in various places on the World Wide Web by inserting personality type into a search engine like Yahoo or Google.

Since this is not a book about the MBTI and its offshoots, you will not find a detailed understanding of each of the sixteen type combinations here. But you are strongly urged to take the MBTI or similar instruments and use a career professional to help interpret the results for you. The web-based instruments each have descriptions of each of the four letter codes. You should read them carefully before you meet with your career adviser. Remember the meaning of the words of the MBTI descriptions are not like the meanings used in the everyday meaning of the word. Use only the MBTI descriptions and not your own interpretation of the words.

You'll probably receive a copy of your results and a brief description of what your combination of four letters mean. Do not overanalyze the results from this description. Your type should never keep you from considering any career. All of us use certain aspects of every type at times but we tend to gravitate to those that we prefer the most. The MBTI is about preferences, not absolutes.

Only you can really determine your personal preferences, not some tool. You best know your own preferences. But instruments, like the MBTI and others, force you to analyze your background and your personal characteristics. Discussing your thoughts with others is a very important part of your self-assessment.

The more comfortable that you feel about your self-knowledge, the better your career choices are likely to be when you move into evaluating careers and comparing them to your own preferences.





You can be happy in many different career fields. But career satisfaction, happiness, pride, and other outcomes are more closely going to be positive if you really enjoy your work.

Everyone can describe an individual that they know who is outstanding at what they do but feel that the person is not really happy doing it. The job provides a great living but little joy in their life. They have remarkable skills that they successfully use but they take no great pleasure in the activity. Some feel that they are in a rut and can't move in any other direction. They feel locked into a given career path. This is a difficult situation and a long-term strategic career plan might have helped before they got themselves into this career quagmire.

Your resume and other portfolio items reveal your skills and some employers will hire you solely on the basis of your specific skill set.

Your goal is to hire an employer! You want to enjoy more than just using your skills. The instruments that measure only your skills and abilities, which you probably already know, are not nearly as important as ones that measure your softer competencies, which more often bring you the joy that you desire at your workplace.

The results of the MBTI can assist you in making higher-quality strategic career planning decisions.

A better understanding of your competencies will enhance your ability to communicate your credentials in a job interview. You want the recruiter to have the best possible information about you in order to help the recruiter to make the best possible decision on your behalf. Getting a job should not be your goal. You need to find the best opportunity for yourself so that you can maximize your potential for both you and the employer.

The website below is a free example of the typology by Carl Jung. A more complete description of the copyrighted MBTI materials is available in chapter 1.

HumanMetrics

www.humanmetrics.com

This site provides online testing in human typology and relationships. Take the Jung Typology test to get your TYPE for comparison to MBTI results. Read the type description. Company's team psychologists, psycho physiologist, mathematicians, etc. has over 30 years test development experience in Israel. Surf to "Jung Typology Test."

As you move forward in your own self-assessment it is very important that you, with your career counselor guidance, visit several websites and take several of these assessment tests.

The Personality Questionnaire

www.meyers-briggs.com

A small cost is assessed to take a test that yields results similar to the MBTI personality type. Please note that Meyers is spelled differently than Isable Myers spelled her name.



Self-Assessment Career Action Projects

Career planning starts with the self-assessment. The only way for you to begin a self-assessment is to physically put words on paper. Everyone needs some aid in conducting the analysis.





Key Decision Points by Type of Experiences

- Education
- Work History
- Personal Events
- Social/Professional Activities

Figure 2.13

Career projects are designed to provide a logical framework for thought and action to aid you in achieving a fair self-assessment.

Career projects offer a means of dealing with a complex situation. The career projects build a progressive story about you. As the story unfolds, a wealth of information falls out as if a novel were developing.

This is not solely a project in self-analysis. You will find real applicability for the results when you later move into the search phase of career planning. The self-assessment career projects contain answers to hundreds of interview questions that you will later face.

The benefit of the career project in self-assessment is directly proportional to the amount of time, thought, and effort put into it. The impact that the efforts have on career planning is significant. The result is truly worth the effort expended.

Autobiography Project

When written in sufficient depth, an autobiography is one of the most effective methods of self-assessment. Unlike the resume, the autobiography is not simply a brief summary that lists events and achievements; rather it is written in a prose style as a story. The purpose is to logically draw out variables that relate to an understanding of the self.

Chronological Narrative. The narrative describes all significant events in your life. It documents all important episodes where turning-point decisions occurred. To make certain all key points receive appropriate attention and nothing is left out, you should start by writing the narrative in a historical, chronological sequence of events placing special emphasis on *key decision points*.

Along with the time sequence of events, the key decision points form the outline of the biography. These decision points may be education, family, personal events, or job-related episodes. This phase of the autobiography can vary from a minimum of three typed pages to as much as twenty pages depending upon your background and the depth of analysis you wish to pursue.

It is important to give an explanation and rationale for the various life transitional points. This analysis brings out important value considerations. These values produce the interest levels that have great influence on career satisfaction.

A straight narration of a life sequence rarely achieves the overall objective of self-understanding. Values, interests, and personal qualities surface only after a thorough analysis of life decisions. Write down the *rationale* for key decisions in the sequence of events.





Regrouping. This analysis starts with a regrouping of the chronological events. Rework the analysis under the following headings:

- education
- work experiences
- family background
- professional/social/civic activities

The regrouping should be written in a highly organized but narrative style. Again, discuss the “why” of each decision made.

The major reason for the regrouping is to put the results into an organized framework, which later becomes the basis of the search phase of career planning. Your skills and interests begin to form a pattern that makes the later interview presentation and resume preparation flow into a harmonized communication package.

The *education* section must not be simply a listing of events. There must be an explanation of the *rationales* for your educational decisions and then an evaluation of those decisions after the training was completed.

Try to cover such points as grades, choice of educational institution, majors, courses, faculty, etc. Cover the decisions that you had the option of making.

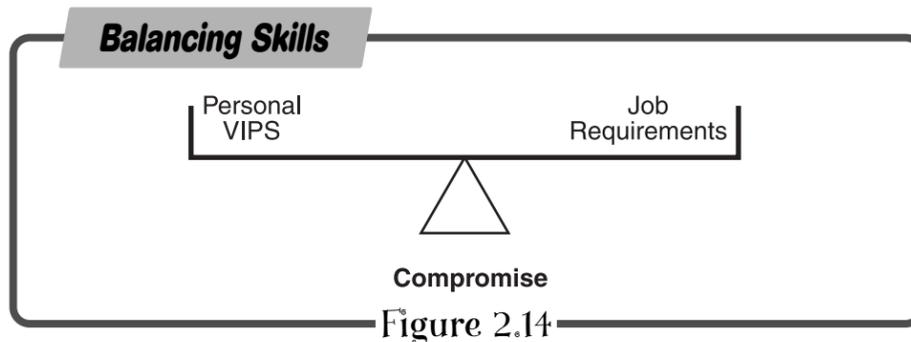
Your previous *work* experience includes full-time, part-time, and summer experiences. Your attitude toward work says much about your work ethic and career value structure. Discuss both good and bad experiences.

Try to show how each work activity benefitted you. Describe your duties and responsibilities in great depth by analyzing typical days, weeks, and months. Discuss the relationships you had with supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Highlight key points of advancement and responsibilities given and/or taken. No job was too insignificant to cover in this analysis.

The reason for covering *personal events* and *social/professional/civic activities* is to draw a value and interest profile.

Your flexibility of choice was probably greater in these activities than in any work or educational endeavor. How did these choices differ? Why did you elect these activities? How did family background influence these independent choices?





Why did you make the decisions that most impacted your life?

Fewer than half of all college graduates earn degrees in fields directly related to a specific managerial, technical, or professional position.

Your family and social background activities have equipped you with certain skills that education and work could never have provided. What have you learned from these situations? Would you consider what you have learned to be valuable skills? Are the skills applicable to work environments?

The regrouping of the chronological autobiographical narrative provides new insights for your decision making. Why did you make certain decisions? Would you make the same decisions again? These insights begin to bring out your basic value system, your interests, and your personal qualities.

You will draw upon these insights in your employment interviews and resume preparation.

Deliverable. Provide at least one typewritten page each for work experience, education, family background, and civic/professional/social activities. Try to have at least one single-spaced, typewritten page for each of these four categories.

The autobiography, written in the two different formats, will serve as the basis for future career planning decisions. It will also serve as data about past behaviors that you will discuss in subsequent interviews.



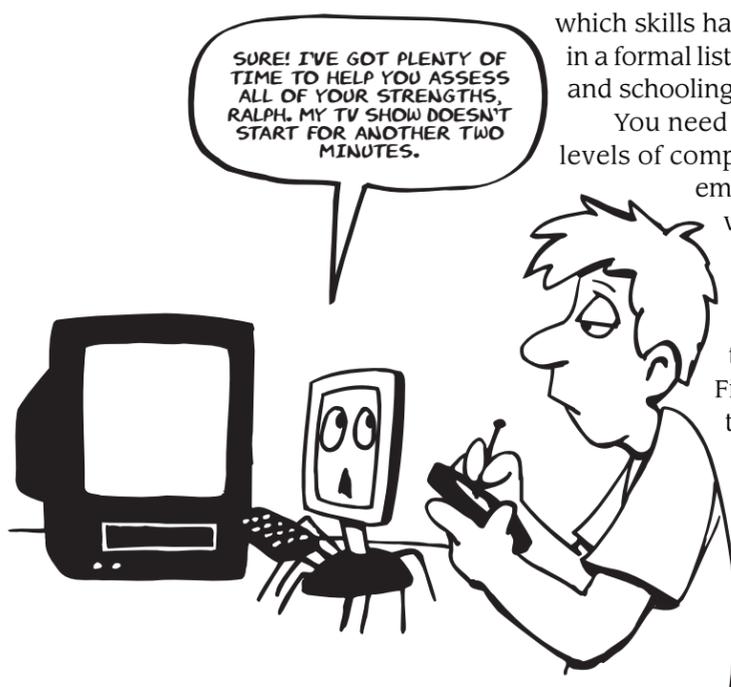
Skill Identification Project

This project is designated to assist you in identifying your skills, the degree of competence you possess in those skills, and ways to illustrate that you have the skills.

Job descriptions describe a basic set of qualifications required to do a job. There is occasionally another set of qualifications that are "preferred" but are not required. Qualifications may be specified in terms of education or prior work experience.

What an employer is really seeking is a *set of skills*. Education and experience frequently serve to develop those skills. However, skills can be developed in a variety of ways. The means by





which skills have been acquired are not always evident in a formal listing of a person's background experiences and schooling.

You need to know what skills you have and what levels of competence you possess. Don't assume that employers know which education class and work experience fostered your basic skills. They need to be coached by you.

Identification. What are the skills that you wish to offer to an employer? Figure 2.9 gives an inventory of the skills that are most widely requested of individuals seeking managerial, technical, and professional positions. Many of these skills are developed by means other than formal education and/or formal work experience.

Read each skill noted in Figure 2.9. Make a list of those that you feel you possess. Leave room beside each skill

on your list to make a note of your level of competence and how you obtained the skill. Focus on your top dozen.

Competence. Using your list of skills, give yourself a letter grade of "A" through "C." Try to force your ratings into a normal distribution of grades (A = Excellent; B = Above Average; C = Good/Acceptable). Try to create an equal number of A, B, and C skill levels. You probably will not give yourself any "D"s or "F"s since you will have eliminated those when you identified your skills.

Source. As you grade yourself, make some brief comments about each skill. Write three or four sentences about how you obtained the skill. Identify the method you employed to acquire and improve the skill. Be specific. Make references to specific sources and circumstances, such as courses, jobs, and formal and informal activities.

Examples. You now have a good idea of your various skills and the levels of your competence in them. Your thoughts now need to be organized in a manner that can be readily utilized in career planning.

You need to be able to recite your most desirable skills quickly and in a confident, supporting manner, especially in an interview.

Figure 2.9 lists skills in alphabetical order. However, you need to deal primarily with your "A" and "B" competence levels of skills.

Rank your twelve best skills. Forget about whether or not your skills are job-related. The job-related aspect becomes relevant only after the self-assessment. Rank order your skills in the way you feel they are best. Put your best skills at the top.





Deliverable. Select any four of your twelve best skills. Write each skill name at the top of a separate sheet of paper along with your competency rating in that skill. Write one single-spaced, typewritten page of analysis for each skill. Assume that you are explaining to an interviewer how you acquired the skill.

Explain how you acquired the skill and how you assess your level of competence. It is best to provide support for your level of competence rating by giving an example.

Your skills might have been developed through participation in a class project, a term paper, a laboratory assignment, a tutorial activity, cultural experiences, social organizations, family activities, civic responsibilities, work experience, etc. Pull out some mini-experiences. Explain the circumstances. Show how the skill was used.

Ideally, your highest-rated skills and those required for an occupation should relate exactly. In our imperfect world this rarely happens, however. Employers never find the “ideal candidate,” and you rarely find the “ideal career.” Compromises are made by both parties. There are usually some reasonably close matches.

The “resume” and “job description” do a fair job of initial selection. The interview process does the fine tuning that fits the pieces together.

It is not unusual for a job candidate to have every skill needed and yet not get the job. Why? It could be that the skill has not been communicated to the employer by the candidate.

The employer assumes the skills are missing unless shown otherwise. This project has you list these skills so that you can make effective use of them in subsequent job interviews. You must show each skill and how it relates to the job.

Corporate Cultures Vary

What type of culture best suits you?

Aloof	Laissez-faire
Aristocratic	Militaristic
Bureaucratic	Old-fashioned
Click-your-heels	Parental
Creative	Pompous
Cut-throat	Pressure
Developmental	Prestigious
Free-wheeling	Sink or Swim
Hierarchical	Supportive
Intense	Team-oriented
Ivory Towerist	Technocratic

Is there an industry environment that best fits you? Within an industry and organization, which best fits you?

Figure 2.15





Values Clarification Project

Over a period of many years, you develop a unique way of thinking. A personal philosophy appears to develop and mature during the teen and college years. It evolves from family, religious, social, and cultural relationships and environments. These philosophical views will influence your future work settings.

It is not necessarily imperative that the people with whom you share your working hours maintain the same value structure. It is important, however, that you and your work partners be tolerant of each other's values because intolerance can lead to discord, which has major disruptive effects on work performance. Conflicts are not healthy for success.

Since success is one of your main concerns, it makes sense to analyze exactly where you stand. You may be quite tolerant of others' viewpoints, but employees presently working with a potential employer may not be as tolerant. A "nuts and bolts" type of person can run at odds with a "thinker" or "dreamer."

This means that you must first develop a high level of awareness of your own value structure. Others are not likely to be in as good a position to assess your capacity to fit in with the environment. By knowing your values, you are much better prepared to chart the lay-of-the-land when you test the potential work setting.

The most difficult aspect of value analysis is assessing the potential work environment. What is needed is an assessment of the "personal feeling" you get when you approach the work setting. Do you feel comfortable with the people for whom you work? Are your argumentative attitudes in harmony with the low-conflict situation with your peer group?

In the abstract, there is no way to analyze the values and philosophies of one work setting. It must be done with a personal visit and/or a temporary work situation. This testing of the work setting is most frequently possible in cooperative education, internship, summer, and part-time employment circumstances. Consulting exposures also helps.

Figure 2.10 gives you a series of work values. What is your basic philosophy toward work? What attitude will others perceive that you are bringing to the work situation? You must know where you stand if you desire to achieve any high level of career success and happiness.



Identifying Values. What is happiness to you? How do the work values in Figure 2.10 affect you? First, read through the entire list of values in Figure 2.10. Try to discern how each word affects you. Go back to the top of the list and begin to quantify your feelings through use of a "like-dislike" scale. Using the scale below, place a numeral beside each value label. Try to create an equal number in each group.

- 1 = Extremely important to me
- 2 = Important to me
- 3 = Of some concern to me
- 4 = Not important





Regrouping. Now list all of your 1-rated work values on one sheet of paper, all of your 2-rated values on another, and so on until you have four separate lists. Search for common denominators in each category. Discuss the similarities in each like-rated group of work values.

Limiting yourself to one page for each of the four groups, analyze what you have uncovered. Are your values consistent within and between groups?

Conclusion. Discuss your ideal work setting. Go into specific values that you feel your colleagues must have in common with you. Does your analysis suggest any special probing that you should do when you approach a new work setting? How comfortable do you feel knowing that you have a certain value set?

Deliverable. Prepare a one-page statement for each of your four work value groups. Identify each group and give a brief statement showing the origin of each group of values. Explain why they are important to you. How they will impact upon your career decisions? Which of your past behaviors would you use to illustrate how you developed and possess this value?

Interest Inventory Project

Many colleges and high schools have a department that administers a variety of career-related tests and inventories. These inventories and tests are very useful in helping you gain a better understanding of yourself.

Psychological tests are not the panacea that will show you exactly which career field is right for you. They are simply very valid and reliable guides that greatly aid in helping people make more prudent decisions.

Interest inventories are very popular among career counselors. They offer some specific content relevant to career questions. These inventories are not tests of aptitude. They indicate the extent of similarities between a person's interests and those of people who are successfully employed in specific occupational groups.

One popular inventory used by professional career counselors is the Campbell Interest Inventory. The output reports are largely self-interpretable, so the feedback of results is well facilitated. They usually require only a small amount of time of the counselor, except for the integration of the results into the overall self-assessment. This test is available for a small fee on the www.USNews.com website.

The Self-Directed Search (SDS) is another interest-related career counseling tool based on Dr. John L. Holland's theory of personality types and environment models. It is self-scored and self-interpretable with a reasonable level of professional instruction.

The use of these interest inventories leads to a systematic exploration of various career fields. The results tell you which career group has interests similar to yours. It then leaves the follow-up career exploration to you.

There really is no good substitute for taking an interest inventory. Make arrangements to take one or all of these inventories. Most university counsel-



Interest Inventory Analysis Outline

1. Factual Results
2. Analysis of Results
3. Analysis of Recommendations
4. Disagreements Discussion
5. Planned Follow-up

Figure 2.16

ing services can provide an interest inventory for you. There is often a small charge for this service.

A test similar to the SDS is available below. If you are not an Indiana resident, a small fee is assessed. This test gives you your personal characteristics categorized in 6 types: realistic, investigative, social, conventional, enterprising, and artistic. Take the test and discover your orientation. There are several websites, in addition to this one, mentioned later in this book that offer further insight into your interests.

icpac

The Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center (ICPAC) offers a wide variety of services to help assess your career goals and educational needs. The CAREERS section offers interactive career assessment tools. Take the 5–10 minute Career Interest or the Merkle Style Preference Inventory. This site also offers information regarding financial aid and has dozens of links to associations and government agencies.

icpac.indiana.edu

Analysis. After the results are available, meet with a professional career counselor and examine the results. Take notes. You may not get to keep the test. Write down all suggestions given. Record recommendations. Request whatever written material is available to you.

The career counselor offers one opinion only. It is usually very accurate in terms of the reporting of the test results. The *action* to be taken as the result of the output is subjective.

When you have all the facts, *you* are the decision maker. Good counselors will suggest avenues for you to explore further. They will not give you many concrete answers to your career questions.

Deliverable. You have the data. Now you must analyze it. Write an analysis of the results using the basic outline in Figure 2.16.

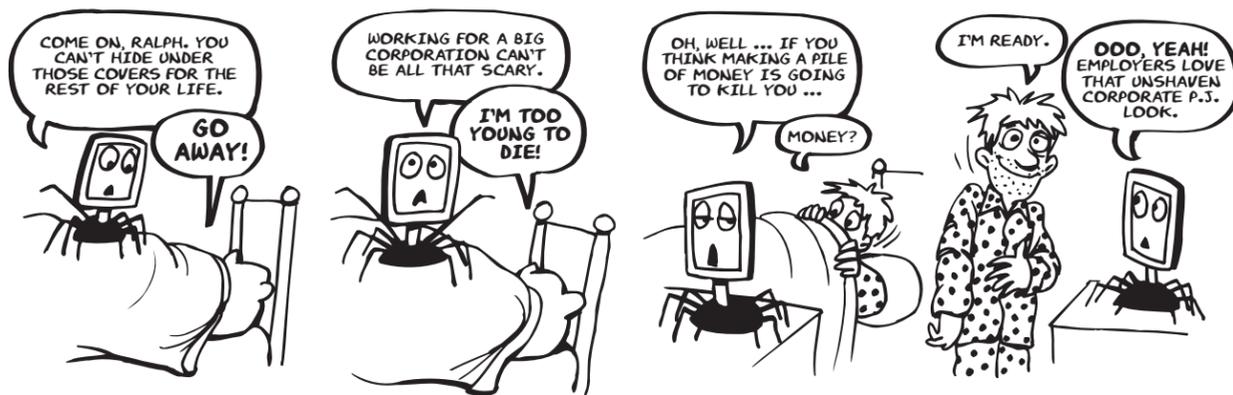
The interest inventory provides additional pieces of information for the self-assessment. The interest information must be integrated with skills, values, interests, and personal qualities before conclusions are drawn.

The interest inventory is an aid for follow-up and investigation, but it must not be the only piece of information you use for career decision making.

**Personal Descriptors Project**

Judgments about a person are made quickly, often in only part of a thirty-minute interview. After an interview, what descriptors would a recruiter use to communicate your potential to his or her boss?

Descriptors are personal qualities. Whether for a new job, advancement, or performance appraisal, people are reviewed by others. A written description is usually made.



Successful job performance is more than education, experience, and skills. Motivational characteristics are just as important. Personal quality assessment is a beginning step in an evaluation of motivation. Will you, given your skills, actually perform up to your highest potential?

What will be written about you? How can you be sure that it is accurate? You must project a true image if you expect an accurate assessment.

It is impossible to cue your evaluator if you do not have a plan yourself. An evaluator gets information from you. Do you have an accurate image of yourself? How can you relay this information?

Be honest with yourself. An accurate description is essential.

Identify Descriptors. The list of descriptive words given in Figure 2.12 is often used by counselors, teachers, employers, and others in describing people they must evaluate. The descriptors are used by people who have not seen you but who must make decisions about you. These decisions might relate to hiring, promoting, developing, or firing you.

Use the list in Figure 2.12 to identify the descriptive words that most nearly could communicate your personal qualities to other people. Place a number from 1 to 4 beside each descriptor, depending upon how well it describes you (1 = strongly describes; 2 = moderately describes; 3 = weak descriptor; 4 = false descriptor). Carefully evaluate every word as you process through the list.

There are about 150 descriptors and four classifications. Try to force your numbering into equal groupings. Use about 40 ones, 40 twos, etc., but it is not necessary for the groups to be exactly equal.

Listing. You should have 30 to 40 ones. Personal qualities are not factors that can easily be ranked from high to low. You either perceive of yourself as having the quality or as not having that quality. This is not to say that other people's perceptions of your qualities are identical to your own perceptions.

List the descriptors you have identified as strongly descriptive. List those that you have identified as moderately descriptive. Before you finally type the two lists, jockey the lists back and forth if necessary.

This project is designed to help you prepare an accurate picture based upon your own perceptions of yourself. To add strength and validity to your



personal analysis, you are asked to support your conclusions with concrete examples. An interesting variation of this project is to ask a close friend or relative to make the same evaluation about you.

Communicating. It is relatively easy to identify the factors that you feel best describe you to others. Communicating an impression that you want others to draw from your conversations and their observation of you is much more difficult.

How do you get another person (who often may not know you at all) to identify the same personal qualities that you selected in your listings? You would look foolish parroting out “Boy Scout” attributes about yourself. Who would believe you? Why should they believe you?

Communicate your qualities via examples. What instances in your life reveal specific attributes? One or two situations or stories about episodes in your life might communicate a number of different personal qualities.

Pick the two personal qualities you value most highly. Think about situations in your life that have portrayed those qualities in you. For example, look at “honest.” Tell about the time you returned ten dollars to a supermarket after discovering you were given too much change when you got home from shopping. Describe that entire sequence of events.

In other words, tell true stories about your life. Describe those stories in such a way that another person quickly sees the quality you have identified without your coming right out and saying that you consider that to be your most important quality. Write each story in about one page for each quality.

Expanding. After describing two different situations, go back and see if they describe other personal qualities you possess. Using each of the stories, write down any other descriptors that you feel the stories illustrate.

It is possible to develop four or five brief episodes from your life experiences that reveal the qualities you want an evaluator to conclude.

Deliverable. Type the forty descriptors you feel best illustrate your traits in rank order. Draw a line midway through the page and type the next forty best descriptors (in rank order) on the lower half of the page. Look over this list of eighty qualities and begin thinking how, in an interview, you might use personal events that happened in your life to describe these personal traits to a recruiter.

Your next step in this action project is to create “stories” or anecdotes that happened in your life that reveal qualities that you possess.

Each descriptor should have a different story on a separate page. You should draw the stories from your classroom experiences, extracurricular activities, home life, work background, or other episodes in your life.

As you develop these stories, leave a two-inch margin on the left side of the page. After you finish each story, re-read them to see which qualities (chosen from the first page) that you feel the stories illustrate. In the two-inch left margin of the three stories, go back and type in the personal descriptors you feel each paragraph illustrates.

You will find this project to be an excellent item to review just prior to each job interview you take.





Summary

The self-assessment is clearly a multifaceted project. It takes time. It takes perseverance. It is hard work, and there are no shortcuts. Doing the self-analysis is critical to making a sound career decision with positive long-term benefits.

The summation of this involved effort is a clear statement of self-understanding. A sound, well-thought-out self-analysis is the best prescription for a happy working life.

A self-assessment plan integrates education, experiences, skills, values, interests, and personal qualities.

One-third of your career planning model is now complete. The next phase is an exploration of potential career alternatives based upon the results of the self-assessment.



