

A question of values

Finding the right career seems simple. Do what you know and what you do best. However, it is important to look a little deeper. If you're not happy in your work perhaps your job is at odds with your personal values.

Twenty years ago a career was a series of jobs you had with just one company until, as career guru Professor Peters put it so beautifully, "you reached your level of incompetence".

When you reached this level, this was where you stayed because promotion was an unlikely option for you.

How things have changed. A recruiter or human resources manager now, seeing that you have stayed with just one company for a lifetime, is going to have doubts about your ability to be proactive.

So, a career is not a job or a series of jobs, nor is it working for one organisation, or even having a variety of employers during your working life.

Your career is your life at work; and as you spend more time at work than in any other personal activity, it is going to be up to you to ensure that during your career you can live out your personal values.

That means making a contribution first to yourself, then to those you are responsible to and finally, to get philosophical, a contribution to human kind.

This might sound very high brow, but our values as individuals are all very different - as the good book says, "It is not right for man to live by bread alone".

We have different values and these lead each one of us to different types of careers.

If we have one set of values and they are not satisfied in our work then there is a possibility that we can get into emotional and psychological difficulties.

Here are the major values as they apply to our work.

- Some people want to have control and influence over others.
- Some want to help others and be of service.
- Some want structure and security in their lives.
- Some want to be good at something and be an expert in their chosen field.
- Some want to be creative.
- Some want to be independent and do their own thing.
- Some don't care what they do as long as they make enough money and have the lifestyle they want.

Now, not one of these values or principles is better than another.

All are legitimate and possible but they lead people to different career paths.

If you want control you become a supervisor or a manager; if you want to help others you are attracted to jobs such as a nurse or a social worker; if you want to be creative you become a potter or a musician.

It is a shame and a waste, however, when a person has a career that is out of sync with their values. This will happen if you do not take charge of your career whenever you can.

So a good slogan is: "If it is going to be, it is down to me".

Think through your values and then have a strategy for achieving your goals.

Capitalism is a fantastic system and brings a certain degree of wealth and freedom to most of us, but it is also ruthless in that if you don't have personal career objectives, you will always be working for those who do.

A good and satisfying career is one which is sympathetic to and reflects your values.

This stops you being a round peg in a square hole. Also, when you have a job that reflects your values you not only enjoy it more but you are better at it and this brings career success.

Be successful!

* An article by Interim - a career coaching firm based in Sydney that helps individuals as well as companies to maximise career performance.