

# Assess Your Assets

Take time to know yourself before jumping on a career path

**W**ouldn't it be wonderful to find a resource that could reveal your perfect career and describe how to achieve it? You have one—it's you.

Unfortunately the noise of the expectations of others, a desire for big money or prestige, the allure of a sexy job title or the latest hot job trend can distract you from listening to who you are and what you want to do with your life.

## Who are you?

Anthony Spadafore of Pathfinders, a Washington, D.C.-area career design consulting firm, and coauthor of *Now What? A Young Person's Guide to Choosing the Perfect Career*, says that often students parachute into college figuring they will determine their major and/or career goal along the way—an expensive, and often ultimately unproductive, tactic.

**"The conventional wisdom that 'you can do anything you want if you try hard enough' is leading most people down the wrong road."**

Donnie McGovern, director of The University of Cincinnati's Exploratory Studies, agrees that young students overwhelmed with the task of making major educational and career decisions often don't take the opportunity to understand what makes them tick and identify the jobs that can keep them ticking productively.

"Students often overlook the advantage of personality and vocational assessments available at the career counseling department at

their local college or university," says McGovern. "Those considering attending college, or making a career transition, can better understand their skills, abilities, personal qualities, values and interests, and be more effective in making decisions about their career goals and setting their educational path when aided by assessments."

## Do it now, or do it later

Spadafore estimates that by the time people reach mid-career, nearly 70 percent are in a job that isn't in alignment with their talents or sense of purpose. Feeling trapped in the wrong profession, many people will choose to stay put and fake it, end up job hopping or go back to school without comprehending that the fix for their dissatisfaction is to use their innate talents rather than struggling to overcome their perceived weaknesses.

Spadafore's personal experience made him a believer in the value of discerning strengths and interests through assessment. "I studied electrical engineering and was in the field for years, but kept falling down the ladder. After getting the results of my assessment, I learned that I was more fascinated by people than machines. The power of my experience made me passionate about helping others find their true niche instead of languishing in a mismatched career."

"The conventional wisdom that 'you can do anything you want if you try hard enough' is leading most people down the wrong road," he says. "Each of us should be taught to understand what our real talents are, and then we can confidently pursue the right education for us—one that can bring long-term, sustainable fulfillment. This is where assessments can help."

"Our underlying aptitudes and natural abilities remain steadfast

throughout our lives, the same goes with our weak spots; they'll always remain no matter how diligently we attempt to overcome them," he says.

## Start here

While thousands of assessments exist that can reveal common threads and patterns in your life that you may not be aware of, and confirm information you may already know, Spadafore and McGovern cite two major ones that have been used for decades and are the ones most often used on college campuses: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII).

## MBTI: You've got personality and preferences

The classic MBTI personality assessment can help you better understand your personality type, how you relate and interact with others, and optimize your career choices by helping you understand your personal preferences. It's designed to help gather information about how an individual perceives information and makes decisions, including the effects of preference on career choice. It allows the individual-

ual to play to their strengths as they investigate related occupations and strategies for career exploration.

## SII: Playing to your strengths

The SII indicator is an assessment of interests, based on an idea that individuals are more satisfied and productive when they work in jobs or at tasks they find interesting, and with people whose interests are similar to theirs. Computer results from this 25-minute assessment show how certain interests compare with the interests of people successfully employed in specific occupations.

It identifies optimum career choices based on interests, and includes related occupations that jibe with them. **CF**

# How Well Do You Know Yourself?

Career and personality assessments can reveal your true strengths

**S**hould you visit a career or counseling center for a personality assessment? The following quiz can help you decide. Select the answer that you most agree with:

- 1 I'll choose my career and course of study based on what my parents and friends suggest.**
  - ☐ A. Yes, I trust their judgment. They know me best and what's good for me.
  - ☐ B. No, I think it makes sense to better understand my talents and what kind of work is most suited to me.

- 2 Successful people work harder to balance out their weaknesses.**
  - ☐ A. No, the most successful people make use of their strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses.
  - ☐ B. Yes, overcoming obstacles is a sign of a strong person.

- 3 The first two years of college are for figuring out my choice of a career and a major.**
  - ☐ A. Yes, those first two years are best spent trying out all different kinds of classes and exploring as many careers as possible.
  - ☐ B. No, if I identify my inherent traits and interests before I go to college, I can focus on classes that are a good fit for my aptitudes.

- 4 The bigger the paycheck, the better the job.**
  - ☐ A. No, the most successful people have a feeling of purpose and a sense of satisfaction in their work. They generally have a better quality of life and income as well.
  - ☐ B. Yes, getting paid is the only reason people work.

- 5 If you do what you love, you might be happy, but you'll probably be poor.**
  - ☐ A. Yes, while there may be the occasional rock star or sports hero, most people have to put making a living first before following a dream.
  - ☐ B. No, there are thousands of well-paying careers that call for a variety of talents. Understanding my talents and preferences and opening myself up to exploring career options can lead me to work that pays well and also gives me satisfaction.

## Answer Key

Give yourself one point for each correct answer.

**1-B.** McGovern says that many students mistakenly choose their major based on the well-meaning guidance of parents, peers, counselors and teachers who often set their recommendations on what they think is the best fit for the student, with little to no consideration of the student's ability or personality type.

Spadafore adds that it's important that people understand that talent is more than an innate ability for acting, music, art or athletics. "In reality, there are many kinds of talents—organizing, visualizing, spatial ability versus working with people—that can result in any number of satisfying careers."

**2-A.** The mistaken assumption is that our strengths will stand, so we should focus on overcoming our weaknesses. In fact, Gallup research shows that a high percentage of people obsess over their weaknesses rather than their strengths. The reality is that the greatest leaders, and most people in general, do their best when playing to their innate talents.

**3-B.** Spadafore says he speaks to any number of parents who spend thousands of dollars on SAT tutoring and backup to get their children into the best colleges before they consider a personality assessment for their children. "It's sad

how many people struggle in college or careers, not because of a lack of intelligence or effort, but because of a mismatch of their talents and traits."

**4-A.** The prevalent belief of many people that work is supposed to be bearable at best, and miserable at worst, keeps them in the shackles of unsatisfying, mind- and spirit-sapping jobs. While it's necessary to have a paycheck, isn't life supposed to be more than punching a clock and cashing a check? Aren't you deserving of a career that offers you affirmation and brings joy to your life?

**5-B.** McGovern notes, "If you major in something you love to study, or naturally gravitate toward, you will typically find a way to make those skills transferable in the job market. In short, do what you love and the money will indeed follow."

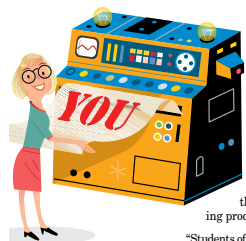
## Scoring

**4-5 points:** You've got a good understanding about how an assessment can give you the lead in your college studies and career. Bet you've already given yourself the advantage of an assessment.

**2-3 points:** Not bad, but why not equip yourself with a better understanding of the talents you have and the career that's right for you?

**0-1 point:** Run, don't walk, to a career counseling department and sign up for an assessment today. You deserve more than slogging through classes and a career that don't match your talents. **CF**

**YOU**



## Go Online

Find out how WCC's Counseling, Career Planning and Employment Services can help you assess your own career aptitudes.

## Feature

# Check Your Attitude

## Are negative emotions putting your job at risk?

By Kim Kachadorian

**T**he other day in a grocery store I heard a mother say to a child "Young lady, you better check your attitude." Adults say this to children all the time, but rarely do they say it to each other. Yet some adults could benefit from a little attitude check—especially at work. Just like misbehaving children, adults who haven't mastered their emotions can poison an entire workplace with their bad attitude.

Attitude is often considered a "soft skill." It's difficult to measure on a performance review, but everyone knows when someone has an attitude problem. Everyone knows who is the angry person, the overly-sensitive person, the complainer, the back-stabber, the slacker and so on. Sure, we all have natural emotional reactions to workplace pressures, but the better you are at mastering them, the more successful you will be at work.

**An optimistic attitude not only reflects well on you, it makes your coworkers, and the entire company, look good.**



How is your attitude at work? Here is a check:

### Are you usually positive?

Dig deep—do you work to keep a positive attitude on the job? If not, is there something you can do to change it? Marsha Petrie Sue, professional speaker and author of *The Reactor Factor*, says, "If you want to succeed, you must take personal responsibility for your attitude. Do you have real enthusiasm in your interactions with others?"

A positive attitude is built by caring and learning from your environment and not being engrossed only with yourself or your own opinions. Take an inventory of your attitude; are you a responsible adult at work?

An optimistic attitude not only reflects well on you, it makes your coworkers, and the entire company, look good. The result

is that your coworkers—and your boss—value your contributions, and your job is a little more secure than it would be if you were a constant complainer dragging everyone down. Learning to see the "silver linings" in your work situation may be the strength that binds your team.

### Do you build good relationships at work?

Gordon S. Curtis, author of the book *Well Connected* and executive transition coach, offers the following advice: "There is a tell-tale way to know how your attitude affects others at work; if you ask for help from a fellow team member and they help without hesitating, your attitude is likely in good standing. If no one wants to invest in helping you, you might want to reevaluate your relationships and your mood at work. Your attitude may be undermining your success with your coworkers; you may be creating your own problems."

While it may be human nature to want to win, in a negative and hostile environment there are no winners. The more you cultivate friendships and teamwork with your coworkers, the more you too will thrive.

### Do you love your work?

Rich Sheridan, CEO of Menlo Innovations LLC, a software development company in Ann Arbor, Mich., is renowned for generating a positive atmosphere in the workplace. "You should seek joy in both what you do and the environment in which you do it. You will be more productive, more engaged, more creative, and produce higher quality work in whatever you choose to do," he says.

But what if you just don't find joy in your work? If you truly feel that you're in the wrong profession and believe the only way to change it is to leave, start working towards that goal. The key word here is "start"—go back to

school, or find a new job or whatever it takes to "start." Change is not always easy, so start with baby steps. Think of the song lyrics "just put one foot in front of the other, and soon you'll be walking out the door." Take that first step, and then another.

How did you do? Positive and optimistic? Check. Cooperative and friendly? Check. Engaged and creative? Check. While everyone is entitled to a bad day now and then and a bad attitude might occasionally creep up on you, learn to resist it.

Of course it takes effort to be your best every day. But by keeping tabs on your attitude and making an effort to resist your desires to throw a tantrum, you're increasing your value at work. You're making it easier for everyone to be happier at work—including you. **CF**

