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What's inside ideal compass to best career direction

The Compass to Career Direction



Anne Gottlieb Angerman

Last week, Lauren a 35-year old woman in advertising who had been downsized, asked me if engineering or nursing were good fits for her. She also wanted to know the hot careers in 2010. Rather than looking at external factors, like job growth, Lauren,

and others planning a career, would benefit more from looking at their internal workings, such as their strengths, abilities and passions.

“One of the primary characteristics of happy, productive and successful people is that they see themselves in a future that feels positive and attainable,” wrote authors Bob McDonald and Don Hutcheson in their book, *Don't Waste Your Talent*. Compare that to data that found that 75 percent of students see no relation between their college major and career after college. Research also has shown that personal vision is more predictive of success than intelligence, education and social-economic background.

So, what are the elements of personal vision? They include abilities, skills, interests, personality, values and family of origin. And, how do you find those internal elements? Assessments are a great tool for identifying each person's individual strengths and characteristics.

Tests can give the answers

There are many assessments with different costs and purposes. These are some of the most popular assessments that can be useful in career transition:

Myers Briggs Type Indicator – A personality inventory that is based on a theory of personality developed by Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Carl Jung to explain normal differences among people. By understanding your individual type (among 16 types) people can see what careers might be suitable. Lauren learned from the MBTI that it is important for her to work with others in a flexible warm environment, not in one that is competitive or hostile.

Strong Interest Inventory – This test helps you see how your interests compare to others who are happy in their careers. Do you like hands-on projects or solving complex problems? Lauren's interests were similar to situations found in health care fields, such as nursing, rather than to those in business. It was a quick reminder to her that she didn't like working in a fast-paced competitive environment that was profit-oriented.

Highlands Ability Battery Testing – This test helps identify an individual's talents. This amazing online three-hour assessment measures inborn unique abilities, work style, learning styles and vocabulary. By understanding that our abilities solidify by the age of 15 and that the more we use our abilities, the less stress we will have, knowing what we do well will be helpful for any career decisions. Because natural abilities are products of our genes, they do not change once they have developed. Analyzing our abilities can give us invaluable information for choosing a college major, a career or making a career transition. My evaluation of the test results helped Lauren realize she had abilities in the sciences and math, which helped her to decide to go back to school in nursing.

Where can you get the assessments to help with your life decisions? The MBTI and Strong are offered at colleges, by private career counselors and online. The Highlands (www.highlandSCO.com) only is offered through trained professionals. By using these assessments, individuals can look at three areas of themselves and have insight for going forward with training and other career decisions.

These two Web sites offer more resources: www.collegeincolorado.org – free assessments and resources in Colorado www.online.onetcenter.org – career forecasts and descriptions

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SMART & SLOW CHANGE

- **Know yourself** – Assessments are one tool for career transition. The more you understand yourself, the easier it is to make a career change. The more time you take to analyze yourself and your needs, the less chance there is to make a mistake. Nothing takes the place of motivation and being proactive.
- **Career change takes time and research** – It's hard to do it alone, as it is done most often. Find someone to help: a friend, coach or a group.
- **Don't let age stop you** – Being unfulfilled or frustrated, at any age, can lead to depression and low self-esteem.
- **Going back to school** at any age offers new opportunities and rewarding change.
- **Take baby steps** – Start small. Get out of the house and away from your computer. Offer your possibly new services to others. Volunteer, conduct informational interviews and/or arrange an internship in a new field.
- **Listen to yourself** – You are the best judge of what feels good to you. Don't let yourself be defined by others.