



Career Planning: What Makes You Shine?

Tips I Used to Find Greater Career Joy

From: Amber Stott, CEO & Chief Food Genius

"Find out who you are and do it on purpose."

The "perfect job?" It's a myth. A fail-safe career-path plan? Another myth. In order to be successful, you have to find out who you are and do it on purpose. While the perfect job doesn't exist, by understanding who you are and building a personal brand, you'll find more contentment in a job that fits you.

Figure out what work environments, projects, and colleagues bring out your best self and seek opportunities to work with those people, projects, and in those spaces. As you discover your strengths--and become known for them--it will become easier for you to identify jobs that are best suited to you.

Strengths

Work on projects that make you shine! The best way to do this is to play to your strengths. While we all feel rewarded when we can learn and be challenged, you'll feel like a rockstar when you become an expert in the areas where you're already strong.

1. People compliment me often on this:
2. I feel energized when I work on these projects:
3. When I feel energized by a project, it is because:
4. These activities challenge me in a way that feels good:
5. These activities challenge me in a way that doesn't feel good:
6. A few projects where I have really been successful include:
7. My contributions to that success included:
8. When I have failed, I learned:

[Take the Strengths Finder test](#), which comes with the purchase of a best-selling book on the topic. Even if you don't read the book, the \$20 price is worth it for the test results.

Values

You can change your work habits, but you're less likely to change your values. If you value communication, but find yourself in a job with colleagues who don't speak openly, you'll have a harder time enjoying your work. When you know your driving values, you can look for them in the jobs and workplaces you seek.

Take 5-10 minutes to [complete this simple values assessment](#) to discover your driving values. Your values may shift over time (for example, when you're single you may value friendships more than family, but as you build a family of your own, this might change), so you can take this test once every few years to check in with yourself.

Workplace Culture

Every workplace has a unique culture, and while no place will be perfect, you can find a job where the projects and the people fit your values and strengths. If you value creativity, you won't be happy in a work culture that demands you to simply replicate the creative work of someone else. You also want to feel in sync with your team. If your boss is an early riser and you can't drag yourself out of bed before the sun rises, you may end up clashing despite working on projects that you enjoy.

Of the following, what compromises are you comfortable making, and which items are deal breakers?

1. What work setting is most productive for you? (cubicle, door closed, listening to music, natural light, etc.)
2. How much travel are you comfortable with? (driving in town, using a bike and having no travel, plane and overnight travel)
3. How adaptable are you to your hours of work? (late nights, weekend projects, early mornings, etc.)
4. What level of focus do you need? (okay with being interrupted, need total project focus and silence, etc.)
5. What dress code are you comfortable with? (suits always, jeans, etc.)
6. How much hierarchy are you comfortable with? (just a manager above you, doesn't matter, comfortable working with politicians and boards of directors, need to be in charge, love team collaboration, etc.)
7. How independent do you need to be? (hands-on boss vs being left alone)

8. What pace do you prefer to work at? (go-go-go, lots of projects at once, just a few projects at once, tight deadlines, long lead time, etc.)
9. How much ambiguity are you comfortable with? (need to be given a plan vs need the end goal and you'll build a plan)



Your Brand

If the above exercises helped you discover your best self, then you need to show up this way repeatedly with others. This is how you build your personal brand. If you value honesty, then always speak the truth and behave forthrightly, and you will become known and valued by those around you for being earnest. You will gravitate towards work that allows your truest self to flourish, and others will know to seek you out for your areas of strength.

Instead of seeing yourself as a job title, look for roles, employers, and projects that speak to your brand. This will get you closer to career happiness.

1. How will I live into my values? My strengths? (at work, with friends, family, etc.)
2. What is one thing I can stop doing that is inconsistent with my values? With my strengths?
3. What is one thing I can start doing that is consistent with my values? My strengths?
4. What am I most proud of that I have accomplished that feels in line with my values? With my strengths?



Further reading

The myth of the Ideal workplace:

[Debunking The Myth Of That Perfect First Job](#)

[3 "Dream Job" Myths You Need to Stop Believing if You Want to Be Happy](#)

[The Dream Job Is a Myth. Focus Instead on Living Your Best Life.](#)

Company culture:

[How to Tell if a Company's Culture is Right for You](#)

Additional work:

[Personal Brand Workbook](#)

Contact me:

amber@foodliteracycenter.org