



IT Career Error! [Click Here](#) to Repair

Natural abilities are the foundation of IT career satisfaction...or hell.

Two years ago Jeff was a discontented software developer. His work left him frustrated and mentally drained each day. His performance reviews were generally positive, but always noted a lack of genuine interest or motivation. He agreed completely with these reviews. Following a specific aptitude test and some coaching, Jeff understood the reason and set his sights on becoming a systems administrator...and he's never looked back.

Jeff's feeling that there was something missing in his career is all too common. Despite the money, the telecommuting—and even the sandals—a growing number of IT professionals are complaining that their work lives seem to have no meaning. And on the surface, this doesn't seem to make sense. These folks seem to have the necessary interest in technology, even the basic aptitudes for it. But they are frustrated by their work, find it tedious and rarely spend their free time reading trade magazines about their profession.

What's the explanation?

In nature, plants and animals flourish when the environment matches their needs. That's why you don't find frogs in the desert. But this is a lesson too many people ignore.

According to one recent study, 80% of corporate employees were in jobs that did not make use of their talents. So is it any wonder that up to 60% of the polled workforce plans to switch jobs in the next 12 months?

Most people—including IT professionals—spend more time researching a home computer purchase than they do deciding on their life's work. They simply assume because they're fascinated with computers that IT is the career for them. Besides, it pays well. But this kind of thinking is all-too-often a direct route to a "toxic job".

What to do?

We all know how to figure out which computer is best for us. We make a chart. We gather information. We assign values. We find the right match between our needs, our desires and pocketbooks. The same kind of evaluation can help us find the right career match. We just need to evaluate a different set of parameters: our interests, values, personality style, temperament and life goals.

If you're going to find a career you truly love, a profession in which you will thrive, you have to align your innate aptitudes/talents with the requirements of the profession. For decades medical

students have used certain types of aptitude testing to determine what field of medicine will they be successful in and, consequently, enjoy. It has equally beneficial applications in the IT arena.

Let's look at Jeff again. When he took the Highlands Ability Battery, it revealed that he (a) was above average spatially, (b) had a high rate of Idea Flow, (c) was a Specialist, (d) had a high aptitude for Classification and (e) had only an average aptitude for Concept Organization. He didn't know it, but that combination spelled "frustration" for any programmer.

- A high score on the spatial relations visualization scale meant that Jeff needed to either work with objects or feel a sense of affecting objects and the "real world". Writing software code was too ethereal and abstract for Jeff's brain.
- As a specialist, Jeff preferred being able to identify a body of knowledge and then attempt to master it and be recognized as a master of it. Programming was too "obscure," too generalized.
- Having a high rate of idea flow is great for a comedian or teacher or a writer, but if you're in a career that involves long projects and endless details, it's an ability you won't be using.
- And even though Jeff's high ability in diagnostic reasoning is great for debugging programs, the logical requirements of the coding trade demand a higher level of analytical reasoning than he had.

The end result was FRICTION. A mismatch between the person and his job that Jeff might have avoided if he'd chosen to be a systems administrator instead of a software developer. A systems administrator needs to be good at hands-on work, needs to develop expertise in a specific subject area, finds himself mostly taking on short-term tasks with concrete results and using his diagnostic reasoning skills as a systems troubleshooter.

Once Jeff saw how the discord between software development and his inborn strengths and needs was the root of restlessness, the decision to switch to another field was easy.

"I felt like a 10-ton weight had been lifted off of me," Jeff says. "Knowing that the cause of my aggravation had been the poor job fit, I was able to rid myself of the guilt I felt. I was so optimistic about the future."

So find the work that uses your unique traits and talents. You'll feel as comfortable and at home as a frog in its pond or monkey in the jungle.

By,

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