

Does Your Personality Match Your Career?

Surveys indicate that up to 80% of us claim that our work lives lack meaning; but don't blame your guidance counselor just yet.

People often pick the wrong career because they're listening to the wrong voices.

They're overly concerned with what they *can do*, what they (or others) feel they *ought to do*, and what they think they *want to do*. But the starting place is with understanding ***who they are***.

Who are you?

You are your *personality*: a collection of your temperament, style, and values. You are a *unique* collection of personal preferences. You may prefer a sense of achievement or of perfection. A structured environment might suit you well while a varied and somewhat chaotic workplace is ideal to someone else. I may thrive in an atmosphere of competition and you may abhor it – preferring more harmonic relationships at work.

Whatever your personality may be, it is, for the most part, set in you at birth. Although much of who we are is learned as we grow through the years of childhood, the foundation of our temperament and style is innate.

Why does personality matter?

Along with innate aptitudes, your personality is one of the major requirements of a "natural vocation" and, thus, a fulfilling career. Even if you are wildly fascinated by the subject matter of your work, if the nature of the job doesn't fit your personality, there will be "friction".

If our personality isn't being expressed, we are basically being somebody else: something toxic to our sense of well-being.

Even a small degree of misfit between personality and job can diminish your effectiveness and satisfaction. People who are introverted become exhausted and stressed if they must spend an excessive portion of the day interacting with others. People who are extroverted feel frustrated when they are without that external contact. Some personality types require an autonomous work-life; others may long to help those less fortunate. It's the way we're "wired".

These needs aren't weaknesses and we're not going to grow out of them. They are requirements of joyful "being". The more the job matches who we are, the more successful and happy we are.

Let's take an example

A large percentage of the population basically prefers to be "group workers". They have a broad, generalist frame of reference for life, usually getting bored with work that is highly specialized and narrow in scope. They are at their best contributing to the goals of an organization. They are on the same wave length as the group. An example could be a secretary or a high school teacher or a sales manager.

On the other end of the spectrum are the "individual workers". They prefer to be valued for their mastery of a particular discipline or subject. At work, they like to have people seek them out for their mastery, expertise, or knowledge. A doctor or scientist or professor or novelist would fit this profile.

The "individual worker" who is a part of a small software development team would probably end up seeking other pastures. Had she chosen the position of consultant she is likely to prefer the learning, focus and advice-giving of such a role.

Regardless of where we fall in the various spectra of our personalities, what we all have in common is that if we are not able to satisfy our preferences at work, we will feel that something is "missing".

Who are you? – Revisited

So how do you determine who you are and, thus, what you need? Well, the answers are already inside of you. The key lies in being posed the right questions.

I believe that a combination of good personality testing and self-administered exercises/inquiries can be invaluable in posing these crucial questions which help validate what you know deep-down about yourself already.

A good place to start is to do some thinking. What are some things you have enjoyed in the jobs you've had? Getting respect? Being appreciated? Being independent?

What have you hated or just plain disliked? Being micro-managed? Having to meet deadlines? Not feeling like you're making a contribution?

Look for common themes in your experiences. Begin to create a profile of who you are (and, again, what you *need*). This profile will help you create the blueprint of your "natural vocation".