

Chapter 10: Strengths and Career Planning

Mark Twain told the story of a man who searched his whole life for the world's greatest general. When the man died, he arrived in heaven and walked up to St. Peter and said, "I'm looking for the world's greatest general."

St. Peter replied, "I know. We've been expecting you, and I have good news. If you will look right over there, you will see the world's greatest general."

The older man excitedly looked over and said, "That's not the world's greatest general. That man was a cobbler on Main Street in my hometown." St. Peter responded, "But had he been a general, he would have been the greatest general ever."

This story is not meant to demean cobblers at all. The work of a cobbler is meaningful and requires very special talents. But the story does raise some fundamental questions: Did the cobbler know what he had the potential to do? Did he know that he had the talent to be the world's greatest general? Did anyone try to convince him that he could be destined for greatness?

Twain's tale points to a painful truth that's echoed in the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes: "Most people go to their graves with their music still inside them." There are plenty of perfectly good cobblers out there who could have been great generals, given the opportunity or encouragement. Maybe, given the choice, they would still have chosen to be cobblers. But they also could have pursued completely different, perhaps historic, careers.

Give this tale some thought when planning your own career. We want the music that is inside you to be heard!

It's a Question of Fit

The Chinese philosopher Confucius had it right 2,500 years ago: "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." We spend half our waking hours at work -- 90,000 hours of our lives, if we work from college graduation to retirement at age 65. That's a lot of time that can be spent

either doing something you love -- and marveling at the fact that you're getting paid for it -- or dreading getting up every morning. In the United States, only 13% of workers say they find their work meaningful, and a mere 20% think they're in jobs that are using their talents (Miller, 1999). If you're like us, you want to be counted among the 1 in 5 that enjoys going to work on Monday morning.

From childhood on, your parents, teachers, and well-meaning friends and relatives have been asking you, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The pressure to make the right choice only intensifies as you head to college. Many people think you should have it figured out by the time you arrive on campus. Yet the reality is that choosing a career is a daunting task, and you're not alone if you struggle with it. Anywhere from 60 to 85% of entering college students change their major at least once. So it's important to recognize that this is a big deal that people struggle with and that may take some time to figure out. Some avoid it as long as possible, and others take the easy road and choose whatever career they think their parents might like them to pursue.

Read just about any book on career choice and you'll find a theme that runs through them all: Choosing a career is all about the right fit. When you find a career that fits you, work doesn't seem so much like work anymore; work allows you to express the essence of who you are and brings you joy. Thomas Edison claimed, "I never did a day's work in my life. It was all fun."

Interestingly, he was also the one who said, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." Interviews with people in their seventies and eighties have revealed that those who had a passion for their work were also the ones who felt their lives were most fulfilling and meaningful (Leider & Shapiro, 2001). And at the end of life, that's what counts: looking back on a life well-lived and feeling that you made a difference.

Because this is an issue of fit, one question that comes to mind is whether there's one perfect fit, one right career choice. We might like to think that there is some career out there that will be just right. But we don't know of any cases where that is true. Our studies of the top achievers in most careers and professions indicate that they "invent" ways to apply their greatest talents and existing strengths as they work. If they can't, they move on until they find a career in which they can.

These superior performers know what we hope you'll soon discover -- that the secret is to find a way to maximize your greatest talents where you are right now, in whatever you are doing. If you're a full-time student, your "job" is that of a student; how do you maximize your talents in that role? If you're also a parent or work in a clothing store to pay your way through college, how do you make the most of your talents in those roles?

Because of all the rapid change in our society, half the jobs that will exist in your lifetime don't even exist yet. Therefore, college is not about preparing you for a job, or even for a career. It's about preparing you for life, to become a lifelong learner who knows how to gain the knowledge and skills that are needed for new challenges. So relax -- your choice of major and even your choice of career don't lock you in for life, and you have the rest of your life to adjust the fit. There are many careers that will allow you to develop and apply a great number of strengths.

Does this mean that you can be anything you want to be when you grow up? Well, that's certainly the American dream. But it's also the American myth! It's democratic and reflects our national character to say that anyone can become the next president or CEO or movie star. But the truth is you can become only a highly developed version of who you already are -- you can only grow into your own potential. You've been wired from early in life, perhaps even from birth, to love certain things, to see the world a certain way, to blossom in particular environments, and to respond naturally and easily to specific opportunities.

Just as an acorn can't become a palm tree, you can't become something other than the very best of who you already are -- which is not such a bad deal after all! Reaching your full potential, becoming the person you were created to be, is an aspiration that will take a lifetime but will be much more satisfying than unsuccessfully struggling to become someone you are not.

So what is "fit" all about? Exactly what are the pieces that must fit together for a satisfying career? There are really only two of them: who you are and what you do. Psychologists call it "person-environment fit." Theologians sometimes refer to it as a "calling." We like theologian Frederick Buechner's definition of calling: "where your deep gladness meets the world's deep needs." It's all about becoming the person you were created to be in order to do the work you were designed to do. It's that simple -- and that complicated.

Your Deep Gladness

It all starts with *you*. Any search for a good fit begins with a good look inside yourself. Or as Parker Palmer says, "Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am" (Palmer, 2000, p. 4). What is your "deep gladness"? What brings you joy? What energizes you and gets you up in the morning? These are helpful clues in your search for the right fit. We want to encourage you to see what's *right* with you. We want you to take seriously those most important and most precious parts of your identity, and then bring these aspects into the career-planning process.

If you can't think of anything that gets you up in the morning these days, reflect on when you were in fourth or fifth grade. What did you love to do? How did you spend your time? What could absorb you for hours? Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi talks about the concept of "flow" that occurs when we enjoy a task so much that we lose all track of time and aren't thinking about ourselves or our performance.

Interestingly, adults report this experience occurs during work three times more often than in any other activity. Flow happens when you're challenged and stretched, but are equal to the task. Athletes and musicians sometimes refer to it as "playing in the zone." Everything falls into place, you don't exactly know how you did it, but you were able to excel in a way that brought deep satisfaction -- that "deep gladness" we referred to earlier. People who have developed strengths and are in environments that allow their talents to flourish are far more likely to experience this "flow."

Watch any group of children and it will be clear what they love to do -- and what they don't. The seeds of their future have been planted and are beginning to blossom. No one has yet told them that they can't get a job doing what they love and there's no pressure yet to follow in Mom or Dad's footsteps by becoming a doctor or lawyer. No teacher has yet said that they don't have what it takes.

There's a saying that goes, "Genius is childhood recaptured." Your childhood reflects the genius of your most naturally powerful talents. So think back to your childhood, put aside the fears that have come with growing a little older, and ask yourself, *"What would I love to do, if I didn't have to worry about making money and if I knew I could not fail?"* Your answer is a clue to your deep gladness, and it's the most important piece of the puzzle.

After you've had a chance to think about this question, there are some other things you can do to figure out who you are and where your deep gladness lies. Talking about your Signature Themes with the most important people in your life can help; taking career inventories and discussing the results with a career counselor can give you some clues; and discussing your dreams with your advisor or your favorite professor can aid you in pinpointing what's most important to you and what you're passionate about.

Meeting the World's Deep Needs

If the first piece of the career-choice puzzle is knowing who you are and what brings you deep gladness, the second piece is connecting that to what you do -- how you can meet the world's deep needs. Leaving the planet a little better off than you found it is a worthy goal. A sense of mission and

purpose for your life can energize you and keep you going when you encounter the natural obstacles of life.

What kind of difference do you want to make in the world? What kind of legacy do you want to leave as your imprint after you're gone? The college years aren't usually a time when thoughts about the end of life are foremost in your mind, and that's as it should be. But the kind of life you live is being determined now by the choices you make every day. So what life are you beginning to craft for yourself? What are the first chapters of your legacy?

You've already begun to write the story that will become your life legacy. Look back over the jobs you've had, hobbies you've enjoyed, and memorable volunteer work. See any patterns? Can you put into words what you liked or disliked about each job or volunteer opportunity? On your best days, what were you doing? When you experienced a sense of fulfillment or satisfaction with work well done, what had you done to make that happen?

Some environments allow your talents to flourish more than others. Research has shown that most of the stress of life is due to the environments we're in, more so than what we are doing in those environments (Miller, 1999). Environments that reflect our values are more likely to enable us to capitalize on our talents. British author Samuel Butler said, "People are always good company when they are doing what they really enjoy." Finding the environment that brings out your best and that allows you to develop strengths by capitalizing on your most powerful talents is the secret to making a wise career choice.

So how do you discover the kinds of environments that are likely to allow you to maximize your talents? Your previous experiences offer a clue, as does what you learn from job shadowing -- following someone who is in a career you think you might enjoy over the course of several days or weeks. But there's another way.

Psychologist John Holland (1992) devised a method of determining person-environment fit back in the early 1970s when he found that there were six basic types of people and there were specific kinds of environments that seemed to fit those types. He believed that people are happiest in their work when they are in congruent environments -- environments that are a good fit for them. It's important to note that people don't fit neatly into boxes like this; most of us are not only one type but are a combination, and most environments also have a mix of characteristics. But Holland's research on vocational types has stood the test of time and can be a useful lens as you think about environments that will allow you to best maximize and apply your talents. You can ask a career counselor how you take the Self-Directed Search, which is a measure of Holland's vocational types. We recommend that you take a number of different career inventories as part of your career exploration process.

A large group of college students from across the United States and the United Kingdom has taken both the Clifton StrengthsFinder and a measure of Holland's vocational types. Their responses give us some clues as to the types of environments that are a good fit for talents from certain themes. These results can be found in the appendix of this book and on the StrengthsQuest Web site. Keep in mind that each person has a unique combination of talents, so any connections between your Signature Themes and your Holland type are simply to give you a place to start as you think about meeting the world's deep needs. In the pages that follow, we've outlined some of the environments that are likely to allow your talents to flourish, based on the research we've done with the Clifton StrengthsFinder and Holland's vocational types.

It's important to remember that StrengthsFinder is not a career inventory, however, and does not tell you what career path to follow. It simply helps you discover the areas where your greatest talents lie so that you can build on them in whatever roles you're in throughout your life. Knowing more about yourself helps you in the process of figuring out the environments that are likely to bring out your best. This journey may begin in your teens, but it continues for a lifetime. Whether you are choosing a career for the first time or changing careers in midlife, the process involves knowing yourself and connecting that self-awareness to environments that will allow your talents to flourish.

Remember that strengths are developed when your greatest talents have been combined with skills and knowledge appropriate to the task. As powerful as talents are, they alone cannot allow you to experience deep gladness in your work. It's only when the talent has been honed with skills and knowledge to the point of strength that you will experience enough success to bring joy. Author Pearl S. Buck noted this when she said, "The secret of joy in work is contained in one word -- excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it." So the clues to the environments that might bring out your best are simply a starting place for you to consider as you begin the exploration for a connection between who you are and what you do. Gaining the skills and knowledge to do the job at the level of strength is what will allow you to achieve excellence.

The Good News

The good news is that in your talents you already have within you what you need to become your best self and achieve in several different careers. Your greatest talents are simply waiting to be discovered. It needs to be *uncovered* rather than *discovered*. That's what the Clifton StrengthsFinder helps you do: It gives you some clues that help you discover your talents. Your Signature Themes are the areas where your greatest talents most likely reside, based on how you responded to the assessment.

On the following pages, we have outlined each theme and under each have described some environments that might encourage the talents reflected in the theme. We've also provided some suggestions that will capitalize on some of the talents within that theme throughout your career-exploration process. Keep in mind that your Signature Themes combine in unique ways; the talents that lie within the Ideation theme look different when combined with the talents from the Woo, Positivity, Communication, and Activator themes, and potentially would fit with different environments than if those talents were combined with the talents found within the Strategic, Futuristic, Intellection, and Input themes. The suggestions we give on the following pages are simply meant to provide you with a place to start exploring. They are meant to open the doors to a journey of uncovering your deep gladness and how it might meet some of the world's deep needs.

Applying Your Talents in Careers

Applying Achiever Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Achiever talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- As a talented achiever, you probably are attracted to goals. Take the time to establish clear and relevant objectives that will guide your intense efforts.
- Make a list of the steps to take in choosing a career, beginning with a visit to the career center on your campus. The list -- and being able to cross items off it as you follow through on them -- will give you a sense of direction as well as a deep sense of accomplishment.
- Roles that challenge you and reward your hard work will allow your Achiever talents to flourish.
- Work environments that provide incentives for quality or productivity are likely to bring out your best efforts.
- Find a place where your productivity, stamina, intensity, and drive for completion will make you a valued team member.

Applying Activator Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Activator talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- People with exceptional Activator talents like to jump right in and start, so your best approach to career planning is to try out various roles. Look for part-time jobs, work-study on campus, or volunteer opportunities where you can "try on" a career that looks interesting to you.
- Identify formal or informal leadership roles on campus where your Activator talents can flourish.
- Powerful Activator talents make you good at the starting line. Look for work environments that will reward you for getting people out of the blocks quickly.
- Consider becoming an entrepreneur. Make a list of possible businesses you could start, grow, and sell once they show a profit. Understand that you may lose interest once an enterprise is so fine-tuned to the point that it runs on its own.
- Understand that some supervisors and managers may feel threatened by your insistence on making decisions and acting without delay. Your Activator talents will flourish best in an environment where quick decision-making is valued and there is not a lot of hierarchical structure.

Applying Adaptability Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Adaptability talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Those with great Adaptability talents often respond well to changing demands. Shadow people in careers that are attractive to you and watch how they continually respond to the varied requests of their customers or clients.
- Interview individuals who have jobs that demand flexibility and a comfort with rapid change. Ask what their typical day is like.
- Gain part-time or seasonal employment in organizations where the demand for flexibility exists hour-by-hour and day-by-day. Pay attention to ways in which your Adaptability talents benefit you in these settings.
- Your Adaptability talents will flourish in environments that reward responsiveness and your ability to "turn on a dime."
- You may thrive in chaos. Avoid environments that are highly structured or routine, with lots of rules and regulations.
- Talk to people in the entertainment industry. Interview designers or producers and ask them to describe their work and the types of satisfaction they receive from it.

Applying Analytical Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Analytical talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Many people who are exceptionally talented in the Analytical theme are good at weighing evidence.
- Ask good questions of people who are currently in careers that interest you. One hallmark of Analytical talents is the quality of your questions. Put that to good use in selecting a career.
- Talk to people who work in such fields as accounting, finance, sciences, forensics, computer technology, journalism, or other fields that involve data analysis or problem solving to find out what they enjoy most about their work.
- Explore jobs that allow you to make decisions based on your evaluation of facts, data, tangible evidence, and research findings.
- Environments that allow you the freedom to explore and think will allow your Analytical talents to flourish.
- Working with data and systems analysis, engaging in research, and critiquing ideas tend to bring out your best.

Applying Arranger Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Arranger talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- People who are especially talented in the Arranger theme often arrange and rearrange bits and pieces until a pattern emerges. This talent can be useful in career planning. Map out a success plan for your education -- arrange and rearrange it to accommodate all possible scenarios as you think about careers that interest you.
- Keep your options open. Explore a variety of careers, knowing that it will all fall into place at the right time.
- Environments that give you contact with people and allow you the freedom and flexibility to work with others and plan events will allow your Arranger talents to flourish.
- You may be a whiz at juggling schedules and people. Environments that call upon these talents may often be very rewarding to you.

- Your Arranger talents may be most obvious during stressful or chaotic times. Environments that encourage multitasking and are relatively unpredictable may bring out your best.
- Talk to event planners, travel agents, human resource directors, city managers, or case work supervisors. Ask them what they enjoy most about their daily work.

Applying Belief Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Belief talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Spend time thinking about your "calling." Once you have articulated this mission, seek more information at the career center about careers that can help you fulfill it.
- A mentoring relationship can provide a valuable way for you to gain insight into the fit between who you are and what you were meant to do with your life. Mentoring and being mentored increases the chances for your behaviors, decisions, and beliefs to remain congruent.
- Environments that are a good fit with your own mission and beliefs will bring out your best. Seek employment in companies and organizations that exhibit a strong sense of mission - that is, a commitment to positively affecting the quality of people's lives.
- Research opportunities in helping professions such as medicine, law enforcement, social work, refugee relocation, teaching, ministry, and search-and-rescue. Talk with people who provide services to individuals in need. Interview those who supervise them.
- Environments that are people-oriented, that provide service to others, or that reward personal growth are likely to allow your Belief talents to flourish.
- Workplaces that respect your commitment to your family and allow for a balance between work and family demands will enable you to thrive.

Applying Command Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Command talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Explore your career options by trying out various roles in part-time jobs or volunteer work.
- Seek to hone your Command talents by filling formal or informal leadership roles in organizations. Ask for feedback from others in the group.

- Leverage your persuasiveness when choosing a career. Talk to people in fields such as law, sales, politics, or theatre about how they use their persuasive talents to succeed.
- Investigate careers that offer upward mobility. You probably are unlikely to be intimidated by others -- including people in positions considered superior to yours.
- Assume a role that permits you to create and control your own and others' work. Environments that encourage your leadership will bring out your best.
- Your comfort in "calling the shots" can be especially useful in crises. Environments that regularly deal with crises or rapid decision making will allow your Command talents to flourish.

Applying Communication Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Communication talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Arrange to have conversations with people who are currently in careers that interest you. By hearing their stories, you will become better able to determine whether those environments and careers would suit your talents and interests.
- Go to career fairs at which you can interact with lots of different people about a great variety of roles.
- You might be a natural storyteller. Interview storytellers such as stand-up comedians, actors, motivational speakers, teachers, public relations specialists, politicians, ministers, and corporate trainers to see how they use their Communication talents in their daily work.
- Explore opportunities to serve as the spokesperson for an organization, product, political candidate, company, school district, hospital, or elected official. These opportunities would allow you to try out your Communication talents in roles that could meet some of the world's deep needs.
- Environments that allow for significant social interaction on a daily basis will allow your Communication talents to flourish. Steer clear of environments that do not offer this opportunity, as they might drain your energy.
- Cooperative, interactive, educational, and political environments are likely to bring out your best.

Applying Competition Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Competition talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Explore leadership opportunities on campus, particularly in organizations where you can stimulate others to excel and win.
- Go to the career center and take several different career inventories, then compare yourself to others who are successful in fields that interest you.
- Choose work environments that challenge you and in which your success can be quantified with scores, ratings, and rankings. Avoid situations lacking meaningful, objective measurement criteria, as you often desire a "yardstick" with which you can measure your progress and compare it to that of others.
- Decide whether you prefer to compete as an individual or as a team member. Select employment that matches your preference either for total or shared control over final results.
- Environments that reward your achievement and offer status or prestige are likely to bring out your best.
- Talk to sales reps, politicians, lawyers, athletes, and business leaders about what they enjoy most in their work.

Applying Connectedness Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Connectedness talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Use service learning opportunities on campus to explore possible careers that interest you. Spend your summers volunteering for humanitarian causes to determine the best fit for your talents.
- Talk to your mentor about the connections you see between your volunteer opportunities, your values, and your mission in life. This relationship can provide a valuable sounding board through which you can articulate the connections that you see so naturally.
- Consider dedicating a couple of years of your life to serving your country or community after graduation. Habitat for Humanity®, the Peace Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), AmeriCorps®, GreenPeace®, and Teach for America® can be good places for you to experience a deep sense of gladness in meeting the world's deep needs.
- Incorporate your need to serve all of humankind into whatever career you choose. Working in fields and for organizations whose values mirror your own will enable you to feel the deep sense of meaning that is so important to you.

- Environments that allow you to interact with others and help them find meaning and purpose will bring out your best. Avoid environments that emphasize routine procedures or rote skills, as they may drain you.
- Talk to people who have made a lifetime commitment to a specific ministry within your faith tradition. Hearing them articulate their sense of connectedness and spirituality may help you determine whether this level of commitment is appropriate for you.

Applying Consistency Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Consistency talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out.
- Go to the career center and talk with a counselor about career inventories or lists of jobs that seem consistent with your greatest talents.
- Referee intramural athletic events or help create policies in your residence hall to see if those applications of the same rules for everyone brings out your best.
- Environments that have regulations, policies, procedures, and guidelines firmly established are likely to feel more comfortable to you and enable you to be more effective and efficient. Less controlled environments probably will not be comfortable for you.
- Environments that are structured, predictable, and detail-oriented are likely to appeal to you. Search for environments where loyalty is valued and equally applied policies are the norm, as this emphasis on consistency will enable you to get more done.
- Research roles in quality assurance, risk management, safety compliance, law enforcement, and human resource analysis.

Applying Context Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Context talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Talk to your mentor and to those in jobs that interest you. Ask them to tell you about their job searches. What led them to choose their particular careers?

- Read as much as you can about career planning, so you'll understand the process from beginning to end. That understanding of the total experience will give you the security to consider a variety of options.
- You recognize that past behavior is often the best predictor of future behavior. Spend some time thinking about your own past choices and how they might be connected to good possibilities for your future.
- Your Context talents are likely to flourish in environments that allow you to explore how things came to be the way they are.
- Collegial environments with strong traditions, rituals, and a sense of organizational history will often bring out your best efforts.
- Interview archeologists, historians, museum curators, humanities professors, or antique appraisers about their talents and what they love about their work.

Applying Deliberative Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Deliberative talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Collect as much information as you can about the careers that interest you. Search occupational handbooks, lists in occupational guides, and online sources. Take the time to think things through, possibly listing the pros and cons of careers that interest you.
- Environments in which you can independently conduct thorough analysis are likely to help you be most effective.
- You likely are a good questioner of actions, helping others to think through their decisions before moving ahead too quickly.
- You tend to be a private person, so environments where people are known for being discreet and trustworthy will likely bring out your best. Environments that expect a lot of socializing or interpersonal interaction or that demand persuasion or selling will not be as comfortable for you.
- Explore the roles of risk analysts, financial officers, judges, and others whose work benefits from careful thinking and deliberation.

Applying Developer Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Developer talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out. You enjoy having this personal connection to what interests you.
- Talk to your mentor about the career planning process. Use that relationship as a sounding board for making decisions.
- You likely have a talent for noting people's progress and for helping them become even better at what they do. Seek an environment in which your work involves getting "people done through work" rather than "work done through people."
- You will be most satisfied in a career that provides some type of service to people or in which organizational success is based on interpersonal relationships and your ability to help people be successful.
- Environments that are collaborative and people-oriented, where you can be part of a team but also have time to work one-on-one with others, is likely to allow your Developer talents to flourish.
- Talk to counselors, teachers, speech therapists, athletic coaches, acting coaches, life coaches, and those who work in your campus learning center to find out what they enjoy most about their work.

Applying Discipline Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Discipline talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Collect all the information you might need about making a career choice. Use your natural discipline to organize it as you prepare to make a decision.
- Lay out all the steps of the career planning process and follow them one by one. Put the steps on a timeline, as timelines often motivate you.
- Environments in which you can maintain order for yourself and others will enable you to be most effective. Your organizational talents can be useful in a wide variety of settings.
- Environments that are structured and detail-oriented, with clearly established routines and procedures, will likely bring out your best. Cluttered, unpredictable environments may not allow your Discipline talents to flourish.

- Work that demands high levels of abstract thinking probably will not be comfortable for you. A daily routine and concrete expectations from others likely will enable you to be most productive.
- Environments that value attention to detail and commitment to accuracy will be a good fit for you. Read about the work that air traffic controllers, brain surgeons, tax specialists, and executive assistants do.

Applying Empathy Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Empathy talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Talk to your mentor about the career planning process. Use that relationship as a sounding board for making decisions.
- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Talk to them about how they feel in those roles.
- Environments that provide regular social interaction and an opportunity to collaborate with others will allow your Empathy talents to flourish.
- The "emotional tone" of your work environment is important. You might find that surrounding yourself with others who are positive and upbeat is highly rewarding.
- Seek work environments in which emotions are valued and not repressed. The rich emotional economy will be the perfect environment for your Empathy talents.
- Interview teachers, counselors, and clergy members and ask them how they use their talents in their work.

Applying Focus Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Focus talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Set specific goals for your career planning. What do you want to achieve by the time you graduate? This attention to your destination and how you will get there will be very engaging and will provide great benefits.
- Spend some dedicated time reading about careers that interest you and following up with internet searches. Your ability to concentrate on a task will stand you in good stead as you research career possibilities.

- Although your Focus talents can reveal themselves through highly proactive goal setting, you might sometimes need to have a target identified for you.
- You are capable of prolonged concentration and persistence, which flourishes in environments with few interruptions and little need to multi-task.
- Structured environments that are predictable, detail-oriented, and reward your dependability and follow-through are likely to bring out your best.
- You might be most satisfied in roles that have identifiable goals, purposes, and objectives, and that provide opportunities to meet your own longer-term goals.

Applying Futuristic Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Futuristic talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Your ability to imagine a preferred future can be applied to the career planning process. Imagine yourself on graduation day -- and five years after that. What are you doing? How did you create the opportunity?
- Volunteer in an organization where you can help create the future, painting vivid pictures for those who work there, helping them see the role they will take in making this vision become reality.
- Use the connections you establish in your jobs during college to network for the career you envision for yourself after graduation.
- Choose a career in which you can help others envision the future and inspire them to create it.
- You are capable of investing lots of time in producing original or creative works. Environments that reward vision and creativity, allowing you freedom to dream and invent, are likely to enable your Futuristic talents to flourish.
- Talk to architects, designers, commercial artists, city planners, and others whose careers provide the opportunity to envision the future. Ask them what they most enjoy about their work.

Applying Harmony Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Harmony talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Talk to your mentors about the career planning process. You will value their wisdom and expertise as you make decisions.
- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Ask them what they find most rewarding about their work. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out.
- You work well and are helpful in team project environments. You help others work together even more productively. Your Harmony talents promote emotional stability and calmness in the group.
- Environments where consensus is the preferred strategy for decision-making and where you can work your magic behind the scenes are likely to bring out your best.
- Collaborative environments in which you can surround yourself with others dedicated to win-win solutions will allow your Harmony talents to flourish.
- Environments that lack structure or are unpredictable from day to day, or that demand high levels of creativity, are not as likely to be comfortable for you.
- Interview statisticians, tax experts, or financial planners and then compare their daily work with those in more people-oriented fields to see which sounds more agreeable to you.

Applying Ideation Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Ideation talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Ideation talents are all about creativity. Freely imagine yourself on graduation day -- and five years after that. What are you doing? How did you create the opportunity?
- Brainstorm all the possible careers that could fit your talents. Check them out online or in an occupational handbook for details, then picture yourself in each one. Which one fits best?
- Environments that reward your creativity and give you the time, space, and freedom to experiment and dream will bring out your best. Often these environments are fast-paced and freewheeling, allowing you to run your ideas past others on a daily basis.
- Avoid environments that box you in with routines or that expect precision or attention to detail. You will invest significant time and produce results without constant supervision.
- Select an organization where the leaders encourage and solicit your divergent thinking, stimulating them to consider some new approaches. You will be able to find new and better ways of doing things within the organization, and you may be of assistance in strategic planning exercises.

- Consider careers in which creativity seems to be important. Talk to strategic planners, consultants, market researchers, designers, or people in advertising to find out what they enjoy most about their work.

Applying Includer Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Includer talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out. This personal interaction with people in careers you are considering can help you sort to the best option.
- Make the most of your willingness to include outside sources by talking to a career counselor about your interests and what you are passionate about. Talking things through with a knowledgeable counselor can give you confidence in exploring the possibilities.
- Environments where you can play a welcoming role, such as in orienting new employees or recruiting minority staff, can allow your Includer talents to flourish.
- Working with a group that is not always included by others, such as physically or mentally challenged children, will allow you to use your talents to help others feel better about themselves.
- Environments that encourage teamwork and foster social interaction and integration and will bring out your best.
- Talk to youth workers, occupational therapists, social workers, special education teachers, and missionaries to learn what they find most rewarding about their work.

Applying Individualization Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Individualization talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- You realize that there is a unique fit between who you are and what you do with your life. Go to the career center and take several career inventories. How does each one offer you a unique picture of yourself and your interests?
- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out. Think about how each one responds differently to their work.

- Your talents can be useful on search committees and in recruiting processes, as you are able to see ways in which people's talents can fit particular roles.
- Careers in which you could work one-on-one with people would allow your Individualization talents to flourish, as you see each one as a distinct person and empower them to grow.
- Environments in which you can mentor others or provide feedback to individuals about their performance may bring out your best.
- Interview teachers, counselors, corporate trainers, and other individuals who are able to see the uniqueness in others. How do they use their talents in their work?

Applying Input Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Input talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Collect as much information as you can about the careers that interest you. Go online, read books, collect all the brochures at the career center and at career fairs. The more information you gather, the better your decision will be.
- Go to the career center and take several different career inventories. What does each one tell you about your interests? What career possibilities do they suggest you to explore?
- Environments that give you the freedom to pursue threads of information and that focus on informed decision-making are likely to bring out your best.
- You probably will enjoy a career in which you are always on the cutting edge of knowledge and you can gather and share valuable pieces of relevant information.
- Choose jobs that require you to be an expert collector and consumer of research. This type of environment will energize you.
- Interview media specialists, librarians, archivists, writers, information technologists, and others who work with large amounts of information on a daily basis. What do they find most rewarding about their work?

Applying Intellection Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Intellection talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Read, read, read! Gather books on careers that interest you, read biographies of people in careers that fascinate you, read all the brochures and books available at the career center. Then go online and read some more. Through your reading you will come to a better sense of clarity about the career options that fit you best.
- Think about the times in your life when you have felt best about your accomplishments. In your journal, write about what you did that contributed to those accomplishments and how you used your talents in each instance. Later, look for patterns in what you wrote.
- A work environment where you have time and space to think and reflect before responding will bring out your best. A fast-paced environment where there is pressure to sell or to follow routine procedures will not be as comfortable for you as one that allows and rewards thought and reflection.
- Select work in which you can share ideas and pose questions. Avoid environments where you cannot challenge the status quo or where operating procedures are completely rigid.
- Environments in which you can interact with colleagues and have philosophical debates will be most satisfying to you and enable you to be productive.
- Choose work that will challenge you intellectually. Talk to editors, theologians, or philosophy professors on campus. Ask what their work is like.

Applying Learner Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Learner talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Go to the career center on your campus and take several different career inventories. What does each one tell you about your interests? What career possibilities do they suggest for you to explore? Your enjoyment of this self-discovery can motivate and guide you as you begin the career planning process.
- Talk to your mentors about the career planning process. Ask them how they made the decision to pursue their career. Learning about their strategies will provide you with possible tools for your own learning process.
- Read and study all the career possibilities that interest you. Research each one and learn what it's really like to be in those careers over a long period of time.
- Choose a work environment that encourages constant learning or where study is a way of life.

- Environments that value the learning process will bring out your best, particularly if you will have opportunities to develop strengths.
- Many college professors have exceptional Learner talents. Interview your favorite professors about what they find rewarding in their work.

Applying Maximizer Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Maximizer talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Talk to your mentors about the career planning process. You will value their wisdom and expertise as you make decisions.
- Interview people who are currently among the "best of the best" in jobs that interest you. Ask them what they find most rewarding about their work. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out. Notice the talents, knowledge, and skills that excellence in those roles requires.
- You are someone for whom "talent talk" comes naturally -- it's the way you see the world as you capitalize on your own and others' talents. Environments that encourage "best practices" and in which you can work collaboratively with others to continually improve the organization will allow your Maximizer talents to flourish.
- Choose a workplace that is known for being among the best in its field. Workplaces with lesser standards probably would frustrate you.
- Find work in which you can help others see their talents and how their talents make a difference.
- Interview business leaders and athletic or executive coaches, and ask what they find most rewarding about their work. Find out how they bring out the best in others.

Applying Positivity Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Positivity talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out.
- Go to career fairs where you can interact with lots of different people and learn about many different roles.

- You will thrive in work environments that are fun, fast-paced, and people-oriented.
- Relaxed, social, pleasant environments where your optimism and sense of humor will be appreciated are likely to bring out your best. Avoid environments where cynicism and negativity are seen as "cool."
- Choose work for which you have passion. You will be energized when you are in environments that encourage your hopeful view of the future.
- Choose a career in which you can help others be more effective. Interview coaches, teachers, sales reps, marketing executives, realtors, or managers and ask them what they like most about their work.

Applying Relator Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Relator talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Talk to your mentors about the career planning process. You will value their wisdom and expertise as you make decisions.
- Talk to your trusted circle of friends about how they see you. Don't ask them what career they think you should choose; instead, ask them to help you see your greatest talents.
- Careers in which in-depth, meaningful relationships are valued are likely to be most rewarding to you.
- Workplaces in which friendships are encouraged, where you can continuously learn about your clients and associates, likely will enable your Relator talents to flourish.
- Stable work environments where you can work with people you trust but also develop multiple levels of relationships probably will bring out your best.
- Interview counselors, teachers, school administrators, mediators, human resource directors, and others who help people as part of their work. Ask them about the relationships they develop and what is most rewarding about their jobs.

Applying Responsibility Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Responsibility talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Make an appointment with a career counselor to talk about how to begin the career planning process. The sense of psychological ownership this step creates will engage you in the process and energize you to follow through.
- Interview people who are currently in jobs that interest you. Shadow them to see what they really do day in and day out.
- You often take the initiative, and you always follow through, so you do not need a lot of supervision. Select work in which you can be given more and more responsibility as you progressively achieve.
- Building trusting relationships with others is important to you, so choose environments in which you can surround yourself with dependable, trustworthy people. When selecting a team to join, be sure the others members are known for pulling their weight.
- Managing others could be a frustrating experience for you, as their standards of responsibility might not match your own.
- You will be most productive in environments where you can fully follow through on the commitments you make to others.
- Choose a work environment that focuses on outcomes rather than processes. Talk to law clerks, librarians, and executive assistants to see what they find rewarding about their work.

Applying Restorative Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Restorative talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Search online and read all you can about careers that interest you. Take career inventories to see where your talents and interests match those who are successful in a particular field. This detailed self-analysis can get you started in a process of elimination that will clarify your career goals.
- Interview people who have a reputation for salvaging bad situations, turning companies around, or stepping in to solve problems no one else can seem to handle. Ask them what they enjoy about their work and what they actually do on a daily basis.
- Volunteer your time in an organization that needs someone to "breathe new life" into their work. This is often what you do best.
- Environments in which you are called upon to diagnose problems and design solutions will allow your Restorative talents to flourish.

- Talk to people who excel as customer service reps, surgeons, or television producers. Ask them what leads to their success and what they find rewarding about their work.

Applying Self-Assurance Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Self-Assurance talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Your confidence that there is a good career fit out there for you will be an enormous asset in the career planning process.
- Your talents probably can give you confidence in a variety of jobs and volunteer opportunities. Try out several different roles. Which ones seem most natural to you?
- Workplaces and tasks that will challenge you and provide you with freedom are likely to energize you most.
- Environments that focus on prominent or critical projects that could intimidate others seem to bring out your best.
- You don't have a great need for direction or support from others, which makes you particularly effective in situations that call for independence of thought and action.
- Interview people in careers that involve public presentations, sales, or entertainment. Ask what they find most rewarding about their work.

Applying Significance Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Significance talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Think about people you admire and what they have in common. Talk to them about the work they do and what they find rewarding about it. Ask them to give you feedback about your own goals and strategies for meeting them.
- Significant people do significant things. Imagine the legacy you want to leave. Picture yourself at retirement, looking back on a life that has made the world a better place. What will you have you done to accomplish that?
- Environments in which you and your significant contribution are visible to others and in which you receive recognition for a job well done are likely to bring out your best.

- Knowing you've made a significant contribution is important to you. Volunteer in organizations where you can make that difference and where your efforts will be appreciated.
- Seek opportunities to work with people you respect because they are professional, credible, and successful.
- Environments in which you are given flexibility to do things your own way are likely to bring out your best.
- Identify the specific talents that will help you make an extraordinary contribution to your workplace, and create opportunities to build on them.

Applying Strategic Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best suit Strategic talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Picture yourself in a career that you love. What are you doing? What path did you take to create the opportunity? Working backward from your goal is often an effective strategy for you.
- Play out a variety of scenarios in your mind to help you decide which career to explore further. List the various paths possible in your future so you can give careful thought to each one.
- Environments that are flexible and encourage creative thought and strategy will bring out your best. Opportunities to see the big picture and plan new approaches will energize you.
- Your ability to create new programs and generate multiple alternatives will be an asset to any organization you join.
- Environments that allow originality and focus more on the outcome than on specific procedures will allow your Strategic talents to flourish.
- Interview people who work in psychology, law, and consulting. Learn what they find most rewarding about their work on a daily basis.

Applying Woo Talents in Careers

These observations and suggestions will help you consider careers that could best match Woo talents. As you think them over, select those that appeal to you most.

- Introduce yourself to a great number of people in a wide variety of jobs. This broad exposure will give you a more informed idea of possible careers, and it could provide you with important career

and social connections.

- Environments in which you can meet new people daily and have the opportunity to create a positive impression will bring out your best.
- Environments that value the ability to persuade or sell likely will allow your Woo talents to flourish.
- Avoid work environments in which there is little opportunity to extend your gregarious social nature.
- Talk to entertainers, corporate trainers, sales reps, attorneys, and public relations specialists to see what they enjoy most about their work.?

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