

Career Decision-Making

Career decision-making is a complex and lifelong process. Most career change statistics indicate that the average worker will change careers five to seven times in their lifetime. In today's fluid and rapidly changing workplace those statistics, in all probability, will increase over time.

The best career decisions are informed career decisions. Being informed means entering into a process of self-assessment (looking at yourself) and career exploration (researching careers) to find the best match.

Many career professionals view career decision-making as similar to putting together pieces of a puzzle to form a clear picture of what those pieces represent. **Many also agree that the primary puzzle pieces in the career process are your interests, personality, values and skills.**

Each piece needs to be explored carefully and thoroughly on its own, and then looked at in terms of its interrelationship with the other pieces in forming a picture that is clear and understandable – a picture of “who you are” in terms of your career aspirations.

Clarkson University's Career Services can help you with this process. Formal and informal career assessments are used to help students and alumni explore the four puzzle pieces, and then to help put the pieces together to form a clear and understandable career picture.

Interests

Interests are those activities in which you like to spend most of your time and from which you gain pleasure. John Holland, a famous career theorist, believed that all of us fall into one or more of six broad interest areas – Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional. He also believed that all work environments could be classified into the same six areas. So if you can identify your interest areas, you can readily identify work environments (and careers) that may match.

The Strong Interest Inventory, a formal career assessment based on Holland's work, is a valid and reliable tool that can help you make this match. As a result, this assessment is available through Career Services to help you identify your career interest areas. Please contact career@clarkson.edu

Personality

Personality is the specific way in which you think and act; it is very complex. One aspect of personality is what's called your "clarity of preferences," or your tendency to be one way or the other. Research shows that personality is very closely connected to career choice, as people of certain personality types are attracted to certain types of careers.

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a formal career assessment, is another valid and reliable tool in the self-assessment process. With the MBTI there are sixteen different personality types. Each type is considered to be good; they are simply different. By taking the assessment you will find out your type, and thus the clarity of your preferences. You will then discover what kinds of careers your type is attracted to.

It is available through Career Services to help you identify your personality type, and how that type is connected to career choice.

Values

Values are the principles or standards that drive your decisions, actions and behaviors; the ideals that guide and give meaning to your life and work. We all have a specific set of core values that serve as our "compass" in our personal and professional lives.

A Career Consultant, Ed Hallenbeck, has developed a "values inventory." It's a list of common values; some of which may resonate with you. The values inventory can be found as a separate career handout. It will help you identify values that are important to you, and thus characteristics that are important to you in careers and work environments.

Skills

Skills are the abilities we use to produce results in the things we do; the things we believe we do well. These things (or skills) come from a variety of sources including, but not limited to: natural ability and aptitudes, formal education, training/professional development, work experiences, volunteer service and leisure activities.

Your skills can be "technical" (e.g., management, accounting, finance, marketing, human resources, engineering or teaching). They also could be "soft" skills (e.g., time management, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, multi-tasking or working well in groups).

Skills can also be classified into motivated and unmotivated. Motivated skills are those things we do well, and we truly enjoy doing. Unmotivated skills are those things we do well, but really have no interest in doing.

Ed Hallenbeck has developed a “motivated skills inventory.” It is a list of common skills; some of which you may possess. The motivated skills inventory can be found as a separate career handout. It will help you identify those things in which you have confidence in doing (and enjoy doing). By having an inventory of your motivated skills, you can then identify careers where those skills are both needed and valued.

Next Steps

Are you interested in identifying and connecting your puzzle pieces to form a clearer picture of career possibilities? Are you also interested in resources and other exercises you can use to further explore those possibilities? Please contact career@clarkson.edu.