

Your Career Past: A Self-Assessment Exercise

There's an old expression that you really don't know where you're going until you know where you've been. When driving down the road to a destination, you will glance every so often in the rearview mirror. Doing this helps you get safely to your desired destination. If you focus the entire time on the rearview mirror, you will surely crash and never find your way down the road.

So now is a time to "glance back," regarding the choices you've made, the things you've done, and what you've accomplished and/or been disappointed with. Your past doesn't define you, but it does inform you regarding future career choices.

Take some time to reflect on the questions below. Please know that these questions are strictly voluntary. Don't feel compelled to answer those questions that make you feel uncomfortable; ones you don't wish to discuss. In addition, some questions may not be relevant based on where you are with your career. Answer all other questions honestly and openly; knowing that these answers will help you look ahead and plan for your career future.

Childhood

1. What was your very first thought about "career?" What did you want to be when you grew up?
2. Who or what was the biggest influence on this choice? Please explain.
3. What did your parents, step-parents or the adult(s) who raised you do in terms of career?
4. What were the "family rules" when you were growing up? What values did your family instill in you?
5. What kinds of things did you enjoy doing for fun as a child?

High School Career

1. What were your favorite (most enjoyable) subjects during high school?
2. What were your best (highest achievement) subjects during high school?
3. What clubs, sports or other out-of-class activities were you involved in during high school?

College Career

1. What is/was your college major/degree program (undergraduate and graduate)?
2. What were the primary reasons you chose your major/degree program? What careers do/did you believe they will/would lead to?
3. Who or what was the biggest influence on your choice of major/degree program? Please explain.
4. Did you change majors/degree programs during college? If so, what were your other majors in college prior to your final choice?
5. What are/were your favorite (most enjoyable) courses during college (undergraduate and graduate)?
6. What are/were your best (highest achievement) courses during college (undergraduate and graduate)?
7. What is/was your overall GPA in college (undergraduate and graduate)? Do you believe it is/was a true reflection of your ability? Why or why not?
8. What clubs, sports or other out-of-class activities are/were you involved in during college (undergraduate and graduate)?
9. What was your greatest accomplishment during college (undergraduate and graduate)?
10. What was your greatest disappointment during college (undergraduate and graduate)?

Work Career

1. What are your current career goals? What do you envision yourself doing 5-7 years from now?
2. Who or what was the biggest influence in the formation of your career goals? Please explain.
3. Regarding all of the jobs you've held, which ones (by job title) did you leave voluntarily? What was "missing" that caused you to leave?
4. Have you ever been fired from a job? If so, which ones (by title)?
5. Regarding all of the jobs you've held, which specific responsibilities would you choose to do again?
6. Regarding all of the jobs you've held, which specific responsibilities would you pay someone else to do?
7. Think about the work environment(s)/organizational culture(s) you enjoyed most. What did you like most about them?
8. What has been your greatest accomplishment (to date) during your work life?
9. What has been your greatest disappointment (to date) during your work life?
10. What have you learned about yourself from all the jobs you've held?
11. If you could change anything about your work life, what would it be?
12. What is "unfinished" (left to be done) in regard to your career?

Next Steps

Contact Clarkson University Career Center to schedule an appointment to discuss your answers and how they may help lead you to a productive and meaningful career.

Note: Career assessments, both formal and informal, do not provide magical answers regarding career choice. Career decision-making is often a complex puzzle, where multiple pieces need to come together to form a complete and clear picture. This career exercise represents one puzzle piece and is not intended to provide a complete picture of your career future.