Who Are You and Where Do You Belong?

A topic that often surfaces in my conversations with graduate students and alumni of all ages is “all I know is that I no longer want to do what I have been (or currently am) doing. I don’t really know what I DO want to do or what type of position I should be looking for.” In other words, they don’t really know “who they are or where they belong”. Clearly, this situation makes it extremely difficult to manage your career or conduct a successful job search. If you don’t know what you want, how can you find it?

There are many self-assessment tools you can take to help you gain a better understanding of your interests, skills, values and motivators and how they match up with job functions in the business world. One assessment that I would recommend is CareerLeader. CareerLeader is a fully integrated approach to business career self-assessment built on the premise that one’s interests, motivators and skills will drive their future career success and satisfaction. You can learn more about CareerLeader by going to www.careerleader.com or by contacting me at jworth2@vcu.edu.

Another method is to take a bit of time to think honestly about “who you are and where you belong”. Below you see a list of questions to ask yourself. When answering them, try not to over-think them; go with the first thing that comes to mind.

1. How would you describe your career in one sentence?
2. What do you love doing? You may want to focus on your favorite subjects in your MBA Program, tasks in a job you held that you really enjoyed, or a hobby that really interests you.
3. What do you hate doing? See above….focus on job tasks you didn’t like and would like to avoid in future jobs, classes you didn’t enjoy or activities that didn’t play to your strengths.
4. What are a few of your most highly developed skills? What are some of the things you do well and that have resulted in success in your jobs?
5. What do you do best? If I were to hire you and have you spend most all of your time doing what you do best, what would you be doing?
6. How have you been successful?
7. What professional accomplishment are you most proud of? What skills or attributes contributed most to this accomplishment?
8. In what work environment do you function best? Do you like working in busy, fast–paced environments or slower, more methodical ones? Do you like working in large or small companies? Do you like working alone or with lots of other people?
9. What 3 adjectives would your manager or colleague use to describe you? Circle the one that you agree with the most?
10. What is most important to you? I leave this open on purpose....
I often suggest this activity to people who are conducting a job search as well as those who say they are happily employed. I also suggest that they answer the questions initially, put them away for a few days, and then re-visit them when they are in a different mood or have a fresh perspective. This information also can help you prepare for and conduct networking conversations as you talk to other students or alumni who work in jobs that interest you.

I hope you find these suggestions to be helpful. Please contact me at jworth2@vcu.edu If you have questions or would like to arrange an appointment.