

Journal #1: What career interests you the most and why? Explain in detail your career interest and tell why you feel that you would be successful in your chosen field.

This journal can be done as a stand-alone journal or in conjunction with an article.

Read an article on aligning interests with a career. For example:

- “When I Grow Up: Lessons scientists would share with their younger selves”

Journal #2: What qualities and goals do you have and how do they fit in with your career interest? Based on the soft skills discussed in this article, discuss one that is a strength for you and one with which you struggle. Share your hopes and plans for the next five years.

6 soft skills everyone needs and employers look for

Technical skills may get you an interview, but these six soft skills will get you the job.

By Larry Buhl

In a 2008 survey of more than 2,000 businesses in the state of Washington, employers said entry-level workers in a variety of professions were lacking in several areas, including problem solving, conflict resolution and critical observation.

You'll likely see these "soft skills" popping up in job descriptions, next to demands for technical qualifications. Employment experts agree that tech skills may get you an interview, but these soft skills will get you the job—and help you keep it:

Communication skills

This doesn't mean you have to be a brilliant orator or writer. It does mean you have to express yourself well, whether it's writing a coherent memo, persuading others with a presentation or just being able to calmly explain to a team member what you need.

Teamwork and collaboration

Employers want employees who play well with others—who can effectively work as part of a team. "That means sometimes being a leader, sometimes being a good follower, monitoring the progress, meeting deadlines and working with others across the organization to achieve a common goal," says Lynne Sarikas, the MBA Career Center Director at Northeastern University.

Adaptability

This is especially important for more-seasoned professionals to demonstrate, to counter the (often erroneous) opinion that older workers are too set in their ways. "To succeed in most organizations, you need to have a passion for learning and the ability to continue to grow and stretch your skills to adapt to the changing needs of the organization," Sarikas says. "On your resume, on your cover letter and in your interview, explain the ways you've continued to learn and grow throughout your career."

Problem solving

Be prepared for the "how did you solve a problem?" interview question with several examples, advises Ann Spoor, managing director of Cave Creek Partners. "Think of specific examples where you solved a tough

business problem or participated in the solution. Be able to explain what you did, how you approached the problem, how you involved others and what the outcome was—in real, measurable results."

Critical observation

It's not enough to be able to collect data and manipulate it. You must also be able to analyze and interpret it. What story does the data tell? What questions are raised? Are there different ways to interpret the data? "Instead of handing your boss a spreadsheet, give them a business summary and highlight the key areas for attention, and suggest possible next steps," Sarikas advises.

Conflict resolution

The ability to persuade, negotiate and resolve conflicts is crucial if you plan to move up. "You need to have the skill to develop mutually beneficial relationships in the organization so you can influence and persuade people," Sarikas says. "You need to be able to negotiate win-win solutions to serve the best interests of the company and the individuals involved."

When it comes to soft skills, show—don't tell

How do you prove you're proficient at, say, critical observation? Demonstrating these soft skills may be more difficult than listing concrete accomplishments like \$2 million in sales or a professional certification. But it is possible to persuade hiring managers that you have what they need.

To demonstrate communication skills, for example, start with the obvious. Make sure there are no typos in your resume or cover letter. Beyond that, enhance your communication credibility by writing an accomplishment statement on your resume or cover letter, says Cheryl E. Palmer, president of Call to Career. "Instead of stating, 'great oral and written communication skills,' say, 'conducted presentation for C-level executives that persuaded them to open a new line of business that became profitable within eight months.'"

Learn soft skills

The good news is that, like any skill, soft skills can be learned. The better news? Boosting your soft skills not only gives you a leg up on a new job or a promotion, but these skills also have obvious applications in all areas of a person's life, both professional and personal.

- **Take a Course:** Some colleges are mixing technology with areas such as effective written and verbal communication, teamwork, cultural understanding and psychology. Take a writing or public speaking course to boost your communication skills. Look for a conflict-resolution course or "leadership skills" class at your local community college.
- **Seek Mentors:** Be as specific as you can about your target skill, and when you're approaching a potential mentor, compliment that person with a specific example in which you've seen him practice that skill, advises Ed Muzio, the author of *Make Work Great*. "Then ask whether that person would be willing to share ideas with you about how you might achieve the same level of capability," he says. "Maybe it will grow into a long mentoring relationship, or maybe you'll just pick the person's brain for a few minutes."

- Volunteer: Working with nonprofit organizations gives you the opportunity to build soft skills. And listing high-profile volunteer work on your resume gives you an excuse to point out what you gained there. For example, "As chair of the environmental committee, planned and carried out a citywide park cleanup campaign. Utilized team-building, decision-making and cooperative skills. Extensive report writing and public speaking.

Retrieved 25 January 2016 from <http://career-advice.monster.com/career-development/getting-promoted/six-soft-skills-everyone-needs-hot-jobs/article.aspx>

Journal #3: What is the most interesting thing I have learned through my career research? How does the information in this article relate to my future career?

APR 16, 2013

How Social Media Can Help (Or Hurt) You In Your Job Search

Social media is a key player in the job search process today.

Sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+ allow employers to get a glimpse of who you are outside the confines of a résumé, cover letter, or interview—while they offer job seekers the opportunity to learn about companies they're interested in; connect with current and former employees; and hear about job openings instantaneously, among other things.

That's probably why half of all job seekers are active on social networking sites on a daily basis, and more than a third of all employers utilize these sites in their hiring process.

Career transition and talent development consulting firm Lee Hecht Harrison asked hundreds of job seekers via an online poll, "How active are you on social networking sites?" Forty-eight percent said they're very active on a daily basis, while 19% said they log on about two or three times per week. Another 22% said they use social networking sites one to three times per month, or less. Only 11% of job seekers said they never use social networking websites.

"I was really excited to see how many job seekers are active on social media," says Helene Cavalli, vice president of marketing at Lee Hecht Harrison. "As strong advocates, we spend a lot of time coaching job seekers on how to develop a solid social media strategy. While it isn't the only strategy for finding a job, it's becoming increasingly important."

Greg Simpson, a senior vice president at Lee Hecht Harrison, said in a press statement that job seekers must understand how hiring managers and recruiters are using social media in all phases of the selection process.

To help job seekers better understand the role of social media in their job search, CareerBuilder.com conducted a survey last year that asked 2,303 hiring managers and human resource professionals if, how, and why they incorporate social media into their hiring process.

First they found that 37% of employers use social networks to screen potential job candidates. That means about two in five companies browse your social media profiles to evaluate your character and personality—and some even base their hiring decision on what they find.

"Social media is a primary vehicle of communication today, and because much of that communication is public, it's no surprise some recruiters and hiring managers are tuning in," says Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder.

CareerBuilder also asked employers why they use social networks to research candidates, and 65% said they do it to see if the job seeker presents himself or herself professionally. About half (51%) want to know if the candidate is a good fit for the company culture, and another 45% want to learn more about his or her qualifications. Some cited “to see if the candidate is well-rounded” and “to look for reasons not to hire the candidate,” as their motives.

So, if you’re among the 89% of job seekers that use social networking sites (daily, sometimes, or rarely), you’ll want to be careful.

A third (34%) of employers who scan social media profiles said they have found content that has caused them not to hire the candidate. About half of those employers said they didn’t offer a job candidate the position because of provocative or inappropriate photos and information posted on his or her profile; while 45% said they chose not to hire someone because of evidence of drinking and/or drug use on his or her social profiles. Other reasons they decided not to offer the job: the candidate’s profile displayed poor communication skills, he or she bad mouthed previous employers, made discriminatory comments related to race, gender, or religion, or lied about qualifications.

(Haefner says no matter what information is found on a candidate, and regardless of where it’s found, the process has to abide by fair and equal hiring practices.)

“If you choose to share content publicly on social media, make sure it’s working to your advantage,” Haefner says. “Take down or secure anything that could potentially be viewed by an employer as unprofessional and share content that highlights your accomplishments and qualifications in a positive way.”

Brad Schepp, co-author of *How To Find A Job On LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google+*, adds: “Make sure any profiles you write are free of typos, the information is coherent and applicable to your industry [or job you’re trying to land], and your photos present you in a favorable light. You can verify the applicability of the information by checking profiles of others in the same field.”

The information you provide online about your job background and accomplishments should also be consistent, he says. “Don’t assume an employer will only be checking you out on LinkedIn. They may also check Facebook, or even Twitter and Google+. The story you tell on each site should be pretty much the same, although it’s fine to adapt the material for the site.”

The good news is that hiring managers aren’t just screening your social media profiles to dig up dirt; they’re also looking for information that could possibly give you an advantage. The CareerBuilder survey revealed that 29% of surveyed hiring managers found something positive on a profile that drove them to offer the candidate a job.

In some cases it was that the employer got a good feel for the candidate’s personality. Others chose to hire because the profile conveyed a professional image. In some instances it was because background information supported professional qualifications, other people posted great references about the candidate, or because the profile showed that the job seeker is creative, well-rounded, or has great communication skills.

This means the job seekers shouldn't just focus on hiding or removing inappropriate content; they should work on building strong social networks and creating online profiles that do a really good job of representing their skills and experience in the workplace, Simpson said in a press statement. "Job seekers who are silent or invisible online may be at a disadvantage. They need to engage on social networking sites to increase their visibility and searchability with prospective employers," he said.

Cavalli agrees. "It's not enough to only post a profile and check your news feed. There are a lot of lurkers—people who have an online profile but don't do anything or engage in any meaningful way. You need to give to the social networking communities, participate in group discussions, share expertise, point someone to an article. You have to work it. While it can feel uncomfortable putting yourself out there, if you're looking for a job, it's not the time to be timid."

Retrieved 25 January 2016 from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/04/16/how-social-media-can-help-or-hurt-your-job-search/#252b305a24fd>

Journal #4: What are your educational goals? What is your plan for achieving those goals? Based on what you have researched about your chosen career and the information in the following articles, discuss your plans for future intellectual and academic development.

Article #1

Two-Year vs. Four-Year Colleges: Which One is Right for You?

Congratulations! You've made it (almost) through high school. Now all you've got to do is plan out the next few years of your life. When it comes to choosing your next educational step, you'll need to think about how much of a time and money investment you're prepared to make as well as what kinds of jobs you can see yourself holding in the future. To help you figure out where your next move should be, here's a short breakdown of the pros and cons of two- and four-year colleges.

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

About

Although four-year schools get all the media hype, many high school graduates head right to a two-year institution. Looking at the facts, it's no surprise why. Cheaper, quicker, and highly vocational, two-year schools offer students the chance to start their careers sooner and with less (or no) debt. You can also use a two-year school as a launching point to start earning your bachelor's degree.

Who Goes There

Students looking to go directly into a trade or technical vocation, those with blemished high school transcripts looking to work their way into a four-year school, and students who simply want to save money on their general education courses before transferring to a more expensive four-year institution.

What You'll Take

Depending on your degree program, two-year students typically either focus on taking general pre-requisite courses that can transfer to a four-year institution or courses in their specific trade. Since community colleges are closely linked to area industries, students will find a wide array of courses that cater directly to the local job market.

Other Learning Opportunities

In addition to in-class learning, two-year college students frequently take on apprenticeships and internships within their local community. Beyond getting an insider's look at their future job, interns and apprentices also gain valuable industry connections they can use to land a job upon graduation.

The Cost Factor

Here is where two-year institutions shine. Since most two-year colleges are designed for commuters, students are responsible for finding their own housing and get to avoid the high costs of room and board. Two-year students get a huge break on tuition as well.

According to the College Board, the average cost of tuition and fees at a two-year school is only \$3,131, just over one-third of the cost for a year at a four-year public institution.

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

About

Get ready to make an investment. Students who put the time and money into a four-year education will reap the benefits throughout their lives. Though four-year schools require at least twice the amount of time as two-year schools AND three times the tuition, they offer students on- and off-campus learning opportunities you simply can't find anywhere else.

Who Goes There

Those who want a well-rounded education and a flexible degree. While four-year students are required to take a much broader range of courses than two-year vocational students, four-year students graduate with degrees that can be used for a wide spectrum of jobs in the real world.

What You'll Take

Everything—math, biology, English, history, even music therapy. Although four-year students typically spend the first two years taking generalized courses then the last two years taking courses in their major, students are free to take electives in any field of study.

Other Learning Opportunities

This is where four-year institutions shine. In addition to in-class learning, four-year institutions offer an enormous spectrum of on- and off-campus learning opportunities. On campus you can attend performances, cultural events, and guest lecture series, as well as participate in student-run clubs and honor societies. Students also go off campus for service-learning projects, study abroad trips, internships, cooperative education programs, and field trips.

The Cost Factor

Get ready to cough it up. The College Board reports that the average cost of one year of in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year school is \$8,655. Tack on another \$9,205 in room and board costs and you're looking at an average yearly bill of \$17,860. For private school students, the situation is even worse. The average private school student pays \$29,056 in tuition and fees per year and \$10,462 in room and board for a grand total of \$39,518. While four-year college students are forced to fork over the dough now, they'll reap the financial benefits later with higher salaries in the future.

Christina Couch is a freelance writer based in Richmond, Virginia, and Chicago, Illinois. She is the author of Virginia Colleges 101: The Ultimate Guide for Students of All Ages (Palari Publishing, 2008). Her byline can also be found on AOL.com, MSN.com, Yahoo.com and Wired Magazine.

Retrieved 25 January 2016 from <http://www.collegeview.com/articles/article/two-year-vs-four-year-colleges-which-one-is-right-for-you>

Article #2

What Are the Benefits of College Vs. Technical School?

by Neil Kokemuller, Demand Media

For students who decide they don't want to dedicate four years to a degree program, a technical or trade school often makes sense as a way to advance a career ambition. However, students who possess more academic discipline and a desire for increasing income and employment options, a four-year bachelor's program might prove beneficial.

Social Experience

For students who want the more traditional college experience, a four-year college or university is a better fit. Trade or technical schools often have less on-campus housing than four-year schools. At a traditional college, you can live in a dorm or on-campus apartment, become more active in social clubs and Greek life, participate in intramural sports and hang out with friends at school and in the college community. This offers a better chance to social involvement and the development of strong friendship bonds. Technical schools are more commonly commuter-based, with students driving in for classes and leaving shortly after.

Employment Potential

College degrees generally included a broader range of content that qualifies graduates for entry-level careers in a variety of businesses and industries. Technical schools are much more degree and industry-specific. While they might offer more immediate employment in the field, they lead to less overall career flexibility. In some cases, students with a four-year college degree can land jobs requiring degrees in areas outside of their college major. This is the benefit of taking classes in math, sciences, language, humanities and communication, along with major-specific classes.

Income Potential

Technical school graduates in certain careers can actually find jobs that pay higher than entry-level jobs attained by four-year graduates. However, on the whole, four-year grads make more over the duration of their working lives and have access to more high-paying jobs. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics studied median income across all education levels in 2012. The results showed that bachelor's degree earners made more than 26 percent more, typically, than workers with an associate degree.

Broader Knowledge Base

Along with the tangible career and income advantages, a primary purpose of a four-year college experience is a broader knowledge base and skill set. The combination of general education courses, program courses, electives and hands-on college experiences typically provide this. Along with greater career flexibility, a more well-rounded education enhances a graduates ability to converse, interact with community and business leaders and participate more fully in the entire operation of an organization.

Retrieved 25 January from <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/benefits-college-vs-technical-school-9505.html>

Article #3

Updated on 12.07.15

Why You Should Consider Trade School Instead of College

by: **Trent Hamm**

For a lot of people, going to a four-year college seems like an automatic choice when they graduate from high school. The reason is obvious – higher income. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, a bachelor's degree accounted for an average of \$16,900 in additional income per year compared to a high school diploma (\$30,000 versus \$46,900).

Over a 30-year career in the workforce, that's more than a \$500,000 difference in earnings. These numbers may not paint the whole picture, however. Due to the increasingly high costs associated with a college education, as well as other drawbacks, more and more people have been considering trade school as an education alternative. If you're one of them, you can actually search for a great trade school right here using the tool below:

Trade School vs. College: Drawbacks to College Education

Length: Four (or More) Years vs. Two Years

For starters, a bachelor's degree typically takes four years of study, which means that people who enter the workforce after receiving their bachelor's degree aren't doing so until age 22. That shaves some years off of a person's career and can be considered an opportunity cost for experiencing the 'real world' hands on instead

of being in a classroom. Plus, a four-year program usually makes you take classes outside of your major to fulfill credit requirements. Unless you enjoy spending time in a classroom, it may seem unnecessary to pay for extraneous credits and courses. Sure, that improv theater class was fun, but was it helpful for your chemistry major?

High Cost of a Bachelor's Degree

Another drawback is the cost. Research conducted by the Idaho Department of Labor Idaho Department of Labor found that the average bachelor's degree in the United States costs \$127,000! Not only that, but nearly 70% of students take out loans to help pay for school. According to the study, over 20% of students with loans owe more than \$50,000, and 5.6% owe more than \$100,000 at the end. Although some student loans are certainly better than others, the added cost of accruing interest makes the overall expense of receiving an education in the U.S. significantly higher for the average student than the already steep price tag suggests. The college lifestyle isn't cheap either — dorming, paying for food, going out, and even doing your own laundry adds up!

Dropout Rate + Late Grads

A third drawback: Some people simply aren't prepared for the rigors of a four-year college. For many students, college is their first experience away from home and, without an adequate plan, it's easy to stray off course. In fact, the Institute of Education Statistics estimates that 40% of attendees at a four-year college drop out before completing their degree. If you find yourself as a part of that 40%, not only have you incurred some of the expense of college, you left without receiving a degree. For the 60% that do complete their degree, a whopping 64% take longer than four years to graduate, costing themselves nearly \$70,000 in lost wages and educational expenses per year, according to *U.S. News*. Most colleges don't even require students to pick a major until the end of their sophomore year, creating a class of undecided students who may have wasted their time and credits on courses that they chose not to pursue.

Poor Economic Conditions

Finally: Job prospects for new graduates may not be as bright as they had expected. Although some college majors are faring better than others when it comes to labor market outcomes, a recent report released by the Economic Policy Institute states that overall, the unemployment (8.5%) and underemployment (16.8%) rates for college graduates under the age of 25 are nearly double what they were in 2007. Over the past five years, graduates have faced sluggish labor markets Young graduates are faced with limited job opportunities and difficulty paying off their student loans. College degrees are a career investment that require a considerable amount of both time and money, and the portion of grads who are unable to find desirable employment (or employment at all!) are seeing negative returns.

Trade School as an Alternative

My response to these statistics is that people approaching high school graduation should seriously consider trade school, particularly if they are not at the top of their class. A traditional four-year degree is not for everyone, and trade school offers a pretty compelling career path, especially when considering the factors associated with a college education outlined above. I'll provide an overview of what a trade school education is, who it would be best for, and some of the advantages of trade school versus college.

What is a Trade School or Vocational School?

A trade school, also known as a technical or vocational school, is an educational institution that exists to teach skills related to a specific job. Trade schools are a more streamlined approach to education, with curricula focusing on developing a particular skillset and knowledge base for a career rather than receiving a general

education. Trade schools typically take a lot less time to complete, have smaller class sizes, and the majority of the training is hands-on, which is an ideal environment for many types of learners. Vocational degrees can lead to well-paying jobs like electrician, mechanic, machinist, pharmacy technician, nuclear technician, and dental hygienist, with room for growth and managerial potential in each field.

Advantages to Trade Schools

Salaries for Trade School Jobs

For starters, salaries for trade school graduates aren't that much of a drop-off compared to a four-year degree. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, technical and trade school jobs have a median annual salary of \$35,720, though this figure varies heavily based on the particular industry and the experience level of the worker. The BLS predicted earnings for bachelor's degree holders to be roughly \$46,900, amounting to an annual difference of \$11,180. This stat, of course, doesn't factor in long term earnings growth.

However, because trade school only takes an average of two years to complete versus four, that amounts to an additional two years of income for the trade school graduate, or \$71,440. Factor in another \$70,000 in costs for the many students who take an extra year to graduate from college, and trade school grads can be over \$140,000 ahead at the get-go, making up for over 12 years of difference in income.

Price of Education

The average trade school degree costs \$33,000, which, compared to a \$127,000 bachelor's degree, means a savings of \$94,000. But that's not all! If you assume that students are fully financing their education with loans at 4% over 10 years, the bachelor's degree will cost \$154,000, while the trade school degree will cost only \$40,000. That's a savings of \$114,000 just on the degree.

Of course, most students in both cases won't fully finance their education. They'll work and find other sources of income to help with the process, meaning the gap will be smaller in the average case. Research gathered in 2012 suggests that the average college student debt load is \$29,900, and that number rises to \$36,327 when factoring in interest. Conversely, the average debt load for students graduating from a two-year technical school is \$10,000, roughly 70% less than the four-year graduate.

Job Security

Yet another advantage of technical trade school is that most of the jobs you'll get are extremely difficult to export to another country. More and more jobs are being outsourced to places where labor is cheaper, making domestic employment in certain sectors difficult to get. It is much easier to export, say, computer programming work or other information economy work than it is to export carpentry or electrical work, as that requires a physical presence.

Not only that, but there's a growing domestic demand for high-precision skills. According to Forbes, skilled trade workers are a disproportionately older population, and will only continue to get older, creating increased opportunities for young workers to fill their shoes.

Final Thoughts on Trade School vs. College

It should be noted that I'm not opposed to a four-year degree; instead, I'm simply making a strong case for an option that many people overlook when deciding what to do after high school. In lifetime earnings, a bachelor's degree still pays off – don't get me wrong. According to statistics, a person with a bachelor's degree is projected to earn around \$1.1 million, compared to the \$393,000 projected earnings of an associate's degree or trade school program graduate.

The advantages of a four-year degree are many: You're going to earn much more later on in life and you also have the door wide open to continue your studies and earn substantially more with a masters degree or doctorate, however the cost/benefit equation to even higher education is changing every day.

Trade school graduates are very limited in opportunities to continue to bolster their education. That being said, a four-year degree is expensive, and not suited to everyone's learning style and skill set. If you're a hands-on learner, excited by the prospects of getting out of the classroom and starting to work immediately after high school, trade school is a relatively inexpensive alternative education that may work well for you. Take advantage of the search tool above to learn more about trade schools near you and what they offer.

I'll leave you with an anecdote. My wife's cousin graduated from high school at roughly the same time my wife graduated. Her cousin went to electrician's school, while my wife went to four-year university. Her cousin started working three years before my wife and incurred much less student loan debt. Today, though he makes a little bit less money than she does, the difference isn't very significant, plus he had hardly any debt to pay off after school.

This past May, my nephew graduated from high school. He is now attending electrician's school as well. I think it's the wisest move he could have made in his situation.

If you are graduating from high school soon, or have a loved one who is approaching graduation, I recommend seriously considering trade school as an alternative option. If you're still unsure about your academic future or you're looking for more information and options, check out our education series.

Retrieved 25 January 2016 from <http://www.thesimpledollar.com/why-you-should-consider-trade-school-instead-of-college/>

Journal #5: Describe your mentoring experience. Explain 3 new pieces of information you learned by participating in this experience. How does the information about mentorship in the article relate to your experience?

JAN 30, 2013

The Often Overlooked but Invaluable Benefits of Mentorship

My colleague Ken Perlman is a strong proponent of mentorship. He gets as much out of being a mentor as he does from his own mentors. Here he shares the often overlooked benefits that make mentorship invaluable. Read more about the “Serious business” of mentoring in his interview in the [Financial Times](#).

I get to work with many different clients as they lead their organizations through significant change. When I ask them, to whom or what they attribute their strong leadership skills, their answers are rather consistent. More often than not, they attribute their leadership skill-building to one or more influential individuals – strong mentors – who helped show them how to lead.

The value of a mentor can be doubly undervalued by many people – especially younger professionals and junior executives. We learn a great deal about management principles and practices in school. Leadership, though more popularly discussed in school now, is still more often learned outside of school. The value of a mentor who can help cultivate leadership skills one-on-one in real-time, reduce the anxiety in taking big steps, and focus leaders on achieving their goals – is huge. Many times it’s the first few years out of school that can shape the career path of an MBA, and that is determined by whether they create or are given an opportunity to demonstrate their leadership skill.

Also, as a mentor myself, the lessons I’ve learned about myself and my own leadership style are huge.

Finally, I see many recent graduates looking to their friends and peers for advice. While this is a good perspective to have, the power of a mentor who can provide a different perspective, relate different leadership experiences, and ask a different set of questions is critically important. Part of this “we know better” thinking may come from the expectation that new will disrupt old, simply based on its ‘awesomeness’. The danger is that people can far too easily filter out views and opinions different than their own simply by changing the channel or subscribing to a different RSS or Twitter feed.

Leadership is about taking it all in, looking at what we really want to achieve, and determining a compelling path forward so that others will help you make it happen. Mentors and peers, colleagues and friends, customers and competitors are all part of that ecosystem that helps give a platform to leaders who know how to make it work for them.

Retrieved 25 January 2016 from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkotter/2013/01/30/the-often-overlooked-but-invaluable-benefits-of-mentorship/#5f9f4b9563e8>

Other topics:

- Workplace ethics
- Stress in the workplace

OCT 5, 2012 @ 11:47 AM 11,241 VIEWS

The Career Tip To Follow Your Passion: Is It Bunk?

Richard Eisenberg, CONTRIBUTOR

Career coaches often say that if you're looking for a job or want to change careers you should "follow your passion." In fact, Next Avenue's work and volunteering blogger Nancy Collamer recently wrote a piece telling you how to do it. But could the whole notion of following your passion be bunk?

Yup, according to Cal Newport, the author of the new, buzzy book, *So Good They Can't Ignore You*. (The title comes from advice Steve Martin gives to aspiring entertainers.)

Become a Craftsman at Work

He maintains that pre-existing passions are rare. Trying to determine your passion and follow it, Newport says, can be dangerous and lead to chronic job-hopping. You'd be much better off, he believes, improving and stretching your "rare and valuable" skills to become a "craftsman." That will make you a stronger job candidate and help you have a successful career.

I have to admit I was a little disturbed to see Newport throwing cold water on the "follow your passion" idea. After all, many people in their 50s or 60s are working in fields they never loved, maybe even never liked, and are eager to make a switch for personal satisfaction. Others have lost jobs that didn't enthuse them and now hope to find work aligned with a particular interest or passion.

Since Newport's book is aimed primarily at young people starting out in their careers, I called him to hear his argument for midlifers. And I confess I reluctantly came away a believer.

Career Advice for Midlifers

"If you're 50 or 60, you have built up very valuable skills," said Newport, who is in his early '30s and an assistant professor of computer science at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. "Don't discount them."

When you're plotting your next career move, "work backwards from your skills," Newport said. "Ask yourself: What skills do I have and how rare and valuable are they? The intersection of your rare skills and what interests you is what should start your job hunt, not introspection about what you're 'meant to do.'"

Introspection Is Overrated

Introspection is highly overrated, Newport maintains. “There’s no one, true calling that you’re meant to follow, one passion entwined in your DNA that you’ll discover if you’re introspective enough,” he said. (If you’re interested in other job-seeking goofs, I recommend the new Forbes article by Jacquelyn Smith, “13 Big Mistakes Job Seekers Make and How to Avoid Them.”)

Newport says it’s important to “deliberately stretch yourself past your comfort zone” at your job, since this will make you more valuable. “I’m an academic and my advisers in their 50s and 60s are constantly tackling complicated fields like abstract mathematics and systematically stretching themselves. They’re able to do things way better than I am.”

Hobby vs. Career

If you’ve made a hobby of, say, photography, it’s not wise to expect success turning that into a second career, Newport says. Unless, that is, you’re really good at it — back to the craftsman idea.

“Yes, if you’re excellent at photography and that’s a valuable skill, it can be a foundation for a career you’ll love,” he said. “But for most people, it’s ‘Yeah, I’m pretty good at it, but my deep skills rely on the career I’ve had for the past few decades.’”

Avoiding a Layoff

I noted that being a craftsman won’t matter if your employer needs to lay off workers and decides that shedding your high 50-something salary will translate into tidy savings for the company.

“Yes, in general, people who are more senior cost more and are in more danger of being laid off,” Newport says. “But if you’re indispensable, you’ll be unlikely to get laid off or you’ll have a clear value to the marketplace when you start looking for a job.”

And what about launching an encore career to follow your passion to serve others?

“An encore career is a great idea,” Newport says. “But you’re much more likely to be successful if you approach it from the skillset mindset. The more rare, valuable and relevant your skill is, the more impact you’ll have in your encore career and the more satisfying it’s going to be.”

In other words, don’t randomly pick a nonprofit so you can do the type of work it happens to need at the moment. Instead, find a place that can truly benefit from the skills you’re best at.

Finding Your ‘One True Love’

I asked Collamer what she makes of Newport’s view and learned that she actually thought it had merit, to a point.

“I agree that few people have one driving passion, so finding your ‘one true love’ can create needless anxiety and frustration,” she says. “That’s also true for the myth that we only have one soul mate.”

But, Collamer adds, “that does not mean introspection is time wasted.” She favors a kind of passion-meets-craftsman strategy, which makes sense to me. “Think about what you enjoy, do well, and find meaningful — and then look for work that lines up with those interests and skills.”

Skillfully said.

Retrieved 17 February 2016 from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2012/10/05/the-career-tip-to-follow-your-passion-is-it-bunk/#4f05690528ae>