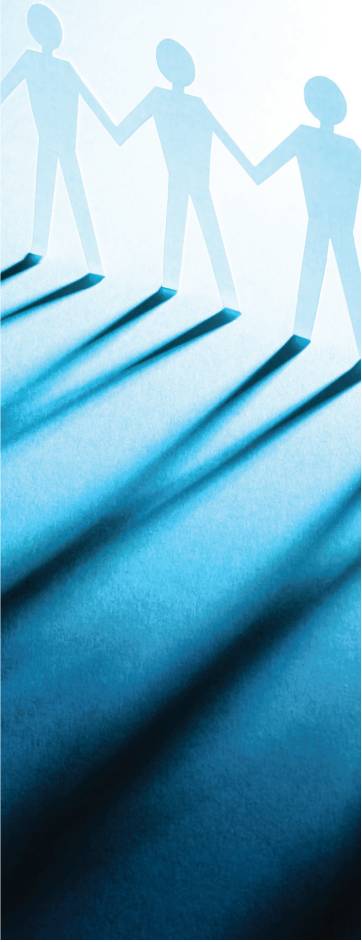


HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND
ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR COLLECTION



Major in Happiness

*Debunking the
College Major
Fallacies*

Michael Edmondson



BUSINESS EXPERT PRESS

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Dedication

*To my parents Bernard and Lillian
They made sure I majored in happiness*

Advanced Quotes for Major in Happiness

“Edmondson clearly debunks the myth that only certain college majors achieve greater success than others. More importantly, he maps a process to achieve and retain success and happiness which are two sides of a coin. A must read for parents and students thinking of going to college.”

—Arun Tilak,
Director - Center for Emerging
Technology & Entrepreneurial Studies,
Cameron University.

“Using strong research blended with a practical, clear writing style, Dr. Edmondson provides perspective and advice that the current generation of students (and parents) desperately needs to hear. So many young people quickly abandon their passions and dreams to pursue majors and careers that they believe are “necessary” to achieve success and satisfaction in their vocational and personal lives. Edmondson pulls back the curtain on the misconceptions and fallacies that fuel that thinking, and outlines a compelling argument for the pursuit of a life driven by calling, purpose, and passion. As a professor in one of the disciplines that is often marginalized, I frequently work with students who are wrestling with the exact tensions that Edmondson describes, and I will certainly recommend this book as a resource for those students in the future.”

—Jeremy Osborn, Ph. D.,
Associate Professor of Communication,
Cornerstone University.

“An eye-opening presentation of the unique challenges of the 21st century college student. Edmondson offers more than just data to support his beliefs that perseverance, adaptability and life-long learning are keys to success. He provides an array of self-assessment tools to help students – and professionals alike – evaluate their unique value to corporations and the world. As a professor, this book has changed the way I

will mentor my students. A must-read for all of us navigating through this quickly-changing landscape and trying to find *our* place in it.”

—Laura Grayson Roselli, Professor,
Rowan College at Burlington County, and
Biopharmaceutical Consultant,
Kinetic Knowledge, LLC.

“As a career professional this is truly a thought provoking book. This book certainly puts majors in perspective and the importance of doing what you love. This is a must read for all parents of college bound students.”

—Cindy Szadokierski,
Executive Director, The Edge Program,
Randolph-Macon College

“Edmondson offers a timely and much needed perspective to the conventional thought that that certain majors have more market value than others and indicates the importance of liberal learning as a better signifier of employability. He exposes the crude assumptions that permeate the idea of ‘return on investment’ and argues that enthusiasm for so called ‘valuable’ majors is misplaced. He convincingly argues that what matters is that students focus on areas that have meaning for them and that the chosen major ‘makes them happy’. Those choices enhance rather than damage potential career prospects and can lead to a more meaningful and successful career. This argument effectively disrupts conventional assumptions about the relationship between the world of academia and the world of work. Edmondson’s theories are accompanied by practical exercises that will be of value to students and their parents as they navigate a pathway through the complex interactions of study and work. He also points to two critical skills: team work and listening skills we expect and rarely teach. This book adds significantly to the debate about education and employability and should be a must read for incoming and exiting graduates and their parents.”

—John Christian,
President/CEO,
CAPA, The Global Education Network

Abstract

The preconceptions and suspicions about how things operate in today's challenging global marketplace often compel people to forge correlations with causations without any substantial evidence. Unfortunately, this flawed thinking is the foundation upon which many students declare their undergraduate major. With the repayment of college loans as a paramount issue for students and their families, the major is often viewed as the stepping stone for a career that can repay those loans instead of the first step to a meaningful life based on leadership, purpose, and service. Students should declare a major that makes them happy. Doing so substantially increases their chances of pursuing careers paths that ignite their passion, identify with their purpose, and spark a commitment to lifelong learning. All too often, however, students are exposed to the myopic valuable versus useless paradigm of decision-making process when it comes to declaring a major. According to this paradigm, a "valuable" major is useful, can teach a specific skill, and provides one with a lifetime of employment and riches. Accounting, marketing, engineering, and computer science are just a few examples. A "worthless" major, on the other hand, is more intellectual and therefore has little, or no, practical application for employment purposes. Majors that generally fall into this category include history, English, philosophy, and sociology among others. This dichotomy between the valuable versus useless majors is based on flawed mental models and ingrained assumptions about how the world works that lead to a series of fallacies surrounding the college major. *Major in Happiness: Debunking the College Major Fallacies* examines a variety of assumptions prevalent in the mental models of undergraduates, parents, educators, higher education leaders, administrators, and policy-makers that cause people to fall into a series of mental traps when selecting a major. Divided into three parts, this publication presents a situational analysis on choosing a college major, dissects the mental models and traps people rely on, and offers a variety of assessments that can help increase one's self-awareness prior to declaring a major.

Keywords

higher education, career development, vocational guidance, college majors, academic programs, undergraduate education, personal development, professional development

Why You Should Read This Book

This book is for anyone interested in learning about the decision-making process related to an undergraduate student declaring an academic major. Part I presents a situational analysis regarding the selection of a college major and sets the foundation for the remaining two parts of the publication. In Part II of *Major in Happiness*, undergraduates, parents, family members, professors, higher education administrators, politicians, and other concerned stakeholders will learn about the fallacies and flawed mental models that have plagued the selection of college majors for decades. Students will find Part III particularly valuable since it contains assessments to complete prior to, and then after, declaring a major. Each assessment allows the student an opportunity to increase their self-awareness. Doing so is critical if the student wants to advance their self-determination. If you are currently a high school student or graduate considering college, or if you are already an undergraduate, you should read this book if you want to:

1. Major in happiness.
2. Gain insight into the fallacies and myths behind certain majors.
3. Declare the major you believe is best for you.
4. Advocate for yourself.
5. Assess your skills, traits, and talents.
6. Exercise self-determination in order to develop into the person you want to be.
7. Separate fact from fiction regarding the application and value of different majors.
8. Understand how to better prepare yourself for tomorrow's challenges.
9. Increase your self-awareness.
10. Develop a better sense of purpose in your professional life.

In fall 2014, some 20 million students attended over 4,000 American colleges and universities.¹ Since each student needs to declare a major that means 20 million individuals asked, or previously asked, themselves the same question: What major do I select? This question is asked at community colleges, residential liberal arts colleges, and 4-year private institutions, as well as major public research universities. Students ask each other, consult with family members, discuss their options with professors, and reflect upon their own wishes. It is a difficult question to answer for most. Trying to figure out the answer often causes anxiety, depression, and confusion. It doesn't have to be this way. *Major in Happiness* provides valuable insight that students can immediately use as they search for an answer to the question: What major do I declare? Many students will also ask themselves "since I don't like my major, which one should I switch to?" The answer to both should be the major that allows you to be happy. The last thing this world needs is another miserable person working at a job they despise that sadly falls short in helping them reach their potential. We have serious global issues that require men and women to operate at their best intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. Future generations need to increase their autonomy, competency, and ability to connect with others. The next generation cannot solve the problems of tomorrow if they are miserable and living lives of mediocrity. Students must engage in self-determination in order to find their purpose and contribute their true and potential selves to tomorrow's solutions, but they must first major in happiness.

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Foreword: The Liberal Arts

When I was an undergraduate student at a liberal arts college, one of my favorite professors said to me “Nobody is really looking for the liberal arts, but they are so glad when they find it.” What did she mean? In over 10 years of working with young adults and their parents, I have come to understand that when most students and families begin the college search, there is no real understanding of how all of the pieces of the college experience, including but not limited to the college major, work together to create well rounded and appreciative graduates who are actually very well prepared to begin their professional lives. In *Major in Happiness*, Dr. Michael Edmondson debunks some prevalent myths regarding majors, careers, and possibilities for the future. In doing so, he helps students *and* parents understand that college is the time to find the liminal or “in-between” spaces where students explore foundational questions about who they are, what they like *and* don’t like, and how that will use who they are to make an impact on the needs of their various communities.

Dr. Edmondson’s vision for navigating the chaos of the career search process is that each student would have the tools to understand and articulate to wide audiences that their time in college is not simply a separate time of life that is designed to prepare them for one, singular future path. Instead, *Major in Happiness* presents a counter-narrative to the college major fallacy that helps students understand that their undergraduate experience is more like a pilgrimage that helps them prepare for the destination of life that will keep evolving. It is exciting for me to think about a new generation of college students who will not only *imagine* what is possible when they embrace who they are in the classroom, in a residence hall, on the athletic field, on the stage, in an office, or in another country but that they might also *practice* being themselves so that they might *articulate* their value to wide audiences. This is the foundation for a rewarding and gainful, and happy professional life.

I have spent all of my post-college years continuing to be grateful for “finding” the liberal arts experience. It is my great hope that *Major in Happiness* will help students to “find” their own happiness not only as a

post-college reflection or appreciation, but as an active part of their college search and daily lives as undergraduate students.

Rev. Kristen Glass Perez
Chaplain and Director for Vocational Exploration
Augustana College
Rock Island, Illinois

Preface: Explaining Happiness

It is both useful and necessary to understand how I am defining the term happiness. Happiness refers to the pursuit of meaning through a life of purpose, leadership, and service to others. Undergraduates can best achieve this pursuit through a gradual increase in their self-awareness fostered by adventures in disequilibrium that destabilize their level of comfort, challenge their assumptions about life, and allow them an opportunity to accommodate new information. Perhaps now more than ever, the world needs college students on campuses large and small around the globe to declare a major in happiness. We are both witnesses and participants in a global epidemic of unhappiness, disengagement, and negativity. According to Gallup's 142-country study on the *State of the Global Workplace*, only 13 percent of employees worldwide are engaged at work. "In other words, about one in eight workers—roughly 180 million employees in the countries studied—are psychologically committed to their jobs and likely to be making positive contributions to their organizations."² Statistics for the United States echo global attitudes. Less than one-third (31.5 percent) of U.S. workers were engaged in their jobs in 2014 and just 33 percent of Americans said that they were very happy, remaining consistent with happiness levels in 2011 but dropping from the 35 percent who reported being very happy in 2008 and 2009.³ Unfortunately, the happiness factor for undergraduates mimics the statistics on both the global and U.S. levels. This has to stop.

If today's undergraduates are going to help solve tomorrow's problems, they need to understand that the pursuit of a college degree has to be more than a collection of *résumé* building experiences designed to attract employers and land a high-paying job after graduation. Getting a good paying job is important, but it is also relative. Achieving financial independence for young professionals should indeed be a priority. After all, graduates have loans to repay, health insurance costs to satisfy, and living expenses to cover. However, if we teach undergraduates, the only thing that matters, the only thing that will make them happy, is a high

starting salary, we are providing a tremendous disservice. The research is overwhelmingly clear: “the pressure to be happy makes people less happy. Organizing your life around trying to become happier, making happiness the primary objective of life gets in the way of actually becoming happy.”⁴ Research within the field of positive psychology continues to illustrate that having purpose and meaning in life increases overall well-being and life satisfaction, improves mental and physical health, enhances resiliency, ameliorates self-esteem, and decreases the chances of depression.⁵ “Happiness without meaning characterizes a relatively shallow, self-absorbed, or even selfish life. What sets human beings apart from animals is not the pursuit of happiness, which occurs all across the natural world, but the pursuit of meaning, which is unique to humans.”⁶ To major in happiness is to pursue a life of purpose, leadership, and service to others. In today’s volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous global marketplace, the world needs individuals to pursue a life of meaning more than ever.

Acknowledgments

As a first-generation college student, my two main acknowledgments go to my parents Bernard and Lillian Edmondson. They made sure that I attended Cabrini College in Radnor, Pennsylvania, and never once pressured me into selecting a specific major. Their lack of knowledge about higher education and its policies served as a blessing in disguise. If ignorance is bliss, then my parent's ignorance about college majors was indeed my bliss. I declared accounting as my first major and quickly switched to one more to my liking—history. Mom and dad never challenged me about my decision to change majors. They never asked me what I was going to do with a history degree. Many people, then as well as now, label history one of the “useless” majors. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no such thing as a useless major. Without knowing it, mom and dad allowed me to major in happiness. More of today's students need to major in happiness. The substantial rise in depression and anxiety among today's undergraduates is frighteningly alarming. All too often today's undergraduates are pressured by their parents or their own perceptions of how the world operates to go into the right school, declare the right major, secure the right job, get the right salary, and have the right life. Such thinking is outrageous. Yet this is exactly what has been happening, is happening, and will continue to happen until the insanity stops. *Major in Happiness: Debunking the College Major Fallacies* is my small attempt to stop the insanity. Parents, professors, higher education officials, and other stakeholders have a responsibility to educate our students and each other on the major in happiness campaign.

During the last few weeks of working on this manuscript, my father died. He and my mom went for their daily swim on June 1 and by July 10 he had passed away. In less than 40 days, stage 4 lung cancer eviscerated my father faster than any of us thought possible. His passing devastated my family, especially my mother who had a 59-year relationship with him. During one of his last days, dad told me he was proud of me. He never mentioned my undergraduate major. He was proud of the man, father, and son I had become. In a book about undergraduate majors, this is an important point to acknowledge. The selection of a college major is

an important decision, but it is just one of many important decisions an individual will make throughout the journey of life. What you declare as a major has little, if anything, to do with your character, ability to demonstrate empathy, or the manner in which you treat others. Unbeknownst to them, my parents taught me that a college major was merely one element of a very dynamic life. We have lost that perspective today. As a nation, we have failed our young people. Lost in a tsunami of news about college loans, global unemployment, cyber-attacks, and domestic terrorism, we have scared the younger generations into a state of perpetual anxiety, depression, and sadness. The hyper-focus on starting salaries, landing the proverbial “dream job,” and securing full-time employment has taken precedence over a career built on purpose, leadership, and service. I say all this to acknowledge that my parents focused on developing a man who was responsible to himself, his family and to those he encountered. I am forever grateful for that lesson as it has formed the bedrock of my life.

In addition to my parents, I need to acknowledge my staff in the Career Development Office at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, in the Careers/Opportunities/Research/Exploration (CORE) Center. These professionals dedicate their lives to helping students understand the major in happiness campaign. Thank you: Keri Bass, Kevin Carton, Judy Butler, James Connon, Beth Ducey, Rebecca Marion-Flesch, Pastor Kristen Glass Perez, Karen Petersen, Leslie Scheck, Andrew Shearhouse, Lisa Slater, Doug Tschopp, Clarissa Thompson, and Alex Washington. To President Steve Bahls, Provost Pareena Lawrence, the Board of Trustees and the entire Augie community, thank you for your daily support and guidance. Several Augustana students helped with some of the research for this book, including Shylee Garrett, Michelle Dempster, and Cori Duncan. The illustrations included in this publication were created by students in the EDGE Center at Augustana. I would like to thank EDGE Director Doug Tschopp and his students Brittney Cox, Shavaun Grant, Marisa Lara, and Holly Scholl for their assistance in translating my thoughts to the images included in this book.

A special thank you also needs to go out to the thousands of students that I have taught over the past 25 years. I have been fortunate enough to teach at the elementary, secondary, and university levels. Unfortu-

nately, I have witnessed the deep concern that middle school students and parents have over getting their child into the ‘right’ high school that will lead to the ‘right’ college and then land the ‘dream job’ to have the ‘perfect’ life; or the high school student who takes every AP class imaginable and gets involved in multiple activities only to get rejected by every college he or she thinks has the magic elixir to a successful career. Those thousands of encounters formed the genesis of this book. Some students and parents understood the major in happiness campaign. Most did not. I am grateful for all of those conversations.

To the entire team at Business Expert Press, including Stewart Mattson, Rob Zwettler, Charlene Kronstedt, Sean Kaneski, Sheri Dean, and Karen Amundson, I owe my deepest appreciation and gratitude for their constant support. *Major in Happiness* is my second book with Business Expert Press as they published *Marketing Your Value: Nine Steps to Navigate Your Career* in 2015 for me. Special thanks to John Christian, Jeremy Osborn, Pastor Kristen Glass Perez, Cindy Szadokierski, Laura Grayson Roselli, and Arun Tilak for their thoughts on a draft of this manuscript. I would also like to extend a special acknowledgment and thank you to my family and friends for their daily guidance and support, including my wife Lori Joyce who made sure that our children Amanda Haley and Jonathan Victor majored in happiness. They provide a much needed perspective and are a constant reminder that a college major is but one small component of a life well-lived.

Introduction: Five Questions for Parents

*The most loving parents and relatives commit murder with smiles on their faces.
They force us to destroy the person we really are: a subtle kind of murder.*⁷

—Jim Morrison

You have good intentions and love your child. You want your child to get into a good college, declare the right major, and land that dream job. You want your child to be financially independent. You want to make sure that you get a return on your investment of high-priced college tuition. You want your child to be a homeowner. You want to make sure that your child can pay back their college loans. All of this, of course, is what you want. As one parent declared, “It’s incredibly competitive out there, and I don’t want my child left in the dust.”⁸ Another way of stating that is “I want my child to get ahead.” Childhood, starting at its earliest ages is now a race. But a race to where? And what is the prize? More importantly, who determines the prize?

A 2009 documentary entitled *Race to Nowhere* examines the lives of young people across the United States “who have been pushed to the brink, educators who are burned out and worried that students aren’t developing the skills they need, and parents who are trying to do what’s best for their children.”⁹ To paraphrase a quote from Dr. Wendy Mogel, parents need to understand that it is their job to prepare children for the road, not to prepare the road for children.¹⁰ Have you prepared the road for your child? Have you walked around campus with your first-year student to check out all of their classrooms during orientation? Have you substituted your voice for your child’s? For those well-intentioned parents, have you asked your child what he/she wants? How do you know what they want? How often do you ask about their dreams? And if you do ask, how often do you listen to their answer? Do you engage in a common doublespeak that has emerged recently? Parents might tell their child that “All I care about is that you’re happy, but when the kid walks in the door is the first question you ask how did you do on the math test?”¹¹

Throughout the last 30 years, I have studied, taught, hired, worked alongside, and trained undergraduates. My wife and I raised two children; one graduated from a major research university and one is currently attending college. Along the way I discovered that the self-determination theory (SDT), an approach to human motivation and personality, formed the foundation of my decision-making process. SDT articulates that enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity, arguably three critical skills everyone needs to succeed, are best fostered by an individual developing a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.¹² Another way to think of SDT comes from author Frank A. Clark who once wrote “The most important thing that parents can teach their children is how to get along without them.”¹³

Unfortunately, many parents with good intentions are failing by prohibiting their child’s self-determination. An epidemic of hyper-involvement known as helicopter parenting has emerged during the last three decades.¹⁴ Helicopter parents often micromanage every decision, dictate schedules, and control relationships for their children.¹⁵ In the world of academics or anything that could be interpreted as competitive, helicopter parenting kicks into high gear. “In communities where academic expectations run highest parents obsess over their child acing an exam, burnishing the transcript, and keeping up with high-achieving peers.”¹⁶ Such intrusiveness has led to children being co-dependent on their parent. Subsequently, high school students of helicopter parents who attend college are left with feelings of incompetence and isolation. These feelings have directly or indirectly contributed to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and sadness found on campuses across the country. In its 2013 survey of approximately 100,000 college students spanning over 150 different campuses around the United States, the American College Health Association discovered some very troubling statistics on how students felt at some point during the previous 12 months: 84.3 percent felt overwhelmed by all they had to do, 60.5 percent felt very sad, and 57.0 percent felt very lonely.¹⁷ In another survey, 95 percent of college counseling center directors reported that the number of students with significant psychological problems is a growing concern on their campus.¹⁸ When coupled with other health issues such as the lack of sleep¹⁹ and eating disorders,²⁰ it’s clear that undergraduates are under tremendous stress both physically and mentally.

Unfortunately, further evidence of the severity of intrusive parenting continues when students apply to graduate school. With hard-to-break habits of excessive coddling, the ubiquitous helicopter parent in undergraduate admissions has invaded the graduate-school admissions process as well. “Some of these parents have become so aggressive that they’ve required a new moniker: “snowplow parents,” for their impulse to push obstacles out of their adult children’s way.”²¹ This is even more so with professional schools, especially business and law. “Professional-school applicants, who often apply directly out of college, don’t always have a clear sense of their career goals, creating an opening for parents to intervene.”²² The intrusion is so severe that some graduate admissions officers have set up events where they inform prospective students that even if a parent is nearby, do not allow them to influence your decision or application materials. For these parents who also wonder when their child will grow up, I ask you, when will you allow them to do so?

This invasive parenting occurring at both the undergraduate and graduate levels prohibits students from creating the sense of autonomy, competence, and connectedness required to determine their own sense of self. This level of involvement actually sends the wrong message to children.²³ For those parents who contact the college admissions officer, professor, or coach with the intention of trying to resolve a situation on behalf of their child, they are sending an unintentional message that their child is incompetent. Harvard Psychiatrist Dr. Dan Kindlon concluded that parents who protect children from discomfort or failure actually insulate them from experiences that can facilitate growth and resilience.²⁴ By interfering, the parent is undermining a child’s ability to problem-solve, communicate, and persevere through a difficult situation. These are three critical skills every professional needs to develop throughout his or her entire career. Stunting their growth early on places students at a disadvantage when they graduate since they have had little exposure to them. “When adult children don’t get to practice problem-solving skills, they can’t solve these problems in the future.”²⁵ Well-meaning and misguided parents inadvertently foster a sense of “existential impotence whereby their child lacks the self-awareness, is unable to make choices, and has difficulty coping with setbacks.”²⁶ Staying connected via technology has only exacerbated the problem. By constantly texting, Facebook messaging, or Skyping for daily check-ins, parents further their child’s co-dependency on them. Such hovering is counter-productive to a

child's maturity. As one mother said, "when you hover, you take away that sense of self-esteem."²⁷ Self-determination demands that a child resolves problems, works through challenging situations, and has difficult conversations with others on his or her own. The journey to self-discovery is lifelong and best made with the child learning how to navigate his or her own life. One such stop along the journey is the declaration of an undergraduate major.

Students often approach the college major decision with a good deal of anxiety, confusion, and doubt. It is no surprise that many students will change their major at least once during their undergraduate experience. Students ask themselves a variety of questions such as: What is the right major? What major will help me with the rest of my life? What major will make me the most money? What major do employers want me to have? Unfortunately some students also find themselves asking questions such as: Will my parents still pay my tuition if I declare this as a major? Will my parents be mad at me with this decision? Will my parents stop talking to me if I declare this as a major? As they often do, helicopter parents attempt to answer or influence how their child answers these questions. This might be difficult to hear but when it comes to the declaration of a college major, parents may not know best. As journalist H.L. Mencken once quipped, "The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom."²⁸ You may indeed be older and have more professional experience than your child, but those two characteristics are far from being qualified to mandate your college student's undergraduate major.

Many parents feel as though that since they are paying tuition they get to dictate what their child declares as a major. These questions and related approaches on how to answer them frequently strike terror in the hearts and minds of students for the simple fact that they believe if they choose the wrong major their life is ruined. Nothing could be further from the truth. Intrusive parents who encourage this type of thinking are placing their child at a severe disadvantage. For many traditional undergraduates aged 18–24, they are unsure as to what they want to do following graduation. Since cognitive development continues well in the 20s, it is no surprise that a good portion of students buy into the notion that their parents know best. But parents may not know best. Instead of knowing answers, or at least pretending to do so, parents should instead

encourage students to explore. Such an approach allows the student to proactively engage in their own self-determination. The helicopter parenting epidemic is so serious; however, one expert proclaimed that “parents who don’t encourage their sons and daughters to be independent are guilty of psychological abuse.”²⁹

To increase your self-awareness and better understand the extent to which you encourage your child’s independence here are five questions to answer. While these questions are pertinent for all parents, they are especially relevant for those who have a child in high school or college. There are many more questions to ask of course, but these five will provide some much needed insight into how often you exhibit the key traits and habits that can help a child develop the autonomy, competence, and connectedness contributing to their own self-determination. Approach each question with the phrase “how often do you...?” instead of “do you...?” This method allows you to view each item as a trait or habit to practice instead of an either-or situation. For example, instead of asking yourself: “Do you support your child’s self-determination?” where you have a yes-or-no dichotomy ask yourself: “How often do you support your child’s self-determination?” This approach allows you to select from a Likert scale of options: never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always for an answer. If you are honest with yourself and conclude that you “sometimes support your child’s self-determination,” then perhaps a reasonable goal for the upcoming months is for you to increase how often you practice that trait.

1. **How often do you support your child's self-determination?** Another way to ask this question is: How often do you foster autonomy, competence, and connectedness when dealing with your child? Do you find yourself making decisions for them or do you allow them to freely decide? Do you complete a task for them thereby sending the message that the child is incompetent? Fostering self-determination in your child is hard work, so the more you interfere, disrupt, or prohibit their progress, the more challenging it is for them to have a sense of self. Supporting a child's ability to self-determine involves nurturing their skills and abilities, understanding their thoughts and feelings, and enabling them to dream and aspire. "When parents decide for their children rather than help them to decide for themselves, children become dependent, not independent, compliant rather than adventurous."³⁰ When it comes to discussing declaring a college major, parents can support their child's self-determination by recalling the work of Hazel Rose Markus and Paula Nurius who introduced the concept of three possible selves: the ideal self that we would like to become, that we could become, and that we are afraid of becoming. "To suggest that there is a single self to which one 'can be true' or an authentic self that one can know is to deny the rich network of potential that surrounds individuals and that is important in identifying and descriptive of them."³¹

Consider supporting your child's decision to declare a major that fosters the development of who they would like to become but also provides them with experiences that allow them to explore who they could become. For those parents courageous enough, encourage your child to explore experiences and learning opportunities that could help them become the person they are afraid of becoming! The four remaining questions are directly linked to self-determination. The more likely you are to foster your child's self-determination, the more likely you are to practice the following traits as well.

2. **How often do you allow your child to experience failure, disappointment, or discomfort?** Part of self-determination is experiencing failure, disappointment, and discomfort and learning how to work through each situation. Unfortunately, helicopter or snowplowing parents shield their children from even the slightest degree of discomfort. Failure is a distant shore that children of intrusive parents seldom see. Children are sometimes home schooled to prevent them from being exposed to people, ideas, and materials the parents deem inappropriate. Prohibiting children from people or ideas you deem uncomfortable for your child to process and then expecting them to mature into well-adjusted, autonomous adults able to connect with others is simply unrealistic.³² As one mother said, “we need to let our kids chart their own course and make their own mistakes.”³³ Competence is one of the three foundational elements of self-determination, but children need to learn that they can’t be good at everything. To learn lessons of failure, disappointment or discomfort college students need to experience disequilibrium. The experience of psychological and cognitive disequilibrium produces feelings of internal “dissonance” that manifests itself as uncertainty, and sometimes as conflict and even threat.³⁴ “But it is the experience of such dissonance that opens up the possibility for learning and growth because it nudges students into confronting and considering new ways of understanding, thinking, and acting that help to unsettle the old and integrate it with the new.”³⁵

UCLA psychiatrist Paul Bohn believes many parents will do anything to avoid having their child experience even mild discomfort, anxiety, or disappointment.³⁶ Shielding a child from psychological and cognitive disequilibrium, failure, or discomfort provides a tremendous disservice; “with the result that when, as adults, they experience the normal frustrations of life, they think something must be terribly wrong.”³⁷ “It is essential for students’ learning and growth in college to have challenging stimuli and experiences of positive restlessness because these provide the creative disequilibrium and intellectual foment that drive personal exploration and development.”³⁸

3. **How often do you demand perfection from your child?** New research indicates that “perfection parenting can cause significant stress and anxiety in children”; therefore, “the more parents back off from pushing their children, the better the outcomes for the child.”³⁹ If you foster self-determination for your child, then you seldom, if ever, demand perfection. As a parent in today’s hyper-competitive, dynamic, and ever-changing global marketplace, you understand that perfectionism rigidifies behavior. Demanding perfection from a child constricts behavior. To successfully launch and navigate a career today, one needs to maintain flexibility of mind, be comfortable with ambiguity, and quickly adapt to changing situations. Parents who demand perfection from a child are unrealistic. “Pressure on children to achieve is rampant, because parents now seek much of their status from the performance of their kids.”⁴⁰ How often do you demand that your child achieve perfection? Do you demand that your child selects the perfect college major? If so, do you even know what that means? Do you realize that perfectionism is a form of parental control? Because it lowers the ability to take risks, perfectionism lowers the ability to take calculated risks, reduces creativity, and stifles innovation. Therefore, a child pressured into achieving perfection is highly unlikely to be engaged in self-determination.

“Psychologists today differentiate between positive perfectionism, which is adaptive and healthy, and negative perfectionism, which is maladaptive and neurotic.”⁴¹ In Tal Ben-Shahar’s book *The Pursuit of Perfect*, he refers to negative perfectionism simply as perfectionism and to positive perfectionism as optimalism. For Ben-Shahar, the optimist embraces the constraints of reality while a perfectionist rejects those constraints. A child engaged in self-determination learns to accept the constraints of reality, adjusts his or her goals and aspirations accordingly, and demonstrates his or her commitment to discovering the self the child would like to become.

4. **How often are you certain?** Parents who interfere with their child's decision to declare their undergraduate major often do so out of certainty. The parent is certain that major x is right for their child, but this certainty often interferes with a child's self-determination. In higher education circles, there is an adage that "every student has two majors: the one their parents want them to have and the one they want to declare." Being certain about the employability of a major provides a student with false hope and is terribly misleading. In today's ever-changing global marketplace, "business executives care more about their new hires' thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills than they do about their undergraduate majors."⁴² New research also shows that the vast majority of employers (88 percent) are looking for a "cultural fit" over skills in their next hire as more and more companies focus on attrition rates.⁴³ Today, it's not just about finding the person that can do the job, but finding someone who can fit into the corporate culture. "Companies are looking to hire people who demonstrate uniqueness and creativity and can market themselves to match the company culture."⁴⁴ For example, a common misbelief expressed by parents to children is that "established fields such as banking, medicine, or law provide a sweet salary and job security; but such assurances are quickly becoming a thing of the past."⁴⁵ When you are expressing any level of certainty about a college major, it would behoove you to recall the conclusion Philip Tetlock reached in *Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know?* "The average expert was found to be only slightly more accurate than a dart-throwing chimpanzee. Many experts would have done better if they had made random guesses."⁴⁶

5. **How often do you equate high salaries with your child's happiness?** Many parents that help pay their child's college tuition want an immediate return on their investment (ROI). That ROI usually comes in the form of a high starting salary. Intrusive parents dictate that their child can accept a job offer only over a certain dollar amount. These parents equate a high starting salary with their child's happiness. Once again this type of thinking interferes with a child's ability to engage in self-determination. For those recent college graduates who are pressured by their parents, they too equate job satisfaction with a high starting salary. The research indicates otherwise. In his 1967 publication *The Motivation to Work*, Frederick Herzberg identified two different categories of factors affecting the motivation to work: hygiene and motivation. Hygiene factors include extrinsic factors such as technical supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, company policies and administrative practices, benefits, and job security. In comparison, motivation factors include intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition and status, responsibility, challenging work, and advancement in the organization. Herzberg's theory postulates that only motivation factors have the potential of increasing job satisfaction. "The results indicate that the association between salary and job satisfaction is very weak. When employees are focused on external rewards, the effects of intrinsic motives on engagement are significantly diminished. This means that employees who are intrinsically motivated are three times more engaged than employees who are extrinsically motivated (such as by money). Quite simply, you're more likely to like your job if you focus on the work itself, and less likely to enjoy it if you're focused on money."⁴⁷ Daniel Pink's *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* makes the same observation. While many people believe that the best way to motivate others is with external rewards like money, the reality is that high performance and satisfaction is rooted in the three elements of true motivation: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. When you are discussing potential employment opportunities with your child, do you focus solely on salary and the ability to repay college

loans or do you also consider the myriad of other factors that go into job satisfaction? If you are solely focused on salary, what do you think that does to your child's ability to engage in self-determination?

Here is a list of the five questions. Remember, your options are: never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always.

1. How often do you support your child's self-determination?
2. How often do you allow your child to experience failure, disappointment, or discomfort?
3. How often do you demand perfection from your child?
4. How often are you certain when discussing the future?
5. How often do you equate high salaries with your child's happiness?

Conclusion

These five questions allow parents to reflect on a quote by Chuck Palahniuk, author of *Fight Club*: “First your parents, they give you your life, but then they try to give you their life.”⁴⁸ Instead of giving your children your life, try allowing them to create their own life free from interference. Provide a sense of hope. Allow them to have their own dreams. As they translate their inspirations to reality, help them to find their own way. Encourage instead of discourage. Allow your child an opportunity to understand what Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in 1841: “There is a time in every man’s education when he arrives at the conviction that... no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till.”⁴⁹ How often do you help your child till their plot of ground? Or have you tilled their plot of ground for them? Have you decided their college major for them? Or have you allowed your children to declare their own college major? “Students should be made aware that choosing a college major that reflects their interests will give them a better chance of succeeding and could also contribute to their satisfaction and happiness in school and on the job.”⁵⁰

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PART I

The Situation

Too many students fail to engage in the process of figuring out what they want to get out of their entire college experience.¹

—Jeffrey J. Selingo

CHAPTER 1

The Information Technology Revolution

Higher education institutions do not operate in a vacuum and undergraduates do not declare their major in one either. Any discussion of higher education in general, and the declaration of a college major specifically, needs to start with the driving force behind today's hypercompetitive global marketplace—the information technology revolution. Dubbed “the most significant revolution of the 21st century” by Cambridge University political scientist David Runciman, the information technology revolution has altered, and will continue to alter, the very fabric of how people work, live, love, communicate, and do just about everything else.² *New York Times* editorialist and best-selling author Thomas Friedman echoed similar sentiment and declared the information technology revolution “the single most important trend in the world today.”³ Friedman summarized the impact of this revolution as the world went from connected to hyper-connected during the 2000–2010 period thanks to cloud computing, robotics, 3G wireless connectivity, Skype, Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, the iPad, and cheap Internet-enabled smartphones.⁴

During the 10 years from 2000 to 2010, world Internet usage increased over 444 percent.⁵ The UN's International Telecommunication Union observed that one-third of the world's population, approximately 2 billion people, have Internet access. Just a short 10 years ago, only 300 million people had Internet access. Of the current 2 billion people with Internet access, 555 million have a fixed broadband subscription, and 950 million have mobile broadband.⁶ World population is expected to grow by over a third, or 2.3 billion people between 2009 and 2050. If that occurs, by 2050 there will be a global population of approximately 9 billion people.⁷ With more people alive, it is safe to assume that the number of Internet users will continue to grow. For example, one estimate from the National Science Foundation predicts that the Internet will have nearly 5 billion users by 2020.⁸

The information technology revolution and transition from connected to hyperconnected has resulted in the creation of a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) global environment, creating an entirely new set of issues demanding higher education institutions and other organizations large and small to rethink how they operate. Noting the challenging economic times and the need to reconsider how their schools function, 43 percent of New England college presidents surveyed said that they didn't think "small New England colleges will remain an important fixture within the academic landscape for many years to come."⁹ Eight in 10 CEOs expect their environment to grow significantly more complex, and fewer than half believe they know how to deal with it successfully.¹⁰ Leaders from organizations large and small are more concerned than ever about the future because of the new requirements to lead in the uncertain and ambiguous 21st-century marketplace. The answer, however, is not to have every student major in a technical field. Fortune 500 CEOs are keenly aware of this as one-third of them have a liberal arts degree.¹¹ The information technology revolution now demands that college graduates effectively demonstrate skills that transcend the knowledge they learn from their academic major. In order to address the challenges, issues, and questions of today's volatile economy, employers have identified marketing, sales, business, social media, graphic design, and data analysis as six skills relevant for all college graduates regardless of major.¹²

Despite articulating the skills they need in graduates in order to stay competitive, employers believe that higher education institutions are failing to keep up with today's information technology revolution. Far too many employers believe higher education institutions are "producing graduates in the 21st century with 20th-century skills."¹³ This skills mismatch has its origins within the priorities of employers and educators. When asked to select the two most important goals for postsecondary education, business leaders placed the greatest premium on preparing individuals for success in the workplace (56%) and providing individuals with core academic knowledge and skills (51%).¹⁴ When asked the same question, education leaders emphasized providing students with core academic knowledge and skills (64%) and preparing individuals to be lifelong learners (47%).¹⁵ Such opposing viewpoints need to be reconciled if higher education institutions

want to enhance how they prepare today's students to solve tomorrow's problems. Key external stakeholders such as employers and politicians need to think differently and recognize the impact of disruptive technologies driving rapid change across most industries. Instead of viewing college as simply filling workforce development needs, graduating students with narrow technical knowledge, employers and politicians need to recognize that colleges have an obligation to prepare students, in the words of best-selling author Daniel Pink, "for their future and not our past." "To deal with today, therefore we need not only new knowledge but new ways to think about it."¹⁶ If future generations are going to help organizations achieve and sustain growth in a VUCA environment, then they also need to learn how to think differently about declaring an undergraduate major.

CHAPTER 2

The State of the College Major

For all of the personal and economic struggles individuals confront, a 4-year degree has probably never been more valuable from an economic, employment, and professional development perspective. The unemployment rate for all U.S. workers with bachelor's degrees or higher is just 3.2 percent, compared with a national average of 6.1 percent.¹⁷ "Earnings disparity between high school and college graduates has widened for successive generations of workers ages 25 to 32. Full-time workers with a college degree earn about \$17,500 more annually than those with just those with only a high school diploma.¹⁸ The pay gap between college graduates and everyone else reached a record high last year based on an analysis of Labor Department statistics by the Economic Policy Institute. Individuals with 4-year college degrees made 98 percent more an hour on average in 2013 than those without a degree. That's up from 89 percent 5 years earlier, 85 percent a decade earlier, and 64 percent in the early 1980s.¹⁹

The research strongly suggests that graduates with a 4-year bachelor's degree earn more over their lifetime than individuals with a high school diploma and those with an associate's degree (Tables 2.1 and 2.2).²⁰ "The median 2013 salary for young millennials with at least a bachelor's degree was \$45,500, while their peers who only went to high school were making just \$28,000 a year. A two-year degree increased their earnings but only to \$30,000."²¹ One of America's famous college dropouts even declares that higher education is indeed worth the investment of time, work, and money. Echoing the benefits of earning a college diploma, Bill Gates wrote on his personal blog that "getting a degree is a much surer path to success as college graduates are more likely to find a rewarding job, earn higher income, and live healthier lives."²² New research supports Gates' observation and "found that education usually pays off for individuals and society in today's technologically complex, globalized economy."²³ With this in mind, however, it

behooves me to state that since this publication debunks the fallacies associated with college major and lifetime earnings potential, let me suggest that a college degree alone is no guarantee of higher income. Many factors contribute to long-term earnings potential. A college degree is just one of them. Despite the struggles of graduates in the post-global recession era of 2008 to the present, investing in a college degree is still relevant, smart, and practical. Those who choose not to pursue a 4-year degree are often in danger of falling further behind in employment opportunities and income potential. Unfortunately, the recent enrollment trends across the nation suggest that the future could witness a potential shortfall of college-educated workers. “By 2020, 65 percent of all American jobs will require some form of postsecondary degree or credential, but the current rate at which colleges and universities are awarding them will fall short by roughly 5 million.”²⁴

Table 2.1 Education Level and Earnings

| Educational Level²⁵ | Average Lifetime Earnings (in million dollars) |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Professional degree | 4.2 |
| Doctoral degree | 3.5 |
| Master's degree | 2.8 |
| Bachelor's degree | 2.4 |
| Associate's degree | 1.8 |
| Some college | 1.6 |
| High school graduate | 1.4 |
| Non-high school graduate | 1 |

Table 2.2 Education Level

| Education²⁶ | Age 25 and Over (%) | Age 25–29 (%) |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------|
| High school graduate | 88.31 | 90.83 |
| Some college | 58.57 | 64.31 |
| Associate and/or bachelor's degree | 41.89 | 44.08 |
| Bachelor's degree | 31.96 | 34.04 |
| Master's and/or doctorate and/or professional degree | 11.77 | 7.57 |
| Doctorate and/or professional degree | 3.27 | 1.70 |
| Doctorate | 1.77 | 0.89 |

Despite the higher salaries and employment opportunities associated with a bachelor's degree, 930,000 fewer Americans were enrolled in college between 2011 and 2013. "The drop-off in total college enrollment during 2011 to 2013 follows a period of expansion. Between 2006 and 2011, college enrollment grew by 3.2 million. This level of growth exceeded the total enrollment increase of the previous 10 years combined (2.0 million from 1996 to 2006)."²⁷ The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center reported that in the fall 2014, overall postsecondary enrollments decreased 1.3 percent from the previous fall from 19.9 million to 19.6 million.²⁸ Although an estimated 3 million more people are projected to enroll in American colleges and universities between 2012 and 2022, this still represents a significant slowdown in enrollment growth compared with the previous decade.²⁹

Degree completion rates are also slow and further contribute to the lack of college-educated workers. For students entering community college, the graduation statistics are bleak with just over one-third (39%) of individuals graduating within 6 years.³⁰ For those pursuing a bachelor's degree, it is a slight improvement with 59 percent of students graduating within 6 years.³¹ As a result of these low graduation rates, the United States ranks 12th in developed countries among citizens between the ages of 25 and 34 with a college degree.³² In referring to this loss of educational status Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board, said, "When I was in school, we were No. 1 in the world in college graduations. When I was governor, we were third, and I was surprised by that drop. Now we're 12th at a time when a good education is critically important to getting a decent job."³³ Coupled with this precipitous drop in college attainment ranking is also the harsh realization that the United States is one of the few developed countries where a less educated generation is replacing an older, more educated generation.³⁴

However, exactly why are undergraduates taking so long to graduate from either a 2-year or 4-year higher education institution? To shed some light on this issue, Public Agenda published a report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation entitled *With Their Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College*. The report concluded: "While many Americans still envision the typical undergraduate as 18 to 22 year-olds... living in college dorms, going to

school full-time, attending ball games and fraternity parties, maybe working a few hours a week or in the summer to bring in a little spare cash... the facts show quite a different picture.”³⁵ According to the report:

- 45 percent of students attending 4-year schools work more than 20 hours a week.
- 60 percent of students attending community colleges work over 20 hours a week.
- 25 percent of students attend a residential college many people often envision.
- 23 percent of college students have dependent children.³⁶

Other reasons students may need additional time include choosing to double major, pursuing cooperative education experiences, or because they need to take developmental courses at the onset of their first semester. In short, the vision of a typical undergraduate is changing. So too is their ability to complete a 2-year or 4-year college degree. Research by the National Student Clearinghouse tracked 2.4 million first-time college students who enrolled in fall 2007 and concluded that 72.9 percent of students who started at 4-year, private, nonprofit schools, and 39.9 percent of those who started at 2-year public institutions graduated in 6 years or less.³⁷ One of the great ironies in higher education is that “students and families spend a tremendous amount of time and effort in selecting a college, but too many students fail to engage in the process that follows: getting ready for their first year and figuring out what they want to get out of the entire college experience.” As a result, some 400,000 students drop out of college each year and one-third of students transfer at least once before earning a degree.³⁸ With a projected two-thirds of all jobs in the United States requiring education beyond high school by 2025 this enrollment slowdown could further exacerbate the growing need for college-educated workers. The rise in college tuition is one contributing factor to this slowdown.

Between 1978 and 2012, the cost of a college education rose 1,120 percent—substantially above the rate of inflation.³⁹ Since 1985, the overall consumer price index has risen 115 percent, whereas the college education inflation rate has risen nearly 500 percent. “If the cost of college tuition was \$10,000 in 1986, it would now cost the same student over

\$21,500 if education had increased as much as the average inflation rate but instead education is \$59,800 or over 2½ times the inflation rate.”⁴⁰ From fiscal years 2003 through 2012, state funding for all public colleges decreased while tuition rose. Specifically, state funding decreased by 12 percent overall, while median tuition rose 55 percent across all public colleges. After the 2008 global economic crisis, higher education institutions received less of their funding from states and increased their reliance on tuition revenue from 17 to 25 percent. Correspondingly, average net tuition, which is the estimated tuition after grant aid is deducted, also increased by 19 percent. These increases have contributed to the decline in college affordability as students and their families are bearing the cost of college as a larger portion of their total family budgets (Table 2.3).⁴¹

Average published tuition and fees at private, nonprofit 4-year colleges and universities increased 14 percent between 2008 to 2009 and 2013 to 2014 beyond the rate of inflation.⁴² Between 2008 and 2011, the United States was one of only six countries, out of the 34 member Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that cut public spending for education.⁴³ When the increasing tuition costs are coupled with the cut in funding, it’s no surprise to learn that recent research illustrates that finances are weighing on practically every aspect of applying to college. As the majority of American families continue to struggle in today’s challenging economy, the amount of money parents can contribute to their child’s education has dropped during the last few years. Parents’ income and savings cover less than a third of the cost of college, compared with 37 percent in 2010.⁴⁴ These three factors—the rising cost of tuition, the decrease in government funding, and the drop in the amount of parent’s contribution—have shifted the conversation about college on to employment opportunities following graduation.

Table 2.3 *Payment Method for College*

| How a Typical Family Pays for College⁴⁵ | Percentage |
|---|-------------------|
| Grants and scholarships | 30 |
| Parent income and savings | 27 |
| Student borrowing | 18 |
| Student income and savings | 11 |
| Parent borrowing | 9 |
| Relatives and friends | 5 |

In one survey, two-thirds of first-year students reported that current economic conditions significantly affected their choice of college. Students are increasingly placing a premium on the job-related benefits of going to college. “The portion of incoming freshmen that cited ‘to be able to get a better job’ as a very important reason for attending college reached an all-time high of 87.9 percent in 2012, an increase from 85.9 percent in 2011 and considerably higher than the low of 67.8 percent in 1976.”⁴⁶ Job prospects have also become part of the conversation much earlier as families worry about how college graduates will be able to pay off their debt. This focus on employment prospects has shifted the focus of higher education from “education to education’s sake” to “what type of job and career will I have?” To answer that question, many students believe the answer lies within the declaration of their academic major.

CHAPTER 3

Selecting a Major

According to a recent *Wall Street Journal* analysis of data from a dozen randomly chosen colleges nationwide, “the class of 2018 was much more likely to declare an academic major during freshman year than their counterparts before the 2008 recession.”⁴⁷ This increase comes as no surprise since 79 percent of high school seniors who completed the American College Test (ACT) in 2013 indicated their intended major to declare while only 15 percent indicated that they were undecided.⁴⁸ Sadly, only a third of that 79 percent indicated they choose a major in line with their interests.⁴⁹ Interestingly, “the percentage of students who were undecided about their planned major choice increased with ACT composite score.”⁵⁰ As one college student observed: “there is an inherent risk in deciding too early or for the wrong reasons. It makes you more susceptible to getting trapped in a certain field, and you may not necessarily enjoy what you end up doing.”⁵¹

Even though more first-year students are declaring their major, the majority of them will most likely change their major at least once during their college experience. While the numbers vary, it is safe to conclude that between 50 and 80 percent of students change their major at least once during their undergraduate experience.⁵² Changing majors is often a healthy by-product of research. Students have a responsibility to research their options and institutions have an equal level of responsibility to communicate the value of each academic program offered. According to an Accenture report, 82 percent of undergraduates reviewed the job market potential of various employment positions prior to declaring a major.⁵³ As discussed throughout this publication, the job market potential related to any one specific major provides a limited view of career opportunities. ACT president of education and career solutions Jon Erickson observed that students “should be made aware that choosing a college major that reflects their interests will give them a better chance of succeeding and could also contribute to their satisfaction and happiness in school and on the job.”⁵⁴

One common path that many undergraduates follow is community college. The low cost of tuition, proximity to home, and transferability of credits to a 4-year institution are three main reasons why individuals choose to attend a community college. According to research conducted by the College Board, four out of five community college students want to transfer to a 4-year institution, so they can obtain a bachelor's degree.⁵⁵ Even families in the upper echelon of income are recognizing the value of this path. One study from Sallie Mae reported "22 percent of college students with a family income of over \$100,000 opted for a community college prior to enrolling in a four year institution."⁵⁶ During the 2012 to 2013 academic year, over 1 million associate's degrees were awarded with about two-thirds (67%) concentrated in three fields of study: liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (34%); health professions and related programs (21%); and business, management, marketing, and support services (11%). Table 3.1 lists the top five fields of study for individuals that graduated with an associate's degree during the 2012 to 2013 academic year.

Once enrolled in a 4-year institution concerns over employment,⁵⁷ college loans⁵⁸ and long-term career potential⁵⁹ create a high-stakes game for students to pick the "right major."⁶⁰ In a growing number of cases, the pressure is so great that students have more than one major, a major and a minor, or two majors and a minor. For those students either absolutely sure or unsure, declaring a second major or minor is also increasing. "Graduating with a double (or triple) major, minor or concentration as a way to hedge bets in an uncertain job market has become increasingly popular; the number of bachelor's degrees awarded with double majors rose 70 percent between 2001 and 2011."⁶¹ These concerns and others have contributed to significant growth in what some analysts have declared practical majors such as business, health professions, and law enforcement while social sciences and history lost ground (Table 3.2).⁶² According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about one-fifth of the 1.79 million bachelor's degrees conferred in 2011 to 2012 were in business.⁶³ The great irony is that this concentration to business has occurred as higher education institutions keep adding programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, colleges and universities reported nearly 1,500 academic programs 2010, 355 of which were added during

Table 3.1 Associate's Degree by Top Majors

| Field of Study for Associate's Degrees 2012~2013 ³⁷ | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Liberal arts and science, general studies, and humanities | 34 |
| Health professions and related programs | 21 |
| Business, management, marketing, and support services | 11 |
| Homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting | 5 |
| Computer and information sciences | 4 |
| Engineering technologies and related fields | 3 |

Table 3.2 Bachelor's Degree by Top Majors

| Field of Study for Bachelor's Degree 2012~2013 ⁴¹ | Number |
|--|---------|
| Business | 360,800 |
| Health professions and related programs | 181,000 |
| Social sciences and history | 177,800 |
| Homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting | 60,300 |
| Parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies | 42,700 |

the 2000 to 2010 period.⁶⁴ Appendix A lists the 100 plus majors offered by the University of Michigan. Students can choose among a wide spectrum of programs from actuarial mathematics to women's studies. Even for the most focused of undergraduates, the wide selection of choices for a major can be overwhelming. With so many choices, it is virtually impossible to explore enough academic programs in order to make an educated decision when declaring one's major. It's no surprise then that students change their major at least three times over the course of their college career. By lacking any comprehensive strategy to assist students in this decision making process, most higher education institutions only add to the confusion for students. Higher education administrators should take note of the ACT research that revealed "high school students need more help planning for college and career and the majority want such assistance."⁶⁵

The research identifying factors that influence a student's decision to declare a specific major spans a wide spectrum of elements from parents and other family members, high school counselors or teachers, college professors, and friends. It's common to hear phrases such as "My dad wanted me to become an English teacher because he loves literature and reading books."⁶⁶ In one survey, over a quarter of college students indicated that they alone choose their major.⁶⁷ A students' own interest and

attitudes toward potential fields of study often direct them to declare a specific academic major.⁶⁸ The research also demonstrates that undergraduates are significantly more likely to major in a discipline if they have an inspiring and caring faculty member in their introduction to the field. This introduction to the field often occurs during their first or second years in college. It is important to note that students are equally likely to write off a field based on a single negative experience with a professor.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, “research has consistently shown that many colleges and universities do little to push their students to make informed choices about what to study.”⁷⁰ Those institutions and departments that can effectively communicate the value of their academic programs will maintain relevance. Those colleges and universities that choose to base their future on hubris, incompetence, or indifference do so at their own risk.

As one report concluded, “far too many colleges require students to select a major without looking at how well the students’ interests fit with their intended program of study.”⁷¹ On those campuses where institutional resources are being used to assist undecided students in choosing a major, it is important to remember that “all students are likely underprepared when choosing a major”⁷² with “75 percent of college freshmen experiencing some level of uncertainty about their educational and vocational goals.”⁷³ This uncertainty makes sense as the dynamics and disruptive forces creating change in today’s global marketplace make it exceedingly difficult to predict future career paths. While the spectrum of student knowledge and confidence in which to declare a major spans a wide spectrum, it is refreshing to note that some percentage of undergraduates echo what one student said “There are a lot of different things I could do with a history major...but I think it’s more important to major in something you’re passionate about than something you see leading to a career path.”⁷⁴ Since that appears to be a minority, it is imperative to recognize that more students are declaring their academic major earlier in their undergraduate experience. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the logic and research behind the college major decision. Upon examination the evidence overwhelming demonstrates the existence of several college major fallacies.

CHAPTER 4

The Fallacies

By definition, a fallacy is an argument in which the premises fail to provide adequate logical support for the conclusion. Most arguments start with a premise (X) that is either a fact or an assumption forming the foundation of the argument. Some logical principle (Y) is then applied to arrive at a conclusion (Z). Originating from the Latin meaning “deception, deceit, or trick,” fallacies are useful analytical tools when assessing the validity of an argument or statement. When dissecting an argument or statement, individuals need to recognize the existence of uncertainties in measurement, errors in sampling, and biases in research. These uncertainties, errors, and biases are especially prevalent when discussing the relationship between academic majors and career potential. For example, in his remarks to a General Electric plant in 2014, President Barack Obama declared “folks can make a lot more potentially with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art history degree.”⁷⁵

This example of flawed logic is just one of many examples of how politicians from both major political parties in the United States have labeled certain majors like art history useless and an intellectual luxury, limiting in employment opportunities, and unworthy of public funding.⁷⁶ Choose a useful major and you will always have a job, a successful career, and become rich compared with those individuals who choose a useless major and in turn end up unemployed, without a career, and become poor. This dichotomy between useful and useless majors lacks substantiation and is too often used to simply a nuanced connection between major and career. As professor Peter Cappelli of The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania observed, “it seems that what a person studies in college should relate to his or her planned career path, but it turns out that it’s very hard to predict how those two things will interact with each other.”⁷⁷ This unpredictability has resulted in five common college major fallacies:

- *Confusing association with causation fallacy:* (also known as cum hoc, ergo propter hoc, “with this, therefore because of this.”) Correlation does not imply causation is a phrase used

in science and statistics to emphasize that a correlation between two variables does not necessarily imply that one causes the other. What does this mean? A brief explanation is that correlation is a measure of how closely related two things are; and just because two things correlate does not necessarily mean that one causes the other. When a visual representation of data illustrates two or more lines sloping or bars rising, “the data practically begs us to assign a reason. We want to believe one exists. Statistically we can’t make that leap, however. Charts that show a close correlation are often relying on a visual parlor trick to imply a relationship.”⁷⁸ Correlations between two things can be caused by three or more factors and often are. “Our preconceptions and suspicions about the way things work tempt us to make the leap from correlation to causation without any hard evidence.”⁷⁹ This happens quite frequently within higher education and the discussion between the selection of a college major and the potential for lifetime earnings. Examples include:

- o *Ex: You need to major in business because employers value students with that major over all other disciplines.*
- o *Ex: Your salary is directly related to your level of happiness. The more money you make, the happier you are.*
- o *Ex: The most important thing you can do for your career is pick the perfect major. Nothing else matters.*
- o *Ex: Since engineering majors have the highest salaries upon graduation, you need to select that as your major if you want to have a great career.*
- *Post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy:* (“after this, therefore because of this”) “Since event Y followed event X, event Y must have been *caused* by event X.” The fallacy lies in coming to a conclusion based solely on the order of events, rather than taking into account other factors that might rule out the connection. This is the second fallacy many individuals fall into when discussing the selection of an academic major.

Examples include:

- *Ex: Kyle has had a successful 20-year career in marketing and it's all because he majored in business.*
- *Ex: Shelly had an offer of full-time employment prior to graduation and it's because she majored in economics.*
- **Single-cause fallacy:** It occurs when it is assumed that there is a single, simple cause of an outcome when in reality it may have been caused by a number of only jointly sufficient causes. This fallacy often demonstrates a lack of awareness about the specific topic examined and can disclose one's bias to demonstrate contempt prior to investigation. Judgments are made quickly instead of analyzing the multiple causes of a situation. Examples include:
 - *Ex: Employers really want me to have two majors and two minors.*
 - *Ex: Employers only care about your grade point average; the higher it is, the better your chances of being hired.*
 - *Ex: People with high grade point averages in college earn more over the course of a lifetime compared with those with a low grade point average.*
- **Anecdotal fallacy:** using a personal experience or an isolated example instead of sound reasoning or compelling evidence. This is a common fallacy committed by parents, relatives, or friends of undergraduates. There is a tendency to persuade students, intentionally or unintentionally, into a major based on one's experience with that specific academic program. Examples include:
 - *Ex: My sorority sisters and I majored in business, economics, or finance and we all have extraordinary careers, so major in one of those subjects and you will be just as successful as we are.*
 - *Ex: I worked at one organization doing the same job for 30 years, so you should do that if you want to be successful.*
- **Sweeping generalization fallacy:** assumes that what is true of the whole will also be true of the part, or that what is true in most instances will be true in all instances. Sweeping generalizations also tend to correspond with other fallacies such as the single cause or anecdotal. Examples include:

- o *Ex: Recent college graduates with a history degree are all unemployed.*
- o *Ex: No one would ever hire a philosophy major.*
- o *Ex: People who choose interdisciplinary studies as a major are wasting their time.*

These fallacies surrounding the college major exist because of the mental models or thinking algorithms that are formed from ingrained assumptions and theories about the way the world works. These fallacies also exist in part because some incoming students may not yet be developmentally ready to make important life decisions. Without a structured period of self-reflection, learning, and growth, they end of declaring a major based on the opinions of those with whom they have a personal relationship, such as family members and often make an uneducated, unrelated, and ineffective decision not based on their true personal goals, interests, and values.⁸⁰ “Though mental models lie below people’s cognitive awareness, they’re so powerful a determinant of choices and behaviors that many neuroscientists think of them almost as automated algorithms that dictate how people respond to changes and events.”⁸¹ The mental models students rely on when deciding to declare an academic major often undermine their ability to view college as “an expansive adventure, yanking them toward unfamiliar horizons, and untested identities.”⁸² This “yanking toward unfamiliar horizons” is a necessity in order to prevent a single myopic view of the world, which is another characteristic of a flawed mental model. “If you only have one framework for thinking about the world, then you’ll try to fit every problem you face into that framework. When your set of mental models is limited, so is your potential for finding a solution.”⁸³

This book examines five assumptions prevalent in the mental models of undergraduates, parents, educators, higher education leaders, administrators, and policymakers that cause people to fall into one or more of the following traps when selecting a college major:

- Your major determines your long-term income potential.
- You need to land your dream job and figure out what to do “with the rest of my life.”

- You can only apply to jobs in your major.
- Employers only care about my major and grade point average.
- Specialization in one major is the key to long-term career success.

The substantial evidence overwhelming demonstrates that no one college major holds a “monopoly on the ingredients for professional achievement or a life well lived.”⁸⁴ As one observer succinctly noted, “it doesn’t matter what you focus on, as long as you focus on it in a rigorous way.”⁸⁵ In a recent survey, 93 percent of employers agreed with the statement: “a candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major.”⁸⁶ Contrary to what many may believe, you do not have to major in English to have a career as a writer; you do not have to study business to work as a consultant; and you do not have to study international relations or political science to get a job in government. Likewise, you are not limited to working as an archivist, librarian, or teacher as a history major. “The real world doesn’t care about your degree as much as your work ethic and attitude.”⁸⁷

This type of thinking surrounding the college major needs to be advocated, explained, and supported from higher education administrators if students are to recognize the value of focusing on an academic program they enjoy instead of what they think they should declare as a major. As one observed noted, “For years we have been focused on access, and now we need to turn our attention equally to student success. It takes courage to say we can do better.”⁸⁸ For higher education institutions to improve, they will need to think and act very differently. “The current way colleges function, with their roots grounded in outdated Weberian management practices, outmoded instructional delivery systems, and archaic approaches to student and institutional support services, simply will not work for institutions that are charged with serving as major democratizing forces and economic engines for a changing population, a changing world and a rapidly evolving future.”⁸⁹ Thinking differently and moving away from the usual way of doing things, however, is a formidable challenge as “people often refuse to relinquish their deep-seated beliefs even when presented with overwhelming evidence to contradict those beliefs.”⁹⁰

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A national survey of freshmen by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles shows that students have grown consistently more concerned with their return on investment. In 2014, 45% of freshmen surveyed said an essential or very important objective of college was to develop a meaningful life philosophy; in 1971—the first year the survey was taken—it was 73%. Conversely, 82% of today’s freshmen said college was essential to being very well off financially, up from 73% in 2006—and 37% in 1971. Douglas Belkin, “Today’s Anxious Freshmen Declare Majors Far Faster Than Their Elders,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 2015.

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PART II

The Mental Traps

CHAPTER 5

Trap One: Your Major Determines Your Long-Term Earning Potential

Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Persistence and determination are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

—Calvin Coolidge

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) periodically publish reports that proclaim students who major in architecture, engineering, or computer science have higher starting salaries and lifetime earnings compared with all other majors.¹ Statements such as “petroleum engineering majors made an average of \$135,754 a year by their mid- to late 20s—more than any other major” and “a college major isn't destiny but it will have critical economic consequences for the rest of your life”² both contribute to the “your major determines long-term earning potential” mental trap. According to this line of thinking, every college student should major in engineering, accounting, or architecture. These majors tower above all others and will provide a lifetime of riches, exemplary working conditions, and unlimited happiness. This mental trap also suggests that students who major in subjects such as history, English, sociology, or other “worthless” majors are doomed to a below average earnings, miserable working conditions, and a lifetime of misery. This conclusion, and its evidence to support it, remains far from logical for a variety of reasons. A closer examination of the research paints a far different picture that is more inclusive of the many factors that determine long-term earning potential.

First, while it may be constructive to know the salaries of recent graduates per major, it is equally destructive in the simple fact that not everyone

wants to study engineering, accounting, or architecture. There are, after all, over 1,500 different majors being offered at higher education institutions across the country. Should we dismantle all but the most “practical” of majors? For the record, no, we should do no such thing. Highlighting high salaries at the cost of others is demeaning, gratuitous, and unnecessary. What are the education, sociology, or art history majors to think when they read about the high salaries of mechanical engineers? More importantly, what is the message we are sending education, sociology, or art history majors, and others who have chosen to study other disciplines? Are we to tell students that they have little value to offer this world because of their low salary compared with the engineer? Of course not, as that would be absurd. A yearly report detailing how certain majors earn more than others is akin to comparing temperatures in Minneapolis and Miami during each February. It is typically below freezing in Minneapolis and above 60 in Miami. Should everyone move from Minneapolis to Miami? Suggesting such a move is offensive on many levels. Telling everyone to major in engineering to earn a high salary upon graduating college is equally offensive. It also provides a tremendous disservice to students because the evidence surrounding long-term career earnings paint a different picture. When comparing incomes at mid-career, the research suggests those who lagged behind certain majors upon graduation actually catch up or surpass those who had a high salary earlier in their career.

When considering the nuances involved with long-term earning potential evidence suggests that “perceptions of the variations in economic success among graduates in different majors are exaggerated. Given a student’s ability, achievement, and effort, his or her earnings do not vary all that greatly with the choice of undergraduate major.”³ “Research demonstrates that while science, math, and engineering majors earn more on average than do those with other degrees upon graduation,⁴ over time liberal arts graduates close the earnings gap with those who majored in professional or pre-professional fields.”⁵ While disparities do indeed exist in the beginning of one’s career when certain majors are compared with others, “such financial disparities grow less pronounced over time as the 30 percent gap that separates academic and career-oriented majors at the start of their careers nearly vanish nine years later.”⁶ A study by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) found that upon graduating with a bachelor’s

degree (age 21 to 25), humanities and social science majors earn \$26,271 a year, while science majors make about \$25,986, and professional and preprofessional majors make \$31,183.⁷ Another study found that history majors who pursued careers in business ended up earning, on average, just as much as business majors by mid-career.⁸

Those who push students into a “practical” major ignore the simple fact that a career spans decades. Starting salaries are indeed important, but they are merely one factor in a very dynamic equation of elements that construct a career built on purpose, leadership, and service. For students majoring in one of the perceived “worthless” subjects such as history, English, or psychology, it is important to remember the observation of Al Lee, director of qualitative analysis at PayScale “With a liberal art’s degree, it’s what you make of it. If you’re motivated by income, then there are certainly careers in psychology that pay as well as careers out of engineering.”⁹ Since no one degree is necessarily better than another when moving up the corporate ladder or earning potential,¹⁰ it is important to remember that “education is an important determinant of income but it is less important than most people think.”¹¹ As one observer noted, “the real world doesn’t care about your degree as much as your work ethic and attitude.”¹² “Focusing solely on one’s major as the lone causation for career success is the first mental trap and ignores a myriad of other factors such as geography, grit, an ability to market your value, demonstrated career preparedness, and the fact that salary is just one of the many elements of employee satisfaction.”

Geography

When it comes to launching and navigating, your career geography plays an important role. When proponents of specific majors ignore geography, they are missing an important factor that affects the ability of workers to find jobs that match their skill set. Looking for work in large urban areas can give workers a better chance to find a job that fits their skills.¹³ Additionally, in terms of salary and long-term career earnings, where you live often matters more than what you have on your résumé.¹⁴ Upon analyzing two decades of data from more than 200 cities, Rebecca Diamond, an assistant professor of economics at Stanford

Graduate School of Business, found that college graduates are increasingly clustering in more expensive cities that offer more amenities such as restaurants and cultural attractions, better parks, less crime, and less pollution. To help recent college graduates identify key geographical locations, top 10 lists of cities to launch a career are now commonplace.¹⁵ Researchers at Harvard University and the University of California-Berkeley concluded that place matters when it comes to social mobility. The researchers identified two types of mobility: absolute upward mobility that measures how individuals stack up to their parents while relative mobility measures their chances of moving up or down the income ladder relative to their peers.¹⁶ Exploring employment opportunities in large urban areas provides individuals with a “greater chance of finding a job that fits their skills since the larger the size of the city, the more likely grads will find a job that matches their skills.”¹⁷ As one observer noted, “students who do best are those who will relocate to cities demanding educated workers.”¹⁸

Recent college graduates need to understand that where they work influences their income potential. One might have a supposedly lucrative engineering degree but that might be of little value in an economically depressed geographical location. They also need to understand larger macroeconomic trends. For example, many of the “biggest U.S. metropolitan areas have yet to recoup all the lost jobs from the Great Recession and almost a third have failed to return to previous levels of output.”¹⁹ Moreover, recent research on 100 urban areas revealed an “economic patchwork in which the legacy of boom and bust hangs heavily over cities in Florida and inland California, while at the other end of the spectrum, technology and bioscience-focused cities such as Austin, Texas, San Francisco, and Raleigh, North Carolina have comfortably surpassed their previous peaks.”²⁰

Another study suggested that recent college graduates consider five variables before choosing a geographical location: size of millennial population between 20 and 34 years of age; job openings per 1,000 residents; lifestyle and entertainment opportunities; unemployment rate and the median cost of a two-bedroom apartment. Using this formula, the data suggested that Washington, DC, ranked first, with Minneapolis in second, Denver, third, and San Francisco in fourth place. The top three most populous cities, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, failed to make the cut.²¹

It is also important to realize that the cost of living differs between locations. For example, if your salary is \$35,000 in Mobile, Alabama, and then you move to Los Angeles, California, your new salary will probably be \$39,504. However, since the cost of living is greater in Los Angeles you would have to earn a salary of \$51,720 to maintain your current standard of living.²² In short, place matters. Where you launch your career factors into your income potential as does the geographical location where you decide to spend long period of your career. Just as geography plays a critical factor in your long-term income potential, so does your ability to overcome obstacles by demonstrating grit.

Grit

While it is important to understand the geographical imprint on salary, it is equally significant to realize that role that grit plays in income potential and career success. Even the most focused senior in college who knows exactly what they want to do after graduation is going to encounter obstacles. You would be hard pressed to find any individual who has achieved even the slightest degree of success who did not encounter difficulty along their journey. Therefore, students across every academic major need to develop a strong sense of grit to overcome obstacles. Author Kevin Daum suggests that there are external obstacles outside of your control such as the economy, internal obstacles that are generally one-time issues but you have direct control over them, such as time management, and habitual obstacles that reflect how people get in their own way and can only be removed with behavioral change. Since these obstacles happen to fall into everyone's path to success, any discussion of long-term income potential that ignores grit would be woefully incomplete and misleading.²³

There has been substantial research with regard to grit during the last two decades. Numerous researchers have concluded that getting to the corner office, long-term earnings potential, and climbing up the corporate ladder all have more to do with grit than graduating with a specific degree. Living a life of leadership, purpose, and service also requires grit. Grit is by far the most important characteristic one needs to demonstrate time and again in order to translate the vision they have for their life into reality. MacArthur Fellow Angela Duckworth, a psychology professor at

the University of Pennsylvania, defines grit as “the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals and equips individuals to pursue, especially challenging aims over years and even decades.”²⁴ Duckworth noted that people who “accomplished great things often combined a passion for a single mission with an unswerving dedication to achieve that mission, whatever the obstacles and however long it might take.”²⁵ Duckworth’s observation after decades of work is synonymous with the research conducted by others.

In *Growth Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Stanford University psychology professor Carol Dweck defined two types of mindsets: fixed and growth. “When wrestling with a problem, a fixed mindset says we’re failing and not cut-out for the job. A growth mindset believes we’re getting closer to the solution and gaining mastery.”²⁶ Dweck’s research shows that the brain develops new “neural pathways if it perseveres through a problem rather than throwing in the towel.”²⁷ Malcolm Gladwell’s *Outliers: The Story of Success* studied world-class performers such as The Beatles, who demonstrated grit by spending 10,000 hours working at their musical performance in order to arrive at the top of the charts. Geoff Colvin’s *Talent is Over-rated: What Really Separates World-Class Performers from Everybody Else* concluded that “everyone who has achieved exceptional performance has encountered terrible difficulties along the way. There are no exceptions.”

Dweck, Gladwell, and Colvin all provide substantial evidence that demonstrating grit is a major factor, if not the most important one, in determining one’s ability to succeed in life and work. As Robert Kaplan noted in the *Harvard Business Review*, “Fulfillment doesn’t come from clearing hurdles others set for you; it comes from clearing those you set for yourself.”²⁸ One such hurdle that many people set for themselves is thinking that since they lack grit, there is nothing they can do. That is simply untrue. If you feel as though you are lacking in the ability to persevere, rebound from failure, or maintain energy over a long period of time, you can indeed learn these skills, traits, and habits. “Effort, planning, persistence, and good strategies are what it really takes to succeed. Embracing this knowledge will not only help you see yourself and your goals more accurately, but also do wonders for your grit.”²⁹ Rest assured that you will need grit if you want to overcome a serious obstacle that many college students and recent graduates

struggle with: learning how to market your value. Students from every academic major need to learn how to communicate their value to prospective employers or graduate school committees.

Marketing Your Value

If you have selected a viable geographical location and developed a strong sense of grit, both will provide little use if you are unable to market your value to a complete stranger. “The real challenge for recent college graduates is deciding how to apply their fundamental skills to the line of work you choose for yourself. But take note: employers aren’t going to figure it out for you. You have to figure it out for yourself.”³⁰ The key is that you have to differentiate yourself from other college graduates, and more education or fancier degrees don’t do it. “Being average just won’t earn you what it used to. It can’t when so many more employers have so much more access to so much more above average cheap foreign labor, cheap robotics, cheap software, cheap automation, and cheap genius. Therefore, everyone needs to find their unique value contribution that makes them stand out in their field of employment.”³¹ “Define yourself and your purpose. Broadcast your strengths. Give people a reason to pay attention to you. It’s your choice to do something worth talking about or not. The only people who stand out are those who want to.”³²

As a professional competing in today’s challenging economy, you need to position yourself in the minds of prospective employers in a clear, concise, and compelling fashion. Remember, no one will advocate for you. If you want to achieve and sustain professional growth, you must work hard at making sure that you position your value as effectively as possible. Professionals at every level have an expectation that their degree or experience will have immediate and obvious value in the job market. Please understand that this is far from reality. Your degree, experience, and current position are important but what will have a greater impact on your ability to navigate your career is your ability to market your value. While it remains challenging to find employment, the real challenge is deciding how to position your value in the marketplace, so that potential employers understand what it is you have to offer. This is true for the online world as well as the off-line environment in which you live and work.

The off-line environment consists of a variety of settings such as networking events, informal gatherings of friends, and at work itself. Perhaps the most important off-line event, however, is the job interview itself. According to human resource professionals and hiring managers, having a candidate present clearly in an interview is taking up more time these days. Too many candidates are talking in circles, not listening or following directions and rambling when they are asked how they can add value to the hiring company. Can you learn to communicate your value and position yourself in the mind of the prospective employer with purpose and intention? If not your ability to launch a career will be at a severe disadvantage regardless of what school you attended, what your grade point average (GPA) was or what you majored in. No one will care about any of that if you cannot position your value.

Let's look at it another way. You may be able to write a 20-page research paper, but can you discuss your value in bullet points and synthesize information to convey quickly with impact?³³ Amazingly, employers are now reporting that they've seen recent college grads "text or take calls in interviews, dress inappropriately, use slang or overly casual language, and exhibit other oddball behavior."³⁴ You need to realize that the interview is still a traditional, and very professional, environment. While texting, dressing inappropriately or using casual language may be completely appropriate outside the interview; you need to realize that all of those actions, as well as your words, position yourself in the mind of that complete stranger sitting across from you wondering if you have achieved the level of career preparedness necessary for his or her organization.

Demonstrated Career Preparedness

Long-term income potential also stems from the ability to successfully demonstrate your career preparedness. Unfortunately, many college graduates mistake their diploma for career preparedness. Many college graduates fail to understand how life on campus is fundamentally different from the everyday routines of a workplace. Acquiring a college degree might provide you with certain academic credentials, professional skills, and personal traits, but "a degree document is no longer a proxy for the competency employers need. Too many of the skills you need in

the workplace today are not being taught by colleges.”³⁵ In fact, you need to understand that “if you continue to have the same expectations of your workplace and employer that you did of the campus and professors, you will be greatly disappointed and worse, yet, could jeopardize your career.”³⁶ One such way that college graduates jeopardize their career is failing to understand and address the perception gap that hiring managers have of younger generations. In short, you may have selected what you perceived to be a relevant major, but the person interviewing you for a position considers you ill prepared. Student misconceptions about the importance of school prestige, the cachet of professional connections, and the weight employers give to GPAs are the three biggest misconceptions students have about their employability. When it comes to business basics, students’ assessment of their own skill mastery exceeded hiring managers’ assessments of recent graduates they have interviewed, on every measure.

In one study, nearly 70 percent of corporate recruiters said that their company has a hard time managing its younger generation of workers who were perceived as lacking in a work ethic, unwilling to pay their dues, and simply harder to retain.³⁷ Over one-third of business leaders and recruiters give recent grads a “C” or lower for job preparedness.³⁸ A recent survey of U.K. companies found that only 1 in 3 employers (23%) believe that academic institutions are adequately preparing students for vacant roles in their organizations. Employers cited problem-solving, creative thinking, and oral communication as the top three workplace skills they think recent college graduates lack.³⁹ And when it comes to business basics, students overestimated their skill mastery on every measure. Fewer than 2 in 5 hiring managers (39%) say the recent college graduates they have interviewed in the past 2 years were completely or very prepared for a job in their field of study, in general. This is in sharp contrast to the 50 percent of college students who rate themselves in the same terms.

Another study illustrates the perception gap that college students and recent graduates need to address very clearly:

- 14 percent of HR professionals perceived Millennials to be less people-savvy *but*

- o 65 percent of Millennials surveyed think they excel in this skill
- 86 percent of HR professionals said Millennials were more tech-savvy than other workers *but*
 - o 35 percent of Millennials rated themselves this way
- 1 percent of HR professionals believed that Millennials demonstrated loyalty *but*
 - o 82 percent of Millennials believed that that are loyal
- 11 percent of HR professionals defined Millennials as hard-working *but*
 - o 86 percent of Millennials reported themselves as hard-working⁴⁰

In order for college graduates to address this perception gap, reach their potential, and establish new professional development goals, they need to “filter out peer pressure and popular opinion; assess their own passions, skills, and convictions; and then be courageous enough to act on them.”⁴¹ Learning how to conduct themselves in professional networking opportunities both off-line and online should be a priority for every undergraduate. Networking is a priority for all professionals regardless of age, location, industry, position, or educational background. Through serendipity and design, networking should be done on a regular basis in order to extend our web of contacts across geographies, industries, and positions. Networking can help you land a job, earn a promotion, have the lead for an important project, and maintain the position of a valuable asset to your organization and perhaps even industry.

To stress the critical importance of networking in order to navigate your career, consider the following three statistics:

- 80 percent of available jobs are never advertised, so it is important to view networking as a routine function, so that you can identify those unadvertised opportunities that could be just what you were looking for.⁴²
- The average number of people who apply for any given job is approximately 120. Approximate 20 percent of those applicants get an interview.⁴³

- To cut through the clutter of hundreds or even thousands of submissions, “many large and midsize companies have turned to applicant-tracking systems to search résumés for the right skills and experience.”⁴⁴ Working your network can help get your résumé to a person instead of going through the software where there is a nominal chance of being found.

You might have an excellent GPA but can you be found on LinkedIn? You might have chosen the “right major” but is your LinkedIn profile updated on a regular basis? LinkedIn is one of the many social networking services offered today. Focused on professional networking, LinkedIn reports over 259 million users in more than 200 countries. “An astounding 94 percent of recruiters used or planned to use social media in their recruitment efforts last year. That’s an increase of 16 percent since 2008. And 78 percent of recruiters made a hire through social media in 2013.”⁴⁵ If you are not on LinkedIn or other critical social media platforms, recruiters will be unable to find you.

Salary Not Only Factor for Job Satisfaction

If you have selected a good geographical location for work, maintain a high level of grit, market your value in a compelling manner and demonstrate significant career preparedness will you be satisfied at work? If you have done all of those things and selected one of the so-called “valuable” majors, will you be satisfied with your work? The short answer is probably not. Employee satisfaction around the globe is terribly low. According to statistics gathered by Gallup, “30 percent of employees in the United States, and 13 percent of employees worldwide, are engaged in their jobs.”⁴⁶ Engaged is defined as “employees who work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward.”⁴⁷ As one researcher noted, “even if you are lucky enough to have a job, you are probably not very excited to get to the office in the morning.”⁴⁸ Once again, proponents of declaring a “practical” major seldom mention the value of engagement in the workplace.

A variety of issues contribute to this lack of employee engagement. The advent of technology, the rise of global hyperconnectivity and an ever increasing reliance on computer software and robots replacing human workers continues to push productivity skyward creating new levels of stress in the workplace. “Demand for our time is increasingly exceeding our capacity—draining us of the energy we need to bring our skill and talent fully to life.”⁴⁹ According to one report, 42 percent of American workers left a position because the level of stress was too high.⁵⁰ “People feel stressed out because there’s that continuing pressure to do more with less. Workers feel pressure to get more accomplished.”⁵¹

While demands on a worker’s time contribute to employee disengagement and dissatisfaction so too does stagnant wages. “Though productivity (defined as the output of goods and services per hours worked) grew by about 74 percent between 1973 and 2013, compensation for workers grew at a much slower rate of only 9 percent during the same time period.”⁵² While the general assumption is that college graduates are immune to downward wage trends, recent data suggest otherwise. Between the bursting of the tech bubble in the late 1990s and then by the 2008 global recession 70 percent of the nation’s college grads have had their after-inflation hourly wages decline since 2000.⁵³ Despite these dire numbers for most American workers, the link between high salary and job satisfaction is tenuous at best.

In his 1967 publication *The Motivation to Work*, Frederick Herzberg identified two different categories of factors affecting the motivation to work: hygiene and motivation. Hygiene factors include extrinsic factors such as technical supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, company policies and administrative practices, benefits, and job security. In comparison, motivation factors include intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition and status, responsibility, challenging work, and advancement in the organization. Herzberg’s theory postulates that only motivation factors have the potential of increasing job satisfaction. “The results indicate that the association between salary and job satisfaction is very weak. When employees are focused on external rewards, the effects of intrinsic motives on engagement are significantly diminished. This means that employees who are intrinsically motivated are three times more engaged than employees who are extrinsi-

cally motivated (such as by money). Quite simply, you're more likely to like your job if you focus on the work itself, and less likely to enjoy it if you're focused on money."⁵⁴

Daniel Pink's *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* makes the same observation. While many people believe that the best way to motivate others is with external rewards like money, the reality is that high performance and satisfaction is rooted in the three elements of true motivation: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. When you are discussing potential employment opportunities with your child, do you focus solely on salary and the ability to repay college loans or do you also consider the myriad of other factors that go into job satisfaction? If you are solely focused on salary, what do you think that does to your child's ability to engage in self-determination? Finally, when discussing work, recall the words of 19th-century social reformer John Ruskin "In order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: they must be fit for it, they must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it."⁵⁵

CHAPTER 6

Trap Two: You Need to Land Your Dream Job and Figure out What You Want to Do with the Rest of Your Life

Our life is a constant journey, from birth to death. The landscape changes, the people change, our needs change, but the train keeps moving. Life is the train, not the station.

—Paulo Coelho

Since the evidence suggests that recent college graduates “tend to bounce around for while they eventually find their professional footing and earn the paychecks to prove it,”⁵⁶ it is imperative to understand that identifying your dream job may simply be unrealistic upon graduation. It is also unnecessary. Coupled with this dream job insanity is the pressure on college students to declare the “right” major in order to figure out what they want to do with the rest of their life.⁵⁷ It’s common to hear parents ask their child: “How will that major help you land your dream job and figure out what to do with the rest of your life?” Even well-intentioned professionals fall into this “rest of your life trap.” One former Ivy League admissions counselor-turned consultant noted “the vast majority of high school students applying to college have no idea what they really want to do when they grow up. Even the ones who claim that they do ... students shouldn’t panic. Instead, they should use their first year or two of college to figure out what they want to do with the rest of their lives.”⁵⁸

Spending a year or two to figure out what you want to do with the rest of your life is grossly misleading and simply unnecessary. Like the pursuit of “that one great love or soul mate, the pursuit of that dream job immediately after graduation, or at any point in one’s career for that matter, is misguided, unrealistic, and self-defeating.”⁵⁹ This dream job approach also negates the ability to have more than one dream and clouds your vision of just how dynamic life could be if you allowed yourself an opportunity to view it as such. As Ted Turner’s father said to him, “Son, you be sure to set your goals so high that you can’t possibly accomplish them in one lifetime. That way you’ll always have something ahead of you. I made the mistake of setting my goals too low and now I’m having a hard time coming up with new ones.” If we force young professionals to answer the question “what is your dream job and what do you want to do with the rest of your life?,” we shift their focus to outcome instead of process. The intrusive parenting, pressure to achieve, and obsession over starting salaries has left an alarming imprint on young people already under tremendous stress.

For the past 20 years, there has been an alarming increase in the number of students seeking help for serious mental health problems at campus counseling centers. The 2010 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors (NSCCD)⁶⁰ found that 44 percent of counseling center clients had severe psychological problems, a sharp increase from 16 percent in 2000.⁶¹ “The most common of these disorders were depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, alcohol abuse, eating disorders, and self-injury. A 2010 survey of students by the American College Health Association found that 45.6 percent of students surveyed reported feeling hopeless, and 30.7 percent reported feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function during the past 12 months.”⁶² “More incoming college students reported that they felt frequently overwhelmed during their senior year of high school (30.4% in 2012 vs. 28.5% in 2011). More than twice as many incoming female students (40.5%) reported feeling frequently overwhelmed as first-year male students (18.3%).⁶³ “It’s a public health issue,” said Dr. Anthony L. Rostain, a psychiatrist and co-chairman of a University of Pennsylvania task force on students’ emotional health. “We’re expecting more of students: There’s a sense of having to compete in a global economy, and they think they have to be

on top of their game all the time. It's no wonder they feel overwhelmed."⁶⁴ Asking the "dream job and rest of your life" question is the second trap as it is virtually impossible to answer since it ignores that life is a journey, disregards personal growth, overlooks the evolutionary potential of your 20s, and is blind to the reality that people change jobs.

Life Is a Journey, Not a Destination

Demanding that college students figure out what they want to do with the rest of their lives is a flawed mental trap. Such thinking exposes logic that believes a successful career can be determined by an exact formula and neatly quantifiable. This is simply untrue. Achievement on either the personal or professional levels seldom follows a simple formula. "Life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination."⁶⁵ As John Gardner said in his famous 1990 speech, "Life is...an endless process of self-discovery, an endless and unpredictable dialogue between our own capacities for learning and the life situations in which we find ourselves." Your dream job today may not exist tomorrow, let alone 5, 10, or 20 years from now. You've got to be open to whatever industry change comes your way. By demanding that young people declare a major that will help them figure out what they want to do with the rest of their lives we are inadvertently stagnating their potential. This flawed thinking is training too many undergraduates to be "polite, striving, praise-addicted, grade-grubbing nonentities," or as William Deresiewicz described them "Excellent Sheep."⁶⁶

Recent college graduates also need to understand that part of the journey might involve taking a job with a lower starting salary that they initially thought they would have to take. For example, 15 percent of those who college graduates from May 2013 said they expected to earn less than \$25,000 a year, while 32 percent of the 2011 and 2012 graduates reported earning \$25,000 or less.⁶⁷ Millions of more experienced workers, however, know the plight of low pay as well. Of the 130 million jobs in the United States, 18 million pay less than \$10 an hour and a startling 63 million pay between \$10 and \$20. Add it all up and you've got 81 million jobs (out of 130 million), or 62 percent of the population, earning less than \$20 as an hourly wage.⁶⁸ In order to transition out of a

low-paying position and into a more lucrative career, young professionals across all majors need to develop a strong set of professional characteristics that include getting comfortable with ambiguity.

“Comfort with ambiguity” is among the most sought-after qualities in job candidates today. “In the past you looked for people with a certain playbook,” says Jeff Sanders, Vice Chairman of CEO and board practice at executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles. “Now you need people with relevant experience who are adaptable and quick learners.” According to Dilbert creator Scott Adams, “Chances are that the best job for you won’t become available at precisely the time you declare yourself ready.”⁶⁹ Instead of having one dream and one dream job, be a process-driven person instead of a goal-driven person. Once you land, your best bet, he explained, was to always be looking for a better deal. “You have to dream big because no one else can dream for you. To some degree, you have to believe that you can dream and that you can figure out a way to get there.”⁷⁰ “The inconvenient truth is that you will have to blaze your own trail and plot your own map for your journey.”⁷¹

In many cases, the journey from college graduation to having a success career, however one defines it, resembles more of a marathon than a sprint. Unfortunately many college students are either too exhausted or have not been educated to think of their lives beyond landing that initial job. The tremendous focus and pressure on landing a high-paying salary, besides being unrealistic far too often, is burning out young men and women. It’s impossible to see what life will be like in 20 years these days. It’s hard to look just 3 to 4 years in the future. They don’t know what they are striving for, which makes it really hard to move forward.⁷² Part of that journey involves a commitment to personal growth.

Personal Growth

In today’s challenging global economy “individuals are under unprecedented pressure to develop their own abilities more highly than ever before, quote apart anything their employers may or may not do to develop them.”⁷³ Personal discipline, growth, and a commitment to life-long development are critical elements that factor into one’s ability to achieve and sustain growth over a long career. In *The Start-up of You*:

Adapt to the Future, Invest in Yourself, and Transform Your Career, authors Reid Hoffman (co-founder of LinkedIn) and Ben Casnocha realize that great people, like great organizations, are in a state of perpetual growth. “They’re never finished and never fully developed.” Each day presents an opportunity to learn more, do more, and grow more. This state of “permanent beta is a lifelong commitment to continuous personal growth”⁷⁴ is a necessity for everyone regardless of what major you declared. But remember, the path you will travel when launching your career will take years and consist of “big moments of panic, insecurity and fear. That’s not because you are awful, and your life is awful.”⁷⁵ Those are just normal feelings. “The good news is that these moments of realization, panic, and their aftermath will slowly teach you the perspective to define your own idea of what ‘made it’ is all about. For some, it’s having kids, for others, no kids. Some hunger for the city, whereas others dream of living on a farm, or the suburbs. When you feel yourself stressing about these things, relax. There is always another day. Don’t worry about screwing up, you’ll figure it out as you go along. That’s how every person who’s really ‘made it’ has done it.”⁷⁶ “It often takes many years to really understand one’s strengths and where one finds happiness. In a sense, I do think it’s unrealistic to assume a long sought-after job can bring one such happiness that one’s searching is done. We’re all a work in progress; new inputs—from new friends to new places visited—mean we’re constantly changing in our thoughts of what’s desired, what’s possible, what’s fun, and what we want to do.”

The flawed thinking with one’s dream job and the obsession to figure out what to do with the rest of one’s life also prohibits any sense of personal discovery following graduation. Self-determination requires a lifelong commitment to learning, self-discovery, and new life experiences. The flawed thinking behind the “rest of your life” mental trap would have you believe that following commencement one goes into some frozen state of personal development void of dealing with any external factors of influence in the future. That’s ridiculous of course, just as ludicrous as asking the question “what do you want to do with the rest of your life?” It’s an impossible question to answer with any degree of certainty. Asking such questions adds to the frustration and anxiety so often experienced by college students.

A more appropriate question would be, “what are you going to do after graduation?” That’s far easier to digest and certainly more feasible to answer. With the global marketplace changing so drastically, it is virtually impossible to predict what type of job one might have in 30 or 40 years. This lends itself to another important question to ask: “how did you grow personally during your college years and how do you hope to grow in the next year or two after graduation?” These questions align with the thinking of Hazel Rose Markus and her work with the three types of selves.

Hazel Rose Markus’ 1986 paper “Possible Selves” redefined how psychologists think of the relationship between self and culture. In it, co-author Paula Nurius and she develop the concept of possible selves: the ideal selves that we would like to become, that we could become, and that we are afraid of becoming.⁷⁷ “A person’s identity involves more than the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the current self; it also includes reflections of what a person was like in the past and hopes and fears about what a person may become in the future.”⁷⁸

We each have a repertoire of possible selves that serve as the “cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats [which] provide the essential link between the self-concept and motivation.” To suggest that there is a single self to which one “can be true” or an authentic self that one can know is to deny the rich network of potential that surrounds individuals and that is important in identifying and descriptive of them.⁷⁹ Possible selves contribute to the fluidity or malleability of the self because they are differentially activated by the social situation and determine the nature of the working self-concept. At the same time, the individual’s hopes and fears, goals and threats, and the cognitive structures that carry them are defining features of the self-concept; these features provide some of the most compelling evidence of continuity of identity across time.

The conceptions we have of our possible selves allow us to develop a vision of our future, set goals in order to make that vision a reality, and establish patterns of behavior allow us to attain those goals.⁸⁰ This development from one self to another, for example from the person we would like to become to who we could become, involves a substantial amount of experiencing, reflecting, and meaning making throughout one’s entire life. This process of self-awareness and personal growth in order to create your three selves continues long into the decade following college graduation.

The Evolutionary 20s

The decade after college graduation is a time for self-discovery. Many parents fail to realize that it takes time for their child to discover the right career path, get married, or become financially independent. In previous decades, a young man or woman in their late teens or early 20s would have had to decide on a career path, who to marry, and whether or not to enlist in the military. New research suggests that people are better equipped to make major life decisions in their late 20s than earlier in the decade. The brain, once thought to be fully grown after puberty, is still evolving into its adult shape well into a person's third decade, pruning away unused connections and strengthening those that remain. Postponing those decisions makes sense biologically, he says. "It's a good thing that the 20s are becoming a time for self-discovery." "It should be reassuring for parents to know that it's very typical in the 20s not to know what you're going to do and change your mind and seem very unstable in your life."⁸¹

Psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett who coined the phrase emerging adults describes college graduates as feeling in between adolescence and adulthood but still closely tied to their parents and family. In *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, co-edited with Jennifer Lynn Tanner, Arnett describes five characteristics of emerging adulthood:⁸²

- **Age of identity exploration:** Young professionals are exploring the transition from who they are to who they want to become. Doing so allows numerous opportunities to reflect on what they would like out of their careers as well as their personal lives and relationships.
- **Age of instability:** Living on campus in a dormitory, living in off-campus housing, and traveling to new locations are very common during the college and post-college period. Most settle down in their early 30s to create a more stable work and personal environment.
- **Age of self-focus:** Freed of the parent- and society-directed routine of school, young people try to decide what they

want to do, where they want to go, and who they want to be with—before those choices get limited by the constraints of marriage, children, and a career.

- **Age of feeling in between:** Many emerging adults say they are taking responsibility for themselves, but still do not completely feel like an adult.
- **Age of possibilities:** Optimism reigns. Most emerging adults believe they have good chances of living “better than their parents did,” and even if their parents divorced, they believe they’ll find a lifelong soul mate.

The five characteristics of emerging adulthood can help us understand why people in their 20s pursue years of experimentation in both their personal and professional lives. One-third of people in their 20s move to a new residence every year. Forty percent move back home with their parents at least once. Two-thirds spend at least some time living with a romantic partner without being married. And marriage occurs later than ever. The median age at first marriage in the early 1970s, when the baby boomers were young, was 21 for women and 23 for men; by 2009 it had climbed to 26 for women and 28 for men, 5 years in a little more than a generation.⁸³ They also go through an average of seven jobs in their 20s, more job changes than in any other stretch.⁸⁴ How can a college graduate know what he or she wants to do with the rest of his or her life when the reality is people of all ages, backgrounds frequently discover new employment opportunities?

The Reality Is People Change Jobs

Asking the “dream job and rest of your life” question negates the reality that people change jobs. Layoffs, quitting, and a host of other reasons explain why people move from one job to another. It is impossible to know what you want to do with the rest of your life at 22 when you have no idea what new jobs are 10 or 20 years out in the horizon. In 2011, 48,242,000 people changed jobs in the United States. Of those who changed jobs, 20 million were from layoffs and discharges, 23 million workers quit, and 4 million were classified as other separations.⁸⁵

With 131 million total workers, the 48 million people who changed jobs represented 36.7 percent of the total working population. According to the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, roughly one in five American workers, roughly 30 million people, have been laid off during the 2009 to 2014 period raising new doubts about exactly how secure job stability really is within the United States.

Despite the number of layoffs in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous global marketplace, where full-time employment is growing more precarious, more than 2 million Americans are voluntarily leaving their jobs every month. Classified as "Quits" by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the percentage of overall turnover has remained relatively steady at approximately 1.69 percent per month over the past decade, but the number of voluntary "quits" is continuing to grow and will not be decreasing anytime soon, according to the bureau.⁸⁶ With the engagement of workers at a pathetic 13 percent globally and 30 percent in the United States, it is no surprise that LinkedIn reports 25 percent of its 313 million members are active job seekers with another 60 percent not proactively searching for a new job but seriously willing to consider opportunities.⁸⁷ For many workers, however, despite the desire to change jobs, they are actually staying on their jobs longer. Fear, anxiety, and discomfort with switching to what could be a more lucrative, exciting or meaningful job is challenging for even the most self-determined individual. According to the BLS, U.S. workers had an average job tenure of 4.6 years in 2012 which is up from 3.7 years in 2002 and 3.5 in 1983, but the truth is employees stick with the same job longer today than they did 10, 20, and 30 years ago.⁸⁸

Students are often mistakenly told to declare a specific major since it will allow them to have a secure job. In today's hypercompetitive global marketplace job security has been replaced with job (in)security. As one observer noted, "If you are putting up with a boring job in exchange for security, you are not as secure as you think. That security which is the main reason most people go to work for a large organization is largely an illusion based on the way things were done 50 years ago."⁸⁹ During the last two decades, globalization, outsourcing, downsizing, recessions, and natural disasters have disrupted the world of work and now "job security can seem like a thing of the past."⁹⁰ Even assurances for long-term job security

in established fields such as banking, medicine, or law are quickly becoming obsolete.⁹¹ Banking and working on Wall Street has grown less enticing as financial institutions have scaled back on bonuses and perks over the last few years, not to mention the physical and psychological ailments often associated with such high-pressure jobs. “Even physicians have become like everybody else: insecure, discontented, and anxious about the future, with only 6 percent of doctors describing their morale as positive.”⁹²

It is also difficult to know what you want to do with the rest of your life when the world of work is changing so rapidly. “Every year, more than 30 million Americans work in jobs that did not exist in the previous quarter.”⁹³ Today’s global economy driven by the information technological revolution is simply too fickle to guess what academic major will be practical for a 50-year career. Choosing the wrong major or path based on the current job market could make things worse, not better. As one observer noted, “guessing what will be hot tomorrow based on what’s hot today is often a fool’s errand.”⁹⁴ Refer to the adjacent table for a brief list of extinct, new, and future careers. Appendix C offers a more comprehensive listing.

Table 6.1 *The Careers of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*

| Extinct Careers | New Careers Available Today | Potential Future Careers |
|---|--|--|
| Bowling alley pinsetter—“stack up pins when there was no machine to do it” | Social media manager—running social media accounts for small and large companies | Personal digital curator—“recommends and maintains your unique suite of apps, hardware, software, and information sources of your evolving personality and career” |
| Food safety tester—“eat [food items] and make sure they were safe” | Mobile App developer—develop apps for Apple and Android | Crowd-funding specialist—“expert on sites like Kickstarter and Indigogo who understands how to promote and attain funds for a project through crowd funding” |
| Human alarm clocks—“walk around with long sticks tapping on people’s windows, throwing pebbles, and shouting at the top of their lungs” | SEO specialist—“ensure websites and internet properties have been technically optimized” | Skype staging—“hired career advisors that prepare and help an individual work through remote interviews or video conferencing, including etiquette, appearance, and conversational skills” |

| Extinct Careers | New Careers Available Today | Potential Future Careers |
|---|---|---|
| Elevator operators— “taking passengers to their desired floor and keeping passengers safe” | Content strategist— “help plan websites, social media, newsletter, and figure out how all of these pieces work together” | Curiosity tutor—“provides inspiration and content to spark curiosity, but one that teaches the art of discovery” |
| Milkman—“deliver the product to people’s homes on a daily basis” | Drone pilot—pilots for commercial purposes as well as private government work | Digital death manager—“a specialist that creates, manages, or eliminates content to craft ones online presences posthumously” |

Today’s students will have 10 to 14 jobs by the time they are 38.⁹⁵ Since 47 percent of U.S. jobs⁹⁶ could be automated in the next 20 years, “it is diabolically tricky to try to pick a career that you’ll still be doing when you’re 40.”⁹⁷ It is important to remember that “the top 10 in-demand jobs in the future don’t exist today. We are currently preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist, using technologies that haven’t been invented, in order to solve problems we don’t even know are problems yet.”⁹⁸ One estimate suggests that more than half of today’s grade-school kids may end up doing work that hasn’t been invented yet.⁹⁹ According to one analysis, “by the time today’s college students retire from the workplace—in or around 2050(!)—they will have held jobs that neither exist in the lives nor the imaginations of many present-day leaders.”¹⁰⁰

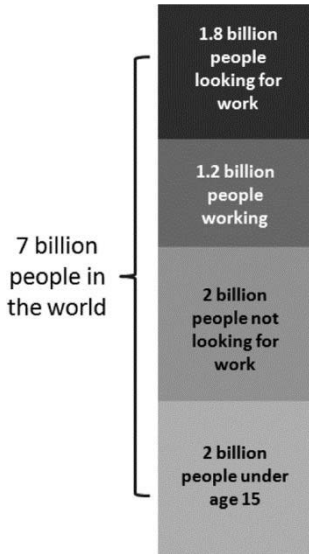
CHAPTER 7

Trap Three: You Can Apply to Jobs Related to Only Your Major

Being average just won't earn you what it used to.... everyone needs to find their unique value contribution that makes them stand out in their field of employment.

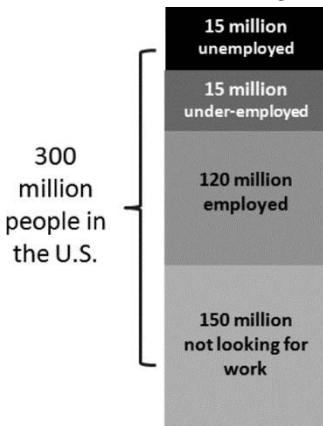
—Thomas L. Friedman

The belief that students can apply to only one type of industry, job, or position is a myth that limits available employment options. Such flawed thinking also runs counter to the evidence that 62 percent of recent college graduates are working in jobs that require a degree, yet only 27 percent of college graduates are working in a job specifically related to their major.¹⁰¹ Students need to realize that while an undergraduate degree is a prerequisite and relevant for the competitive workforce, a specific academic major is seldom a prerequisite and is in fact often irrelevant when it comes to applying to many employment positions. As John Downey, president of Blue Ridge Community College, wrote “we need to educate our youth on all of the careers available to them, inspire them to select a career cluster that will ignite their passion, and then show them the educational pathways required to get there.”¹⁰² This mental trap of only applying to jobs related to one specific field often prohibits students from declaring a major that are interested in and forces them to study a subject less than compelling. Is that really the type of environment we want to create? Do we want to have students studying something solely for the supposed payoff down the road? In today’s hypercompetitive marketplace, just how sure can you be that the one job you wanted will even be around in a few years? Global statistics illustrate just how challenging it is to find a good job.



Of the 7 billion people on Earth, there are 5 billion adults aged 15 and older. Two billion are not looking for work while 1.2 billion people are working. Thus, there is a potentially devastating global shortfall of about 1.8 billion good jobs.¹⁰³ This also means that potential societal stress and instability lies within 1.8 billion—nearly a quarter of the world’s population. “It’s against this backdrop that the coming jobs war will be fought. And this new world war for good jobs will trump everything else. That’s because the lack of good jobs will

become the root cause of almost all world problems that America and other countries will attempt to deal with through humanitarian aid, military force, and politics. The lack of good jobs will become the cause of hunger, extremism, out-of-control migration patterns, reckless environmental trends, widening trade imbalances, and on and on.”¹⁰⁴



In the United States, the jobs war involves 15 million unemployed people and another 15 million underemployed. Neither, number, however, includes people who were working part-time because they couldn’t find a full-time job. It also doesn’t include people who want a job but haven’t looked for work in 4 weeks.¹⁰⁵ With high unemployment and underemployment across the globe, graduates

should expand, not limit, their employment options. While today’s job market makes it difficult to find employment, it is important to realize that some graduates do indeed find jobs. As Richard Bolles, author of *What Color is Your Parachute?* concluded, “Even in tough times there are jobs to be had, but applicants have to work far harder to get an employer’s

attention and consider a broader range of employers.” As one insurance industry executive noted, “Insurance doesn’t have the sexy title next to it but those entering the industry have opportunities to have greater responsibility than ever before. We find great people in all different majors including history and anthropology.”¹⁰⁶

According to one recent survey, 44 percent of recent college graduates apply to only between one and five jobs at a time.¹⁰⁷ To properly consider a broader range of employers, it is important to apply to dozens of jobs simultaneously. Completing the academic requirements for the final semester of college, failing to prioritize the submission of job applications, and lacking information about what positions to apply for are just three of the many reasons that explain why students apply only to a few jobs at a time. Applying to a small number of positions severely limits options. It is important to remember, however, that you should apply for positions in which you are interested. Doing so can help generate a positive attitude during the interview. With 26 percent of employers turned off by an entry-level applicant’s bad attitude, your disinterest in the position will most likely be exposed during the interview.¹⁰⁸ Maintaining a narrow view of employment opportunities is the third trap and discounts the chaos theory of career development, the pursuit of living with purpose, the concept of positive uncertainty, and the ability to create options through subtle maneuvers.

Chaos Theory of Careers

In *The Chaos Theory of Careers: A New Perspective on Working in the Twenty-First Century* (2011), Robert Pryor and Jim Bright identified three elements to explain how in today’s uncertain and unpredictable world the notion of applying to jobs related to one’s major becomes ever more questionable. First, the dynamics of today’s challenging economy include technological innovation, speed of communication, and the globalization of consumer markets to name a few. Second, given the emergence of new markets, employment positions, and types of work, research now indicates that changing careers is not only the norm, but is beneficial for career satisfaction. Finally, research indicates that serendipity often has an impact on vocational decisions and career development. Based on these three elements

to explain today's unpredictable world, the chaos theory of career development highlights four principles graduates from all majors could embrace when considering employment opportunities:

- It is useful and vocationally mature to be both certain and uncertain when making a career decision.
- Too much order and stability is actually quite hazardous to adaptation.
- Changing one's mind after having made a choice is an adaptive trait for the future and not necessarily a sign of incompetence or stalling.
- Complexity need not be feared but rather embraced with humility and openness to its inherent possibilities.

Chaos theory requires students to reflect upon their experiences in order to better understand their skills and identify lessons learned along the way. This process of intentional reflection helps students increase their self-awareness, promotes individual responsibility and self-reliance, and endorses the transformative process that one can undergo. The chaos theory of career development encourages individuals to search for work that provides an embodied experience of aliveness. It also provides individuals with an opportunity to surrender individual self-identify and self-importance in favor of developing a multitude of potential careers through being open to chance events, to serendipity, and to luck readiness (being prepared for next opportunity). "Chaos theory provides individuals with a mechanism for hope and optimism, even in the face of challenging life events."¹⁰⁹ In other words, the chaos theory of career development offers individuals a blank slate upon which to transform their current self to their possible self, but this ability to transform your current self to your possible self requires positive uncertainty.

Positive uncertainty is compatible with the new science and beliefs of today's society and incompatible with yesterday's decision dogma. It involves ambiguity and paradox because the future is full of ambiguity and paradox. In the future, it will help to realize that one does not know some things, cannot always see what is coming, and frequently will not be able to control it. "Being positive and uncertain allows one to be able to act when one is not certain about what one is doing." To deal with complexity, change, and chance, H.B. Gelatt identified four major par-

adoxes that students need to understand to help them move forward in their career decision making process:

- Be focused and flexible about what you want.
- Be aware and wary about what you know.
- Be objective and optimistic about what you believe.
- Be practical and magical about what you do.

All too often graduates believe they have only a few employment options. As one observer noted, “Your self-imposed limitations on how to make money are often just that: self-imposed. Seek out other routes to your destination.”¹¹⁰ There are numerous resources to help students determine other routes and destinations. LinkedIn is one example. The online program has collected substantial evidence of other routes people have taken and provides a free valuable resource to learn what opportunities exist for potential career paths. When reviewing profiles, it is common to find that the current position or industry of a LinkedIn member is different from previous positions they held. For example, one profile might be that of someone holding the title of Vice President in the higher education industry, but upon review the same person was a Director at a nonprofit organization dedicated to cancer research 10 years earlier. In a recent research project, LinkedIn identified over 60 professionals as Influencers to learn firsthand how they managed their careers. According to LinkedIn, “what became clear was the likelihood of change and transition that occurs during a person’s career as they continue down their professional path.”¹¹¹

Living with Purpose

In addition to relying on the chaos theory of career development, another way recent college graduates can widen their scope of employment is by identifying opportunities that match their life purpose. Graduates can find employment that directly supports their life purpose or they can work for a company that is aligned with their beliefs. Since the majority of Americans are unhappy, disengaged, or disinterested in their job, the Millennials’ focus on purpose might bring a refreshing change

to the American workforce. In Deloitte's global survey of Millennials, over 75 percent believe that businesses are focused on their own agenda rather than helping to improve society. Millennials are demanding more. "The message is clear: when looking at their career goals, today's Millennials are just as interested in how a business develops its people and how it contributes to society as they are in its products and profits."¹¹² Millennials want to work for organizations with purpose. For 6 in 10 Millennials, a "sense of purpose" is part of the reason they chose to work for their current employers. Among Millennials who are relatively high users of social networking tools, there appears to be even greater focus on business purpose; 77 percent of this group report their company's purpose was part of the reason they chose to work there, compared with just 46 percent of those who are the "least connected."¹¹³

When it comes to an individual's work, there are a variety of ways to find meaning. The often told story of the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral illustrates a case in point. In the late 1660s, Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to re-design St. Paul's Cathedral after the Great Fire of London destroyed it. According to legend, one day Wren visited the construction site and asked three workers what they were doing. The first worker replied, "I am cutting a piece of stone," while the second worker responded "I'm earning five shillings two pence a day." The third worker provided a completely different view and said he was "building a magnificent cathedral to the glory of God." Each of the stone masons found purpose in his work. One found purpose in the task of cutting stone. Another found purpose in earning money. And the third found his purpose in his small contribution to the larger task of building a cathedral. Finding meaningful work is about the why as well as about the what. Some people derive meaning from a job that allows them to provide for their families and pursue non-work activities they enjoy. "People with a craftsmanship orientation take pride in performing the job well. Those with a service orientation find purpose in the ideology or belief system behind their work. Still others extract meaning from the sense of kinship they experience with coworkers."

This sense of connection or purpose to work can help drive happiness. The same is true with a college major. If you choose a major you enjoy, studying chances are you will enjoy the work. You will find purpose in

your research, classroom conversations, and reading. Enjoying work, whether at a job, volunteering for a community project, or studying for a final examination in your major, provides you with the motivation, energy, and attention that frequently translates into success. Career success is dependent upon achieving a high level of performance in any field. To perform at a high level for an extended period of time, it helps to be happy. “When people work with a positive mindset, performance on productivity, creativity, and engagement improves.”¹¹⁴ While often viewed as a result of success research demonstrates that people who maintain happiness perform better in the face of challenge. In other words, being happy allows one to perform at high levels required to succeed. If you have declared a major that makes you unhappy it will be difficult to achieve a peak level of performance. Before you declare a major that makes you perform less than your best; think twice and remember that there are many roads that lead your destination, so you should reconsider and travel the path that brings you the most happiness.

Create Options

C.S. Lewis once wrote “Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward.” Achieving career success will also require one to let go at some point to move forward. Unlike the traditional corporate ladder metaphor, however, there is another way to create options for your life and career as you let go of the monkey bar to move forward. In her book *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead*, Sheryl Sandberg borrows a career development metaphor of the jungle gym from *Fortune* magazine editor Pattie Sellers. According to Sandberg, “a jungle gym scramble is the best description of my career since I could never have connected the dots from where I started to where I am today.”¹¹⁵ The jungle gym metaphor offers a different approach to career development than the traditional corporate ladder for a variety of reasons:

- *Movement:* The jungle gym allows you to move up, down, and sideways, whereas the ladder only allows you to move up and down. Having the flexibility of a jungle gym is an absolute necessity in today’s challenge job market.

- *Collaboration:* The jungle gym allows you to work with others, while the ladder only offers you the opportunity to walk over someone to get to the next step.
- *Foundation:* The jungle gym has a wide base and therefore allows for a stronger foundation compared with the ladder that has two legs and is subject to wind, shifts in weight, or unpaved surfaces.
- *Achievement:* The jungle gym allows more than one person to sit at the top, while the ladder has room for only one person.

Creating options via the jungle gym is especially relevant for college graduates who possess high expectations that their degree will result in an immediate dream job following graduation. The pursuit of a “dream job” is “a recipe for disappointment.”¹¹⁶ To build their path around, over, and through their career jungle gym, college graduates need to expand their employment options. There are many positions in large organizations where students from any major could thrive that do not necessarily spring to mind during the job search. Finding your next career option takes work. As author Thomas L. Friedman reminded the graduates from Williams College in June 2005, learning to create options is critical to translating one’s dream into reality: “Do what you really love to do and if you don’t know quite what that is yet, well, keep searching, because if you find it, you’ll bring that something extra to your work.” That something extra, noted Friedman, can help make someone “an untouchable radiologist, an untouchable engineer, or an untouchable teacher.”¹¹⁷

Becoming an untouchable anything will depend you’re your ability to create options throughout your career. In the chaos theory of career development, it is important to realize that you cannot control the trajectory of your career. Despite your best wishes and desire to control your career, there are simply too many external factors beyond your control that will shape job options. Global economic trends, the advent of new technologies, severe weather events, geopolitical instability, and political elections all play a part in your career development. “So don’t commit the hubris of thinking that you can determine your professional

glide path.”¹¹⁸ You can, however, take a proactive approach, remain positive amidst the uncertainty and increase your probability of success by approaching your career as a continuous process that has to be actively managed. “At each step in your career, you need to ask yourself: What can I do next that will maximize my options in the future?”¹¹⁹ Mariana Zanetti emphasized the necessity of creating options in her book *The MBA Bubble*. Zanetti explicitly stated “an evident and crushing reality is that wealth is the result of creating a source of income other than your salary.”¹²⁰ One way to create a source of income other than your salary would be to engage in subtle maneuvers.

Engage in Subtle Maneuvers

The flawed mental trap of believing that employers only care about your major or GPA fails to recognize the power of engaging in subtle maneuvers. This approach allows you to do something small at nights and on the weekends that slowly builds value over time. Such an approach, however, demands that you maximize how effectively and efficiently you use your time. Remember that everyone has the same amount of time that you do. Don’t say you don’t have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to anyone who ever accomplished a goal, lived a life of purpose, or challenged the status quo. When you are pressed for time, recall the words of Franz Kafka to his finance: “Time is short, my strength is limited, the office is a horror, the apartment is noisy, and if a pleasant, straightforward life is not possible, then one must try to wriggle through by subtle maneuvers.”¹²¹ During the day Kafka worked his *broteruf*, literally “bread job,” a job done only to pay the bills, at an insurance company and then he would pursue his passion of writing at night and during the weekend. This subtle maneuver approach has been utilized by many successful people.

Pulitzer Prize winning poet Wallace Stevens, an American Modernist poet, engaged in subtle maneuvers. After a brief career in law, Stevens joined the home office of The Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company in 1916. With a love of writing poetry dating back to his undergraduate days at Harvard University, Stevens started to write at nights and on weekends. By 1934, he had been named Vice President of the

company. Stevens's first book of poetry, *Harmonium*, was published in 1923. He would go on to produce additional works throughout the 1920s and into the 1940s. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his *Collected Poems* in 1955. After he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1955, he was offered a faculty position at Harvard but declined since it would have required him to give up his vice presidency of The Hartford.¹²² William Faulkner wrote *As I Lay Dying* in the afternoons before clocking in on the night shift as a supervisor at a university power plant. He found the nocturnal schedule easy enough to manage. After sleeping for a few hours in the morning, he would write during the afternoon and then visit his mother on the way to work. He would often nap due to the undemanding nature of his work. The novelist Henry Green was independently wealthy and did not need to work. Since he liked the structure of an office job, he went into his family's manufacturing business every day. Joseph Heller thrived in magazine advertising by day and wrote *Catch-22* in the evenings, sitting at the kitchen table in his Manhattan apartment. According to Heller, "I spent two or three hours a night on it for eight years... I gave up once and started watching television with my wife. Television drove me back to *Catch-22*."¹²³ The American composer Charles Ives never let music get too far from his mind. After graduating from Yale in 1898, he secured a position in New York as a \$15-a-week clerk with the Mutual Life Insurance Company.¹²⁴ Though already an accomplished and talented organist as well as composer, he was looking to create beyond the conservative musical establishment of his day. So staying in a steady job made sense. As Ives put it, "if a composer has a nice wife and some nice children, how can he let them starve on his dissonances?"¹²⁵

As aspiring author once wrote to Irish playwright Oscar Wilde asking for advice on how to have a success career as a writer. In his response, Wilde told him not to rely on earning a living from writing and declared "the best work in literature is always done by those who do not depend on it for their daily bread."¹²⁶ *The Onion* published an essay entitled "Find The Thing You're Most Passionate About, Then Do It On Nights And Weekends For The Rest Of Your Life."¹²⁷ Although satirical in nature, the piece fails to recognize the abundance of evidence to suggest that is indeed

the very way many successful people have achieved greatness. Mason Currey's book, *Daily Rituals: How Artists Work* examines dozens of creative people and concludes that most of them engaged in subtle maneuvers in order to pursue meaningful creative work while also earning a living.¹²⁸ "The book makes one thing abundantly clear: There's no such thing as the way to create good work, but all greats have their way."¹²⁹

Robert Frost was changing light bulb filaments in a Massachusetts factory when he sold his first poem, "My Butterfly: An Elegy" in 1894. Kurt Vonnegut managed a Saab dealership on Cape Cod after he'd published his first novel *Player Piano*. Charlotte Brontë worked as a poorly paid governess that had to pay her employers out of her own pocket for using their facilities to wash her clothes. Poet William Carlos Williams was a career pediatrician in New Jersey, working long hours caring for patients and penning phrases on the back of prescription slips. Musician Philip Glass worked as a plumber, furniture mover, and taxi driver. Such jobs were integral to his artistic process. According to Glass, "I was careful to take a job that couldn't have any possible meaning for me." He never earned a living from his music until he was 42.¹³⁰ How did these individuals accomplish so much while working a day job? As one observer noted, "you find out a way to get more done when you're really busy. You just learn how to fit it in."¹³¹

CHAPTER 8

Trap Four: Employers Care about Only Your Major and Grade Point Average

We can each define ambition and progress for ourselves. The goal is to work toward a world where expectations are not set by the stereotypes that hold us back, but by our personal passion, talents and interests.

—Sheryl Sandberg

Several recent research reports illustrate that employers care very much about a wide spectrum of characteristics for recent graduates who have applied for employment. Unfortunately, the research also demonstrates that recent graduates feel as though they are well qualified. This “perception gap” appears in several research reports and strongly suggests that many employers do not believe that recent graduates, regardless of their GPA, are prepared for the workforce.¹³² The students indicated that they felt qualified in areas like written and oral communication, critical and analytical thinking, and applying knowledge and skills to the real world, but employers consistently rated students lower than they rated themselves. Fewer than two in five hiring managers (39%) say the recent college graduates they have interviewed in the past 2 years were completely or very prepared for a job in their field of study, in general. This is in sharp contrast to the 50 percent of college students who rate themselves in the same terms. Additionally, 59 percent of students said they were well prepared to analyze and solve complex problems, just 24 percent of employers said they had found that to be true of recent college graduates.¹³³

Despite the apparent generation gap, the majority of both managers and HR respondents feel that the definition of what is professional

should not be subject to change. The attitude appears to be that young employees should learn to conform to current standards of professionalism rather than the standards being modified in response to larger societal changes.¹³⁴ “Today’s college graduates do not exhibit as much professionalism as their employers expect of them.” A survey of more than 500 human resources professionals and business leaders to gauge not only what they think “professionalism” means but also how well the recent college graduates they have hired exhibit it. The survey indicates that “there is a widely held sentiment that not all college graduates are displaying professionalism upon entering the workforce.” More than 37 percent of the respondents reported that “less than half of [the recent graduates they have hired] exhibit professionalism in their first year.”¹³⁵ This lack of professionalism occurs during the interview, the most important part of the job search process as “human resource professionals say they’ve seen recent college grads text or take calls in interviews, dress inappropriately, use slang or overly casual language and exhibit other oddball behavior.”¹³⁶ *Believing that employers solely care about a major or GPA is the fourth trap and overlooks the value of internships and learning how to fit into the organizational culture, the need to development critical cognitive and noncognitive skills, and the importance of emotional intelligence (EI).*

Internships and Cultural Fit

According to the NACE, an internship is defined as “a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting.”¹³⁷ By providing students with opportunities to gain experience and network an internship also gives the employer a chance to assess the interns as potential new hires. “In industries across the board, employers viewed an internship as the single more important credential for recent grads. More than where you went to school and what you majored in.”¹³⁸ The results show that internships truly have become the “new interview” in the job search process for students and employers alike. Over 90 percent of employers think that all students, regardless of major, should intern before they graduate.¹³⁹

Because of the hypercompetitiveness of today's global marketplace, some observers believe that completing two to three internships is imperative for recent college graduates to maintain their competitive edge.¹⁴⁰ "Internships are essential indicators that a student is not just a great reader and writer, but also capable of succeeding in a business environment and interacting with coworkers and clients."¹⁴¹ Because of their ability to offer employers an opportunity to see how a student responds to real-world scenarios, internships "have become the new interview in the job search process for students and employers alike."¹⁴² In 2015, one report concluded that "40 percent of all entry-level full-time hires in the United States are sourced through internship programs."¹⁴³ Thus, for a growing number of college seniors that want to land employment at one of the top organizations, internships are no longer a luxury but a necessity. Internships are also an excellent way for students to learn about organizational culture.

While there are many definitions of organizational culture, it is often described as the personality of an organization from the employee perspective that might include the company's mission, expectations and work atmosphere. Whether it's written down, symbolized in the business logo, or simply an unspoken but understood definition, culture determines a company's environment. "Over 80 percent of organizations are more strict about who they hire today than in previous years because of the economy and the cost of hiring."¹⁴⁴ In one 2014 report, human resource professionals and job seekers reported that "cultural fit" carries the most weight when considering an applicant, while GPA mattered least.¹⁴⁵ "Today, it's not just about finding the person that can do the job, but finding someone who can fit into the corporate culture."¹⁴⁶ "Cultural fit can cover a variety of characteristics, but ultimately, the question hiring managers should be looking to answer is, does this candidate's values align with those of the company, be they work-life balance, corporate mission or how to handle a customer phone call. Fitting into the organizational culture also requires a young professional to communicate effectively with the five different generations of people that make up the workforce."¹⁴⁷

- Traditionalists: born prior to 1946 and approximately 5 percent of the workforce

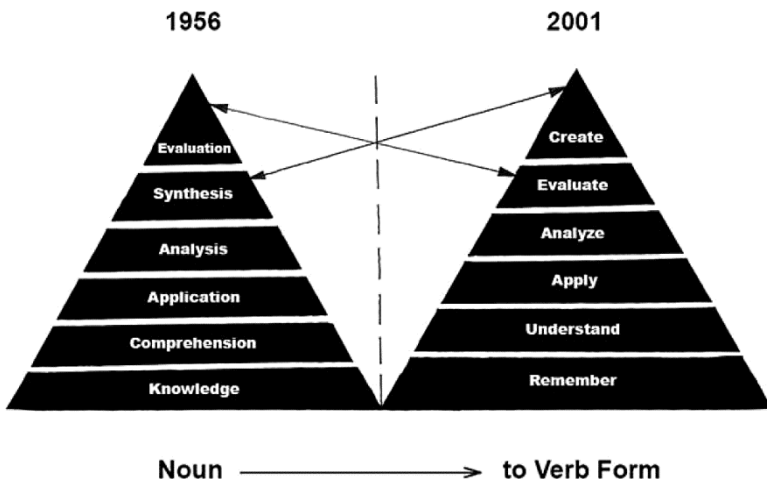
- Baby Boomers: born between 1946 and 1964 and make up 45 percent of the workforce
- Gen X: born between 1965 and 1976 and make up 40 percent of the workforce
- Millennials: born between 1977 and 1997 and make up 10 percent of the workforce
- Gen 2020: born after 1997 and will soon join the workforce

While most businesses continue to scour résumés and lurk on LinkedIn for the person with the most experience and degrees from the best schools, hiring firms and researchers are beginning to realize that in many industries, the most qualified candidates often do damage to a firm when they fail to connect with the organization's culture.¹⁴⁸ Almost half of an employee's success in the first 18 months on the job can be attributed to how the employee fits in with others in the organization while the rest of his success depends on whether he can do the job.¹⁴⁹

Cognitive Skills

Cognitive skills involve conscious intellectual efforts, such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering. Since business executives care more about their new hires' ability to demonstrate cognitive and noncognitive skills than they do about their undergraduate major, it is both important and relevant for students to understand the difference between both skill sets.¹⁵⁰ To promote higher forms of thinking in education such as analyzing and evaluating concepts, processes and principles educational psychologist Dr. Benjamin Bloom created a classification of cognitive skills in 1956. This classification, known as Bloom's Taxonomy, consisted of six cognitive skills ranging from low to high in terms of degrees of difficulty. A student should master one prior to moving on to the next skill. In order, the cognitive skills Bloom identified were knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Lorin Anderson, a former student of Bloom, revised the Taxonomy and changed the names of each skill from a noun to a verb. In the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, the six cognitive skills are, from lowest to highest:

1. *Remembering*: Recall or retrieve information.
2. *Understanding*: Comprehending the meaning, translation, and interpretation of instructions and problems.
3. *Applying*: Use a concept in a new situation or applies what was learned in the classroom into the workplace.
4. *Analyzing*: Separates material into components in order to understand its organizational structure and distinguishes between facts and inferences.
5. *Evaluating*: Make judgments about the value of ideas.
6. *Creating*: Builds a structure or pattern from diverse elements. Put parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure.



The highest stage in the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, creating, has been the subject of a great deal of research as organizations look to find solutions to new problems in today's challenging global marketplace. To help individuals and organizations understand the dynamics involved with the highest cognitive skill, Daniel Pink published *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future* and identified six areas of creating relevant for the 21st-century professional:

1. *Design*: Moving beyond function to engage the senses.
2. *Story*: Narrative added to products and services—not just argument.

3. *Symphony*: Adding invention and big picture thinking (not just detail focus).
4. *Empathy*: Going beyond logic and engaging emotion and intuition.
5. *Play*: Bringing humor and light-heartedness to business and products.
6. *Meaning*: The purpose is the journey, give meaning to life from inside yourself.

Proponents of the major only counts mental trap fail to understand that 95 percent of employers are looking for candidates whose skills translate into creativity, out-of-the-box thinking, and innovation. These are now prerequisite skills employers need to fill as many of today's jobs come with challenges far more complex than in the past. This shift to focus on demonstrated creativity and problem-solving through innovation is just one reason why Silicon Valley companies have shifted to hiring employees who studied liberal arts, versus those who took the more "typical" tech path as software engineers.¹⁵¹ All undergraduates need to understand that soft skills are the skills of the future. Employers say that future workplaces need degree holders who can come up with novel solutions to problems and better sort through information to filter out the most critical pieces.¹⁵²

Noncognitive Skills (Soft Skills)

Employers routinely discuss the harsh reality of how new college graduates who are entry-level candidates are simply "clueless about the fundamentals of office life."¹⁵³ In short, recent college graduates lack a comprehensive set of soft skills to navigate today's workplace. Noncognitive or "soft skills" are related to motivation, integrity, and interpersonal interaction and are associated with an individual's personality, temperament, and attitudes. For virtually all jobs, a worker needs the soft skills associated with working well with other people and functioning effectively in a work environment. The top 10 noncognitive (soft) skills employees need recent college graduates to demonstrate are:

1. Self-control
2. Approach to learning

3. Social interactions
4. Attentional focus
5. Eagerness to learn
6. Persists in completing tasks
7. Creative in work or play
8. Emotional intelligence
9. High level of energy
10. Positive personality

Unfortunately, research indicates that not all college students and recent graduates can demonstrate the necessary cognitive or noncognitive skills to succeed in today's hypercompetitive economy. The Collegiate Learning Assessment Plus, which measures the intellectual gains made between freshman and senior year, concluded that 4 in 10 U.S. college students graduate without the complex reasoning skills to manage white-collar work. A survey by the Workforce Solutions Group at St. Louis Community College discovered that more than 60 percent of employers say applicants lack communication and interpersonal skills and "44 percent of respondents cited soft skills, such as communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, as the area with the biggest gap."¹⁵⁴

Proponents of the "employers only care about my major and GPA" flawed mental trap conveniently overlook the fact that the lack of soft skills is one of the reasons competent technical graduates fail to secure employment. Employers often place soft skills as a primary factor when considering a job candidate with technical and computer-related knowledge a secondary consideration. One in five employers worldwide are unable to fill positions because they can't find people with appropriate soft skills. All too often candidates lack motivation, interpersonal skills, appearance, punctuality, and flexibility. If a candidate does get hired their inability to develop soft skills often hinders their professional development.¹⁵⁵

No matter their major, college graduates need to make a lifelong commitment to further both their cognitive and noncognitive skills to stay competitive over the long term. Competitiveness for jobs is at an all-time high, and individuals "are under unprecedented pressure to develop their own abilities more highly than ever before."¹⁵⁶ Therefore, it is imperative

that college graduates across all majors take the initiative to develop additional skills and enhance their abilities to think creatively and demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism. To help students better prepare for their future, higher education departments need to update their curricula each year in order to stay relevant. Failing to do so jeopardizes the student's ability to compete against better prepared candidates. Today's ever-changing global marketplace has put a premium on graduates who are multifaceted and can demonstrate a spectrum of cognitive and noncognitive skills valuable to employers. To help develop, further, and then communicate their skills, graduates should rely on their EI.

Emotional Intelligence

Proponents of the "employers only care about my major and GPA" flawed mental trap ignore the growing importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Doing so provides a huge disservice to undergraduates. In his widely recognized publication *Emotional Intelligence*, Rutgers University psychologist Daniel Goleman defines EI as emotional management and the ability to identify, appropriately express, and manage our emotions. For those students with "the right major and GPA" yet have trouble launching or navigating their career, it is often a lack of EI that prohibits them from moving forward. Over the last decade, there have been several studies illustrating the relationship between EI and career success. Ernest O'Boyle Jr. at Virginia Commonwealth University concluded that EI is the strongest predictor of job performance. The U.S. Air Force found that the most successful recruiters scored significantly higher on the EI competencies of empathy and self-awareness. A survey of 251 executives in six countries by Accenture identified three key indicators of EI that predicted who will succeed and who won't: interpersonal competence, self-awareness, and social awareness.¹⁵⁷

With growing evidence that EI is a strong indicator of career success, it behooves students to recognize its growing importance and commit to furthering their EI. Cognitive ability alone will not ensure career success. Students need to combine sophisticated levels of cognitive and noncognitive skills with EI in order to successfully launch and navigate a career in today's hypercompetitive global economy. Since developing EI

is important for personal, family, and business relationships, here are four of the many factors that are crucial for today's college graduates need to acknowledge, develop, and monitor:

1. *Self-awareness*: You maintain a realistic sense of self-confidence and understand your feelings. These two elements to self-awareness is the foundation upon which your EI can grow.
 - a. *Realistic self-confidence*: You understand your own strengths and limitations; you operate from competence and know when to rely on someone else on the team.
 - b. *Emotional insight*: You understand your feelings. Being aware of what makes you angry, for instance, can help you manage that anger.
 - c. *Resolving conflicts*: You maintain self-control and awareness in order to resolve conflicts peacefully and without emotion.
2. *Self-management*: Your ability to manage yourself through resilience and emotional balance allows you to keep moving toward short- and long-term goals simultaneously.
 - a. *Resilience*: You stay calm under pressure and recover quickly from upsets. You don't brood or panic. In a crisis, people look to the leader for reassurance; if the leader is calm, they can be, too.
 - b. *Emotional balance*: You keep any distressful feelings in check—instead of blowing up at people, you let them know what's wrong and what the solution is. You can successfully manage your emotions during times of stress.
 - c. *Self-motivation*: You keep moving toward distant goals despite setbacks.
3. *Empathy*: Your understanding of other's perspectives, grounded in good listening skills, demonstrates your high degree of empathy.
 - a. *Cognitive and emotional empathy*: Because you understand other perspectives, you can put things in ways colleagues comprehend. And you welcome their questions, just to be sure. Cognitive empathy, along with reading another person's feelings accurately, makes for effective communication.

- b. *Good listening*: You pay full attention to the other person and take time to understand what they are saying, without talking over them or hijacking the agenda.
 - c. *Perspective*: You understand and accept that the emotions of others are just as important as yours.
 - d. *Acceptance of criticism*: You leave emotion out of conversations regarding your performance and accept constructive criticism in order to improve your abilities.
4. *Relationship skills*: Your excellent communication skills allow you to develop strong team work among a diverse group of people who feel relaxed around you.
- a. *Compelling communication*: You put your points in persuasive, clear ways, so that people are motivated as well as clear about expectations.
 - b. *Team playing*: People feel relaxed working with you. One sign: They laugh easily around you.
 - c. *Acceptance of others*: You get along with and work well with others, even if you do not like them. You do not allow your emotions to have a negative impact on others.

CHAPTER 9

Trap Five: Students Must Specialize in One Major in Order to Succeed

That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach.

—Aldous Huxley

A fifth mental trap that people fall into regarding college majors is the necessity to specialize. “The entire educational system is based on the premise that you must pick a field and specialize. Expertise, they tell you, is the key to success.”¹⁵⁸ According to this approach, specialization is a prerequisite to stay competitive in today’s challenging economy. What’s often overlooked, ridiculed, and misunderstood is the value of declaring a major in the liberal arts or being versatile across many topics. As Steve Sandove, Chairman and CEO of Saks Fifth Avenue, noted, “it is foolish to underappreciate the value of liberal arts skills. It is bad for our country, bad for business and bad for those just starting in their careers.” The National Leadership Council bluntly concluded that “narrow preparation in a single area is exactly the opposite of what graduates need from college.”¹⁵⁹ Employers across various industries endorse such thinking. In one survey, 80 percent of employers agree that, regardless of their major, every college student should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences through a liberal education.¹⁶⁰ Bennington president Liz Coleman expressed a similar idea when she noted in a Technology Entertainment Design (TED) presentation that specialization “will not yield the flexibility of mind, the multiplicity of perspectives or the capacity of collaboration and innovation this country needs.”

This flawed mental trap of depending upon specialization fails to realize how the world’s complexity, which will only continue, demands

that students learn the flexibility, adaptability, and nimbleness to changing circumstances. “It’s a horrible irony that at the very moment the world has become more complex, we’re encouraging our young people to be highly specialized in one task.”¹⁶¹ In today’s dynamic and hypercompetitive world a liberal arts education prepares students to find solutions to new problems not yet identified, to address new questions about social responsibilities, and to view old problems through a new lens. “These are essential elements necessary to succeed on a small, flat, interconnected globe.”¹⁶² “In an increasingly global economy and world, more than just technical skill is required. Far more challenging is the ability to work with a multitude of viewpoints and cultures. And the liberal arts are particularly good at teaching how different arguments on the same point can be equally valid, depending on what presumptions or values you bring to the subject. The liberal arts canvas is painted not in reassuring black-and-white tones, but in maddening shades of gray.”¹⁶³ Believing that specialization is the only way to ensure career success is the fifth trap and overlooks the value of the liberal arts within the context of a liberal education and disregards how business executives continue to support the liberal arts. This chapter also examines a variety of myths surrounding specialization as it relates to graduate school.

The Value of the Liberal Arts within the Context of a Liberal Education

Proponents of specialization often ignore the value of the liberal arts within the content of a liberal education. It is important to note that while a liberal education refers to an approach to learning, the liberal arts refer to a specific set of disciplines such as the humanities, sciences, and social sciences, and majors within those categories such as history, English, and philosophy.¹⁶⁴ “The liberal arts are those studies which set the student free—free from prejudice and misplaced loyalties and free for service, wise decision making, community leadership, and responsible living.”¹⁶⁵ As noted throughout this publication, majoring in a liberal arts field often leads to successful and rewarding careers in a wide array of professions.¹⁶⁶ A “liberal education may be pursued through any subject matter but the term implies distinct purposes: breadth of awareness and

appreciation, clarity and precision of thought and communication, critical analysis, and the honing of moral and ethical sensibilities.”¹⁶⁷ “A liberal education may in fact be the most practical kind of education of all in the kind of society we are becoming,”¹⁶⁸ and it is “the best way to prepare for success in today’s global economy.”¹⁶⁹ Countries around the globe have noted the significance of this approach as the number of liberal education programs has increased to 183 programs in 58 countries around the world.¹⁷⁰ Whatever undergraduate major they may choose, “students who pursue their major within the context of a broad liberal education substantially increase their likelihood of achieving long-term professional success.”¹⁷¹ This is especially true in the world of business.

“The corporate world’s appreciation of liberal arts graduates continues to grow.”¹⁷² Management guru Henry Mintzberg argues that business skills cannot be taught in a classroom and believes a degree in philosophy or history would be more beneficial.¹⁷³ “The separation of business courses, which focus on narrow technical study and the broader Liberal Arts approach, no longer serves business students, and that an integrated program that focuses on engagement of the real world from a practical, personal, and moral perspective is needed.”¹⁷⁴ Why is the integration of business and liberal arts needed in the 21st century? Such fusion is required because the world and cultures are so interconnected today and therefore business leaders must gain more knowledge from the liberal arts.¹⁷⁵ Throughout the major U.S. tech hubs, whether Silicon Valley or Seattle, Boston or Austin, Tex., software companies are discovering that liberal arts thinking makes them stronger.¹⁷⁶ As Steve Sadove, Chairman and CEO of Saks Fifth Avenue, declared, “for some students, a specialized college education leading to a specific set of skills may be the right choice, but I believe most will be better served in their professions by a liberal arts education.”

A number of studies have shown that students who are educated in the liberal arts are, in fact, more employable and, more surprisingly perhaps, generally advance farther up the career ladder. “As time passes, liberal arts graduates often reach career levels that equal or surpass those of their more specialized colleagues as upper levels of management seem to require the more general skills developed in a liberal arts program.”¹⁷⁷ “No particular concentration or area of study is inherently a better ticket

to security, leadership, or personal satisfaction than another. Students should be encouraged to follow their passions and interests, not what they guess (or what others tell them) will lead to a supposedly more marketable set of skills.”¹⁷⁸ Looking at the profiles of CEOs and other professionals outside of education provides further testimony and numerous examples of how liberal arts majors succeed in their careers.

Businesses Support Liberal Arts

To suggest that businesses are only hiring graduates who specialize in one field is completely false and downright misleading. Quite the contrary as liberal arts grads are in high demand in the corporate world. For a wealth of data to support this claim, just refer to the alumni information found on LinkedIn. By posting current and previous employment positions, it is entirely possible, and relatively easy, to identify career paths of individuals as well as groups. Doing so provides some interesting and valuable findings. For example, of the 62,887 LinkedIn members who attended Northwestern University in the past decade, 3,426 have moved to the San Francisco Bay Area to work at Silicon Valley giants Google, Apple, Facebook, Genentech, and LinkedIn to name a few. What’s fascinating is that a mere 30 percent of these migrants ended up in engineering, research, or information technology. As LinkedIn data show, most of the Northwestern graduates who moved to the Bay Area have created non-technical career paths in Silicon Valley. The list starts with sales and marketing (14%) and goes on to include education (6%), consulting (5%), business development (5%), and a host of other specialties ranging from product management to real estate.¹⁷⁹ Recognizing this success, it is no surprise that business leaders continue to hire liberal arts graduates.

Business leaders continuously support students who pursue a liberal education as well as those who declare one of the liberal arts as their major. A third of all Fortune 500 CEOs have liberal arts degrees.¹⁸⁰ “Getting to the corner office has more to do with leadership talent and a drive for success than graduating with a specific degree from a prestigious university.”¹⁸¹ In other words, no one degree is necessarily better than another when moving up the corporate ladder.¹⁸² Appendix B lists famous people from various industries and their undergraduate major.

This brief listing of some current or recent CEOs and their educational background provides ample evidence liberal arts majors can indeed succeed in business.

- Jeff Immelt (General Electric) studied applied mathematics at Dartmouth.
- James Dimon (JPMorgan Chase) studied psychology (plus economics) at Tufts.
- Former CEO at Hewlett-Packard Carly Fiorina studied philosophy and medieval history at Stanford.
- Janet Robinson (*New York Times*) was an undergraduate English major at Salve Regina University.
- Sam Palmisano (IBM) studied history at Johns Hopkins.
- Ken Chenault (American Express) studied history at Bowdoin College.¹⁸³
- Donald Knauss (Clorox) and the former CEO of Coca-Cola North America, earned a bachelor's degree in history.¹⁸⁴

In addition to CEOs, examples abound as to the various other professionals who have succeeded with a liberal arts degree relying on the “discipline of the mind” and not the “furniture of subject knowledge” they acquired. For example, Dr. Jim Mitchell, who obtained a PhD in philosophy from the University of Colorado, spent 30 years in the Canadian federal public service, rising through the ranks to become assistant secretary to the cabinet where he advised prime ministers on the organization of government. According to Mitchell, “my philosophical studies turned out to prepare me quite well for the kind of work I ended up doing, although I never would have predicted it.”¹⁸⁵ Skidmore graduate Jeff Treuhaft was an art major who went on to launch and develop Netscape Communications. Diana Gilson is a neonatal physician but studied sociology as an undergraduate because she thought it would help her relate to her patients.¹⁸⁶ Adam Smith was chairman of the Moral Philosophy Department at Glasgow University when he wrote *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, not an economist as many believe.¹⁸⁷ What many believe and what is true are often very different. This publication has demonstrated that time and again

when it comes to the declaration of an undergraduate major. The same holds true, however, for graduate school. This last section briefly outlines just a few of the many myths surrounding specialization and graduate school.

The Graduate School Traps

There are several fallacies related to graduate school so this section looks at each one independently. It is important to remember that these fallacies only apply to a small minority as approximately 10 percent of Americans have a graduate degree. If an undergraduate or recent graduate is considering graduate school, it would behoove them to examine one or more of the following fallacies:

- I need a graduate degree to get to the corner office and be successful.
- Only biology majors will be admitted into medical school.
- Only prelaw majors get accepted into law school.
- A graduate degree will help me be rich.
- Law school graduates are guaranteed a life of happiness, employment, and riches.

I need an MBA to get to the corner office

About 40 percent of S&P 500 CEOs have an MBA while between 25 and 30 percent have another type of advanced degree, such as a PhD or law degree. Thus, the MBA is not a requirement to get to the corner office.¹⁸⁸ The *Wall Street Journal* article reported that some private-equity firms have recently dropped the policy of requiring entry-level employees to leave after their first few years to go get a MBA. For example, Chicago-based private-equity firm GTCR will now promote deserving associates even if they don't have a graduate degree in business.¹⁸⁹ *BusinessWeek* research has found that fewer than one out of three executives who reach those lofty heights do so with the help of an MBA.¹⁹⁰ In short, the MBA is not a requirement for those seeking a job at the very top of the corporate hierarchy.

Only Biology Majors Get Accepted into Medical School

There is a strong belief that undergraduates who want to get into medical school must specialize as a biology or premed major. Once again this represents a very flawed way of thinking. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), medical schools accepted 43 percent of the biological sciences majors, 47 percent of physical sciences majors, 51 percent of humanities majors, and 45 percent of social sciences majors who applied in 2010. Admission committee members know that “medical students can develop the essential skills of acquiring, synthesizing, applying, and communicating information through a wide variety of academic disciplines.”¹⁹¹ For example, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York launched its humanity-oriented program HuMed because there is a strong belief that including in each medical school class some students who have a strong background in the humanities makes traditional science students better doctors.¹⁹²

Only Prelaw Majors Get Accepted into Law School

As with other flawed mental models in this chapter regarding specialization, it is important for undergraduates to understand that the belief that only prelaw majors get accepted into law school is completely false. According to the American Bar Association’s web site, there are a wide variety of paths that will prepare students for law school. Successful law school graduates come from many walks of life and educational backgrounds. “The American Bar Association does not recommend any undergraduate majors to prepare for a legal education. Students are admitted to law school from almost every academic discipline.”¹⁹³ One student concluded that philosophy, anthropology, history, and English were among the top majors associated with high acceptance rates for law school. Both the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association advise applicants to choose majors that interest them, work hard for excellent grades, develop their research and writing skills, and make the most of the opportunities that come their way.¹⁹⁴

A Graduate Degree Will Help Me Be Rich

The belief that you need to pursue a specialized graduate degree to be rich is also misguided. The number of people with a Masters who received food stamps and public assistance almost tripled from 101,682 to 293,029, and the number of PhDs on public assistance substantially increased from 9,776 to 33,655 during the last few years.¹⁹⁵ Just because you obtain a doctorate degree, does not mean you automatically get a high-paying job either. “360,000 of the 22 million Americans with graduate degrees received some kind of public assistance.”¹⁹⁶ “Job numbers released by the National Science Foundation show that people with doctoral degrees in those technical fields are struggling to find work in their industries. Upon graduation, PhDs in general have a less than 50 percent chance of having a full-time job, and that percentage has been decreasing for about 20 years.”¹⁹⁷ Public assistance utilization is particularly high among fast-food workers, child care providers, and home care workers while “a quarter of the families of part-time college faculty members are on public assistance.”¹⁹⁸

Law School Graduates Are Guaranteed a Life of Happiness, Employment, and Riches

Employment rates for graduates of law schools have been grim. Approximately 57 percent of 2013 law school graduates had found steady jobs but that is just a fraction better than the 56.2 percent of 2012 grads who had secured full-time employment. In an article entitled “The Job Crisis at Our Best Law Schools is Much, Much Worse Than You Think,” *The Atlantic* noted that “almost 28 percent of recent law school graduates were underemployed, meaning they were either in short-term or part-time jobs, jobless and hunting for work, or enrolled in another degree program. The average debt for 3 years is \$122,158 for private school graduates and \$84,600 for public school graduates.” The median salary of new associates hired by major firms fell by more than a third between 2009 and 2011.¹⁹⁹ More law school graduates should focus on finding their “unique genius, and find that specialized skillset outside of law.”²⁰⁰ “More law school graduates are looking outside of the legal profession at

jobs in which a law degree is preferred or required.” “Law school students are more focused than they’ve been before and law schools shouldn’t be concerned if their graduates get good-paying jobs that they want outside of the legal profession. That’s the future...that there are jobs out there where you can use the analytical abilities you learn in law school to work in business.”²⁰¹

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PART III

Assessments

The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.

—Vince Lombardi

Introduction

While part one of this publication outlined the situation regarding college majors and the second section explained the mental traps that people fall into, this third and final section provides a variety of assessments to help students increase their self-awareness. What do self-assessments have to do with the college experience, the selection of a college major, professional development or launching a career? There are many reasons. First, self-assessments are valuable tools students can leverage in order to achieve the self-awareness required to sustain the personal growth and professional development in today's hyper-competitive global marketplace. Since "76% of organizations with more than 100 employees rely on assessment tools such as aptitude and personality tests for external hiring" students need to realize that their days of testing will most likely continue after graduation.¹

Moreover, as *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni pointed out in *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*: "the level of work and effort applied by a student, the self-examination that is undertaken, and the resourcefulness that is honed all matter more than the name of the institution attended."² And I would add those all matter more than the major declared as well. Thus, all students, regardless of their institution, major, or grade point average, need to make self-examination a priority. Doing so is critical to launching a career in today's hype-competitive global marketplace. Engaging in periodic self-assessments is also vital for a healthy and productive career over the course of decades.

Recognizing that many employers are unhappy or disengaged from their work, one observer noted "It's no wonder many of us aren't fully satisfied with where we're at professionally. We keep ignoring that crucial personal component that helps drive great results."³ In short, personal growth is directly related to professional development. If you want to

advance in your career as a professional you will need to dedicate yourself to personal growth. To develop that crucial personal component, and to succeed in the job market of today and tomorrow, workers across all industries and titles will need to engage in a great deal of self-reflection. Doing so will allow people to get better at the necessary skills of human interaction. As Geoff Colvin noted in *Humans Are Underrated: What High Achievers Know that Brilliant Machines Never Will*, workers need to “become champions at the skills of human interaction-empathy above all, social sensitivity, collaboration, storytelling, solving problems together, and building relationships.”⁴ Completing self-reflection exercises on a regular basis will help you increase the self-awareness required to improve upon one or more of those skills Colvin mentioned.

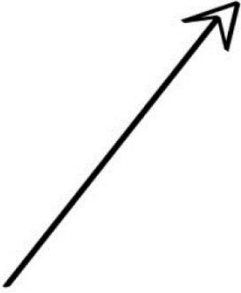
These assessments are relevant for undergraduates across all majors and regardless of the next step after graduation. Even if you want to attend graduate school medical school, law school or some other program, self-assessments should be a priority. Each assessment helps students better understand one specific objective they can accomplish in order to prepare for life after graduation. As the previous section illustrated, having just a college degree is far from sufficient if you want to launch and sustain a career over multiple decades. One needs a commitment to lifelong learning, a significant level of self-awareness, an open mind, and a high level of energy to move forward amidst the chaos of today’s global marketplace. As one of the largest professional services firms in the world PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) stated in a February 2015 white paper *Data Driven: What Students Need to Succeed in A Rapidly Changing Business World*: “self-awareness involves being clear on personal values, understanding your strengths and weaknesses, and being cognizant of one’s impact on others.”⁵

The assessments included in this section can help you identify your personal values, understand your strengths and weaknesses, and provide insight into your impact on others. As stated earlier, you are ultimately responsible for your career so leverage personal assessments to increase your self-awareness and achieve the personal growth and professional development required to succeed in today’s hyper-competitive and ever changing global marketplace. Each of the assessments included in this

section are designed to increase your level of self-awareness. Complete these assessments now and every few months revisit your answers. Doing so allows you to compare your answers as you periodically complete each assessment. The following assessments are in no particular order:

- Build Your Bridge
- Career Target
- AIM for Your Purpose
- The Greater Fool
- The Milkshake
- The Openness and Awareness Index
- Career Vision
- Soft Skills
- “How Good Do You Want to Be?”
- Professional Skills
- Personal Assessment of Traits and Habits to Success
- Emotional Intelligence
- Social Media
- Communicate Your Value

SUCCESS



WHAT PEOPLE THINK
IT LOOKS LIKE

SUCCESS



WHAT IT REALLY
LOOKS LIKE

CHAPTER 10

Build Your Bridge

Objective: To help you to effectively manage your time in college by outlining the five components of an undergraduate education. This assessment allows you a structure upon which you can build your undergraduate experience. It also illustrates that your undergraduate experience consists of five elements and how you piece those together matters. “Too many students fail to engage in the process of figuring out what they want to get out of their entire college experience.”⁶ The bridge exercises helps students build their own blueprint as to what they want to get out of their entire college experience.

Directions: Your undergraduate experience consists of five elements:

- Your major/s and minor/s
- Your core classes and curriculum
- Your elective classes
- Your co-curricular involvement and leadership opportunities
- Your experiential education opportunities (e.g., internships, study abroad, jobs)

Underneath these five elements is your **foundation** that consists of past experiences, family members, friends, personal traits, and beliefs. What do you believe is the foundation of your life at this point in time? What or who do you refer to when you reflect back upon your life or need assistance? What experiences do you draw lessons from in order to move forward?

For this exercise, create a bridge illustration that contains the following:

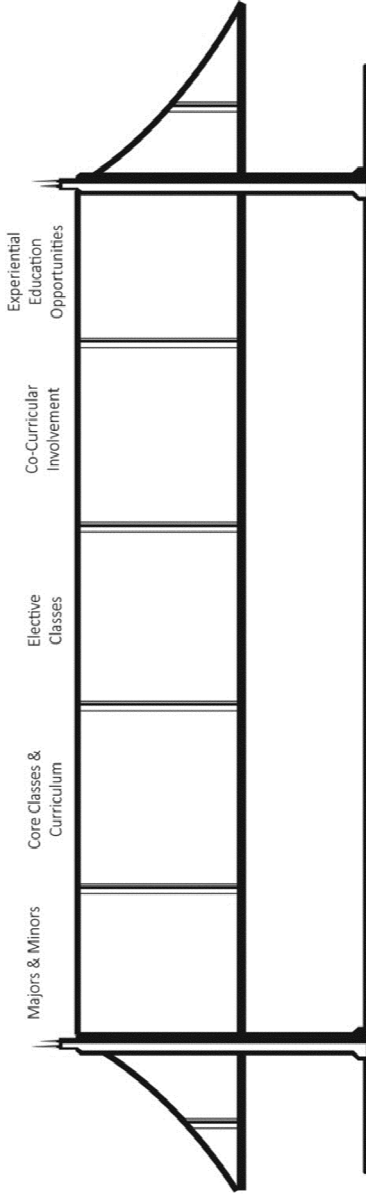
- Today’s date on the left-hand side of the page
- Your anticipated graduation date on the right-hand side of the page
- A description of your foundation at the bottom of the page
- A bridge illustration that contains five separate yet equal components:

- o Your major/s or minor/s that already have declared or would like to declare
- o Your core classes and curriculum that you would like to take prior to graduation
- o Your elective classes that you would like to take prior to graduation
- o Your co-curricular activities that you would like to get involved with and perhaps lead one day before graduation
- o Your experiential education opportunities that you would like to apply to such as an internship, study abroad, or other opportunities.

Please Note: Once you build your bridge the first time, you will more than likely edit it as you go through your undergraduate experience. Please refer to it each semester, so that you can plan accordingly and get the most out of your undergraduate experience.

UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Your undergraduate experience consists of five elements:



FOUNDATION

Past Experiences Family Members Friends Personal Traits Beliefs

What do you believe is the foundation of your life at this point in time?
 What or who do you refer to when you reflect back upon your life or need assistance?
 What experiences do you draw lessons from in order to move forward?

Today's Date

Graduation Date

CHAPTER 11

Career Target

Objective: To help you stay focused on those issues, skills, and locations of interest to you.

Directions: Launching or navigating a career move consists of a variety of targets. Like any target or dartboard, however, there is one bull's-eye surrounded by other rings of opportunity to score points. Hence, when you are looking for a job, it is important to remind yourself that multiple opportunities exist, but only if you are looking for them.

For this assessment, you are going to answer seven questions:

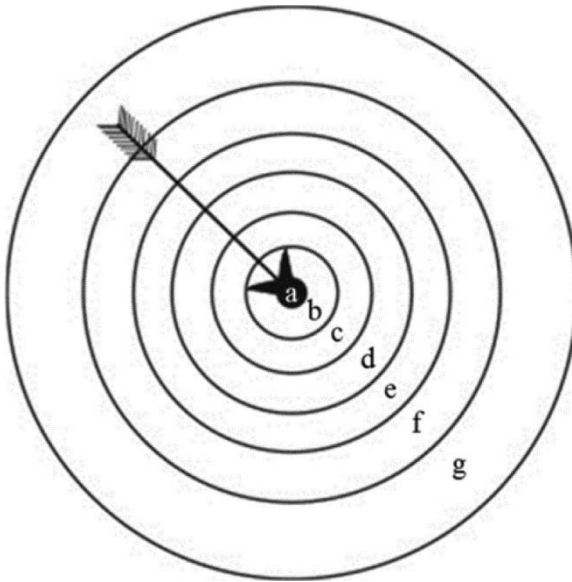
1. Where do you want to live?
2. What specific company/organization or type of do you want to work for?
3. What local/global issues are of great interest to you?
4. What would you do if you knew you would not fail?
5. What are some dream job/s you currently have?
6. What do you like to do?
7. What are you good at?

Once you have answered each of the seven questions, match them with one of the letters on the target. Doing so allows you to prioritize your career targets. It is difficult to accomplish a goal if you do not clearly identify what it is you are trying to accomplish. Match each of your answers with one of the letters on the target.

For example:

- a. Where do you want to live?
 - i. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- b. What specific company/organization or type of do you want to work for?
 - i. Any college or university

- c. What local/global issues are of great interest to you?
 - i. Helping young professionals launch and navigate their career
- d. What would you do if you knew you would not fail?
 - i. Write non-fiction books
- e. What are some dream job/s you currently have?
 - i. President of a college or university
 - ii. Vice President at a private company
- f. What do you like to do?
 - i. Public speaking
- g. What are you good at?
 - i. Public speaking



In this example, the person has chosen where they want to live as the target. Such a decision is critically important as they can then focus on the other rings of opportunity. All too often, however, young professionals have no idea of their target. This assessment allows you to create the rings of opportunity important to you as you launch your career. Remember, you can change your targets anytime.

CHAPTER 12

AIM for Your Purpose

Objective: To help you identify your life purpose. Since one's purpose often changes throughout life, it will be important to revisit this frequently. You may also have more than one life purpose. To live a life of purpose requires you to constantly reflect on your life situation and assess the best course of action that will help you translate your vision into reality.

Directions: To complete this exercise, you will need to answer three questions using the AIM acronym for (Action, Individual, and Mission). If you wish to have more than one purpose, and most people are capable of doing so, then complete this exercise for each purpose.

- What *Action* do you want to take?
- What *Individuals* do you want to help?
- What *Mission* do you want to accomplish?

Below is an example:

- I want to teach (action) high school and college students (individuals) that their school, major, or grade point average (GPA) play a secondary role in their career success.

Once completed, post this exercise somewhere you will see it each day. As you develop both personally and professionally, challenge yourself to update your purpose. After all, you just need to A.I.M.! Identifying your purpose in life is one of the most important exercises you need to complete.

To complete the following table, you will need to answer three questions using the AIM acronym (Action, Individual, and Mission):

- What *Action* do you want to take?
- What *Individuals* do you want to help?
- What *Mission* do you want to accomplish?

| | What action do you want to take? | What individuals do you want to help? | What mission do you want to accomplish? |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| My purpose in life is to: | teach | College students | That their school, major, and GPA play a secondary role in their career success |
| My purpose in life is to: | motivate | adults | To work toward a life of intention and to work with purpose |
| My purpose in life is to: | | | |
| My purpose in life is to: | | | |

One final note here about finding your purpose—remember that it is yours and yours alone. You may not know exactly what your purpose is now and that is okay. Choose to be happy with your current life purpose, recognize that you can always change it, and understand that comparing yourself with others robs you of your own joy. As Theodore Roosevelt said, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” It is often difficult to do but try to not compare your career to others. If you are living with purpose and happy with your choices then comparison offers no valuable or tangible lesson for personal growth or professional development.

CHAPTER 13

The Greater Fool Theory

Objective: To have you reflect upon the greater fool theory.

Directions: Read the statement and then answer the questions that follow.

The greater fool theory (also called survivor investing) is the belief held by one who makes a questionable investment, with the assumption that they will be able to sell it later to “a greater fool”; in other words, buying something not because you believe that it is worth the price, but rather because you believe that you will be able to sell it to someone else at an even higher price. When applied to fields outside of economics, the term greater fool means someone who combines self-delusion with ego in order to succeed where others have failed.

In the final episode of *The Newsroom* (Season 1, 2013), the term “greater fool” was used to describe the show’s main character, Will McAvoy (Jeff Daniels), because of his belief in doing “real news.” Throughout the episode, Will views it as a negative term. However, financial reporter Sloan Sabbith (actress Olivia Munn) tells Will, “The greater fool is someone with the perfect blend of self-delusion and ego to think that he can succeed where others have failed. This whole country was made by greater fools.”⁷

1. What does it take to be a greater fool?
2. Why does an organization need greater fools?
3. What are some issues the greater fool will encounter along the way?
4. Are you, or do you wish to be, a greater fool? Explain.
5. Have you studied a greater fool in history? Do you personally know of any greater fools? What can you learn from them? Explain.

CHAPTER 14

The Milkshake

Objective: To assess your level of awareness as it relates to connecting with others.

Directions: Read the statement below and answer the questions.

In *How Will You Measure Your Life*, Clayton Christensen shares the story of a fast-food restaurant chain that wanted to improve its milkshake sales. The company started by segmenting its market both by product (milkshakes) and by demographics (a marketer's profile of a typical milkshake drinker). Next, the marketing department asked people who fit the demographic to list the characteristics of an ideal milkshake (thick, thin, chunky, smooth, fruity, chocolaty, etc.). The would-be customers answered as honestly as they could, and the company responded to the feedback. But alas, milkshake sales did not improve.

The company then enlisted the help of one of Christensen's fellow researchers, who approached the situation by trying to deduce the "job" that customers were "hiring" a milkshake to do. First, he spent a full day in one of the chain's restaurants, carefully documenting who was buying milkshakes, when they bought them, and whether they drank them on the premises. He discovered that 40 percent of the milkshakes were purchased in the morning by people who were generally by themselves and had a long commute to work.

The next morning, he returned to the restaurant and interviewed customers who left with milkshake in hand, asking them what job they had hired the milkshake to do.

"Most of them, it turned out, bought [the milkshake] to do a similar job," he writes. "They faced a long, boring commute and needed something to keep that extra hand busy and to make the commute more interesting. They weren't yet hungry, but knew that they'd be hungry by 10 a.m.; they wanted to consume something now that would stave off hunger until noon. And they faced constraints: They were in a hurry, they were wearing work clothes, and they had (at most) one free hand."

The milkshake was hired in lieu of a bagel or doughnut because it was relatively tidy and appetite-quickening, and because trying to suck a thick liquid through a thin straw gave customers something to do with their boring commute. Understanding the job to be done, the company could then respond by creating a morning milkshake that was even thicker (to last through a long commute) and more interesting (with chunks of fruit) than its predecessor. The chain could also respond to a separate job that customers needed milkshakes to do: serve as a special treat for young children—without making the parents wait a half hour as the children tried to work the milkshake through a straw. In that case, a different, thinner milkshake was in order.⁸

When marketing yourself to others, learn to apply lessons from the milkshake story and ask others what jobs they need done. Doing so can help you figure out if what they have available is a good fit with the type of work you are looking for. To use an analogy from the story itself, perhaps the organization is looking for a bagel but you have yogurt to offer.

Questions

1. Write down a situation in the last few weeks where you hired someone to fill a specific need (and no we are not talking about hiring a plumber to fix a leak). What lessons can you take away from this observation?
2. Write down a situation where someone hired you to fill a specific need. What lessons can you take away from this observation?

CHAPTER 15

The Openness and Awareness Index

Objective: To provide insight into your openness to opportunities and knowledge of basic economic facts. Both are critical traits for recent college graduates to practice as they claim responsibility for transitioning from college to work.

Directions: Part I—Economic Issues: For each of the following questions, write down true or false after each one. For each correct question, assign yourself five points.

1. Approximately 40 percent of college graduates from 2013 and 2014 had a first job that paid them less than \$25,000 a year.
2. Approximately 60 percent of American workers have a job that pays less than \$20 an hour, which is equivalent to earning less than \$41,600 a year.
3. Generally speaking, a recent college graduate will have 10 to 14 jobs by the time they are 38 years of age.
4. The number of people with a master's degree who received food stamps almost tripled from 101,682 to 293,029, and the number of PhDs on public assistance substantially increased from 9,776 to 33,655 during 2007 to 2010.
5. For young college graduates, the unemployment rate is currently 8.5 percent (compared with 5.5% in 2007), and the underemployment rate is 16.8 percent (compared with 9.6% in 2007).

Economics Issues Score: _____

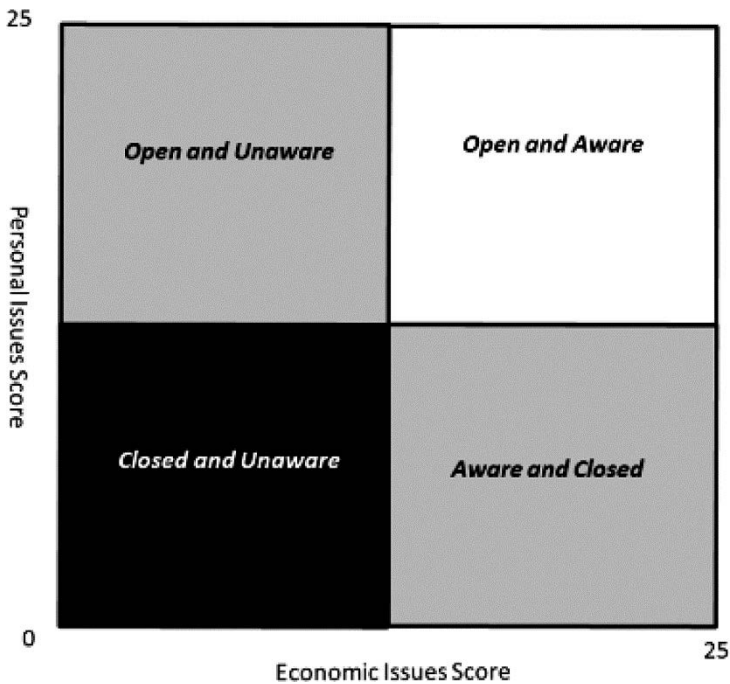
To grade your responses, please find the answers below the explanations.

Directions: Part II—Personal Issues: For each of the following statements, use the scale below to assign yourself one to five points for how much you agree with each item.

Do Not Agree (1); Rarely Agree (2); Sometimes Agree (3); Often Agree (4); Agree (5)

1. No one person will understand why they should hire me until I communicate my value in a clear and concise manner.
2. Networking is fundamental to my career success, so I actively network in person and online via LinkedIn and other platforms.
3. Long-term income potential is related to grit and ambition more than any specific major, minor, or academic certification.
4. In today’s ever-changing global marketplace, it is likely that I will pursue several dream jobs throughout my career.
5. Today’s economy is hypercompetitive, so I am willing to start at the bottom of an organization and work my way up over time.

Personal Issues Score: _____



Open and Aware: You have an open mind regarding potential career opportunities and possess an awareness of the current economic situation. An open mind will help you identify or create opportunities as you launch your career. Maintaining an open mind can help you develop the personal skills and traits required to successfully launch and then maintain a career over decades. An awareness of the current economic situation can provide much needed perspective as you consider various job opportunities and career paths. Staying current on issues such as salaries, benefits, and other career-related topics can shed some important light on new opportunities. Ultimately, transitioning from college to work is your responsibility, not your employer's. Your open mind and knowledge about the economy can help as you move forward.

Open and Unaware: You have an open mind regarding potential career opportunities but lack an awareness of the current economic situation. An open mind will help you identify or create opportunities as you launch your career. Maintaining an open mind can help you develop the personal skills and traits required to successfully launch and then maintain a career over decades. An awareness of the current economic situation can provide much needed perspective as you consider various job opportunities and career paths. Staying current on issues such as salaries, benefits, and other career-related topics can shed some important light on new opportunities. Ultimately, transitioning from college to work is your responsibility, not your employer's. Work on learning more about the economy while maintaining your open mind. Doing so could help your transition to work go more smoothly.

Closed and Unaware: You have a closed mind regarding potential career opportunities and lack an awareness of the current economic situation. An open mind will help you identify or create opportunities as you launch your career. Maintaining an open mind can help you develop the personal skills and traits required to successfully launch and then maintain a career over decades. An awareness of the current economic situation can provide much needed perspective as you consider various job opportunities and career paths. Staying current on issues such as salaries, benefits, and other career-related topics can shed some important light on new opportunities. Ultimately, transitioning from college to work is your responsibility, not

your employer's. Work on learning more about the economy and opening your mind to new opportunities that others provide. You should also consider learning how to create your own opportunities. Doing so could help your transition to work go more smoothly.

Closed and Aware: You have a closed mind regarding potential career opportunities but have an awareness of the current economic situation. An open mind will help you identify or create opportunities as you launch your career. Maintaining an open mind can help you develop the personal skills and traits required to successfully launch and then maintain a career over decades. An awareness of the current economic situation can provide much needed perspective as you consider various job opportunities and career paths. Staying current on issues such as salaries, benefits, and other career-related topics can shed some important light on new opportunities. Ultimately, transitioning from college to work is your responsibility, not your employer's. Work on opening your mind to new opportunities that others provide. You should also consider learning how to create your own opportunities. Doing so could help your transition to work go more smoothly.

Answers to the True and False questions are all true.

CHAPTER 16

Career Vision

Objective: To challenge students to understand three common career paths: knowledge, issues, and skills.

Directions: Locate at least one job description for each of the three types of careers. Find a knowledge position that is directly related to your major; a job that pertains to one of the key issues important to you; and a position that requires a specific skill that you can adequately demonstrate. Remember, the most options you can see and consider, the most opportunities that will come your way.

Introduction: Generally speaking, there are three types of careers:

- **Knowledge-based careers:** These are most closely aligned with a student's undergraduate academic major.
 - Ex: The history major who teaches social studies in high school.
- **Issue-based careers:** Individuals are attracted to these types of opportunities because they are passionate about the specific issue. One's undergraduate academic major may or may not factor into this type of position.
 - Ex: The world languages major working at a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping homeless people.
- **Skill-based careers:** where an employer is hired due to a specific skill.
 - Ex: The English major who goes into market research because a company was impressed with her writing and presentation skills.

Knowledge-Based Careers

Following is the list of typical jobs related to history major in the knowledge-based area. This is just one example of knowledge-based careers. Every major has knowledge-based careers.

- Historians as educators
 - Elementary schools
 - Secondary schools
 - Postsecondary education
 - Historic sites and museums
- Historians as researchers
 - Museums and historical organizations
 - Cultural resources management and historic preservation
 - Think tanks
- Historians as communicators
 - Writers and editors
 - Journalists
 - Documentary editors
 - Producers of multimedia material
- Historians as information managers
 - Archivists
 - Records managers
 - Librarians information managers
- Historians as advocates
 - Lawyers and paralegals
 - Litigation support
 - Legislative staff work
 - Foundations

Issue-Based Careers

The following list of global issues represents a wide variety of career options for any major:

- Arms trade
- Biodiversity
- Causes of poverty
- Climate change and global warming
- Consumption and consumerism
- Education environmental issues

- Fair trade
- Food and agriculture
- Geopolitics
- Health issues
- Human rights issues
- International criminal court
- Mainstream media
- Natural disasters
- Nuclear weapons
- Sustainable development
- Third world debt
- War on terror
- World hunger and poverty

Skill-Based Careers

Many employers are looking for candidates that can demonstrate one or more of the following skills.

- Ability to work in a team structure
- Ability to make decisions and solve problems
- Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization
- Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work
- Ability to obtain and process information
- Ability to analyze quantitative data
- Ability to work with others in a diverse environment
- Proficiency with computer software programs
- Ability to create and/or edit written reports
- Ability to sell and influence others

CHAPTER 17

Soft Skills

Objective: To evaluate your non-cognitive or soft skills that are critical to personal and professional development.

Directions: For each of the following soft skills, ask yourself “How frequently have I practiced this trait during the last month?”

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

1. **Comprehension:** When introduced to a new project or task, a student is able to comprehend and analyze information and expectations provided by the teacher and ask the right questions to complete the task beyond expectations and on time.
2. **Independent learning:** A student takes the personal initiative to seek out and make use of new resources and inspirations to include them in learning independently beyond the classroom.
3. **Problem solving:** A student routinely solves problems and works toward answering questions.
4. **Progressive learning:** The student is able to apply principles, facts, and feedback to improve upon what they are responsible for having learned.
5. **Process:** A student understands, enjoys, and respects the process by which work is completed.
6. **Initiative/Motivation:** A student exhibits a love, drives for what he or she does, and seeks opportunities to continue and expand his or her personal growth.
7. **Self-evaluation:** A student takes a critical eye to the details of his or her work, carefully checking assignment requirements prior to presenting his or her finished product.
8. **Improvement:** A student continually works to improve his or her knowledge, skills, and craft.

9. **Professionalism:** A student conducts himself or herself in a professional manner, presenting his or her work in its best light.
10. **Respects opinions:** A student understands the value of other's opinions and insights.
11. **Verbal interaction:** A student uses professional, nonabusive, socially appropriate, and grammatically correct language when interacting with coworkers, clients, and service providers, both in person and online communication.
12. **Express concepts:** A student effectively expresses his or her process, thoughts, ideas, and solutions verbally.
13. **Participation:** A student contributes to the creative collective by joining in activities, discussions, and critiques. A student is attentive while others are speaking (lectures, presentations, and critiques) and enthusiastically and actively participates in class discussion or activities.
14. **In-class conduct:** A student maintains thoughtful and professional conduct when interacting with coworkers, clients, and service providers. A student follows stated rules of classroom conduct as defined in syllabus and student handbook—including appropriate use of lab facilities, cell phone, or computer when prohibited (i.e., during lecture and demonstrations) and uses class time appropriately.
15. **Preparation:** A student demonstrates the ability to manage time, supplies, and resources, and comes to each class prepared to accomplish requirements of scheduled activities in order to deliver the job on time and meet job expectations.
16. **Out of class work:** A student is expected to spend at least the minimum required hours outside of class for each credit hour doing homework or computer time to accomplish course objectives. The student understands that to exceed expectations often requires much more time and energy than the minimum time requirements.
17. **Meeting deadlines:** A student meets intermediate and final deadlines throughout the process of a job, as established by the client's needs.
18. **Time management:** A student plans the workload of a job wisely to manage all stages of the job and to allow proper attention to details in the process. A student worker demonstrates the ability to prioritize school work or other demands in order to successfully manage his or her time to accomplish learning objectives.

19. **Attendance:** A student understands how missing work affects one's ability to complete a job well and on time and communicates necessary lapses in attendance.
20. **Responsibility:** A student takes responsibility for his or her actions or in-actions rather than making excuses.

Scores:

- **80 to 100:** You practice soft skills frequently and have a good sense of what they are. Moving forward you will need to maintain this high level of practice. Please note that anyone rarely scores over 90 as it is very difficult to practice so many soft skills at a high level of frequency.
- **60 to 79:** You practice some soft skills frequently and could certainly increase your practice of others. Make a decision to increase the level in which you practice some soft skills and be sure to work on those you seldom use.
- **40 to 59:** You seldom practice most soft skills and there is plenty of room for you to grow both personally and professional. Remember, this is not about strengths and weaknesses but instead, about the frequency in which you practice each soft skill. Now that you have increased your self-awareness you can make a commitment moving forward to identify those soft skills you would like to practice more often.

Next Steps

1. Which two or three soft skills can you rely on during the next month?
2. Which two or three soft skills would you like to practice more often during the next month?

CHAPTER 18

“How Good Do You Want to Be?”

Objective: To challenge you to think about the level of performance you want to achieve during your lifetime.

Directions: This is the shortest assessment in this section. All you have to do is answer one question: “So how good do you want to be?” Only you can answer this question. Take your time. Do some research and figure out if you want to be quite good, the best in the world, or somewhere in between. Like most of the assessments, your answer to this question will probably change over time.

SO HOW GOOD DO YOU WANT TO BE?



CHAPTER 19

Professional Skills Assessment

Objective: To have students assess a wide variety of professional skills related to the 21st century professional.

Directions: For each of the professional skills numbered below, select one of the descriptions underneath it and then provide a specific example as to how you have demonstrated it in the past. If you do not have a specific example, circle that specific professional skill.

1. **Being flexible while managing multiple tasks**
 - a. Demonstrates an ability to achieve desired results
 - b. Delivers reliable and sustained results while effectively dealing with issues as they arise during the process
 - c. Delegates to improve organizational effectiveness
2. **Collaborating with others or working as a team member**
 - a. Inspires cooperation and confidence
 - b. Promotes cooperative behavior and team efforts
 - c. Gives careful consideration to tactical alternatives
 - d. Recognizes value of others, regardless of position or experience
3. **Communicating by listening, writing, or speaking**
 - a. Makes effective and proper use of communication platforms and devices
 - b. Is able to communicate complex information into user-friendly terms
 - c. Encourages honest feedback
 - d. Schedules meetings only when absolutely necessary
4. **Completing assignments independently**
 - a. Meets responsibilities promptly
 - b. Achieves results when confronted with major responsibilities and limited resources

- c. Comfortable asking questions to ensure deliverable is completed as designed
- 5. Connecting choices and actions to ethical decisions**
 - a. Maintains high personal integrity
 - b. Adheres to ethical principles that reflect the highest standards of organizational and individual behavior
 - c. Is regarded as highly trustful, sincere, and honest
 - 6. Demonstrating innovative or creative ideas**
 - a. Follows a variety of approaches in activities and techniques
 - b. Challenges conventional practices
 - c. Thinks differently by relying on a disparate set of resources
 - 7. Engaging with others at work and the community**
 - a. Recognizes the value of others within the community on a regular basis
 - b. Supports others through training, identification of new resources, or forging connections across departments
 - c. Offers a pleasant personality and is someone people want to be around
 - 8. Getting along with others**
 - a. Encourages the full participation of all team members
 - b. Excels in appointing people with complementary skills for maximum team effort
 - c. Makes sure that personal differences do not impact professional environment
 - 9. Learning about new technological developments**
 - a. Seeks out new technological platforms and devices to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency
 - b. Helps others overcome issues with new technology
 - c. Studies how competitors are leveraging technology
 - 10. Locating, organizing and evaluating information**
 - a. Demonstrates a tremendous knowledge of information sources
 - b. Draws on a variety of resources to achieve results
 - c. Seeks out new information sources to help spark creative ideas and new ways of thinking

11. **Managing and leading others**
 - a. Projects self-confidence, authority, and enthusiasm
 - b. Is an inspirational leader
 - c. Exerts a positive influence on the organizational culture
 - d. Understands the difference between management and leadership and works hard at development both skill sets
12. **Organizing and executing a plan of action**
 - a. Effectively puts plans into action
 - b. Anticipates emerging opportunities
 - c. Schedules updates to ensure plan continues forward
13. **Thinking critically and analytically to solve problems**
 - a. Promotes an environment conducive to creativity
 - b. Welcomes ideas, even those they are contradictory, from others
 - c. Recognizes the power of information
14. **Understanding global issues and their implications**
 - a. Recognizes the key global trends impacting the organization
 - b. Works to help others understand the implications of global issues
15. **Working with numbers and analyzing data**
 - a. Demonstrates a strong power of data analysis
 - b. Discusses data integrity and its importance within a study
 - c. Understands how data can help provide insight into key issues

Next Steps

1. Which two or three professional development skills can you rely on during the next month?
2. Which two or three professional development skills would you like to practice more often during the next month?

CHAPTER 20

Personal Assessment of Traits and Habits to Success

Objective: To have students increase their self-awareness by evaluating how often they practice the traits and habits of successful people.

Directions: For each of the 20 traits and habits of successful people listed below, ask yourself how often you practiced each one during the last month: never, seldom, sometimes, often, always. For example, “during the last month I sometimes practiced the trait of believing I create my own life.”

Introduction: The ability to engage in routine self-evaluations of personal traits and professional skills is a necessary component of communicating one’s value to the marketplace. The Personal Assessment of Traits and Habits (PATH) to Success lists 20 of the most common personal traits and habits frequently practiced by successful professionals and organizations. Each one is listed below with a definition and an example of someone who has demonstrated that specific trait or habit.

1. **Believe you create your own life:** The influence of other people and circumstances are all around us, but you need to believe that you can make an impact on them if you want to achieve your goals.
 - a. *Madame Walker* was an American entrepreneur and philanthropist, regarded as the first female African-American self-made millionaire. She created her own life and doing so allowed her to make her fortune by developing and marketing a successful line of beauty and hair products for women.
2. **Create a vision for your life:** Know where you are going, where you need to turn, and what resources you need along the way, so you can live with intention.
 - a. *Jack Dorsey* is an American web developer and businessman widely known as the creator of Twitter and as the founder and

CEO of Square, a mobile payments company. In a *60 Minutes* interview in April 2013, Dorsey outlined his vision for his life and expressed interest in becoming Mayor of New York City one day.

3. **Define a specific goal:** It is impossible to work toward something if you do not know exactly what it is you are trying to achieve.
 - a. *Charles Kemmons Wilson* defined a specific goal of creating the Holiday Inn chain of hotels that were friendly to families. Wilson came up with the idea after a family road trip during which he was disappointed by the quality provided by motels of that era.
4. **Exercise self-discipline:** Once you have clearly identified a vision and goals, it requires inner drive and deliberate effort over an extended period of time to achieve them. Exercising self-discipline can help you travel down your PATH to success as you manage the other traits and habits needed to succeed.
 - a. *Christopher Paul Gardner* exercised self-discipline to overcome homelessness to become an American entrepreneur, investor, stockbroker, motivational speaker, author, and philanthropist.
5. **Deal with change:** The world is in constant motion and people that live with intention and work with purpose have to deal with change on a constant basis. Instead of avoiding or ignoring change, it is important to recognize its existence and figure out ways to manage the change in order to live with intention and work with purpose.
 - a. *Gabrielle “Coco” Bonheur Chanel* dealt with change as she had to overcome a difficult childhood and became a French fashion designer and founder of the Chanel brand. She was the only fashion designer to appear on *Time* magazine’s list of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century.
6. **Rebound from failure:** Nobody is successful all the time with everything they try to do. If we give up after a failure or two, we will fall short of achieving the life we envision. Few, if any, people or organizations achieved success without experiencing some degree of failure along the way.

- a. *Eric Thomas* rebounded from failure as a high school dropout to eventually obtain his Master's degree and developed The Advantage Program, an undergraduate retention program targeting academically high-risk students of color.
7. **Believe in yourself when others do not:** Your goals and desires are uniquely yours and may not be shared by anyone else. To achieve them, you must retain self-confidence in what you are doing despite what others say.
 - a. *Orville Wright and Wilbur Wright*, The Wright brothers, believed in themselves when others did not as they pioneered aviation inventing and building the world's first successful airplane and making the first controlled, powered, and sustained heavier-than-air human flight, on December 17, 1903.
8. **Exhibit courageous behavior:** Courage is facing situations that scare us but demand our attention if we want to take action and achieve a new goal.
 - a. *Valentino Deng* demonstrated courageous behavior by building schools in Sudan, the very place where decades earlier the Second Sudanese Civil War wiped out his village. Deng is one of the Lost Boys of Sudan—the name given to 20,000 boys who were displaced and/or orphaned during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983 to 2005).
9. **Get comfortable being uncomfortable:** Many things in life make us uncomfortable, so we must routinely practice getting comfortable in uncomfortable situations, both personally and professionally. Doing so can help us take the smallest of steps toward our next goal.
 - a. *Dick Fosbury* was able to get comfortable being uncomfortable and revolutionized the high jump event, inventing a unique “back-first” technique, now known as the Fosbury Flop, adopted by almost all high jumpers today. His method was to sprint diagonally toward the bar, then curve and leap backward over the bar.
10. **Persevere through a difficult situation:** Reaching any goal requires you to keep moving forward no matter what the obstacle or how difficult the situation.

- a. *Mario Renato Capecchi* persevered through a difficult situation when as a child he was left to fend for himself on the streets of northern Italy for the 4 years, living in various orphanages and almost died of malnutrition. Capecchi eventually became a molecular geneticist and a co-winner of the 2007 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.
11. **Be more resourceful:** Be aware that other resources or people might exist to help you answer a question, address an issue, or resolve a problem.
 - a. *Jimmy Wales* learned to be more resourceful when he helped create Wikipedia after two previous business ventures provided the funding he needed to launch the free online encyclopedia.
12. **Prioritize your to-do list:** There are many things we have to do, but not all things are necessary for us to meet our timelines and accomplish our goals.
 - a. *Fred Smith* prioritized his to-do list in order to become the founder, chairman, president, and CEO of FedEx, originally known as Federal Express, the first overnight express delivery company in the world, and the largest in the world.
13. **Collaborate with others:** Working with others can make you more effective by exponentially increasing your capabilities.
 - a. *Paul Orfalea* collaborated with others when he grew his first Kinko's store in 1970 to a network of over 80 stores in the United States. Rather than franchise, Orfalea formed partnerships with each individual store's local co-owners.
14. **Differentiate yourself:** Examine your traits and skills, so you can identify what makes you unique and valuable to others in a specific situation.
 - a. *S. Truett Cathy* differentiated himself when he launched Chick-fil-A restaurant chain centered on the chicken sandwich. A devout Baptist, Truett further differentiated himself by always closing his stores on Sunday.
15. **Communicate your value:** Present a compelling story about yourself, so that others can better understand how you differentiate and offer value to them.

- a. *Sheryl Sandberg*, author of *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, urges women to communicate their value in order to advocate for themselves whether in the workplace, home, or in school.
16. **Understand events and people more clearly:** Assumptions block communication, hurt collaboration, and derail action.
- a. *Dale Chihuly*, as a world renowned glass sculptor and entrepreneur, needed to understand events and people more clearly when glass blinded him in a car accident. Unable to create the glass art he taught others and learned how to become “more choreographer than dancer, more supervisor than participant, more director than actor.”
17. **Respect and discuss new ideas:** Growth comes from inviting, processing, and implementing new ideas without judging the validity of those ideas before thinking about them. New perspectives can help you become more creative and open opportunities.
- a. *Michael Wesch* respects and discusses new ideas, especially the effect of new media on human interaction through the emerging field of digital ethnography.
18. **Take calculated risks:** To live with intention is to move forward without a guaranteed outcome because one or more of the variables are unknown.
- a. *Philip Petite* is a French high-wire artist who took a calculated risk and gained fame for his high-wire walk between the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, New York, on August 7, 1974.
19. **Ask yourself empowering questions:** Question what is happening around you to deepen your understanding. Instead of lamenting when something occurs, you can ask “what is life trying to teach me at this very moment?”
- a. *Randy Paus* was an American professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University. Upon learning that he had pancreatic cancer in September 2006, he asked himself empowering questions and gave an upbeat lecture titled “The Last Lecture: Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams” on September 18,

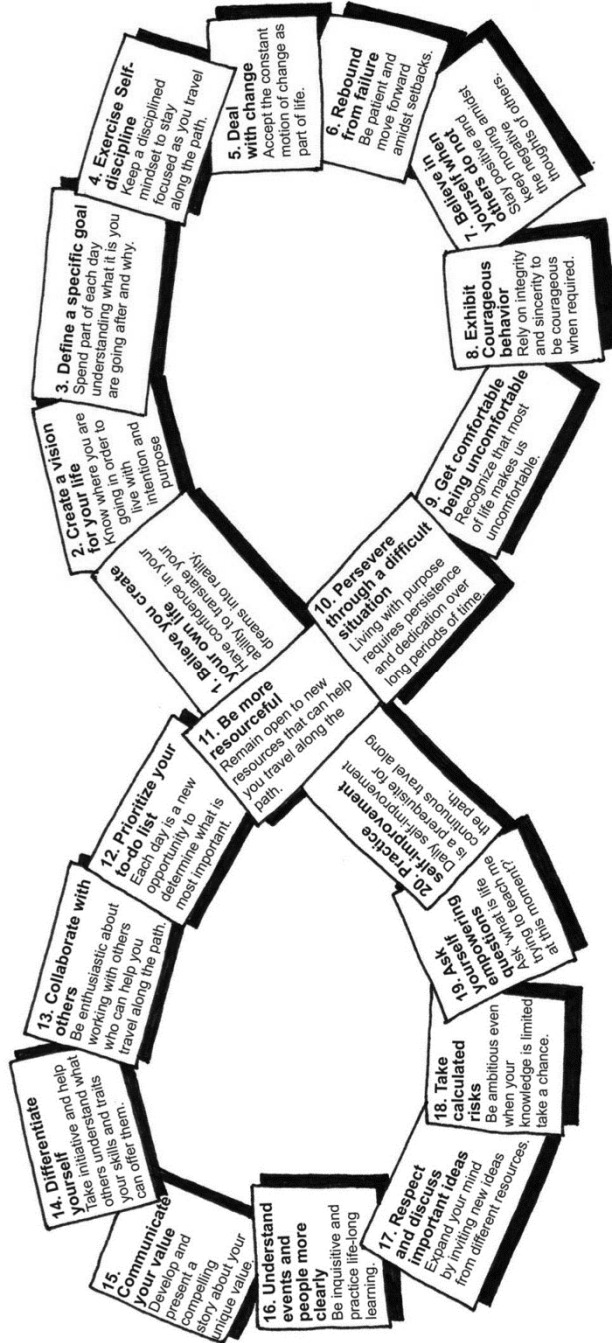
2007. Pausch died of complications from pancreatic cancer on July 25, 2008.

20. **Practice self-improvement:** The more you intentionally improve the other traits and habits, the more effective you become in other areas of your life. Only you can take the steps needed to practice self-improvement on a regular basis as you look to achieve the personal growth required for professional development.
 - a. *Reid Hoffman* is an American entrepreneur who co-founded LinkedIn, venture capitalist, and an author. In his book *The Start-Up of You*, Hoffman wrote that we are all in a state of permanent beta. “Each day presents an opportunity to learn more, do more, grow more.” Permanent beta is a lifelong commitment to continuous personal growth.

Next Steps

1. Which two or three traits or habits of successful people can you rely on during the next month?
2. Which two or three traits or habits of successful people would you like to practice more often during the next month?

The Personal Assessment of Traits and Habits (PATH) to Success



CHAPTER 21

Emotional Intelligence Assessment

Objective: To provide students with an opportunity to assess their emotional quotient (EQ) or emotional intelligence.

Directions: EQ: For each of the following EQ traits listed below, ask yourself how often you practiced each one during the last month: never, seldom, sometimes, often, always. For example, during the last month I seldom practiced realistic self-confidence and often misunderstood my own strengths and limitations and seldom relied on someone else on the team.

1. Self-awareness

a. *Realistic self-confidence:* You understand your own strengths and limitations; you operate from competence and know when to rely on someone else on the team.

i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

b. *Emotional insight:* You understand your feelings. Being aware of what makes you angry, for instance, can help you manage that anger.

i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

2. Self-management

a. *Resilience*: You stay calm under pressure and recover quickly from upsets. You don't brood or panic. In a crisis, people look to the leader for reassurance; if the leader is calm, they can be, too.

- i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

b. *Emotional balance*: You keep any distressful feelings in check—instead of blowing up at people, you let them know what's wrong and what the solution is.

- i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

c. *Self-motivation*: You keep moving toward distant goals despite setbacks.

- i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

3. Empathy

a. *Cognitive and emotional empathy*: Because you understand other perspectives, you can put things in ways colleagues comprehend. And you welcome their questions, just to be sure. Cognitive empathy, along with reading another person's feelings accurately, makes for effective communication.

- i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

- b. *Good listening*: You pay full attention to the other person and take time to understand what they are saying, without talking over them or hijacking the agenda.
 - i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

4. Relationship skills

- a. *Compelling communication*: You put your points in persuasive, clear ways, so that people are motivated as well as clear about expectations.
 - i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

- b. *Team playing*: People feel relaxed working with you. One sign: They laugh easily around you.
 - i. How frequently have you practiced this trait during the last month?

Never (0); Rarely (1); Sometimes (3); Often (4); Always (5)

Next steps

1. Which one trait would you consider to be your most reliable?
2. Which one trait would you like to develop in the upcoming month and why?

CHAPTER 22

Social Media Quiz

Objective: To determine your level of professional preparation and understanding related to social media.

Directions: For each of the following statements, choose one of the options.

1. You have a profile on both Facebook and LinkedIn:
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. What is LinkedIn?
2. In your LinkedIn profile picture you are:
 - a. Professionally dressed and smiling.
 - b. In a t-shirt and shorts.
 - c. What is LinkedIn?
3. Your LinkedIn profile pic is:
 - a. Current and within the last few years.
 - b. Out of date and taken 5 years ago or longer.
 - c. I need to get a profile pic on LinkedIn.
4. Before you post on any social media, you say to yourself:
 - a. Would I want my boss to read this?
 - b. It's my account so I can be myself!
 - c. Anything goes.
5. You review and clean up your social media accounts:
 - a. On a frequent and regular basis.
 - b. On an infrequent basis.
 - c. Never.
6. On most days you:
 - a. Post at least on one social media account.
 - b. Rarely post since there is so little time.
 - c. Spend my time checking out what others are doing on social media.

7. Your Facebook privacy settings are:
 - a. Set so only friends can see my pictures, tags, and posts.
 - b. I have no idea but will check now.
 - c. My profile is public.
8. Your LinkedIn profile:
 - a. Is updated frequently and includes endorsements and recommendations.
 - b. Is updated frequently and includes just a few, or none, recommendations or endorsements.
 - c. I still need to set up my LinkedIn profile.
9. Your LinkedIn connections are mostly:
 - a. Coworkers and professionals within fields you're interested.
 - b. Friends and coworkers.
 - c. I don't have many connections.
10. When a coworker adds you on social media, you:
 - a. Accept their requests and consider my privacy settings.
 - b. Sometimes connect with them.
 - c. Ignore their requests. They don't need to see my pictures and posts!
11. The last time you Googled your name:
 - a. Within the last month
 - b. Within the last year
 - c. Never
12. When you Google your name the search results:
 - a. Show several relevant links that include my LinkedIn profile, personal web site, and other relevant links about my career.
 - b. Include not only some links about me but also information about others that have my same name.
 - c. There are no relevant links with my name on the first page of the Google search results.

10 points for each A.

5 points for each B.

0 points for each C.

Scores:

- **90 to 120: You are savvy about social media.** You are aware that others search for you online and want to have a good online impression of yourself. You actively engage with social media to enhance your image and realize that it is a powerful tool to help you communicate your value.
- **60 to 89: You are a social media novice.** You have started to understand the purpose of social media but have a good deal of work to do in order to improve your online presence. You infrequently engage with social media, so when someone searches for you there is an incomplete picture of your skills and abilities online.
- **59 or lower: Your social media skills require immediate attention.** You need to seriously consider creating a LinkedIn account or if you have one, substantially improving it so you can be more easily discovered. If you want prospective employers to notice your accomplishments, skills, and abilities, it will be important for you to spend the time to further enhance your online visibility.

CHAPTER 23

Communicate Your Value Assessments

Objective: To allow students to understand how to communicate their value. These assessments are based on my book *Marketing Your Value: 9 Steps to Navigate Your Career*

Directions: This assessment involves three different yet interrelated exercises:

- one word
- value proposition
- success factors

Recognize Your One Word

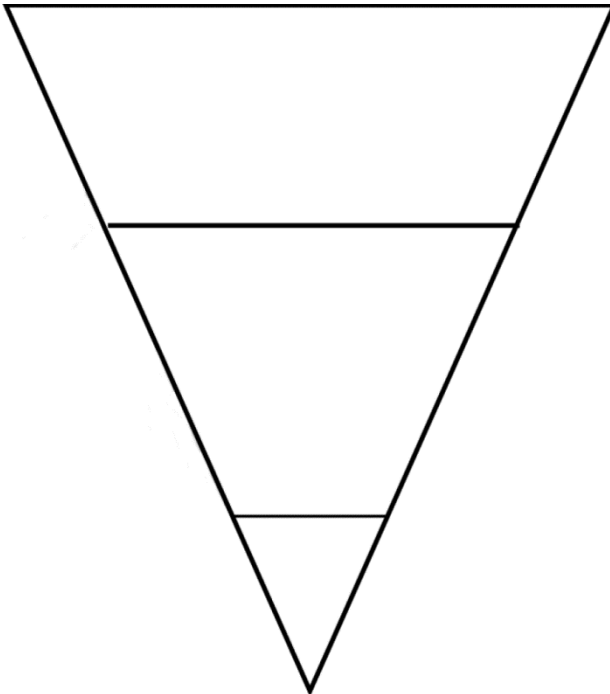
Describing yourself in one word is one of the most difficult challenges to complete. If you do it correctly, however, it provides the focus you need as you start to learn how to communicate your value in a clear, concise, and compelling manner. The selection of a one-word descriptor is so important to the interview process and one's ability to communicate his or her value that LinkedIn has launched an annual list of overused LinkedIn profile buzzwords. Here is their latest list released in December 2013 with over 259 million members worldwide as part of their analysis:⁹

1. Responsible
2. Strategic
3. Creative
4. Effective
5. Patient
6. Expert
7. Organizational
8. Driven

9. Innovative
10. Analytical

While there were similarities around the globe among these top 10 buzzwords, LinkedIn identified some notable outliers such as the word “sustainable” in the Netherlands; “enthusiastic” in Great Britain and “passionate” in Australia and New Zealand.¹⁰

Directions: Complete the triangle below using the answers from this section. In the top section, write down 10 words you would use to describe yourself at this moment in your life. From those 10, select the top 5 and write them in the middle section. From those 5, select the one word you would use to describe yourself and write that in the bottom (smallest) section at the tip of the triangle. Remember, this is your one word and you should revise it throughout your life.



Additional exercise: Ask 10 people to describe you in one word and compare their word against yours. Did most people have a similar word

that you selected? If not, why do you think that is? If they are choosing a word that closely resembles the one word you choose, then please recognize that you are positioning yourself well in the minds of others. This is an important realization as you move forward and market your value and navigate your career.

Value Proposition Exercise

Now that you have completed the one-word exercise, you need to create a value proposition. A value proposition is a statement of seven words or less that help make you stand out from the competition. You can use your value proposition, or some variation of it, to answer any number of questions during an interview or networking event. Examples include: “How would you describe yourself in a minute or less?” “What is your greatest strength?” “Why should we hire you?” A clear, concise, and compelling value proposition contains the following design elements:

- **It highlights your ability to focus:** A value proposition is seven words or less because it forces you to focus on the quality of your words, not quantity. It is impolite to ramble on for more than a few minutes when answering an interview question. During an interview, it is imperative to focus on what is most important and that is engaging in a conversation.
- **It demonstrates preparation:** A well-defined value proposition illustrates that you have given it some thought. The last thing you want to do is stumble on such an important question during an interview or networking event.
- **It allows you to tell a story:** A compelling statement should help spark a conversation where you can then discuss how one or more of your experiences support the words you have chosen for your value proposition.

Examples of value propositions (each seven words or less):

- Using keen insight to help customers
- Relying on resiliency to transform businesses
- Inspiring people to pursue vibrant career paths
- Focused on collaboration and leadership development
- Achieving progress through passion and team work
- Global marketer dedicated to new ideas and insights
- Helping others develop a passion for affordable wine
- Driving innovative product design through enthusiasm
- Experienced senior executive focused on results
- Building relationships through empathy and concern
- An energy provider who gets things done
- Developing human capital to move organizations forward
- Growing profits by increasing effectiveness and efficiency
- Creating compelling brands across different industries
- Action-orientated professional driven to succeed

Step 1. Write down at least five value proposition statements you would use to describe yourself.

Step 2. Share your ideas with others and ask them if they believe any one of those statements best describes you. If you get a consensus, you might want to use the one people agree upon. If not, you may need to draft a few more statements and rethink your word choice. This is a difficult exercise for many people since they stress over selecting the best words. The best thing to do is use your value proposition for a while and see how people react to it. Remember you can always change it.

Step 3. What value proposition did you decide to use?

Success Factors Exercise

Now that you have your one-word descriptor and seven-word value proposition, you can turn your attention to identifying your success factors. With recruiters and hiring managers inundated on a daily basis with hundreds or thousands of applicants submitting their materials, they often

resort to skimming résumés. They simply lack any amount of adequate time to read each résumé word-for-word. One study suggested that recruiters and hiring managers glance at your résumé for 6 seconds. Other research studies indicate that hiring managers and recruiters may spend between 30 seconds up to 2 minutes reading your résumé. Whether it's 6 seconds or 2 minutes, "that's hardly any time to impress someone who could determine your employment future."¹¹ If you are unable to keep their attention, they will most likely toss your résumé aside. Let's review that last sentence. The operative phrase is "if you are unable to keep their attention." Please understand that while you may have spent hours crafting your résumé, it may still lack the compelling material a recruiter or hiring manager needs at that point in time. To help you grab someone's attention while they are reading your résumé, you may want to consider placing three to five success factors at the top of your first page.

Placing three to five success factors at the top of the first page of your résumé allows you to effectively market your value within seconds. "Research suggests that content elements that propel employers to immediately discard résumés include a focus on duties instead of accomplishments, while documented achievements were highly ranked among content elements that employers look for."¹² Since successful factors focus on accomplishments, you are practicing the trait of differentiating your value from that of other candidates. By focusing on your accomplishments, you grab the reader's attention. Your success factors help them understand why they should call you for an interview. Success factors indirectly answer one or more of the following questions:

- What special things did this candidate do in their past that sets them apart from others?
- How well did you do your previous job?
- What specific results did you achieve in your current position?
- What were the problems or challenges that you or the organization faced and how did you overcome the problems?
- How did the company benefit from your performance?
- How did you leave your employers better off than before you worked for them?

- How have you helped your employers to:
 - Make money
 - Save money
 - Save time
 - Make work easier and more efficient
 - Solve a specific problem
 - Be more competitive
 - Build relationships
 - Expand the business
 - Attract new customers
 - Retain existing customers

Examples of Success Factors

- Managed and collaborated with writers, photographers, and editors to produce the campus section of the Anchor, Hope's student-managed newspaper, ensuring well-written, carefully researched, and edited news stories.
- Wrote stories that involved interviews, online research, and event coverage.
- Designed compelling layouts using Adobe InDesign and Photoshop.
- Worked as data analyst for a Fortune 100 company.
- Obtained a career center graduate assistantship at Grand Valley State University.
- Gained advising skills on three different levels: a private baccalaureate institution, a master's degree granting institution, and a level 1 research institution.
- Launched major plank of strategic plan.
- Oversaw a budget of 2 million dollars and led a staff of 15.
- Presented at Michigan Career Personnel Association's (MCPA) Annual Conference, 2013.
- Managed a variety of situations in nonprofit and for-profit environments.
- Successfully increased sales by 17 percent for a product line within a 24-month period.

Directions: Write down at least three but no more than five success factors. You will eventually place these at the top of your résumé. For now, be sure to write down a few sentences that explain your evidence supporting each one of your success factors. You can then mention those during an interview or networking event.

Endnotes

- ¹ Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, "Ace the Assessment," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2015.
- ² Frank Bruni, *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*, Grand Central Publishing, New York City, NY, 2015.
- ³ John Bowen, "The Link Between Personal Development and Professional Success," *Huffington Post*, March 4, 2015.
- ⁴ Dan Schawbel, "Geoff Colvin: Why Humans Will Triumph Over Machines," *Forbes*, August 4, 2015.
- ⁵ *Data Driven: What Students Need to Succeed in A Rapidly Changing Business World*, PwC white paper dated February 2015.
- ⁶ Jeffrey J. Selingo, "Does the College Major Matter? Not Really," *The New York Times*, April 29, 2013.
- ⁷ Wikipedia, "Greater Fool" located at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_fool_theory (accessed June 22, 2015).
- ⁸ "Clay Christensen's Milkshake Marketing," Harvard Business School, Working Knowledge, February 14, 2011.
- ⁹ Christine Choi, "Top 10 Overused LinkedIn Profile Buzzwords of 2013," LinkedIn article, December 11, 2013.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Susan Adams, "The Best and Worst Words to Use on Your Résumé," *Forbes*, March 17, 2014.
- ¹² Katharine Hansen, "Avoid These 10 Résumé Mistakes," *Quintessential Careers*. No date.

APPENDIX A

List of Majors from University of Michigan

The University of Michigan offers its 43,000 students (28,000 undergraduates and 15,000 graduates) over 100 academic majors. Visit <http://admissions.umich.edu/academics-majors/majors-degrees> for more information.

1. Actuarial Mathematics
2. Aerospace Engineering
3. Afro-American and African Studies
4. American Culture
5. Ancient Near Eastern Studies
6. Anthropology
7. Arabic Studies
8. Architecture
9. Armenian Studies
10. Art and Design
11. Arts and Ideas in the Humanities
12. Asian Studies
13. Astronomy and Astrophysics
14. Athletic Training
15. Biochemistry
16. Biology
17. Biomedical Engineering
18. College of Engineering
19. Biomolecular Science
20. Biophysics
21. Biopsychology, Cognition, and Neuroscience
22. Business

23. Cell and Molecular Biology
24. Chemical Engineering
25. Chemical Science
26. Civil Engineering
27. Classical Archaeology
28. Classical Civilization
29. Classical Languages and Literatures
30. Cognitive Science
31. Communication Studies
32. Comparative Literature
33. Computer Engineering
34. Computer Science (BS)
35. Computer Science (BSE)
36. Creative Writing and Literature
37. Dance
38. Data Science (BS)
39. Data Science (BSE)
40. Dental Hygiene
41. Drama
42. Earth and Environmental Sciences
43. Earth System Science and Engineering
44. Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
45. Economics
46. Electrical Engineering
47. Elementary Teacher Education
48. International Studies
49. Italian
50. Jazz Studies
51. Judaic Studies
52. Latin American and Caribbean Studies
53. Latin Language and Literature
54. Latina/o Studies
55. Linguistics
56. Materials Science and Engineering
57. Mathematical Sciences
58. Mathematics

59. Mechanical Engineering
60. Microbiology
61. Middle Eastern and North African Studies
62. Movement Science
63. Multidisciplinary Music Studies
64. Music (nonprofessional)
65. Music Composition
66. Music Education
67. Music Performance
68. Music Performance with Teacher Certification
69. Musical Theater
70. Musicology
71. Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering
72. Near Eastern Studies
73. Neuroscience
74. Nuclear Engineering and Radiological Sciences
75. Nursing
76. Nursing—Second Career
77. Organizational Studies
78. Performing Arts Technology
79. Persian Studies
80. Pharmaceutical Sciences
81. Philosophy
82. Philosophy, Politics, and Economics
83. Physics
84. Plant Biology
85. Polish
86. Political Science
87. Psychology
88. Public Policy
89. Pure Mathematics
90. RC Individual Major Program
91. Romance Languages and Literature
92. Russian
93. Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies
94. Screen Arts and Cultures

95. Screenwriting
96. Secondary Teacher Education
97. Social Theory and Practice
98. Sociology
99. Sound Engineering
100. Spanish
101. Sport Management
102. Statistics
103. Theater Arts
104. Theater Design and Production
105. Theater Performance (Acting and Directing)
106. Turkish Studies
107. Women's Studies

APPENDIX B

Famous People and Their Majors

List of 100 people with their major, college, and title or profession in alphabetical order by last name.

1. Rowan Atkinson, Electrical Engineering, Newcastle University, actor, best known for his role as Mr. Bean
2. Jill Barad, English, Queens College, former CEO of Mattel, Inc.
3. Tony Barone, English, Duke University, former head coach of the Memphis Grizzlies of NBA
4. Chris Berman, History, Brown University, ESPN host
5. Mayim Bialik, Neuroscience, University of California-Los Angeles, actress
6. Joe Biden, History, University of Delaware, Vice President of United States
7. Lloyd Blankfein, Government, Harvard University, CEO of Goldman Sachs
8. Wolf Blitzer, History, Journalism University of Buffalo, CNN host
9. Nicholas Bollettieri, Philosophy, Spring Hill College, tennis coach to Andre Agassi and others
10. Jerry Brown, Classics, University of California-Berkeley, Governor of California
11. Carol Browner, English, University of Florida, American lawyer, environmentalist, and businesswoman
12. Jimmy Buffet, History, University of Southern Mississippi, music singer, songwriter, and author
13. Jeb Bush, Latin American affairs, University of Texas at Austin, former Governor of Florida
14. Dean Cain, History, Princeton University, actor best known for Superman television show
15. Ely Callaway, History, Emory University, legendary entrepreneur and founder of Callaway Golf

16. Steve Carrell, History, Denison University, comedian/star of *The Office* and various films
17. Kenneth Chenault, History, Bowdoin College, Finance Chairman and CEO of American Express
18. Julia Child, History, Smith College, world famous chef and author
19. Ethan Coen, Philosophy, Princeton University, filmmaker with his brother Joel
20. Larry David, History, University of Maryland, comedian/creator of *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*
21. Tim Donahue, English, John Carroll University, President/GM of AT&T Northeast Operations
22. Donna Dubinsky, History, Yale University, CEO of Palm, Inc. and co-founded Handspring with Jeff Hawkins
23. David Duchovny, English, Princeton University, actor, writer, and director
24. Michael Eisner, English, Denison University, CEO of Walt Disney Corp
25. Will Ferrell, Sports Information, University of Southern California, actor and comedian
26. Carly Fiorina, History, Stanford University, former CEO of Hewlett-Packard
27. Will Forte, History, UCLA, comedian and Saturday Night Live star
28. Jodi Foster, English, Yale University, actress, star of numerous movies
29. Matthew Fox, Economics, Columbia University, actor on *Lost*
30. Kathryn Fuller, English, Brown University, President and CEI of the World Wildlife Fund
31. Jim Gaffigan, Business, Georgetown University, comedian
32. Art Garfunkel, Art History, Columbia University, musician
33. Janeane Garofalo, History, Providence College, comedian and actor
34. Newt Gingrich, History, Emory University, former Speaker of the U.S. House
35. Annabeth Gish, English, Duke University, star of *X-Files* and other television/movies
36. Lauren Graham, English, Barnard College, star of *Gilmore Girls* and other shows

37. John Grisham, Accounting, Mississippi State University, author
38. A.J. Hammer, Philosophy, University of Hartford, hosts of CNN
Headline News evening show, Showbiz Tonight
39. Katharine Hepburn, History, Bryn Mawr College, American ac-
tress of film, television, and stage
40. Herbert Hoover, Geology, Stanford University, former U.S. President
41. Ariana Huffington, Economics, Girton College, co-founder and
coeditor in chief of *The Huffington Post*
42. Jeffrey R. Immelt, Math, Dartmouth College, CEO and Chairman
of General Electric
43. Robert Iger, Communications, Ithaca College, CEO of The Walt
Disney Company
44. Ken Jeong, Medicine, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill,
comedian and actor
45. Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, Physiology and Criminology, Uni-
versity of Miami, actor and professional wrestler
46. Sue Monk Kidd, Nursing, Texas Christian University, author
47. Tommy Lee Jones, English, Harvard, actor
48. Duncan Jones, Philosophy, College of Wooster, director
49. Michael Jordan, Geography, University of North Carolina-Chapel
Hill, professional athlete
50. Carol Ronning Kapsner, English, College of St. Catherine, North
Dakota state supreme court justice
51. Garrison Keillor, English, University of Minnesota, author and
host of *A Prairie Home Companion*
52. Kimberly Kelleher, History, University of Wisconsin, Madison,
Vice President and Publisher, *SELF Magazine*
53. John Kennedy, Jr., History, Brown University, magazine publisher,
lawyer, and socialite
54. James Kilts, History, Knox College, President & CEO Gillette
Corporation
55. Donald R. Knauss, History, Indiana University, Clorox chairman
and CEO
56. Lisa Kudrow, Biology, Vassar College, American actress
57. Jay Leno, Speech Therapy, Emerson College, former late night
media personality

58. Eva Longoria, Kinesiology, Texas A&M, American actress, activist, and businesswoman
59. Dolph Lundgren, Chemistry, Washington State University, actor and martial artist
60. Michael Lynne, English, Brooklyn College, Co-Chairman and Co-CEO of New Line Cinema Corporation
61. John J. Mack, History, Duke University, President, Morgan Stanley
62. Rooney Mara, Psychology, International Policy, New York University, actress
63. Chris Martin, Greek and Latin, University College London, lead singer of Coldplay
64. Jerry Mathers, Philosophy, University of California, Berkeley, television star of *Leave it to Beaver*, among others
65. Betsy McCaughey, History, Vassar College, Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York from 1995 to 1998
66. Christopher Meloni, History, University of Colorado, Boulder, Emmy-nominated actor; star of "Law & Order: SVU" and "Oz"
67. Tom Morello, Social Studies, Harvard University, American guitarist and activist, famous for touring with Rage Against the Machine and Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band
68. Gretchen Morgenson, English, Saint Olaf, *New York Times* writer
69. Anne Mulcahy, English and Journalism, Marymount College, former CEO of Xerox
70. Cynthia Nan Sayer, English, Ithaca College, jazz banjoist and vocalist
71. Edward Norton, History, Yale University, American film actor, screen writer and director
72. Conan O'Brien, History, Harvard University, late night television host
73. Christopher O'Connor, Sociology, Ohio State University, CEO of Sherwin-Williams
74. Bill O'Reilly, History, Marist College, author and political commentator
75. Samuel J. Palmisano, History, Johns Hopkins University, CEO, Chairman and President of IBM
76. Henry Paulson, English, Dartmouth College, 74th United States Secretary of the Treasury

77. Regis Philbin, Sociology, University of Notre Dame, Media personality and actor
78. Stone Philips, Philosophy, Yale University, award-winning television journalist
79. Janet Reno, Chemistry, Cornell University, former U.S. Attorney General
80. Sally Ride, English, Stanford University, former NASA astronaut
81. Janet Robinson, English, Salve Regina College, President and Chief Executive Officer
82. Mitt Romney, English, Stanford University, former Governor of Massachusetts
83. Franklin Roosevelt, History, Harvard University, U.S. President, 1933–1945
84. Antonin Scalia, History, Georgetown University, current Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court
85. Herb Scannell, English, Boston College, former President of Nickelodeon and Vice-Chairman of MTV
86. Brooke Shields, French Literature, Princeton University, American actress and model
87. Gene Siskel, Philosophy, Yale University, long-time film critic alongside Robert Ebert
88. Elliott Smith, Philosophy, Hampshire College, musician
89. George Starbird, English, Stanford University, Mayor of San Jose, California from 1954 to 1956
90. Flo Steinberg, History, University of Massachusetts Amherst, publisher of one of the first independent comic books
91. Martha Stewart, History, Barnard College, Living Omnimedia, Inc.
92. Julia Stiles, English, Columbia University, actress
93. George Robert Tebbetts, Philosophy, Providence College, Major League Baseball player and manager
94. Alex Trebek, Philosophy, University of Ottawa, long-time host of Jeopardy game show
95. Christy Turlington, Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy, New York University, model
96. Ted Turner, Classics, Brown University, founder of CNN
97. Kerry Washington, Anthropology, George Washington University, actress on the hit show Scandal

98. John Wooden, English, Purdue University, long-time basketball coach
99. Howard Zahniser, English, Greenville College, environmental activist and primary author of Wilderness Act of 1964
100. Renee Zellweger, English, University of Texas at Austin, star of Chicago and various other movies

APPENDIX C

Extinct, New, and Future Careers¹

Extinct careers: Careers that used to exist but no longer do.

1. *Bowling alley pinsetter*: stack up pins when there was no machine to do it.
2. *Food safety tester*: consumed food to determine if it was safe for others.
3. *Human alarm clocks*: walk around with long sticks tapping on people's windows, throwing pebbles, and shouting at the top of their lungs.
4. *Rat catchers*: eliminate as many rats as possible while risking being bitten.
5. *Elevator operators*: taking passengers to their desired floor and keeping passengers safe.
6. *Milkman*: deliver the product to people's homes on a daily basis.
7. *Lector who entertains factory workers*: come into the factory and read literature to the workers to keep them entertained while doing often tedious work.
8. *Log drivers*: transport logs and other forms of lumber from the forest to the mill by dragging them through rivers.
9. *Radio actors*: people "performed skits, similar to modern sitcoms on TV today over the radio.
10. *Street sweepers*: sweep the streets and sidewalks.
11. *Pre-radar listeners*: the men operating the machines would listen for any detection of incoming enemy using amplified receivers.
12. *Quarrymen*: extracted stone from the earth, and would carve various items.
13. *Lamp lighters*: walk the streets right before it got dark and ignite the flames.
14. *Ice cutter*: saw up the ice on frozen lakes for people to use in their cellars and refrigerators.

15. *Switchboard operator*: connect long-distance calls and do other things that are not done digitally.
16. *Gandy dancers*: lay tracks for the railroads and often singing songs as they toiled.
17. *Town crier*: a gentleman with a booming voice made important announcements.
18. *Resurrectionists*: in the 19th century they removed corpses from graves for universities to use as cadavers.
19. *Hemp dresser*: separate the coarse parts” in the linen industry.
20. *Powder monkey*: stuff gunpowder back into canons.

New careers: Careers that did not exist 20 years ago.

1. *Website copywriter*: writing content conveyed through online media.
2. *Social media manager*: running social media accounts for small and large companies.
3. *Internet marketer*: leverages online tools in order to sell products and promote speaking engagements.
4. *Online business manager*: manages the operations of Internet marketers from their own home office.
5. *Content strategist*: helps plan websites, social media, and newsletter, and figures out how all of these pieces work together.
6. *Blogger*: keeps up with the demanding blogging schedule of big brands
7. *App developer*: develops apps for Apple and Android.
8. *SEO specialist*: ensures websites and Internet properties have been technically optimized.
9. *Chief Listening Officer*: follows social media and finds out what people think and feel about the company.
10. *Professional Ethical Hacker*: “finds problems and vulnerabilities in a company’s computer security system.
11. *3D animator*: produces most of the work from computers with the newest animation software.
12. *Green funeral director*: assists grieving families while promoting a healthy, sustainable environment.
13. *E-commerce consultant*: consults on online sales and businesses.

14. *Big data analyst/architect/engineer*: creates powerful open-source batch-processing platforms [to] allow researchers and businesses to search multiple servers at once.
15. *Cloud-computing worker*: integrates an external platform, like Salesforce.com, with a company's internal systems.
16. *Genetic counselor*: assesses individual or family risk for various inherited genetic disorders and birth defects, providing the information to other health professionals and patients and advising patients and families.
17. *Drone pilot*: pilots for commercial purposes as well as private government work.
18. *3D printing professional*: works in the 3D printing industry as scientists, technicians, engineers, etc.
19. *Wind turbine service technician*: installs, maintains, and repairs wind turbines.
20. *Sustainability expert*: develops new workflows to increase productivity while lowering the carbon footprint of a business.
21. *Elder care*: handle legal concerns, staffing at residential facilities or consultants hired to facilitate end-of-life issues.
22. *Millennial generational expert*: helps companies understand the changing workforce
23. *Zumba teacher*: Latin-inspired dance-fitness program.

Future careers: Careers expected to exist in 20 years.

1. *Productivity counselors*: help people refine their lives to improve their productivity, combining ergonomics, wellness, time management, and career counseling.
2. *Personal digital curator*: recommends and maintains your unique suite of apps, hardware, software, and information sources of your evolving personality and career.
3. *Microbial balancer*: a trained balancer that assesses the composition and microbial makeup of an environment or individual and provides recommendations for balancing ecosystems for enhanced health.
4. *Corporate disorganizer*: an expert that shuffles hierarchies in companies to create start-up culture or organized chaos.

5. *Curiosity tutor*: provides inspiration and content to spark curiosity, but one that teaches the art of discovery.
6. *Alternative currency speculator*: as Bitcoin and other virtual currencies are gaining traction with people who distrust Fiat currency, this is creating an opportunity for alternative currency arbitrage and investment opportunities.
7. *Urban shepherd*: a combination of resilient micro-farmer and guide to the nature-filled side of the city. These plant care specialists focus on small-scale gardens and plots that exist in unusual urban areas.
8. *Printing handyman*: a neighborhood materials and 3D printing specialist, akin to the 'do it all' local repair man of the past who comes to you to fulfill your micro-manufacturing needs.
9. *Digital death manager*: a specialist that creates, manages, or eliminates content to craft ones online presences posthumously.
10. *Personal life log archivist*: organize, catalog, and make sense of the volumes personal content and to identify potential uses for one's life log.
11. *Digital detox therapist*: counselor who specializes in separating technology-stressed individuals from their devices, creating unique analog immersion zones.
12. *Crowdfunding specialist*: expert on sites like Kickstarter and Indiegogo who understands how to promote and attain funds for a project through crowdfunding.
13. *Cultural skill Sherpa*: helps clients develop and acquire the skills to prepare for positions that are one of a kind, emergent or newly relevant.
14. *Quantified self-personal trainer*: health trainer who not only recommends and curates diets but also analyzes personal and fitness routine data to create optimum personal life choices.
15. *Vicarious videographer*: captures unique experiences for consumption by armchair explorers.
16. *Hack-schooling counselor*: encourages students to hack the real world and experiment with life rather than only pursuing traditional educational paths.
17. *Privacy consultant*: reveals vulnerabilities in an individual's personal, physical, and online security points.

18. *Skype staging*: hired career advisors that prepare and help an individual work through remote interviews or video conferencing, including etiquette, appearance, and conversational skills.
19. *Meme agent*: represents and maximizes the value of the personality or intellectual property used in a meme.
20. *Drone driver*: expanding outside of the military, as demand for commercial and private drone use increases, experienced drone drivers will be sought after.

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This book examines a variety of assumptions prevalent in the mental models of undergraduates, parents, educators, higher education leaders, administrators, and policymakers that cause people to fall into a series of mental traps when selecting a major. Divided into three parts, this publication presents a situational analysis on choosing a college major, dissects the mental models and traps people rely on, and offers a variety of assessments that can help increase one’s self-awareness prior to declaring a major.

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