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IN SIGHT

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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

INFUSE PASSION INTO YOUR CAREER

Identifying the passions and motives that drive you is the key to building a meaningful career. People tend to be motivated by what they like, not by what makes sense to others. Yet people allow obligations and external forces to direct their career paths instead of building on their own motivations. They use other people's definitions of success to fuel their efforts, which leads to burnout or unhappiness. By tapping into your passions and motives, you can energize your career development.

Finding the courage to forge your own path and construct a personal definition of success isn't easy, but its rewards are monumental. The steps outlined below will help get you started.

Step 1. Know what you truly want.

Take some time to think about what you *really* want to do. Do not underestimate the power of passion. The world is filled with examples of people who achieved their goals – against all odds – because of their passion. Consider Neil Parry, the San Jose football player whose right leg was amputated below the knee after a horrific injury in the 2000 season. Hours after his leg was removed, Parry vowed he'd play football again. Everyone thought he was delusional. Yet in September 2003, Parry was back on the field, and fans were hard pressed to notice a difference between his abilities and those of his two-legged teammates. He had the drive and passion to withstand 25 operations and countless hours of rehabilitation and physical therapy. Neil Parry is just one example. With passion, we can move mountains. To help you begin to identify your motives, ask yourself:

- What are my priorities?
- What do I want from life?
- What am I willing to sacrifice to achieve my goals?

Step 2. Focus on your strengths, assets, and talents, not your shortcomings.

When your direction is fueled by your internal drive, your shortcomings will have little or no impact on your ability to succeed in reaching your goal. Your shortcomings may present hurdles, but your passion will galvanize your strengths and talents so you can easily clear the bar.

Step 3. Do not accept conventional wisdom unconditionally.

There will frequently be some perfectly logical reason why your qualifications are insufficient for a specific position or why your goal seems unattainable. Anticipate what those reasons might be and decide for yourself whether they are, indeed, insurmountable, or merely a hurdle to clear. Remember, conventional wisdom would suggest that amputees cannot play football. Passion is stronger than conventional wisdom. Always strive to be the exception to the rule.

Step 4. Set goals and develop an action plan.

Carve out some quiet time to think about the direction you'd like your life to take. First, list the 10 to 12 most important things you want to accomplish during your lifetime. Date your list. These are your lifetime goals. From that list, select four or five things you want to accomplish in the next five years to create your five-year plan. Then review your five-year plan and choose three or four things you want to accomplish during the coming year. These are your annual goals. For each annual goal, write down the answer to the following questions:

- What is the goal?
- Why do I want to achieve this goal?
- When will I achieve this goal?
- How will I achieve this goal? (Or: What

three things do I need to DO?)

- Who can help me achieve this goal?

Repeat this process once a year, referring back to your lifetime goals and five-year plan. Revise each list as circumstances warrant. You will be amazed at what you can accomplish when you are clear about what you want and have an action plan in place to guide you.

Step 5. Make course corrections.

Keep in mind that goals and motives may shift as you mature and grow. What moves you to action today may bore you or disillusion you tomorrow. Change should not be seen as a sign of weakness or a lack of commitment. Rather, change should be seen as a prerequisite to personal and professional growth and, ultimately, career satisfaction.

Step 6. Know your “career anchor.”

To achieve success as *you* define it, you must develop the ability to make choices among conflicting goals. Through these choices, you will begin to see what is most important to you. When all needs cannot be met at the same time, it is important to know which one has the highest priority. That priority can be defined as your “career anchor.” It serves as an anchor and shapes the choices you ultimately make throughout your career.

Research suggests that most people can be described in terms of one of eight career anchors. The career anchor can shift or lie dormant as you pass through different life stages, but ultimately it reflects your important inner values. Your career anchor may be a desire to be a specialist or a generalist; it may be a drive for autonomy, security, service, challenge, creativity, or work-life balance. Getting greater clarity about your career anchor will help you to choose your career direction. For more specific information about types of career anchors, see the sidebar below.

Focus inward to figure out how you would like to spend your career without being limited by how you think you could be employed or by what someone else says you should do. Reevaluate your goals and priorities annually. Continual self-assessment will afford you the opportunity to articulate your goals and objectives as they evolve, to

describe and market yourself to potential employers, to evaluate employment options, and to take charge of your future!

This article originally appeared as “Infuse Passion Into Your Career,” Kathleen Brady, Law Practice Today, October 2006. © 2006 by the American Bar Association. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Edgar Schein's Eight Career Anchors

Technical/Functional Competence

- desires to develop expertise in a chosen field
- seeks opportunities to consistently hone craft
- motivated by expanding knowledge base

General Competence

- learns many varied and integrative functions
- enjoys motivating, training, and directing others
- enjoys authority, responsibility, and leadership

Autonomy/Independence

- needs control over own work
- desires freedom from rules and procedures
- wants to be recognized for achievements

Security/Stability

- values a predictable, structured environment
- identifies strongly with the organization
- motivated by calmness, consistency

Creativity

- wants to create something and run it
- likes the challenge of starting new projects, businesses, products, or services

Service

- seeks chance to focus on a particular cause
- motivated by core values
- gets satisfaction from helping others

Challenge

- seeks ever-tougher challenges to conquer
- desires to overcome obstacles, solve problems
- enjoys competition and winning

Lifestyle

- needs to balance work with other priorities and activities
- seeks to integrate work with rest of life
- desires flexibility

Edgar H. Schein, Career Anchors: Self-Assessment (Pfeiffer: San Francisco, 2006).