

Defining, planning the path to a new career

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By Nina Friedman



You say you want to make a change. But before you start out on your challenging trip toward work satisfaction, you should consider the paths to follow and choices to make. With this in mind, let's plan the trip, define the path and establish where you would like to be when it's all over.

In most cases, a great deal of frustration attends the traveler who goes on such a voyage alone and unprepared. Here is what happens on the journey:

- ◆ **Job dissatisfaction** - Many studies show that the average worker is dissatisfied with his or her work life. Most people are in their jobs more or less by free choice. One significant conclusion can be drawn: Poor choices are made because of the absence of knowledge of how to make effective decisions to find job satisfaction.
- ◆ **Choosing the easiest path** - On this journey, a skilled and experienced career counselor may serve as your guide. This guide knows the forest you are in, and has successfully led others through it many times. He or she can anticipate the blind spots, flag the dead ends and help you discover optional pathways and unimagined avenues. This guide has the knowledge of a planned and structured course that can help you successfully reach your new destination.
- ◆ **Career evaluation** - The first leg of your trip is to take stock of your current "work self" (the part of you that desires fulfillment in work.) This is a dynamic process, much like the way Michelangelo sculpted. Without any preconceived images of what he would sculpt, he would sit before his piece of marble. He then began to chip away at the stone, until the image inside it naturally emerged.

So it is for you. Your task in this process is to open-mindedly, curiously and honestly attempt to chip away at your condition and discover new understandings about yourself. The answers that appear form puzzle pieces that can be joined together creatively with the help of your guide. As you let go of old identifications that are no longer true for you, the new or modified "work self" emerges.

It is important that you first look inside yourself to find the answers before looking to classified ads or job markets. Once you know yourself, you can be confident, self-directed and focused in your job search.

The following are some guidelines to get you started defining your current "work self":

- ➔ **Guidepost No.1 - your work values:** Maybe you wish to have the independence to do job tasks as you see fit without significant direction from

others. Perhaps you desire to accumulate large amounts of money to support a luxurious lifestyle. Possibly you want to create new ideas, methods or solutions. Or you may prefer work that is secure, where there is little likelihood of job loss. Define your priorities.

- ➔ **Guidepost No.2 - personality assets:** If friends are always commenting that you are “easy to talk to” about personal matters, you may be naturally empathic, honest and attentive. Does your written work or thought process attract attention because it is precise, accurate and orderly? Are you known to be active, energetic and physically strong? Recognize the assets you possess and would enjoy getting paid to use in work. These skills are what distinguish you from your competition. They are often the intangibles that determine success in the interview or on the job itself.
 - ➔ **Guidepost No.3 - what you can and like to do:** Think about past achievements that have given you an “inner glow” of accomplishment. For example, did your heart beat faster when recalling a time you successfully negotiated a settlement between your colleagues, spouse and child, or yourself and a salesperson? Did you find yourself eagerly awaiting the opportunity to plan family vacations and develop the itinerary? Did you find it challenging to objectively analyze the reasons for the stock market plunge? Maybe you felt energized upon successful completion of the goals of a project or assignment.
 - ➔ **Guidepost No.4 - your passions, enthusiasms and interests:** These too are skills, and are most important in making fulfilling career transitions. They lead you to new job options. So stop and think. Uncovering this knowledge may be the hardest task of all, since it is often unconscious or taken for granted. What areas of a bookstore do you love to browse in? What subjects excite you in discussions with friends? What are your hobbies and recreational activities? Do not jump to any conclusions regarding job titles based on these interests.
- ◆ **Results of the evaluation process:** Once the component parts of the puzzle are laid out, a complete job description may be generated. This includes job titles, job objectives, your qualifications, and specific job tasks and results. As a natural by-product, your self-esteem greatly increases. The satisfying career direction you have created by sculpting your current “work self” is clear and focused.

Nina Friedman is the CEO of Nina Friedman Career Services, a Boulder, Colorado based career counseling/coaching firm she founded in 1983. She has a Masters Degree from Columbia University and is certified in Gestalt therapy and Neurolinguistic Programming. More than 25 years, Nina has helped thousands of people in transition to better understand themselves, maximize their potential, and become gainfully employed with increased success, fulfillment and joy. Her background includes training with Richard Bolles, author of What Color Is Your Parachute?, and doing outplacement work with organizations, including Hughes Aircraft Corporation and Corporate Express. She has also worked on programs for career development within organizations such as IBM and Ball Aerospace Corporation, in addition to executive-level coaching. Nina has lectured on the topic of careers at Colorado and Naropa Universities, been interviewed

on television and radio, written columns on career issues for the Business Plus section of the Boulder Daily Camera, and is a parent. She can be reached via email at nina@nfcareers.com or phone at 303.444.5158. For more information check out www.nfcareers.com.