

Get a GPS to Navigate Your Skills to Find Career Purpose

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ABSTRACT

The global pandemic saw employees take charge of their careers and focus on what inspired them in never seen ways. Finding purpose can seem overwhelming and a daunting task in these changing times. To address this issue, Charu and Lisa have written this paper to guide knowledge workers to find purpose and fulfillment in their work while bringing their best strengths forward. Using their combined skills and expertise in psychometrics, SAS, and testing and measurement, they will share self-assessment tools to understand one's skill set and then apply it to job fulfillment. Each participant will be provided with a self-assessment tool that will be discussed during the presentation.

INTRODUCTION

This is an interactive paper presentation. We invite the reader to reflect and answer questions while going through the process of navigating to find a career and life purpose. Let us get started, we would like you to pick up a pen and paper and write down answers to the following questions:

Q1. When was the last time you asked yourself what you wanted to be when you grow up?

Q2. How many of you can honestly say that you are in a career that you said you wanted to be when you grew up?

PURPOSE

The meaning and purpose you seek may come to you when you least expect it.

WHY IS PURPOSE IMPORTANT?

1. No matter what your profession, your job exists for a reason. When you know that reason— and when you fully understand how your efforts make the world a better place for someone else – you've found your **job's** purpose.
2. This helps you because when you understand your job's wider purpose, you can be happier, more engaged, and more creative.
3. Your organization can benefit as well. When employees see how their roles truly fit the company's goals, they may work harder, use their initiatives, and make sensible decisions about their work.

PURPOSE IS SUBJECTIVE

1. Purpose has a lot to do with your mindset. Finding purpose in your work can have a lot to do with your attitude.
2. Happiness and meaning often result when you focus on something or someone other than yourself.
3. Story of the Starfish

A man walks on a beach one day, and he sees another man, up ahead acting strangely. As he gets closer, he realizes the other man is picking up starfish and throwing them back into the water. The starfish lie stranded on the sand by the tide change, and there are thousands of them on the beach.

"Don't you think you're wasting your time?" asks the first man. "You can't possibly pick up all these starfish. What you're doing isn't going to make any difference."

The second man just looks at him, then throws yet another starfish into the water. "I just made a difference for that one," he replies simply.

Your turn - What difference do you see yourself making in the world through your work?

WHO ARE YOU?

The process of uncovering what you are meant to do, that is finding career direction, is a journey (MTCT, 2023). It begins by essentially finding "YOU".

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FIND YOU?

It means finding "the person who truly resides behind the facades, defenses, and stresses of everyday life." (MTCT, 2023).

- 1 Examine your situation and keep a personal "boast book."

We tend to focus forward on what we have not yet done, and we rarely stop to look back at what we have done that's made a difference.

Try to express what you've done in terms of outcomes and results, rather than activities.

- 2 Rediscover what's truly important.

When you try to rediscover purpose in your career, you need to understand what's truly important to you. Step back a little. It's possible to see that, no matter what you're doing, you can incorporate meaning into it.

4. Take the Values Assessment (see below) and reflect.

Your turn - What are your values?

To help answer this question, here are some things you can do to reflect and help you find YOU.

1. Take the *Values Assessment* (MyPlan, 2023) - This free Values Test can help you learn more about your underlying work needs and motivations and can help you decide what is important to you in a job.

2. What task do you do that truly "lights you up?" What makes you feel alive and engaged?

Simply applying your values to what you do every day can make a big difference in how you feel about your work.

3. Apply the "5 Whys" to Your Job

Ask yourself "Why?" at least five times to discover the true meaning behind your career.

Example:

Lucy is a manager at a research company. She starts by questioning why she even has a job in the first place:

Why do I have a job? Answer: To make sure that my co-workers do their jobs correctly and well.

Why must my co-workers do their jobs? Answer: So that the research company continues to provide solutions to our customers around the world.

Why do customers want their solutions? Answer: To provide symptom relief to medical conditions.

Why do customers want relief from their medical conditions? Answer: So, they can feel better and do day-to-day activities pain-free.

Through this questioning process, Lucy starts to look at what she does in an entirely new way. Yes, she's a manager at a research company – but in the end, she helps people live better lives.

Why does that matter? Answer: Because by feeling better, customers can lead fuller, more enjoyable lives.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL TRAPPED

ARE YOU THRIVING OR SURVIVING?

Are too many things in your way to feel like you can make a difference? Do you feel like you continuously try to get satisfaction from your work, but can't get past the day-to-day grind?

Tips to get past being “stuck” or “trapped”

1. Shift how you think about what you are capable of doing and what you want to do.
 - Think about your skills in everything you do. Review your skills in every job and every role you've ever had.
Example: parenting, Sunday school teacher, care giver for your mother, skills you've obtained learning and mastering a hobby, and of course on the job skills.
 - Harness those skills and investigate doing something different either in your current job or a new one. Use them to overcome fear or procrastination.
2. Review your strengths.
 - Have you ever slipped into a state of “flow”? This is where you're so engaged with your work that time seems to slip by? You often do your best work in this state.
 - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who first described the concept, suggests that this state of “flow” - being able to achieve total focus - applies to almost every field of activity. According to Csikszentmihalyi, flow involves “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost.” (MTCT, 2023)
 - What are your superpowers? Some superpowers include:
 - Mindful listening
 - Being present in the moment
 - Creativity
 - Flexibility

3. Review and try to find your sense of ikigai.

Ikigai can be translated as "to live (iki) and reason (gai)" – essentially, what is the source of your daily motivation? Ikigai can be applied as a practical philosophy for life, a way to find strength in tough times, and to identify what you want from your career (Hughes, 2021). Figure 1 shows a Venn diagram of Ikigai.



Figure 1. Venn Diagram for Ikigai.

There are four elements of ikigai:

1. What you love.
2. What you are good at.
3. What you can be paid for.
4. What the world needs.

Your turn – Find your sense of ikigai.

Work through the following to find your sense of ikigai:

1. Understand what ikigai means.
2. Fill in your ikigai chart.
3. Find overlapping responses.
4. Find the missing circle(s) of your ikigai.
5. Address the missing circle(s).

For more information about the Ikigai method you can do a Google search and you will find many articles about it, as well as books (Sutton, 2021).

CONCLUSION

FIND YOUR CALLING

It may be hard to find your ultimate calling when you can't even figure out what is for dinner. (Hughes, 2021), but with a bit of reflection and thought it can be achieved. It takes persistence and requires ongoing refinement.

Consider what types of tasks give you the most joy in your current job.

- Do you enjoy managing people or working in isolation on technical tasks?
- Do you get satisfaction from solving complex issues or giving presentations and chairing interviews?
- Are you more interested in directly managing stakeholders or do you prefer to get into the coding details of a SAS program?

"By slowly sifting out the aspects of your work you don't enjoy, and increasing what you do, you can start to gain a sense of your ikigai" (Hughes, 2021). You do not have to change jobs to get closer to your ikigai (Mitsuhasi, 2018) or find happiness and purpose. Instead, you can craft your current role, making small changes to what and how it is performed, into one that benefits others and enables you to experience a sense of joy in what you do (Sutton, 2021).

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