

The Role of Values in Career Change

Introduction

It is natural when you are thinking about a career change to consider your skills and experience and to ask yourself which jobs are open to you. Your skills and experience will define the broad areas of work that are open to you and will give you a range of possibilities. However, it is neither skills nor experience which will determine whether your new career will be one that you are likely to enjoy. The most important factor to consider in a career change is your values.

What are values?

Values are what matters to you, what is important, what you focus on. They make you take or not take an action – they are part of your motivation. Values drive your choices and decisions and determine your view of your world, your belief system and attitudes. Values are the standards of behaviors and ways of doing things you think are correct in the way you live and work.

We each develop a unique system of values that determine how we feel about our work and the contribution it makes to society. If you choose to pursue a career in an organization with requirements or culture that are at odds with your values, you will not be happy with your choice. If you pursue a job that is congruent with your values, you will feel satisfied and successful in your career. Different people have different values including the following:

Security	Collaboration	Responsibility
Variety and Diversity	Teamwork	Achievement
Enjoyment	Compensation	Reward
Power	Openness	Helping others
Flexibility	Honesty	Determination
Authority	Integrity	Enthusiasm
Recognition	Learning	Equality
Success	Growth	Hard work
Creativity	Money	Happiness

Before jumping into a career change, you might want to consider the following tips:

1. Identify your values

Firstly, you need to discover your core values. Values are one of the first things I work on with my clients, because most people have a hard time identifying them. To help determine your current set of values, ask yourself the following questions and extract your values from the answers:

1. What is most important to you right now in terms of your career?
2. What do you want to gain from your work?
3. What makes you happy at work?
4. What were you doing to feel happy at work?
5. What were the most fulfilling or satisfying times in your career?
6. What need or desire did you meet in this situation?
7. What was your proudest moment professionally?
8. What factors contributed to your feelings of pride?
9. What do you generally focus on in your career?
10. What is it that you most identify with in your workplace?

2. Assess your values

Review your identified values and rate their importance to you on a scale of 1 – 10 giving a "1" to those values that are most important to you and a "10" to those that are least important. Then examine the highest rated values and choose the top five values that have the greatest weight when considering a career change.

Instead of a numerical ranking system, you may choose to rank your answers using the terms "Must have", "Nice to have", "Ok not to have" and "Must not have".

3. Revisit your values

While your values are generally consistent as you grow and progress in life, they may also change. It is recommended that you revisit them as you see fit to avoid losing sight of what matters. The above exercise can be repeated as needed.

Conclusion

Being clear on your values helps you to evaluate what is important to you in your career. Once you assess your own values, it will be much easier for you to change your career, choose a career path and to accept or decline a promotion.

Even within the same occupation, not every job will satisfy your work values. When evaluating a job offer, make sure your prospective employer's corporate culture is in line with what you find important. For example, if collaboration is something you feel strongly about, steer clear of a job that requires you to work independently.

If the job you do is in line with your values then you will consider that job valuable. If the job clashes with your values, then you will almost certainly be unhappy at work.