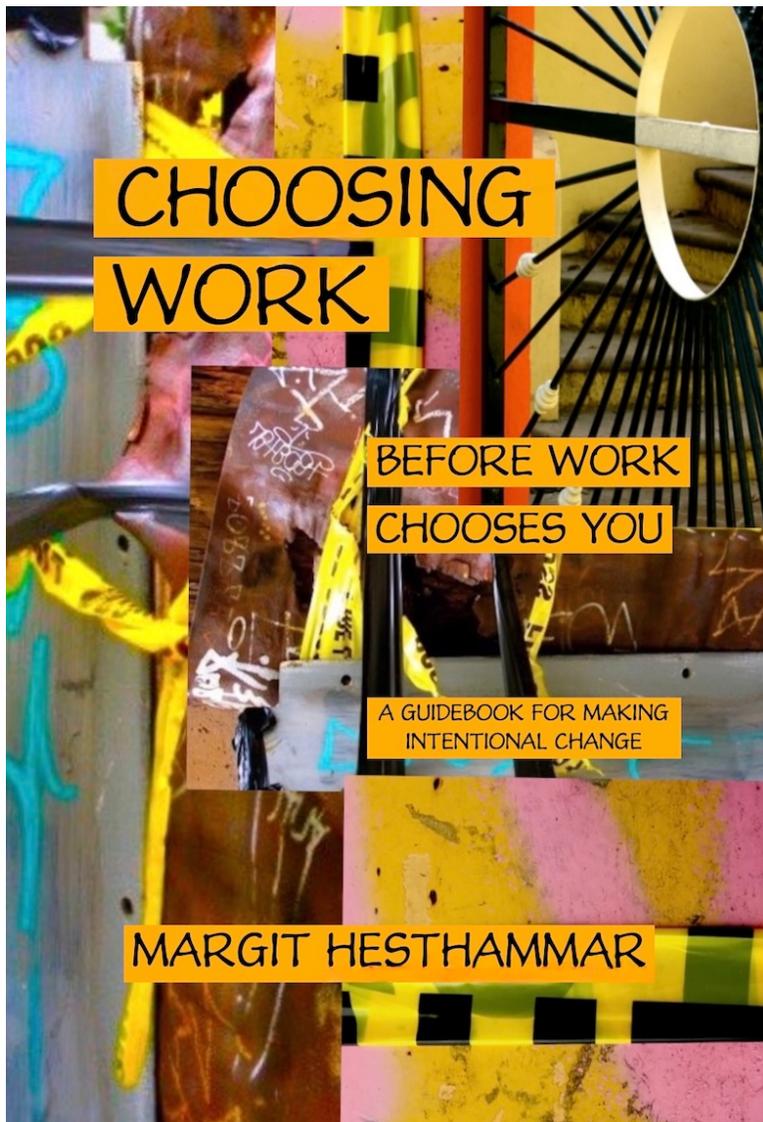


PART THREE



THE SELF PORTRAIT

INTRODUCTION: “TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF— WHO ARE YOU?”

It’s a pretty straight-forward question – and one we can all expect to hear in a job interview. Yet in spite of knowing that it will probably come up, few of us are able to answer it in a memorable way. We name a few past jobs (“*Network Technician for North Shore Cable, Sales Manager for Kaltek Electronics*”) and then we list a bunch of generic adjectives (“*hard-working, reliable, team-player...*”), all of which were likely to have been used by the last ten people interviewed, or for that matter, by people all over the world interviewing for completely different jobs. This does not help the interviewer to understand why we, in particular, would be right for the job.

“But they have my resume,” you might protest. *“It’s all there if they just take a moment to read between the lines.”* Never assume that anyone will read between the lines to find your strengths. If anything, assume they’ll be reading between the lines to look for gaps or inconsistencies.

As the first screening tool, your resume is the document that tells the hirer whether or not you’re a potential candidate for the job. If it’s straight forward, dynamic and relevant, it should get you in for an interview. However, unless they’re looking for a rare and specialized portfolio that only you possess, it will not land you the job. Only *you* will do that. And you will do it by connecting the dots for them – taking them by the hand and showing them convincingly what you, and only you, can bring to the table. To do this, you must first connect the dots yourself. This is the purpose of the manual.

THEY WON’T KNOW IF WE DON’T TELL

“Tell me about yourself” is a direct invitation from the interviewer to talk your walk, to tell them – and show them – where you really *rock*. It is arguably the most important question to prepare for before an interview and the most challenging to answer well. In your answer to this question, you reveal not only your strengths, but your level of confidence, your degree of presence (authenticity, originality, dynamism) and your preparedness. Your answer can be the one thing that persuades them to take you on or it can be the thing that leaves you in the stands with all the rest.

It gets confusing. On the one hand we're told to include key words in our resumes and personal statements. We're warned that the employer will be scanning for them. We get overwhelmed by the lists of words on offer everywhere. (Look at any career manual or simply google "resumes + key words.") We imagine some hostile program out there mechanically scanning for all the ways we have expressed our desire to help the company prosper. We pick out words like *"goal-oriented, strategic thinker, good problem-solver, drive to succeed, motivated, eye for efficiency, out-of-the-box approach, winning attitude,"* and so on. In a long-winded statement, we do our best to include them all. And we lose our audience by the end of the first line.

Even when we pare it down to a one-line bullet, if we have used the same old generic terms, we have done nothing to make ourselves stand out. Less is not more if it's less of the same.

Generic expressions are one-size-fits-all. By definition, they can't do anything to express uniqueness. Like off-the-shelf clothing, anyone can wear them. And it doesn't matter how well they fit – if everyone else is wearing them, you won't stand out. You will sound lifeless and stale because the words themselves have become lifeless and stale.

However, if you can follow the over-used terms with a brief elaboration that personalizes them, you can bring them back to life. Sense the difference in the following statements when a brief elaboration is added:

Generic: *"I'm hard-working."*

Elaboration: *"I love being really immersed in what I do."*

Generic: *"I'm reliable."*

Elaboration: *"If I say I'll be there, I'll be there. if I say I'll do it, I'll do it."*

Generic: *"I'm a good team player."*

Elaboration: *"I enjoy a spirit of cooperation – that feeling of working together toward a common goal."*

Generic: *"I have great customer service skills."*

Elaboration: *"People trust me and I go out of my way to earn that trust. I have a great track record – my customers always come back."*

Generic: *"I'm a great time manager."*

Elaboration: *"I always tackle the urgent and important stuff first. I use tight deadlines to avoid getting snagged in unnecessary details. This leaves me time to anticipate and prepare for the unexpected."*

“WHAT DO I MEAN BY THAT?”

Notice that none of the elaborations were in any way complicated or academic. They were all derived from asking one simple question: “*What do I mean by that?*”

Look again at the statement: “*I’m hard-working.*” Along with being wildly over-used, it has a droney, serious tone to it. Personally, I find it dry. Now consider this brief elaboration: “*I love to put my heart into my work*”.

All we have done is to add a slightly more original turn of phrase to an over-used expression. The addition is in no way brilliant or stunning. It doesn’t make the speaker sound impressively articulate. What it *does* is to make her sound real, simply because she’s using her own words.

When we speak from a real place, our words come to life. We ourselves come to life. In the process, we become believable. Our energy is freed from the prison of prefabrication and it literally becomes palpable in the room. Keep in mind that *it’s our energy we’re selling* when we go to work. And it’s our energy the interviewer is tuning to, whether or not she’s conscious of it at the time.

In the exercises that follow, you’ll be given a variety of words and phrases – many of which are generic – to get you started in describing the strengths that you *in particular* bring to the workplace. These are the values, interests, skills and special qualities that best describe you. You will also be asked to describe a few past experiences that illustrate your strengths.

Begin by selecting the words or phrases that resonate most strongly with you. Then personalize each word or phrase by asking “*What do I mean by that?*” Write your answers briefly and concisely in the spaces provided.

Where possible, use simple images or metaphors. “*Seeing is believing,*” even when the seeing takes place in the imagination. Notice that most of the examples above contain at least a partial image: *immersion, working together, customers coming back, heart*. They give us the beginning of a mental picture, and a picture really is worth a thousand words. Imagery of any kind, whether visual, auditory or kinesthetic, is highly persuasive. It allows us to see, hear or feel you in action.

Example: A woman who had worked in a print shop wanted to highlight her speed and coordination. She put it this way: “*I knew exactly what sound each printer made as it finished a run and I timed my routine so I’d be passing that printer just as the last page dropped.*”

This woman’s words were impressive not because she said anything brilliant but because she gave us something no one else could or would: a vivid picture of

herself in action. It's not that there's anything wrong with saying "*I'm fast and coordinated.*" In fact, it's a reasonable place to start. But the added illustration proves it in a way that makes the claim unique and believable.

The more thought you put into these exercises, the more likely you will be to arrive at a powerful, original and memorable answer to the question "*Who are you?*" Some interesting things start to happen as a result of this. First, in getting clear about your strengths, you naturally start to use them more. You step up to the plate more easily. As you do this, you feel your capacity and confidence growing, which encourages you to step up in still bigger ways. You face not only interviews, but all of life's challenges with greater confidence.

Being conscious of who you are and what matters to you also helps you develop a functioning relationship with your internal compass, or guidance system. This in turn makes every kind of decision-making easier – career, life-style or relationship.

Do this work with heart. For a relatively small investment of time, the payoff can be invaluable.

VALUES

Our values are the guidelines by which we live our lives. Because they define our essential commitments, they are strongly related to our sense of identity. *"This is who I am,"* we say. *"I am a person who values integrity, satisfaction and fulfillment."*

Given that they are often broad and generic, value terms are particularly vulnerable to fuzzy interpretations. Take the examples above: "Integrity, satisfaction and fulfillment" are common terms used by people in career transitions to describe what they value at work. Yet when asked what they mean by the terms, most have a struggle and few arrive at the same meaning.

When asked *"What does integrity mean to you?"* many people will say that they know what they mean – kind of. They have an internal flavour of what they mean, yet the actual definition eludes them. After mulling it over, some will say that to them, integrity means honesty. Others will say that it means adhering to a strong code of ethics, though they may not be able to identify the ethics themselves. Still others will call it a sense of harmony or integration, as in a life whose standards are consistent throughout – though again, they may not be too clear on what those standards are.

When asked *"What does satisfaction mean to you?"* responses range even farther afield. For some, satisfaction will mean a simple, quiet life with relatively solitary work. For others, it will mean a life of action and challenge, where complex problems and dynamic interactions fill a work day. For still others, it will mean a life of connection and creativity, where collaboration with a harmonious team is what defines a satisfying day.

The term *"fulfillment"* is as meaningless (or meaning-full) as the term *"satisfaction."* In fact, it is actually common for people to define one in terms of the other: *"Satisfaction? It's about fulfillment"* – or – *"Fulfillment? You know, satisfaction."* The problem is that neither term offers a clear understanding of what *produces* the satisfaction or fulfillment; therefore neither term tells us anything particular about the person using it.

We can probably safely assume that everyone is looking for satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. But what they derive from in the work-place will be different things to different people. Perhaps they have to do with completing a set of tasks successfully and on time through your speed and efficiency. Or perhaps they arise from the smile on a child's face that reflects your ability to create a caring environment. Or the gratitude of a satisfied customer for whom you have taken extra pains. What do satisfaction and fulfillment mean to you?

Again, there is nothing wrong with using the generic terms if you can follow up with what you *mean*. Tell, and then *show*. Take your audience by the hand and lead them backstage, past the stale, over-used terms, to the real person breathing behind them.

EXERCISE # 1: PERSONAL VALUES

This exercise will help you to identify your personal values by first looking at the activities that bring you real satisfaction. Think of the things you find satisfying at work as well as on our time off. Include your hobbies, volunteering activities, social or recreational activities and any others that are genuinely rewarding to you. Write these down under "Activity" on the left side of the page. Then ask yourself what you get from each activity. What does it give you or do for you? This will be its "Corresponding Value."

When I did this exercise I was surprised to notice that the first activity that came up for me was cleaning my apartment. This was not because I love cleaning my apartment, but because cleaning my apartment sets the stage for other activities such as writing. It provides the order I need before I can sit down and concentrate. So the value it illustrates might be "order" or "an orderly setting." Be sure to include in your own list the everyday things that support your well-being and/or focus.

REWARDING
ACTIVITY

CORRESPONDING
VALUE

EXERCISE # 2 – WORK VALUES

In the last exercise you looked at values that are important to you in your life as a whole. The next exercise asks you to limit your focus to values that are especially important to you in the workplace. On the list that follows, rate the *work values* that matter most to you on a scale of 1 to 5, being sparing with the 5's. At the end of the exercise you'll be asked to narrow your list down to your top 10. A word of caution: Working from a list tends to restrict your view to the items on that list. Stay alert as you do the exercise to other significant values that may surface as you're working and add them at the end.

VALUE _____	SCALE
Acknowledgement/Recognition	1 2 3 4 5
Advancement Possibilities	1 2 3 4 5
Autonomy - Being Trusted/Freedom To Be Self-Directed	1 2 3 4 5
Challenge - Work That Makes Me Stretch	1 2 3 4 5
Climate Of Fun/Laughter/Playfulness/Humour	1 2 3 4 5
Climate Of Peace And Harmony	1 2 3 4 5
Climate Of Respect And Dignity	1 2 3 4 5
Climate Of Honesty/Transparency/Integrity	1 2 3 4 5
Commitment To Excellence of Product/Service	1 2 3 4 5
Contribution To Others	1 2 3 4 5
Cooperation/Good Team Spirit/Inclusive Climate	1 2 3 4 5
Creative Expression Of Some Kind	1 2 3 4 5
Culture Of Equity/Fairness/Equality	1 2 3 4 5
Culture Of Responsibility/Reliability/Accountability	1 2 3 4 5

VALUE _____ SCALE

Demands Of Job Allow For Healthy Work-Life Balance	1 2 3 4 5
Ethical Practices Observed	1 2 3 4 5
Environmentally Friendly Product/ Service/Work-Place	1 2 3 4 5
Good Benefits	1 2 3 4 5
Health Is Promoted - Physical/Mental/Emotional	1 2 3 4 5
Individual Merit Is Rewarded	1 2 3 4 5
Management Is Supportive	1 2 3 4 5
Management Offers Clear Direction	1 2 3 4 5
Minimal Amount of Pressure/Stress	1 2 3 4 5
Minimal Supervision	1 2 3 4 5
Open-Door Policy/Employee Feedback Valued	1 2 3 4 5
Opportunity To Develop Mastery	1 2 3 4 5
Opportunity For On-The-Job Training	1 2 3 4 5
Opportunity To Meet New People	1 2 3 4 5
Opportunity For Travel	1 2 3 4 5
Opportunity To Use My Strengths/Talents	1 2 3 4 5
Policies And Procedures Are Clear	1 2 3 4 5
Professional Development Supported And Encouraged	1 2 3 4 5
Progressive/Innovative Ideas Valued	1 2 3 4 5
Reasonable Loyalty On Both Sides	1 2 3 4 5

VALUE _____ SCALE

Safe Environment 1 2 3 4 5

Schedule Is Flexible 1 2 3 4 5

Sense Of Accomplishment/ Achievement 1 2 3 4 5

Sense Of Belonging/Relatedness 1 2 3 4 5

Seniority Is Recognized 1 2 3 4 5

Shift Work Preferred 1 2 3 4 5

Shift Work Not Preferred 1 2 3 4 5

Short Commute 1 2 3 4 5

Variety Of Tasks 1 2 3 4 5

Wage Allows Me To Save 1 2 3 4 5

Work Allows For Full Engagement 1 2 3 4 5

Work Is Fulfilling 1 2 3 4 5

Work Offers Financial Security 1 2 3 4 5

Work Primarily With My Hands 1 2 3 4 5

Work Primarily With My Head 1 2 3 4 5

Work Primarily On My Own 1 2 3 4 5

Work Primarily With Others 1 2 3 4 5

Work Setting Is Formal/Professional 1 2 3 4 5

Work Setting Is Informal/Casual 1 2 3 4 5

VALUE _____ SCALE

OTHER VALUES:

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

Now review Exercise #1 and #2 and select your top ten work values. Write these down on the next page, including where necessary a brief elaboration to indicate what each one means to you. For example, if you selected "Wage Allows Me To Save," give a concrete figure that's in line with what you need. If you highlighted "Work Is Fulfilling," briefly explain what will make work fulfilling for you. If you selected "Work Allows Me To Use My Strengths," identify the specific strengths you have in mind.

When you have identified your top ten work values, arrange them in order of their priority, with #1 being the most important. If you would like help with prioritizing, google "prioritizing grid." A number of sites will come up that offer prioritizing tools. The one I use comes from Richard Bolles and can be found on the web at *Ground of Your Own Choosing*.

MY TOP TEN WORK VALUES

1) _____
What I mean is: _____

2) _____
What I mean is: _____

3) _____
What I mean is: _____

4) _____
What I mean is: _____

5) _____
What I mean is: _____

6) _____
What I mean is: _____

7) _____
What I mean is: _____

8) _____
What I mean is: _____

9) _____
What I mean is: _____

10) _____
What I mean is: _____

EXERCISE # 3—ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It is human nature to focus more on our shortcomings than our strengths. We tend to overlook the things that come most easily to us because they don't feel particularly special - perhaps because we haven't had to work for them, or we believe, quite mistakenly, that if they're easy for us, they must be easy for everyone. Unfortunately, when we give more attention to what's wrong with our picture than what's right, we end up with a very distorted view of who we are. And our self-esteem suffers accordingly.

Some strengths are so much a part of our personality that we may lack the objectivity to see them. It might take the feedback of an outside observer to bring them to our attention. You'll be invited to seek such feedback for this purpose a little later on.

The next exercise will lay the foundation for a full understanding of your 'natural resources.' It asks you to look back in time at all the moments in which you've experienced a feeling of mastery, pleasure, or satisfaction through some form of accomplishment. Start as far back as you can remember and work forward, giving approximate ages for each experience. Recalling your past homes, relationships and work environments will help you remember details. If you encounter black holes (disturbing memories), don't fall into them - walk around. Think of yourself as a prospector, mining your past for gold.

When your list is complete, look at each accomplishment in turn and ask yourself "*What did it take for me to do this?*" Your answer should point directly to the strength or strengths that the accomplishment illustrates.

Do not ignore the things that everyone learns to do, such as riding a bike or learning to read. If they were things you naturally excelled at, if they taught you perseverance or brought you a feeling of mastery, include them. One of the things I recalled when I did this exercise was learning to do a four-finger whistle when I was about ten. It was something all the boys seemed to be born doing and it drove me crazy I couldn't. I worked at it and worked at it until one day, out it came: a wonderfully fierce, perfectly deafening whistle with an excellent back-end curve. I was thrilled. I hid behind the chimney and whistled at my older sister and her friends to see if I could get them to turn their heads. Later I used it at rock concerts, and I still use it to hail cabs. It may not have helped me in my career per se, but it definitely taught me perseverance. And brought me enormous satisfaction.

Approach this exercise as *subjectively* as possible. What feels like an accomplishment to one person may not feel the same to another. E.g., for A, learning to manage anger might have been a major accomplishment; for B, learning to *express* anger might have been big. For C, walking away from a toxic situation might have been significant; for D (or for C in a different situation), sticking around and standing her ground might have been the thing.

Also bear in mind that many of our biggest accomplishments happen when we're afraid. Be sure to acknowledge the strengths that were forged under fearful circumstances. A strength is *more* significant, not less, for having emerged in a state of fear. If you did what you did in spite of chattering teeth and a pounding heart, then you need to identify one of your strengths as courage, or the ability to face fear.

New Canadians: Relocating to another country, particularly a country with a different language, is a huge accomplishment, requiring many different strengths. The fact that others have also done it should in no way diminish your own experience. Everyone has a unique story and everyone faces unique challenges. What were yours? How did you face them? What did it take?

Take real time with this exercise. The more thorough you are, the more likely you will be to gain a full grasp of your resources. As new items come to mind, add them to your list.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

– What did you do?

STRENGTH

– What did it take?

When you have completed the exercise, review it carefully and look for recurrent themes. Are there strengths that appear consistently over time? Can you see where certain life challenges have forced you to expand or deepen your strengths?

Now take a moment to identify the ten (more or less) strengths you value most. Include the ones that come most easily to you as well as the ones you've had to work for. And keep in mind that the strengths we develop over time stay with us. Even if they get a little rusty from lack of use, they're still there, waiting to make a comeback when required.

THE TEN PERSONAL STRENGTHS I VALUE MOST

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

EXERCISE # 4—INTERESTS

Your interests are the things you enjoy, the things you're naturally drawn to. What section of a library or bookstore do you naturally gravitate to? What kinds of information programs consistently attract you? What do you find yourself hungry to know more about? Interests tend to show up in the activities you find most rewarding (Exercise #1) and are often linked to at least a few of your accomplishments (Exercise #3). A quick review of those exercises should get you started.

Though they may be related, interests are often quite different from skills. You may have developed a particular skill because your work demanded it, for example, but this won't necessarily mean you enjoy using it. On the other hand, you may have developed a passionate interest in a subject where you have no skill, but your lack of skill won't necessarily diminish your enjoyment.

As you think of your interests, try to imagine which of them might find expression in the workplace and which you'd prefer to pursue on your own. I love to write, for example, but I wouldn't want to write for a living. I know that if I spent my whole day writing for other people, I'd have no juice left for my own writing at the end of the day.

Also remember James Latke (Chapter Four), the salesman who had a passion for law, but realized in the end that he didn't want to become a lawyer. This was not just because the process was lengthy and costly, but because the work itself, when he looked at it more closely, was not what he wanted to do. What he wanted was to learn more about the law - which he could do quite well from home. Some things are more fun to pursue at your own pace, in your own time.

As you do this exercise, look at the various domains of your life and ask what interests you have (if any) in each. The list on the next page might help. It covers a few of the general domains of living, with sample interests in each:

GENERAL DOMAINS OF LIFE, WITH SAMPLE INTERESTS

- Outdoor activities - e.g., gardening, renovating, pets, hiking
Include activities from the workplace as well as from home.
- Indoor activities - e.g., art forms, hobbies, pets, cooking, design
Again, include activities from work as well as home.
- Forms of entertainment - e.g., novels, movies, sports, music, dance
- Current affairs - e.g., news, editorials, political commentary
- Informative activities - e.g., documentaries, reading, learning about...?
- Interactive activities - e.g., volunteering, socializing, care-giving
- Recreational or health-related - e.g., exercise, sports, yoga, nutrition
- Personal/spiritual development - e.g., meditation, prayer, time in nature, self-help, inspirational reading

In the spaces below, list your strongest interests. Note: 10 is an arbitrary number. Do not feel inadequate if you only have one or two! Some people are passionate about just one thing and like to devote as much time as possible to that one thing. Others have a variety of interests and like to spread their time amongst many things. It is understood that people will vary widely in all of these exercises.

MY STRONGEST INTERESTS

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

EXERCISE # 5—TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Our skills are the abilities we've developed to a relatively high level of proficiency, generally through training and experience. When linked to natural talent they may be relatively easy to acquire, though talent alone does not ensure mastery. As with interests, skills often point to potentially fulfilling occupations, though having a skill does not necessarily mean that you'll enjoy using it eight hours a day, five days a week. Skills developed out of necessity in past jobs may or may not be enjoyable to you. In the exercises that follow, you will be asked to identify the skills you would most enjoy using on a consistent basis.

Skills are called transferable when they can potentially be used in a variety of occupations or fields. For example, office management skills developed while working at an accounting firm should transfer easily to the office of a real estate company, a law firm, a warehouse, or a college. Customer service skills developed while working in a bar will transfer well to retail sales, restaurant or hotel work.

Skills are generally named after the activities involved in their use: A teacher is engaged in *communicating*; hence, we would say that she has *communication skills*. Note that we have not yet identified what those skills *are*. We have simply indicated that a teacher possesses a grouping of skills that falls under the general heading of *communication*. General headings such as these are called *skill sets*. For a more complete picture, the teacher would need to elaborate by telling us what her particular communication skills are.

Skill sets are useful for quick generalizations, especially on resumes and cover letters, but they don't offer a lot of concrete information. A teacher, a therapist and a salesperson will probably all say that they have good communication skills. However, in order to stand out in an interview, they will need to break that skill set down into the *specific abilities* that apply directly to their particular occupations.

Under the general heading of communication, a teacher might include the following:

- explains complex concepts with simplicity and care
- attunes to groups quickly; adjusts smoothly to differing needs
- engages and motivates students; maintains upbeat environment
- addresses immature behaviour firmly and professionally

Under the same heading, a therapist might include:

- consistently creates a trusting rapport with clients
- listens deeply and intuitively
- supports courage and a desire for truth
- encourages self-acceptance; offers tools for self-empowerment

A salesperson might include:

- offers support without pressure
- accurately diagnoses customer's needs
- clearly explains costs and benefits of available products/services
- handles complaints with patience and respect

Note that each of the items on these lists gives us the beginning of a concrete image. In the back of our minds, we begin to *see* the salesperson listening patiently, we start to *feel* the intense attention of the therapist, we can almost *hear* - and *see* - the teacher taking pains to explain something simply and carefully. As with values, when skills are described concretely enough to give us an image of the speaker in action, the speaker will sound convincing and informed.

Remember that the core of a skill is generally an action word, or verb: The teacher *explains, attunes, adjusts, engages, maintains* and *addresses*. The therapist *creates, listens, supports, encourages* and *offers*. The salesperson *offers, diagnoses, explains* and *handles*. As you can see, the verb by itself doesn't give us enough information. The teacher and the salesperson both *explain*, the salesperson and the therapist both *offer*. To make them distinct, we need to know *what* is being explained or offered, and in many cases *how*. In other words, we need an object and a modifier for the verb.

As a general rule, for a complete description of a specific skill, find the object of the verb by asking "Who?" or "What?" and the modifier by asking "How?" For example:

The teacher explains (*what?*) complex concepts (*how?*) effectively.

The salesperson explains (*what?*) costs and benefits (*how?*) clearly.

Most people underestimate their strengths out of a simple failure to break their skill sets down. Remember that it is your specific abilities that bring you into focus. If you represent yourself only through general headings, you will fail to stand out from the crowd.

People can also sell themselves short by listing only the abilities that they have developed at work or at school. For a full understanding of your skills, you need to look at every aspect of your life.

In demonstrating this to a group, I often ask people to examine a social activity that some people find relatively easy and others find challenging. The activity is cooking for a large group. I happen to be one of those people who find this activity enormously challenging.

Remembering that the core of a skill is an activity, I ask students to identify every activity from start to finish involved in the making of a sit-down dinner for a group of twelve people.

Following is a typical list of activities:

- Determine budget for dinner
- Decide on menu, considering special needs - vegetarians, allergies, etc.
- Identify needed ingredients
- Take inventory of ingredients on hand and those you need to buy
- Write a shopping list
- Identify other necessary supplies - extra chairs, plates, glasses, etc.
 - Arrange to borrow supplies if necessary
- Plan shopping route to optimize time
- Go shopping
 - Compare cost and quality of food items while shopping
 - Improvise if items are of poor quality or unavailable
- Do advance food prep - cleaning, chopping, marinating, etc.
- Clean house and create an inviting atmosphere
- Set dinner table
- Prepare yourself - bathe, dress, etc.
- As guests are arriving, greet and if necessary introduce people
 - Serve drinks and appetizers
- Cook remaining dishes; put dishes on table
- Call guests to table; serve food
- Ensure dinnertime conversation is enjoyable and inclusive
- Serve coffee and dessert
- Say good-byes

After writing the list on the board I go through it again, underlining the action words. I then ask students to review the list and identify the applicable skill *sets*.

The skill sets that are typically identified involve:

Organization/Time Planning

Coordination/Ability to Multi-task

Social/Interpersonal/Hospitality Skills

Aesthetic Ability

Culinary Skills

Looking at the general headings, you can see that the skills involved in putting on a dinner might transfer easily to several occupations, among them event planning. A dinner is of course an event, but if you haven't counted it because it happened in the home, this entire list of skills might be overlooked.

I'm struck by the dinner example partly because it is not my forte and partly because I have a friend who, after being a stay-at-home mother for ten years, was terrified to re-enter the workforce because she believed she had no skills. This same woman all this while had been entertaining her husband's colleagues and clients completely on her own. She'd been preparing gourmet dinners for large groups of people for years, welcoming complete strangers into her home with ease and grace, without ever acknowledging the skill involved. She didn't see it because it happened at home.

Anyone who has successfully raised children has out of sheer necessity developed a huge range of skills. I would occasionally go shopping with the same friend when her kids were small. To me, her focus and coordination were phenomenal (I don't have kids). I'd still be working my way down the first aisle when I'd realize she was already at the check-out counter. Why such speed and efficiency? Because she knew she had only so much time before her son would start howling or her daughter would start undressing (true fact).

Moral of story: Don't sell yourself short on your skills by ignoring the ones you have developed outside of work and/or out of necessity – through family or social life, outside interests, volunteering, etc.

Your challenge now lies in deciding which general headings to choose for skill sets and which specific skills to highlight under each heading. The exercise will be easier once you have at least a general idea of the field or occupation you're most drawn to and the skills you most want to use.

Remember, working from a list tends to restrict your view to the items on that list. To avoid being restricted in this way, see if you can first generate a list of your own in the pages that follow. Identify the skill sets you most want to use in the workplace and then list the specific skills in each set that you believe are most applicable to you. Use these pages as worksheets and don't feel that you have to fill in all the available spaces. Many people's skills fall mainly under one or two broad headings. Again, it will help if you have at least a general field in mind. When you're done, check out the lists that follow to ensure that your list is complete.

SKILL SET: _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS: _____

SKILL SET: _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS: _____

SKILL SET: _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS: _____

SKILL SET: _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS: _____

SKILL SET: _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS: _____

SKILL SET: _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS: _____

SKILL SET: _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS: _____

You might notice the occasional overlap between terms used for skill sets and those used for specific skills. For example, if you have identified “organizational ability” as one of your major skill sets, you might go on to say, quite logically, that “organizing information effectively” is one of your specific skills. It’s perfectly appropriate to use the same term in both categories. In the broader category you are talking about organizational ability in general. In the specific category, you are spelling out a particular form of organization involving ideas. Remember, if it makes sense to you, it should make sense to others.

SKILL SETS

The list below offers some samples of skill sets that have been classified in different ways. It is not an exhaustive list, either of skill sets or of classifications. Use it to augment and/or refine the work you have just done.

Skill Sets Classified by Field – a few examples:

Advertising	Environmental	Marketing/Sales
Architecture	Protection	Office Administration
Aviation	Event Planning	Navigation
Chemistry	Film Production	Product Development
Computer Technology	Financial Consulting	Public Relations
Construction	Graphic Design	Real Estate
Corrections	Health Care	Retail
Counseling	Hospitality/Tourism	Security
Culinary Arts	Human Resources	Social Work
Customer Service	Journalism	Teaching
Drafting	Logistics	Technical Writing
Electronics	Medicine	Web Design

Note again that this is not a complete list. Look at the fields you have worked in and ask yourself if they represent skill sets that would transfer well to the field(s) attracting you now.

Skills Sets Classified According to General Ability Type

E.g., Physical and Mental Skills, Emotional Intelligence

Examples of Physical Abilities :

- Visual/Spatial Skills
- Skills With Materials, Animals, Plants, Equipment or Machinery
- Skills With Designing, Drawing, Planning and/or Organizing Physical Processes
- General Attention Skills

Examples of Mental Abilities:

- Skills With the Management/Organization of Information or Data
- Skills With the Interpretation/Application of Information or Data
- Research Skills
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Skills involving Reason, Logic, Mathematics

- Verbal/Linguistic Skills
- General Attention Skills

Examples of Emotional Intelligence

These have been broken into two categories – Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Abilities:

1) Interpersonal Abilities

- Ability to Communicate, Lead, Mentor
- Ability to be Professional and Assertive
- Ability to Manage Others
- Organizational Ability
- Skill in Conflict Resolution
- Instructional Skills
- Motivational Skills
- Understanding of Human Dynamics
- General Attention Skills

2) Intrapersonal Abilities

- Skill in Understanding Oneself and One's Motives
- Skill in Applying Understanding to Behaviour
- Emotional Maturity
- Personal Management Skills:
 - Ability to Manage Moods and Stress
 - Ability to be Self-Directing and Self-Motivating
 - Ability to Set Goals, Manage Time, and Organize Oneself
- General Attention Skills

Skill Sets Classified Under Creative/ Artistic Ability

A few examples from such fields as Music, Drawing, Painting, Photography, Sculpture, Theatre and Dance:

- The Ability to Attend to, Appreciate, Interpret, Create, Communicate, or Heal Through an Art Form
- General Attention Skills

Notice that “General Attention Skills” shows up in the last four categories. Whether the abilities are primarily physical, mental, interpersonal, intrapersonal, or creative, all activities in the workplace require focused attention. The ability to direct your attention at will is the foundation of all other skills. Any practice that enhances your ability to concentrate will support the development of all your other skills.

Take a moment now to review the skill sets you identified in the previous exercise and decide whether or not they represent you well. Using the lists above, make any additions or revisions that might help you to fill out your picture. Now re-write your main skill sets below.

MY MAIN SKILL SETS

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

SPECIFIC TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Having identified your main skill sets, it should now be fairly easy to identify the specific skills you most want to highlight under each. Following are some samples of specific skills. As you browse through the lists, *select only the skills you possess and genuinely enjoy using*. Rate these on a scale of 1 – 5, being careful not to circle too many 5’s. At the end of the exercise you will be asked to narrow your list to the ten you most want to use at work.

SKILL SET : PHYSICAL ABILITIES

SPECIFIC SKILLS:

Manual Dexterity, Finger Dexterity	1 2 3 4 5

Eye-Hand Coordination	1 2 3 4 5

General Physical Coordination	1 2 3 4 5

Strength, Speed, Stamina, Endurance	1 2 3 4 5

Acute Sense of Hearing, Smell, Taste, Sight	1 2 3 4 5

Planning, Organizing, Visualizing, Designing	1 2 3 4 5

Constructing, Building, Decorating	1 2 3 4 5

Molding, Shaping, Modeling, Framing	1 2 3 4 5

Sketching, Drafting, Drawing	1 2 3 4 5

Assembling, Disassembling, Salvaging	1 2 3 4 5

Refinishing, Restoring, Preserving, Repairing	1 2 3 4 5

Drilling, Fastening, Hammering, Fitting	1 2 3 4 5

Sewing, Weaving, Sculpting, Painting	1 2 3 4 5

Preparing, Cleaning, Ordering, Sorting	1 2 3 4 5

Measuring	1 2 3 4 5
Loading, Unloading, Installing	1 2 3 4 5
Working with Precision Tools	1 2 3 4 5
Operating Heavy Equipment/Machinery	1 2 3 4 5
Driving a Variety of Vehicles	1 2 3 4 5
Cultivating, Nurturing, Tending	1 2 3 4 5
Proficient in Sports (name which)	1 2 3 4 5

OTHERS:

	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5

SKILL SET : MENTAL ABILITIES

SPECIFIC SKILLS:

Able to Think in a Logical, Linear Progression	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Remember Accurately	1 2 3 4 5
Able to See Patterns in Random Data	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Re-Frame/Re-Contextualize Information	1 2 3 4 5

Able to Create a New Story-Line or Narrative	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Think Laterally, Out-of-the-Box	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Organize and Categorize Incoming Data	1 2 3 4 5
Able to See New Distinctions, Create New Categories	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Analyze, Break Down, Compartmentalize Data	1 2 3 4 5
Able to See Underlying Connections	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Synthesize, Combine Different Elements	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Extrapolate, See Implications and Ramifications	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Make Deductions and Predictions	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Read Directions, Blueprints, Maps	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Express Ideas Simply and Clearly	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Solve Problems Logically and Rationally	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Plan, Manage Time Well, Prioritize Activities	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Translate, Interpret, Explain	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Distil, Condense, Summarize, Simplify	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Make the Abstract Concrete	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Identify Inferences, Logical or Illogical	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Identify Buried Assumptions	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Note Contradictions or Inconsistencies	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Imagine, Create, Invent New Ideas	1 2 3 4 5
Skilled at Gathering Information Through: Interviewing, Observing, Researching	1 2 3 4 5

Investigating, Examining, Evaluating	1 2 3 4 5
Reviewing, Summarizing, Compiling	1 2 3 4 5
Skill With Numbers: Auditing, Budgeting, Calculating, etc.	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Develop, Improve, Adapt Processes/Procedures	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Imagine, Design, Visualize, Dramatize	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Communicate Well Verbally and in Writing	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Store, File, Organize, Retrieve Information	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Keep Accurate, Organized Records	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Keep Track of Details	1 2 3 4 5
Mentally Coordinated, Able to Multi-Task	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Solve Problems Logically and Systematically	1 2 3 4 5
OTHERS:	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5

SKILL SET : EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

1) INTERPERSONAL ABILITIES

SPECIFIC SKILLS:

Able to Discern Sub-Text, Innuendo in Communications	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Identify/ Address Passive Aggressive Behaviour	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Maintain Healthy Boundaries	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Help Others See the Cup as Half-Full	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Inspire/Motivate	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Create Rapport, Set People at Ease	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Lighten a Mood, Make People Smile	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Recognize and Expose the Dynamic at Play	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Empathize, Relate, Identify With Others	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Create and Sustain a Comfortable Silence	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Discern When Not to Interfere	1 2 3 4 5
High Level of Self Control; Able to Manage Anger	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Differentiate Between Real and False Support	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Manage, Organize, Discipline an Unruly Gathering	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Deliver Constructive Criticism	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Perceive and Convey Core Essentials	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Genuinely Listen	1 2 3 4 5

Able to Delegate Tasks	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Ask for Help When Needed	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Assess Needs, Suggest Solutions	1 2 3 4 5
Able to take Instruction and Criticism Well	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Identify and Optimize Human Resources	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Cooperate, Bring Positive Energy to a Team	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Communicate Well Verbally and in Writing	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Teach, Mentor, Train Others	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Counsel, Advise, Coach, Empower Others	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Connect or Refer People	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Communicate Effectively With Individuals	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Communicate Effectively With Groups	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Assess, Evaluate, Select, Recruit People	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Perform, Amuse, Entertain People	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Negotiate, Mediate, Resolve Conflicts	1 2 3 4 5
OTHERS:	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5

2) INTRAPERSONAL ABILITIES

SPECIFIC SKILLS:

Able to Manage Personal Moods	1 2 3 4 5
Able to tolerate a Reasonable Level of Tension	1 2 3 4 5 --
Able to Fully Engage, to Be Present in the Moment	1 2 3 4 5
Self-Motivating, Self-Directed, Autonomous	1 2 3 4 5
Aware of and Confident about Personal Strengths	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Notice and Disengage From Negative Self-Talk	1 2 3 4 5
Trusts General Perceptions of "Reality"	1 2 3 4 5
Maintains a World-View That is Personally Empowering	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Maintain Optimism in the face of Hardship	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Identify and Resolve Internal Conflicts	1 2 3 4 5
Reads/Understands the Signals of the Body	1 2 3 4 5
Hears/Heeds Internal Guidance/Intuition	1 2 3 4 5
Spends Time Alone Comfortably	1 2 3 4 5
Self-Soothing - Entertains/Engages Self Easily	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Be Quiet and Still When Alone	1 2 3 4 5
Confident About Being Capable	1 2 3 4 5
Confident About Being Lovable	1 2 3 4 5
Strong, Positive Self-Regard	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Notice and Disengage From Defensive Thoughts	1 2 3 4 5

Not Dependent on Outside Approval	1 2 3 4 5
Reasonably Forgiving and Compassionate with Self	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Notice and Retract Projections	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Laugh at Self	1 2 3 4 5
Does Not Take Rejection or Criticism Personally	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Delay Gratification	1 2 3 4 5
Honours/Champions Personal Needs/Rights	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Notice and Experience Difficult Emotions	1 2 3 4 5
Able to Disengage From Emotional State	1 2 3 4 5
Strong Sense of Internal Values/Priorities	1 2 3 4 5

OTHERS:

	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5

CREATIVE/ARTISTIC ABILITIES

Creative and/or artistic abilities can show up in any category – physical, mental, or emotional. If you have developed strong transferable skills through your participation in an art form and these skills have not yet shown up on any of the preceding lists, be sure to include them here.

Sample Art Forms:

Music, Drawing, Painting, Photography, Sculpture, Theatre, Dance, Multimedia

Sample Abilities:

The Ability to Attend to, Appreciate, Interpret and/or Evaluate Art

The Ability to Create, Communicate, or Heal Through an Art Form

OTHERS:

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

Now review your findings from all categories and select the specific skills you most want to highlight. Do *not* feel inadequate if you don't have 15 skills just because there's room for that many! Some of you may have one or two main skills that are deeply honed, while others may have a variety.

MY SPECIFIC TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____
- 11) _____
- 12) _____
- 13) _____
- 14) _____
- 15) _____

Take a moment now to re-visit the skills and skill sets you identified at the beginning of this exercise (pages 199, 200 and 203). Is the list above consistent with your earlier findings? Do most of your specific skills fall logically under the heading of one of your skill sets? (Don't worry if you don't have a perfect match; some skills can stand comfortably alone.) Having looked more closely you may find that your selections have changed somewhat. If so, revise them and then record your final results on the next page. Again, be sure to select the skills you most want to use in the workplace.

MY SKILL SETS AND SPECIFIC TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

SKILL SET : _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS : _____

SKILL SET : _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS : _____

SKILL SET : _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS : _____

SKILL SET : _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS : _____

SKILL SET : _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS : _____

SKILL SET : _____

SPECIFIC SKILLS : _____

EXERCISE # 6—PERSONAL QUALITIES

Personal qualities have to do with *style* – the way we go about doing the things we do. They often show up as the modifier of the verb when we’re describing transferable skills. For example, as a teacher I might say that one of my skills is “my ability to *explain ideas logically*.” The core of the skill is the verb *to explain*. How I explain – *logically* – is the modifier. To turn the modifier into a personal quality I would simply change the wording slightly: “I am a *logical* person.”

There is considerable overlap between skills and personal qualities. The way to navigate the overlap is to be clear about the message you want to convey. Personal qualities generally connote strengths that come naturally to us – e.g., “I’m a (naturally) logical person.” Skills generally connote strengths that we have mastered over time – e.g., “my (learned) ability to explain ideas.” It’s the wording that will determine whether your strengths are being highlighted as skills or personal qualities.

Below are some samples of strengths that could be described either as skills or personal qualities, depending on the wording:

SKILL: I have good *attention* skills.

PERSONAL QUALITY: I’m *attentive*.

SKILL: I have great *organization* skills.

PERSONAL QUALITY: I’m *organized*.

SKILL: I’m skilled at *asserting myself*.

PERSONAL QUALITY: I’m *assertive*.

SKILL: I have the ability to *persuade* people.

PERSONAL QUALITY: I’m *persuasive*.

SKILL: I’m skilled at *creating an upbeat environment*.

PERSONAL QUALITY: I’m *upbeat*.

What you decide to highlight in a resume or interview will vary according to the occupation you’re targeting and the person you’re addressing. For now, your task is to get as complete a picture as possible of the whole range of your skills

and personal qualities. Again, the more conscious you are of your strengths, the more confident you will be in presenting them to prospective employers. Keep in mind that in the back of every employer's mind is the knowledge (conscious or otherwise) that those who can represent *themselves* well will be most likely to represent the *company* well.

Your personal style is what makes you unique. Your ability to describe it well is the thing that will set you apart from others who have similar skills. Do this exercise with pride. This is no place to hide your light. Your prospective employer wants to know where you really shine; that's what the whole interview process is about. And no one but you can tell them.



On the pages that follow you will find a wide variety of personal qualities. Choose the ones that reflect you best and that feel most appropriate to the field(s) that currently attract you. In other words, even if you *are* "goofy" or "wacky" or "zany," don't highlight these qualities if you're planning to become an accountant. If you're set on becoming a stand-up comic, "goofy," "wacky," or "zany" might be perfect.

Go through the whole list first, placing a check-mark beside the qualities you most want to highlight. Then review the qualities you have checked and select your top 10. If you have trouble narrowing down your list, try rating your strongest qualities on a scale of 1 to 5 as you did with your transferable skills.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplished (at...) | <input type="checkbox"/> Courageous | <input type="checkbox"/> Good in |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountable | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergencies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate | <input type="checkbox"/> Cunning | <input type="checkbox"/> Good-Natured |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achievement
Oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive | <input type="checkbox"/> Goofy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptable | <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated | <input type="checkbox"/> Graceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventurous | <input type="checkbox"/> Deliberate | <input type="checkbox"/> Gracious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alert | <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard Working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Altruistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Detail Oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Having Drive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amiable | <input type="checkbox"/> Diligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Having Flair,
Panache, Style |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciative | <input type="checkbox"/> Diplomatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate | <input type="checkbox"/> Disarming | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Discerning | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assertive | <input type="checkbox"/> Discreet | <input type="checkbox"/> Humanistic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astute | <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic | <input type="checkbox"/> Humorous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attentive | <input type="checkbox"/> Easygoing | <input type="checkbox"/> Idealistic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authentic | <input type="checkbox"/> Economical | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authoritative | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ingenious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autonomous | <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Awake | <input type="checkbox"/> Empowering | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiring/
Inspirational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Intentional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Engaged | <input type="checkbox"/> Intuitive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Candid | <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging | <input type="checkbox"/> Inventive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Capable | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys a
Challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> Joyful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cautious | <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charismatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Exceptional at... | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledgeable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charming | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhaustive | <input type="checkbox"/> Lateral Thinker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classy | <input type="checkbox"/> Experienced at... | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal Thinker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clearheaded | <input type="checkbox"/> Expert at... | <input type="checkbox"/> Likable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> Firm | <input type="checkbox"/> Linear Thinker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Committed | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Logical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compassionate | <input type="checkbox"/> Focused | <input type="checkbox"/> Loving/Lovable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competent | <input type="checkbox"/> Forward
Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confident | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Maternal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conscious | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun-Loving | <input type="checkbox"/> Mature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative | <input type="checkbox"/> Funny | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conscientious | <input type="checkbox"/> Generous | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent | <input type="checkbox"/> Gifted at... | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Good at
Optimizing
Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> No-Nonsense |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinated | <input type="checkbox"/> Good at Time
Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Nurturing |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Objective |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Open Minded |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Organized |

MY TOP 10 PERSONAL QUALITIES

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

EXERCISE # 7—WORK HIGHLIGHTS

Your work highlights describe the times when you have demonstrated excellence or in some way distinguished yourself in the workplace. They are the actual behaviours that illustrate and thereby *prove* that you have the strengths you say you have. They might be one-of-a-kind incidents or consistent aspects of your everyday work style that made you valued as a member of a team – e.g., always doing a thorough job, consistently bringing positive energy to work, and so on.

Work highlights are *not* job descriptions – those are covered in your resume – and they are *not* skills. They are *illustrations* of skills, stories of you in action. The more clear you are on these, the better prepared you will be when a prospective employer asks you to “give an example of a time when...” (you demonstrated one of your strengths.)

Take a moment now to look back at past jobs, remembering any times when you:

- met a challenge
- resolved a conflict
- consistently brought positive energy to the workplace
- took charge in an emergency
- increased sales
- saved money through streamlining a process or procedure
- consistently completed all tasks, however small, with care
- received a positive evaluation from an employer
- owned your mistakes; consistently kept your word
- saved money through economizing in some way
- were responsible for repeat business and/or word-of-mouth referrals
- received positive recognition from a client, co-worker, or employer

If you can't think of any particular incidents, describe your work style. Give us an image of you in action that demonstrates why you are an excellent worker and a great person to work with. Remember the woman from the printing company who described how she had learned the sound each printer made as it finished a run and timed her routine to be there as the last page dropped. With a description like that, we don't even need to be told that she's fast and efficient. She's proving it. Seeing (hearing, tasting, touching) is believing, even when it's happening purely through imagination.

Keep your descriptions as brief as possible without losing essential information. One of the biggest mistakes people make when telling stories is to go on too long. A story inevitably loses punch when there's too much detail. The "SCARF" acronym below should help you keep your descriptions on track.

SCARF:

S - Situation or Setting (type of company and your position)

C - Challenge (crisis or cause for concern)

A - Action (what you did)

R - Result (what happened because of what you did)

F - Follow-up (long-term consequences of what you did)

Here's an example from my past life as a server:

Situation: I was working the night shift as a server in a restaurant.

Challenge: An electrical fire caused all the lights to go out. As people gradually rose to leave, a panic started because someone had locked the front door.

Action: I quickly unlocked the door and addressed the crowd in a calm, authoritative manner. I apologized for the inconvenience, assured them that the fire was out, the exit door open and there was no cause for alarm.

Result: At least half the customers stopped at the bar to pay their bills on their way out. Because of this, the restaurant saved at least half the evening's revenue.

Follow-up: Because action was taken quickly and professionally, regular customers continued to come to the restaurant and business continued to flourish.

Document your own work highlights on the pages that follow.

MY WORK HIGHLIGHTS

S: _____

C: _____

A: _____

R: _____

F: _____

S: _____

C: _____

A: _____

R: _____

F: _____

S: _____

C: _____

A: _____

R: _____

F: _____

S: _____

C: _____

A: _____

R: _____

F: _____

S: _____

C: _____

A: _____

R: _____

F: _____

S: _____

C: _____

A: _____

R: _____

F: _____

EXERCISE # 8—EDUCATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

A complete self-portrait should include your significant learning experiences. Some may be formal: programs of study in which you obtained a degree or some form of certification. Others may be informal: strengths you developed at work or picked up on your own.

Learning experiences will naturally overlap with work experience wherever learning occurred on the job. Look for areas of cross-pollination, where learning from one area transferred naturally into another.

For example, I often say (only partly in jest) that I learned everything I needed to know about teaching adults from working in bars and restaurants. Waiting tables and bartending on busy nights requires real skill in crowd control. Unruly gatherings are common, especially on weekends and during sporting events. To manage them, I developed a style that was respectful, firm without being edgy, and liberally seasoned with humour. I established clear boundaries and I was good with follow-through: if someone knowingly crossed a line, they paid for it. After this, managing immaturity in a class of adults was a piece of cake.

(Note: I also have been known to say that I learned everything I needed to know about working in bars from teaching ninth-graders.) (No offense ninth-graders - you're great teachers!)

I learned many other skills in the hospitality industry that overlap well with the requirements of teaching. To name a few: Excellent timing *and* time management, mental coordination, the ability to read a group and adjust my style to different needs, the ability to defuse aggression, to be organized without being rigid, to coordinate a variety of activities that are happening concurrently and to improvise when the unexpected occurs.

Review the accomplishments exercise from page 15. Many of the strengths you identified there will relate to significant learning experiences. Remember, we learn from many different things, including accidents, tragedies, bad luck and difficult beginnings. Hardship is a great teacher. Don't limit yourself to things learned at work or school. Include them, but go beyond them as well.

Be sure to include times when you took the initiative to learn on your own. These are of particular interest to any thinking employer because they indicate that you will be motivated to keep up in changing times.

Elise, a woman who came into the program after several years in Human Resources, had a manager in a previous job who was very difficult to communicate with. The woman was unclear in her directives, disliked any form of confrontation, and preferred to communicate exclusively through e-mail – a process that resulted not only in misunderstandings, but a colossal waste of time. Elise was going crazy trying to do her job. She decided to take a course in her own time on advanced communication techniques. Through the course she picked up valuable tools that, once applied, had immediate positive results with her manager.

An example like this is pure gold to a prospective employer. Here is a woman who becomes conscious of a problem and despite the fact that it isn't *her* problem – except insofar as it prevents her from doing a good job – takes it upon herself to resolve it by learning something new in her spare time. The illustration indicates maturity, personal power, skill in problem-solving and a willingness to take initiative.

Devon, a man in his mid-twenties with a high school education, attended the program after an injury forced him to stop doing physical work. When the group was sharing educational highlights, he looked glum and passed when it was his turn to talk. Then out of the blue, he absently commented that everything he'd learned of any significance he'd learned at hockey school. Thinking he was joking, the man beside him laughed, which made Devon take his own comment a little more seriously.

“No man, I'm serious,” he said. “Hockey school was the best thing that ever happened to me.” He then proceeded to give the class a truly inspired description of what he had learned in hockey school. I asked him to write the gist of it down for me and this is what he wrote:

Program of Study: Hockey School

What I learned:

Power skating. Wrist shot, back-hand slap shot, snap shot fundamentals.

Strategy – how to plan a course of action and how to effectively react to the unpredictable.

Relaxing techniques – breathing routine, how to separate yourself yet remain, to be in the moment but not get caught up in the moment, to handle situations under a timetable with clarity and controlled panic.

Body awareness – how to give and receive a body check, how to avoid injury, awareness of your limbs and where to put/not put them, agility, balance, courage, confidence, training (physical) to maintain a strong body. Training (mental) to maintain a strong mind. To work as part of a team.

Social skills – placed in an unfamiliar setting with no friends, yet able to create friendship and change an unfamiliar setting into a familiar setting that is comfortable like a second home...

(Learned) how to effectively live in a common dwelling with strangers that have different habits, reactions, personalities, and how to (handle) confrontations.

Leadership, an ability to follow, to inspire and to be inspired, the beauty of healthy competition, how to learn, how to have fun, independence and dependence, how to win, how to lose, how to live. Sacrifice.

Significant Challenges/Achievements/Recognition:

*Brought into an unfamiliar setting, knowing nobody and making friends despite everything.
Realization that I can make friends quickly and the people will want to make friends with me.
An ability to walk into any room comfortably.
My first successful hip check, wrist shot, back hand, cross-over, slap shot, snap shot, shot block.
First time I inspired a team through speech and action and took us to another level.*

Hockey school taught Devon an incredible variety of life skills – to say nothing of confidence. These skills and that confidence will continue to support any kind of work he does, but he might not have recognized them if he hadn't taken the time to examine his experience.

Again, when we really get conscious of the strengths we've developed in the past we're more likely to exercise and build on those strengths in the future. We climb into ourselves in bigger ways – and we're less susceptible to the negative voice of the inner critic.

In the exercise that follows, describe what you consider to be your most significant learning experiences. Begin by identifying the program or learning situation and what it was that you learned. Then describe any challenges you faced, achievements you felt proud of, and/or recognition you received from the experience. Finally, identify areas of life or work where this learning has been or might be applied.

MY EDUCATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

1) Program/Learning Situation and What I learned:

Challenges/Achievements/Recognition

Where This Learning Has Been or Might Be Applied in my Life:

2) Program/Learning Situation and What I learned:

Challenges/Achievements/Recognition

Where This Learning Has Been or Might Be Applied in my Life:

3) Program/Learning Situation and What I learned:

Challenges/Achievements/Recognition

Where This Learning Has Been or Might Be Applied in my Life:

4) Program/Learning Situation and What I learned:

Challenges/Achievements/Recognition

Where This Learning Has Been or Might Be Applied in my Life:

5) Program/Learning Situation and What I learned:

Challenges/Achievements/Recognition

Where This Learning Has Been or Might Be Applied in my Life:

6) Program/Learning Situation and What I learned:

Challenges/Achievements/Recognition

Where This Learning Has Been or Might Be Applied in my Life:

EXERCISE # 9—THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

You should now have ample raw material for your Personal Statement. In fact, you will probably have more information than you can use. Your final challenge is to consolidate this information into a simple, dynamic statement that answers the question “*Who Are You?*” (or “*Tell me about yourself!*”) in a way that is both relevant and memorable to a potential employer.

Take some time now to revisit the exercises you have completed so far. Try to reduce your strongest values, skills, interests, personal qualities, work highlights and education highlights to five or fewer, then transfer these to page 236 for a one-page “portrait-at-a-glance.” For work and education highlights, a one-line reminder will suffice. (E.g., under work highlights I might write “*Fire in restaurant*” to remind me of the example I used earlier.)

If you feel reluctant to eliminate some of your strengths (one client said he felt like he was deserting his children!) remember that you’re not discarding them, you’re simply selecting the ones you most want to highlight right now. Your selection will naturally depend on the occupation you’re targeting, so if you have more than one occupation in mind, select the one you’re most drawn to today. Once the gist of your statement is written down it’s an easy matter to rework it if your target shifts and you want to highlight other strengths. A few Do’s and Don’ts:

KEEP IT SIMPLE

The greatest challenge in self-presentation is to keep your statement relevant, convincing and alive. Use conversational language and relatively short sentences. Being too formal is alienating and tends to put people to sleep. Keep the content simple and remember that less is almost always more. Trying to include too much will diminish your impact. So will long lists. Don’t include more than three items on any list; people stop listening after three. Think of it in terms of rhythm: three units are dynamic (*da-da, da-da, da-da!*); four or more are deadly (*da-da, da-da, da-da, da-da, da-da, da-da*) (*zzzzzzz*).

AVOID ABSTRACTIONS—BE CONCRETE

Express yourself concretely enough that your listener can see you in action. Remember, seeing is believing, even when the seeing takes place in the mind’s eye. It is far more powerful – and more convincing – to imagine someone using a strength than to simply hear them naming one. Depending on your delivery, the suggestion of an image (“*I love bringing order to chaos*”) can be much more powerful than a generic term (“*I’m organized*”). At the same time, you don’t want to overdo it. Save the images and

anecdotes for the strengths you most want to emphasize. Vary your delivery by including simple factual statements. *"I'm organized"* can have great impact as a simple statement of fact if it's delivered with confidence.

BE CONSISTENT

Be sure the wording of your statement is consistent throughout. If you're mentioning figures more than once, use the same categories (wholesale *or* retail prices, gross *or* net sales). If you're referring to job titles, be consistent (foreman *or* supervisor). Don't use different terms interchangeably – it will derail your listener and introduce an unnecessary question: *"Was he a foreman and a supervisor with this company or is he using different titles for the same job?"* If they find themselves questioning any part of what you've said, they will miss what you say next.

DON'T MAKE THEM STOP AND THINK

Any time you force your listeners to stop and think, you've potentially lost them. Don't leave room for guesswork. If you tell them that you were studying from 1987 to 1989 and mention in another moment that you were working during those years, make sure they realize that you were studying *while* you were working. Otherwise they'll be left with another question: *"Didn't she say she was at school from '87 to '89?"* and their focus will stray.

CONNECT THE DOTS

Do not assume that they will connect the dots or fill in the blanks by themselves. The fact that you have an MA in Fine Arts means only that. The fact that you have worked as a Mechanical Engineer means only that. They will not know what your particular experience has taught you or how that experience might benefit their company unless you tell them. Walk them through as you would a child, but don't patronize. Speak with simplicity, respect and hospitality. Anticipate all areas of possible confusion and either avoid them or explain them.

NO FALSE MODESTY: CONFIDENCE + ENTHUSIASM = ENERGY

Start strong, build on that strength, and end even stronger. Show them where you *rock*. This is your best shot at promoting yourself. Your level of confidence and enthusiasm are direct indicators of your level of energy, and it's your energy you're selling. Stay true to your style – a quiet dynamism is just as powerful as a lively one – but show them that you're wide awake and ready to go to work.

SHOW THEM YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Consider finishing with a few words about what you value most in a work environment. Leaving them with a strong impression of your work values will not only tell them how to get the best out of you, it will also let them know that you have thought about what you're looking for. This will remind them in a positive, respectful way, that you too are interviewing them.

E.g., *"I thrive in an upbeat, energetic environment where objectives are clear, co-workers are cooperative and there is a shared commitment to excellence in every job, however small."*

For the main elements of your personal statement, think ESP:

E for EXPERIENCE: Work and Educational Background
(approximately 60 - 80% of statement)

S for STRENGTHS: Values, Skills, Accomplishments
(approximately 20 - 40% of statement)

P for PURSUITS (if relevant): Passions, Interests, Hobbies, Volunteer
Activities (approximately 0 - 10% of statement)

What you emphasize will naturally vary according to your age and experience. Younger people who have not had time to accumulate a lot of work experience will need to put more emphasis on strengths. Older people who have a broad range of experience will need to be selective, emphasizing work that has particular relevance to the position in question.

Following is the statement I initially created for targeting work in the field of employment counseling:

My name is Margit Hesthammar. I have a wide range of experience working with people - from public relations work with the Xerox Corporation, to newspaper advertising, teaching - both adults and adolescents - and work in the hospitality industry. My greatest strengths are my communication skills - both written and verbal. I'm quick to establish a comfortable rapport with clients, I listen well and I'm a natural motivator.

I'm also a good writer. Writing is actually my passion and I'm currently completing a manuscript on the subject of career transitions that I plan to publish within the year. I also enjoy the challenge of creating a curriculum and have designed both the curriculum and the manual for the career transition program that I've been facilitating for the last thirteen years.

Finally, I'm an avid fine arts photographer and have had several professional exhibits in the last few years.

This statement is short and sweet and can be said in about forty-five seconds. It covers the bases, though it's a bit brief and impersonal. For contrast, here is a statement I might use if I felt encouraged to be more personal and knew I had more time:

My name is Margit Hesthammar. From the time I was young I've been fascinated by what makes people tick – in particular, what gets them stuck, repeating negative patterns, and what gets them unstuck. My studies in psychology and philosophy have fed this interest over the years and my current work with a school of transpersonal psychology continues to feed it – as does my love of literature and the arts. My formal education includes a BA in English and Philosophy and a secondary level teaching certificate.

Communication – whether written or verbal – is where I shine. I enjoy the challenge of curriculum development and have designed both the curriculum and the manual for the career transition program that I currently teach. My people skills have been honed through a wide variety of venues: from public relations work with the Xerox Corporation to newspaper advertising, teaching – both adults and adolescents – and every job you can name in the hospitality industry.

I have a playful, intuitive mind, a broad understanding of human nature and a compassionate heart. I'm also clear with boundaries, direct with expectations, and impeccably organized. I create a supportive, upbeat field and a high level of trust within the first hour of meeting any new group – and I'm a natural motivator. My clients are consistently enthused, engaged and productive by the end of day one.

The things I'm most proud of in my life are the things that are most invisible. Every step I have taken toward greater honesty with myself and greater ownership of my life path feels like a triumph to me.

In more material terms, I get great satisfaction from writing and the visual arts. I have created and presented several private workshops over the years and was recently nominated for an Award of Excellence for individual performance in Vancouver's career development field. I'm a published writer and I've also had several juried exhibits of my photography. I'm currently working on a manuscript that captures the essentials of the program I teach, targeting people who are trying to make a career transition on their own.

I thrive in a positive, cooperative environment where autonomy is encouraged, initiative and creativity are rewarded, and where the vision of my company is both ethical and progressive.

(Reading Time – two minutes)

Again, I would use the first version if I knew my time was limited and wanted to give my audience the bare bones of my qualifications. I would use the second if I felt they were looking for a deeper impression of me. In the end, it's up to you to feel your audience out, but one thing is certain – the more time you put into writing and reading (and re-reading) your statements, the more likely you will be to select the right words at the right time.

For those of you who haven't done a lot of writing, I'm offering a basic format on page 62. Use it as a place to start, but don't get trapped in it. It's designed to help you focus on the essentials of your statement, but you need to customize it in a way that feels real to you.

Do not be discouraged if your statement feels stiff or stale at first. The most important thing is to get a start. Once you have something down on paper, you will find it becomes easier and easier to revise. As you continue to work it, your own unique flavour will come through more and more vividly.

Finally, in order to present yourself as the winning candidate in a job interview you must first be aware of the challenges your prospective employer is facing. You cannot present yourself convincingly as their solution if you haven't first understood the nature of their problems. The worksheet on page 64 asks you to examine the employer's needs and determine how best you can help to meet them. Use it to customize your statement when applying for work in different fields.

MY PORTRAIT-AT-A-GLANCE

VALUES

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND SKILL SETS

PERSONAL QUALITIES

INTERESTS

WORK HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

FORMAT FOR A PERSONAL STATEMENT : “ESP”

Use the following format for a first draft of your personal statement. Then read and revise it to make it as fresh and original as possible. Next, try to elaborate on it as I did in my second example. You may not need more than your basic statement to answer the question “*Tell me about yourself,*” but the more you have thought about it and elaborated on it, the stronger the impression you will make when the prospective employer is probing for more depth.

“My name is...

EXPERIENCE: “I have a wide range of experience in... *(field or type of work)*, most specifically as a... *(job title)* in the... *(specific name)* industry.

My most recent job was with... *(name the company you worked for most recently if it's related to the work you're targeting)*, where I... *(list the main duties of this job)*.

Note: If your recent or current work is not related to the work you're targeting, mention past jobs that are. E.g., The work experience I have that's most relevant to this industry is... (and then list the main duties).

STRENGTHS: “Wherever I have worked, I have consistently brought three key strengths to the table: ..., ..., and ... *(choose words and phrases that identify your strengths in fresh, lively language)*.

The accomplishments I feel most proud of in my life are... *(name the challenges you have risen to that best illustrate your strengths.)*

PURSUIITS: “In my free time I enjoy... *(name the pursuits that speak well of your use of free time – e.g., anything to do with fitness, learning, teamwork)*

Optional:

WORK VALUES (Optional): “What I look for in a work situation is the opportunity to express/use my ... *(name the specific strengths you most want to use in the workplace)* in an environment that fosters...” *(name the specific conditions you most want your work environment to promote, support or encourage)*.

MY PERSONAL STATEMENT

My name is _____

EXPERIENCE

STRENGTHS

PURSUIITS

WORK VALUES (Optional):

EXERCISE # 10—CUSTOMIZING YOUR STATEMENT FOR SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONS

In order to present yourself as the winning candidate in a job interview, you must help the potential employer to see you as part of their solution. You do this by:

- 1) Identifying the specific goals and challenges of the employer, and
- 2) Proving to the employer that your skills and experience will help them to meet those goals and challenges.

Name the occupation you are targeting:

List the main duties and responsibilities of this occupation:

As an employer in this industry, what would be your primary goals and challenges?

Keeping these goals and challenges in mind, what would be the main skills and strengths you'd be seeking in a potential employee?

Assuming you possess these skills and strengths, customize your personal statement to highlight them. And be enthusiastic! Enthusiasm is a major factor in creating a positive impression. Not only is it contagious, it's also a highly persuasive indicator of your energy level. We can't be enthusiastic if we're running on empty. Whether you demonstrate it quietly or exuberantly, let them see that you're excited about the job and eager to get to work.

For your convenience, the Career Evaluation Tool from Part Two of the book has been reproduced on the next three pages.

I wish you all the best in your next career!

CAREER EVALUATION TOOL

The Career Evaluation Tool is designed to help you determine how well your potential career options satisfy your conditions for enjoyable work. By scoring all your options (including past careers) on the same range of conditions, you'll be able to compare them with one another to see which are most likely to bring you satisfaction.

1) In your inquiry notebook, identify the conditions you feel are most essential to your happiness at work. A review of the section on work values in Part Three will help refresh your memory. If you have not yet completed the Self Portrait, now would be the time. Describe each condition briefly, as indicated in the exercise that follows, and include about ten to fifteen items.

2) Now ask yourself if your list is self-explanatory. In other words, would someone else know exactly what you mean by each condition? If not, take a moment to define them, in point form, as briefly and concretely as you can. For example, if one of your conditions was 'Wage of \$35K or higher' you will need no further elaboration. On the other hand, if one of your conditions was 'Good Co-workers,' you will need to say more. What is a good co-worker to you? Someone you can be friends with? Someone who is professional and conscientious? Someone who consistently brings in positive energy? All of the above?

3) After your list has been clarified, rate each condition on a scale of 1 to 5 according to its level of importance *relative to the other items on your list*. The most important conditions should receive a 5 rating, the least important a 1. For example, one of my conditions was "Pleasing Surroundings;" another was "Good Management." When I compared these two items with the rest of my list, I decided that "Pleasing Surroundings" was worth about a 1, "Good Management" a 5. If you want help with the rating process, google "prioritizing grid" for a useful on-line tool.

4) When you have rated all your conditions, transfer the conditions and their values to the designated spots on the Evaluation Tool. You are now ready to assess a range of occupations based on how well they match your conditions. If a condition is worth 3 and it's well met in a given occupation, you will give it a score of 3. If it's barely met, you will give it a 1 or a 2. If it's not met at all, you will give it a 0 or even a minus value (-1 or -2), according to what feels appropriate.

5) Under 'Careers' on the left-hand side of the Evaluation Tool, list a few of the most significant occupations you have done in the past as well as the occupations you're currently considering. Since you already know a lot about your previous occupations, these will give you useful base-line scores with which to compare new possibilities.

6) Your perception of past jobs may change somewhat through doing this exercise, for better or worse. There may be some real surprises. You will also find that there are conditions you have to guess at when grading new occupations, either because there are gaps in your research or because certain conditions, such as benefits and management style, vary from company to company. Score each condition as well as you can and *circle the scores that are guesses.*

7) When you have scored every occupation, total the scores and place your final totals in the designated spaces on the right. You can now compare the totals to see which occupations best satisfy your conditions for enjoyable work.

You'll notice, depending on how many numbers you circled, that your results are based to a greater or lesser extent on guesswork. Take a moment now to review the conditions you had to guess at and in your dedicated notebook, list these as questions you still have about the careers you're investigating. Use them to guide your continued research, particularly when conducting information meetings with people in your field of interest.

It may turn out that certain questions can only be answered in the course of an actual job interview. (E.g., questions about training and advancement opportunities, frequency and style of performance evaluations, level of employee autonomy, company-specific challenges or hazards). If this is the case, you'll find it useful to bring these up when the interviewer asks "Do you have any questions for me?"

