

The 5 C's to Building a Career

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If you have clarity about what you want and need in your life, you are more likely to get it. This is as true for your career as it is for other things in your life. However, most people spend more time researching and evaluating a car purchase, than they do on that very important thing in life – a career.

When it comes to your “life’s work,” you can significantly increase the odds of building a career you will love by taking a few simple factors into account. These include being clear about what you want to do, where and with whom you want to do it, and what you want to get out of it as well as what you are willing to give up in return. However, this is not the way most people approach their career.

Unfortunately, many of us don’t plan our careers, we just take jobs. And even when we do some planning, we base our decision on only one or two factors, when there are other equally important things to consider.

When asked about your particular job and career choice, it’s likely that you respond with one or two of these statements:

- “It’s a great place to work” (culture)
- “The guy I’ll be working for seems really nice” (command)
- “The people are fun” (comrades)
- “The pay is really good” (compensation)
- “I’ll get to do what I want” (contribution)

The problem is, just one or two of these criteria are typically not enough to keep us excited about our choice, and soon we find ourselves not enjoying our work. This is because, although we love the pay, our boss is a jerk, or we’re not getting to do the tasks we enjoy, or something else we overlooked, is now an issue.

You can avoid this problem by getting clear about the 5 C’s of your career from the beginning. It’s important to know what matters to you. Here are some criteria to consider:

1. Culture – In what kind of company do I want to work?
 - Large or small?
 - Product or service?
 - Liberal or conservative?
 - Public or privately owned?
 - For profit or non-profit?
 - Lots of managers and few employees?
 - Nurturing environment or “sweat shop?”
 - Room to advance?
 - Fun or serious?
 - Pro-employee or pro-owner?
2. Command – For what type of boss/supervisor would I like to work?
 - Warm and friendly or distant?
 - Micro-manager or hands off?
 - Motivational or indifferent?
 - Generous or selective with praise?
 - Older or younger?
 - Male or female?
 - Encourages creativity or autonomy?
 - Supports advancement and growth?
 - Dictator or leader?
 - Flexible or rigid?

3. Comrades – With whom do I want to work?

- Team players or mavericks?
- Highly motivated or passive?
- Older or younger?
- Men or women?
- Highly social or indifferent?
- Shared work ethic?
- Helpful and supportive?
- Liberal or conservative?
- Fun or serious?
- Ambitious?

4. Compensation – What would I like my financial package and other “benefits” to be?

- How much money do I want to make?
- How much vacation or paid holidays do I want?
- How important is recognition to me?
- Do I want professional growth and development?
- Would I like to work on a commission basis?
- Do I need to be intellectually challenged?
- Would I accept some deferred compensation?
- Do I want ownership in a company?
- Is the company generous with raises?
- Is getting a bonus important to me?

5. Contribution – What would I like to give in my work?

- Do I need to make a difference in the world?
- Do I need to express myself creatively?
- Do I want to work longer hours than what is typical?
- Do I want to lead or manage people?
- Do I want to make sacrifices in order to gain future benefits?
- Do I need to take on a lot of responsibility?
- Do I want to apply some or all of the skills I have?

The 5 C's raise your awareness and ultimately improve your job satisfaction, because you're more likely to be doing and experiencing what you love, than taking what you can get.

Although you can't control all these aspects of your career nor the people in it, being clear will help you ask better questions and do better research as you evaluate your career. The key is in getting the most you can, and also agreeing with yourself that what you are able to get is what you truly want.

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