

8 Questions to Help You Choose a Career That Suits You

Choosing a career is an important decision you can't take lightly. Ask yourself these eight questions to ensure you get the most out of your career and life.

When it comes to choosing a career, there are plenty of factors. It is important to make the correct career choice since many people work more than they sleep.

By asking yourself these eight questions, you will be best positioned to choose a career that suits you.

1. Can This Career Support My Desired Lifestyle?

Your lifestyle is a combination of time and money. Depending on whether you have kids or wanting to travel, you will need a certain amount of time away from the office.

Does this mean your work needs to offer flex-options?

Sure, that is one way to make sure you have time for your family and leisure activities. You could also explore working four, 10-hour days or on a 9-month calendar. Once you understand the time aspect, you need to determine how much income you need to live your lifestyle.

If you want to travel or have a large family, you need a certain amount of money to afford that lifestyle. Depending on what matters to you the most, you can choose to sacrifice your time for a few years to afford more time later in your career, or you may prioritize chasing your passion and dream career.

The choices are vast, but you want to be intentional with how you spend your time and money. Studies show 78% of people are living paycheck to paycheck^[1].

However, we know that 78% are not living in poverty. That number simply reflects the number of people who spend all the money that they make.

2. Does This Career Challenge Me?

Imagine being a talented professional athlete and competing against kids in elementary school. Sure, you are going to win every match, but you will not feel the same satisfaction as if you were challenged by other talented professionals. Choosing a career requires you to gauge the opportunity for growth and advancement.

This is important because your chosen career will allow you to build new skills, attain additional education, and expand your knowledge base.

As you grow in your career, tasks that were once difficult will become easy. When this happens, you are left with two choices. You can coast for the rest of your career while only putting in minimal effort to get above average results. Or you can take on new challenges in areas where you are not guaranteed success.

The difficulty with this decision lies in our fear of failure. When you take on new challenges, there is going to be a learning curve that can create fear and self-doubt.

Do not allow your fear of the unknown to cause you to stay in your comfort zone.

3. Who Can Mentor Me?

You only know what you know, and if you want to know more, you will either have to experience it yourself or learn from someone else's experiences.

By finding someone who is in the career you want to choose, you will have someone to ask and seek guidance from. They can share what they learned and tell you what it takes to build a career in a certain industry.

Will you need a certification or additional education? Will you be willing to move?

Instead of waiting until you start your career to learn all these things, find a mentor who is a few steps ahead of you.

4. What Would I Do for Free?

Chasing money is one of the quickest ways to end up broke. Most careers are going to require more than the love of money to stick it out.

You probably know people who are making good money, and yet they are miserable. They work in a career where they feel like they are losing a piece of themselves every day.

The reason it is good to ask yourself what you would do for free is that your mind has an amazing ability to rationalize anything. What this means is you can find yourself in a toxic work relationship (or any relationship for that matter) because you have convinced yourself it is 'not that bad'.

Instead of making yourself believe that you are doing what is necessary, allow yourself to imagine the career you would pursue for free.

5. Where Is My Line?

It would be nice to live in a world where everyone is ethical and trustworthy. However, you do not need me to tell you that this is not always the case.

If you find yourself in a compromising position, you must decide where your line is located.

You may recall the Veterans Administration was in the news because patients were waiting for 115-days to be seen. When the new mandate came down to create a 24-day wait time, the employees noted how they felt compelled to manipulate performance records to meet these ambitious goals.

In a Harvard study, researchers discussed how good people are provoked to make bad choices. The reasons are:
[2]

1. When it is unsafe to speak up;
2. There is excessive pressure to reach unrealistic performance targets;
3. There are conflicting goals;
4. When no positive example is being set.

You will surely face at least one of these four scenarios in your career, and you will be the one to decide for yourself if it is worth it.

6. Am I Continuing to Grow?

One of the most common reasons people disengage from their role is because they no longer feel like they are growing.

Choosing a career is more than making money and having job security, it is also about that feeling you are learning new things. You will notice low skilled careers tend to have a higher turnover rate. Of course, the lower wages that tend to accompany low skilled positions are a part of the decision-making process; it is also the mundane nature of doing the same thing every day.

Everyone likes being promoted and getting a raise, but those are just external recognition of your internal growth. Promotions feel best when you know you have earned it through the continual development of your skills and leadership.

7. Where Does My Personality Fit?

You can find plenty of information online about choosing a career based on your personality type.

Among the most referenced materials is the work of John Holland and the Holland Theory of Career Choice:^[3]

'According to John Holland, there are six key categories that define the modern worker. His assessment offers a framework that considers career interest and pairs ideal environments for certain personalities that also play a role in job satisfaction and performance. The six types are Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional.'

For example, those who are Enterprising are most likely to lead and persuade, and as a result, this group would enjoy being a sales manager or attorney.

8. Where Do I Want to Live?

Choosing a career is going to have a direct impact on where you will live.

If you want to work on the floor of the stock market, you will find yourself living in New York and close to Wall Street. Large metropolitan areas tend to provide the best opportunity for careers in engineering. If you are not excited about working in places like Seattle, Boston, and Atlanta, then you may want to explore careers for more

rural areas.^[4]

If someone was interested in working in the tech industry, Silicon Valley is going to be on your list. This is not to say that opportunities in tech are not available anywhere else in the country, but you will have more opportunities in the tech industry if you live near Silicon Valley. The same holds true for broadcasting in New York and entertainment in Hollywood.

You must be strategic in where you choose to live to provide yourself the best opportunity to succeed. For those who would prefer to choose the location based on their kids or proximity to their family, you will want to examine which professions are prevalent in your area.

If you can find a company that has a local headquarters in your area, then you open up the opportunity to find a career that fits you.

Final Thoughts

These eight questions are a great starting point when it comes to choosing a career that suits you.

At different points in your life, your answers will change. You will desire to make more money, a change of scenery, or a simpler life so you can spend more time with loved ones.

Regardless of the reason, if you start with these eight questions, you will be well-positioned to choose a career that suits your wants and needs.

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