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Run Toward Your Next Job, Not Away From Current One

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Run Toward Your Next Job, Not Away From Current One

By Bob Porter
UCF Forum columnist
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If you are considering a job change or are looking for your first job, how do you know what direction to take?

Early in my career when I worked for General Electric, I had the opportunity to participate in a two-year leadership-development program. As part of this program, every six months I met with a senior executive named Peter Bergen, who served as my career mentor and taught me the important lesson: “It is better to run toward your next job versus run away from your current one.”

This is one of the best reasons to discover your “sweet spot” in life and will serve as a powerful guide to help you develop a meaningful and rewarding career path.

Those who know me have heard me talk about the concept of a sweet spot, which is the intersection of three areas: your passions, the things you are good at, and the activities that others value highly.

These three areas of life can be graphically visualized by drawing three circles (one for each area) that intersect in one central zone in the middle. This intersection is what I call the sweet spot in life.

But how do you find that perfect place? Or know whether you’re already there? My advice is to pursue the answers to a set of basic yet introspective questions. After you answer the questions, then reflect on your answers to find where they intersect, which in

turn defines your sweet spot. I recommend that you write your answers down — you will need them later.

To discover your passions in life, ask: “What activities would get me up early on a day I don’t have to be at work?” Or “What would I be willing to do for free (or for low pay) as my daily job?” A test of this is to think back to your most recent vacation, time off from work, or possibly even a work project you really enjoyed, and identify the activities and why you enjoyed it.

To confirm what you are really good at, recall what people come to you regularly for to get help with or ask your advice about. Another way to get insight in this area is to ask people who know you to describe what you are really good at doing. Another suggestion is to use the exercises by Richard Bolles, in his book, *What Color is Your Parachute?* He offers a series of questions to help you discover what he terms as your transferable skills.

To find things that others value highly, it is important to define “value” as something that is not just financial in nature. It could be something you are willing to invest considerable time in or barter for. Make a list of the volunteer groups that you support, the social networks that you have joined and strongly relate to, and the non-work related activities that you give significant time and money to. Determine what is similar among these activities that you believe important and therefore of high value.

Now you have three lists — one for each area to focus on. Look for activities and patterns in each of the areas that intersect. It is possible that activities could intersect with a little more work on your part. This means that if you are passionate about something that others value, but you don’t have the full set of skills to be really good at the activity, then you may want to consider taking some additional training or classes to help you improve to the point you are really good at the activity.

Here’s an example of a good match: You love to play the acoustic guitar, you are very good at it, and there is a local coffee shop that is willing to pay you well to perform on a regular basis. (So what are you waiting for?)

If you don't have activities where all these areas intersect, that's OK. You can use this framework as a guide to develop yourself and move toward finding the perfect combination.

Remember, you want to run toward that next job, not run away from your current one.

Take the time to complete a personal inventory and define what that next ideal opportunity is, and you can start running to your destination.

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