

How to Measure Your Life

1) How can I be sure I will be successful and happy in my career?

I believe I will continue to be successful and happy in my careers if I can pursue careers that fit the definition of Right Opportunity. The circles in the Right Career Venn diagram provide the structure for my answer:

Be My Best: In the past I have only been successful when I was doing my best. I have learned that only happens when I leverage my natural personality (INTJ), my natural strengths and my natural skills. I also know that leveraging those things will make me happy. Trying to live someone else's personality might be possible but it will be hard and I will not be happy doing it. I am most happy when I am using my strengths and skills.

Meaning & Passion: In the book *Success Built to Last* the authors The author's research lead to two main conclusions: 1) What you do must have Meaning, i.e., what you do must matter deeply to you. It's something you're so passionate about that you lose all track of time when you do it. In fact it may not feel like work at all. It seduces you to the point where you lose interest in everything else. 2) The bad news is that it's really dangerous not to do what you love. The harsh truth is that if you don't love what you're doing, you'll lose to someone who does. Your co-workers or competitors who love their work will gladly work longer hours, think about work 24/7, try more things, come up with more great ideas and get better opportunities than people who only do things for a living.

In my life I have experienced exactly that. It started with running the school newspaper. I had such a passion for the newspaper and felt it fulfilled a real need for the school. I was constantly thinking about the newspaper and how it could be improved. In fact I became so obsessed with it my grades started to suffer. I have experienced the same thing many times in my career – my job doesn't seem like work.

Fuel your Economic Engine: You can be doing something that leverages your strengths/personality and something that has meaning to you, but if society won't pay you to do it then that is not your Right Career. Being raised in a small Midwestern town where my great grandfather, grandfather and father also lived gave me moderate economic needs. But I still want to provide my family with the basics in life, including a college education for my children, so I have to have careers that will provide a reasonable income.

Whole Person: There are other elements, besides the three above, that are important to a successful and happy life. I would like to live in interesting places, have children and travel – to mention a few.

Last I have to recognize the unique challenge of my INTJ personality posed by the author of "Do What You Are": "Consider practical realities, recognize the value of input from others, and balance your work and personal life." I can get very inspired by ideas and forget to take into account the practical realities. This enthusiasm and mental quickness leads to me not taking other people's opinion into account. I need to truly solicit and use opinions from knowledgeable people.

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2) How can I be sure that my relationships with my spouse, my children, and my extended family and close friends become an enduring source of happiness?

I am very fortunate to have been raised in a Normal Rockwell environment. We lived in a 400-person Midwest town where everyone knew everyone else. My great grandfather had moved there from Sweden in 1874, my grandfather had lived there and my father had lived there. The grandmothers on both sides of the family also lived within 2 miles of the town. My aunt, uncle and their two boys, who were 8 and 10 years older than me, lived across the alley from me. I saw the benefits of having a close relationship with your family. I also went to school with the same kids from 1st grade through high school so I know the value of long-term friendships. I also know you have to be honest with your friends if you want to keep them as friends.

I am also fortunate to have the parents I had. They too were raised in this small close-knit community. I saw how important family, friends and community were to them. I am also starting to realize my mother was a genius at raising my sister and I. She was able to get us to internalize the culture of our family, which was about being honest and fair to others. We didn't really get punished, instead we knew when we had done something wrong and would admit it.

I am fortunate to have worked for my father for four summers. He ran a plumbing, heating and electric business. I worked as an apprentice and besides learning a trade I also got to see how talented my father was and a different side of him.

I have to recognize the unique challenge of my INTJ personality posed by the author of "Do What You Are": "Consider practical realities, recognize the value of input from others, and balance your work and personal life." I must ensure my pursuit of the three Venn circles (Be your Best), Meaning/Passion and Economic Engine doesn't turn my life into a one-dimensional event. When work doesn't seem like work you can forget to go home. By the time I recognize that is happening it will be too late.

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I also have to recognize the challenges to leading a balanced life posed by my strengths. I am someone who will do what I say I will do. I also really like to be productive and busy. I also really like to intellectually explore and work provides that outlet, where home doesn't.

- Achiever - People who are especially talented in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive. The StrengthsFinder system suggests some ways to combat this when dealing with your personal life.
 - Count personal achievements in your scoring “system.” This will help you direct your Achiever talents toward family and friends as well as toward work.
 - Remember to build celebration and recognition into your life. Achievers tend to move on to the next challenge without acknowledging their successes. Counter this impulse by creating regular opportunities to enjoy your progress and accomplishments.
- Responsibility - People who are especially talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. The StrengthsFinder system suggests some ways to combat this when dealing with your personal life.
 - Push yourself to say no. Because you are instinctively responsible, it might sometimes be difficult to refuse opportunities. For this reason, you must be selective. Ask for more responsibility in only the areas that matter most to you.
 - Partner with someone especially talented in Discipline or Focus. This person can help you stay on track and prevent you from becoming overloaded
- Intellection: People who are especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.
 - Schedule time for thinking; it can be energizing for you. Use these occasions to muse and reflect. Some of that time can be at home.
 - Find intellectual pursuits outside of work that can be integrated into your personal and family life.

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3) How can I live a life of integrity — and stay out of jail?

First I am not very good at lying because I don't have a good memory so telling you something other than the truth is hard for me to pull off.

Second, as I said above I am very fortunate to have been raised in a Normal Rockwell environment. We lived in a 400-person Midwest town where everyone knew everyone else. You very quickly figured out your word was very important. You did what you said or you lost everyone's respect.

Third, it was fortunate my first company out of graduate school was IBM. They were a great example of an ethical company and the things I learned from them have stuck with me for the rest of my life.

Fourth, I have integrated the concept of being Trustworthy into my view of the world. To be Trustworthy you have to have competence and character. You might have the strengths and skills to do the assignment, but if you don't have character they cannot trust you will complete the assignment. On the other hand you might be an Eagle Scout whose character is not an issue, but you don't have the ability to perform the task. In either case you are not trustworthy. I would not delegate or work on teams with people who are not trustworthy. I have strived to be Trustworthy and will continue to do so.

Fifth, I have always been the Executive who lead the effort to define and instill a culture of Integrity in every early stage company. It has been one of my passions in life.

As the writer of this article says, it is a slippery slope you do not want to start down. I pride myself in the way I have conducted my life from elementary school until now.