

Success Built to Last Insights

I believe I will be both successful and happy in my career if I can continually pursue careers that fit the definition of Right Careers. I say careers because I believe I will have multiple careers during my 40+ year professional life. I have read that my generation will have from five to eight careers. The circles in the Right Career Venn diagram provide the structure for my answer:

Be My Best: It is obvious I will not be successful if I am not doing my best. To be my best I need to leverage my personality (INTJ), my strengths and my skills. I also know that leveraging those provide me with real passion; I enjoy doing things at which I excel. I am most happy and passionate when I am using my strengths.

Meaning & Passion: 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 short life I have experienced exactly that. Running the school newspaper is a perfect example. 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. To offset the demands of the newspaper I dropped varsity baseball because by my junior year I no longer had the passion for baseball I had at an earlier age. I also realize I don't have the same passion for being an engineer as most of my peers. I can easily translate that into lower performance in the workplace. I don't think of engineering like I do of the newspaper.

Fuel your Economic Engine: Here I somewhat disagree with the Success Built to Last authors. 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. In fact maybe it should be your hobby. 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. But I do agree with what is written in the Meaning section above. One of the reasons I don't think I want to actually be an engineer is I don't have the passion I see in other engineering students. Thus I realize in the work world I won't be able to compete very well with them – so I will not provide as much Fuel for my Economic Engine.

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.