

CAREER VALUES

Why Focus on Career Values?

It is important to consider why we are drawn to certain types of careers, as well, as why we are disinterested in others. After graduation, many students enter the workforce and experience varying degrees of “career disillusionment” – they find themselves moving from one employer to the next in search of the perfect job.

Understanding our career values is a critical step in the career planning process. Our values help us to define what is purposeful, meaningful, and important in our lives – they help to guide our choices when looking at potential careers or employers that we wish to work for. Often when we experience job dissatisfaction, it is a result of value misalignment. For example, let's say that your top two career values are autonomy and achievement. However, you are working for a large bureaucratic organization where change is extremely slow and handled with caution. In addition to this, you report directly to a “micro” manager who enjoys overseeing everything you do and is insistent that your work does not deviate from your job description – which is very limited! How long do you think it will be before you begin looking for another job or show up to work each day with grudging compliance?

Career Value Framework

Taking time to explore and identify our core values is one of the most important investments that you will make. Finding the right career is not something that happens by accident or that we miraculously fall into – it is intentional and focused. A helpful framework for thinking about career values was developed Nova (www.novaworks.org). “In their Values Driven Work assessment exercise, career values are clustered in four domains: Intrinsic Values, Work Environment Values, Work Content Values, and Work Relationship Values.

Intrinsic Values: What motivates me to truly love my work day after day? Among a list of these values are Achievement, Giving to Community, Status, Independence, and Power.

Work Environment Values: What working conditions provide an optimum environment in which can do my best work? Work Environment Values include Learning, Benefits, Fast-Paced, Comfortable Income, Structure and many more.

Work Content Values: What makes my work activities most satisfying and engaging to me? Among the 18 values in this area are values such as Problem Solving, Organizing, Public Contact, Detailed, and Creative.

Work Relationship Values: What characteristics of interaction with others in my workplace are the most important to me? Work Relationship Values include Open Communication, Diversity, Leadership, Teamwork, Competition, and Trust.”

Career Value Exercises

- Describe in detail what your dream career would look like (your role, responsibilities, location, benefits, pay, workplace environment, etc.).
- Based on the description you provided of your dream career, go through the career values inventory below and begin to identify related values.
- After you have identified these values, rank your top five based on their level of importance.

Career Value Inventory

What is important to you?

Review the examples of work values below and rate their importance:

Very Important: You must have this in your work

Important: This would be nice to have

Neutral: Undecided – no strong feeling one way or the other

Not Important: This is something you could easily go without

Achievement: Results oriented; using your strongest skills; feeling a sense of accomplishment

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Achievement: Results oriented; using your strongest skills; feeling a sense of accomplishment

☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
Very Important

Achievement: Results oriented; using your strongest skills; feeling a sense of accomplishment

☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
Very Important Important Neutral Not Important