Values

Living our values in our work life is the key to fulfillment in our careers. So often, people have a work persona and a personal persona (that is, who they are at work and at home differ). The goal is to have these identities be the same by having them both reflect our values. It's what makes work not feel like work.

Values clarification is a process used to identify what is important to an individual, department, organization, or for that matter, a country. When an individual is said to be true to his or her self, that self can be defined by a clear list of values. Not surprisingly, individuals' career satisfaction and fulfillment are much higher when they can express and realize many, if not all, of their personal values in their careers.

It is important to understand that values are not morals or ethics. Webster's Dictionary refers to a moral as "relating to principles of right and wrong behavior." Values, on the other hand, are "intrinsically valuable or desirable…that which belongs to the essential nature or constitution of a thing" (person, department, organization). While people can decide about their morals, they already *are* their values. Values can also change in relative importance over time. For many people, the value of security is not important in their early twenties, but is typically more important once they have a family.

How we express our values may also change over time. The value of adventure might be expressed by rock climbing and bungee jumping when one is younger, but at a later stage in life this same value of adventure may be expressed through new experiences or world travel.

Being true to your values helps you escape the weight of the "shoulds" or the external messages and judgments that we referred to earlier on . Values clarification is not a process where you choose what values you would like to have or should have. It is an honest assessment that looks at who you are, right now in your life. When you honestly assess your values, your next step becomes much clearer.

The exercises on the following pages will help you define and clarify your values. We recommend that you do them early in your career transition or job search process. The information these exercises yield will not only help you make career decisions that will be most fulfilling, but can also help focus your search and information-gathering process.

PEAK EXPERIENCE EXERCISE

A simple way to identify your values is to think of peak experiences in your life — moments when you were thriving, felt alive or on top of the world, and were completely yourself. A peak experience may be a moment in time, like crossing a finish line, or a period of time like your college years. It may be personal or professional in nature, and may have occurred at *any* time in your life, including your childhood or adolescent years. By reflecting on the aspects of those experiences that made you feel this way, you can identify your values. For example, if a peak experience of yours was climbing a mountain, this may reflect the values of perseverance or challenge. A time when you learned Spanish in Guatemala may reflect the values of diversity, communication, or adventure. A time when you were part of a college musical may suggest the values of teamwork, creativity, or performance. A more detailed example of a peak experience and the apparent values reflected in that experience is as follows:

> *Several years ago, I decided to train for a triathlon. I had never been very athletic or in especially good shape but I just decided to go for it. Maybe that was part of my interest — to do something I wasn't sure I could do. I started training with some other people twice a week, as well as doing my own training. I liked the camaraderie of meeting new people, as well as having time to myself just to run, bike, swim, and think. It was amazingly time-intensive and coincided with a big rush at work, but I had no problem getting everything done. I just became a lot more efficient. I was in constant pain for several weeks but I kept on going. I think I liked having a big project to sink my teeth into. In the end, not only did I finish the triathlon, but I was in the upper half of the finishers, which was a huge accomplishment for me.*

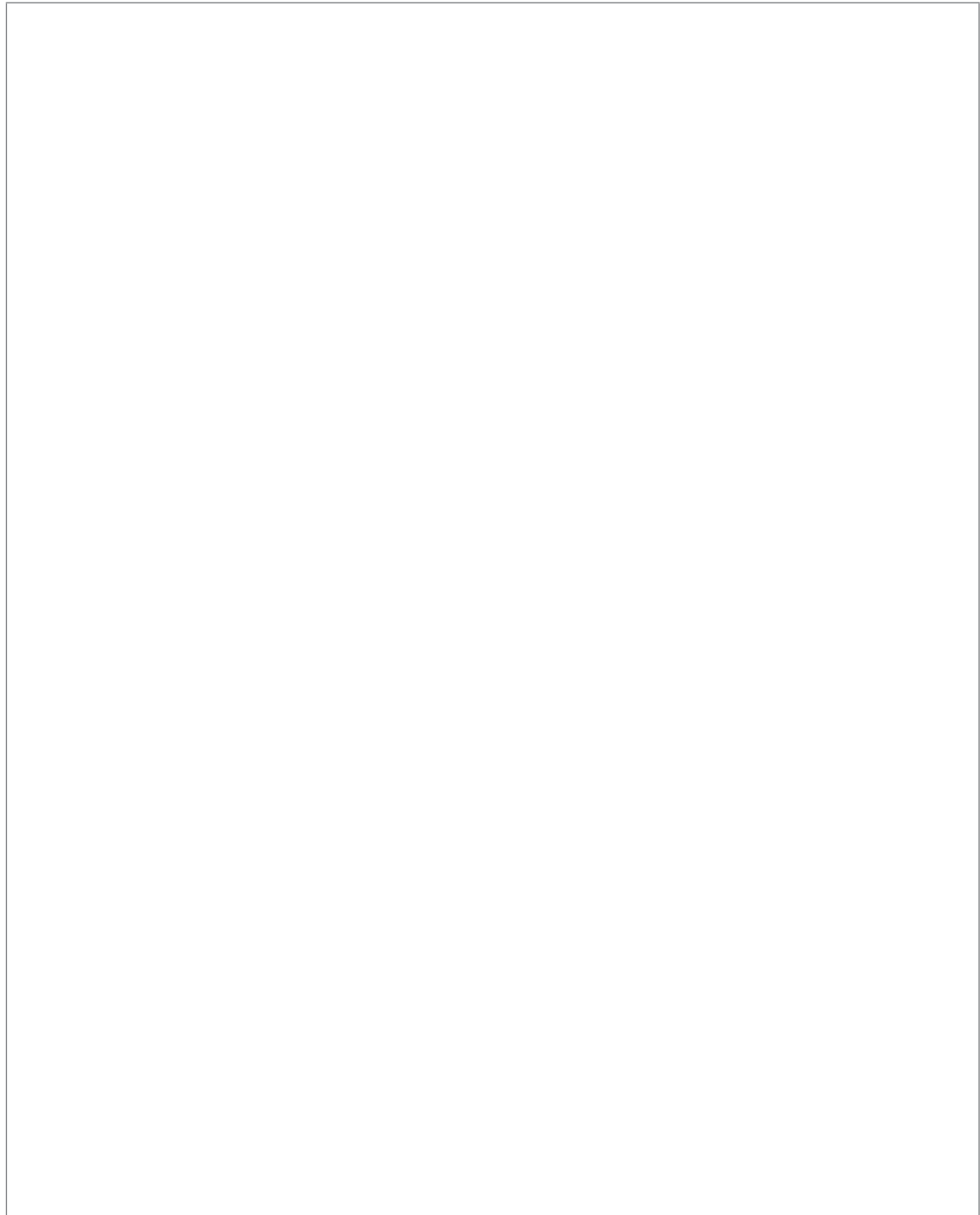Some values that appear to be present in this example are:

- Performance
- Perseverance
- Self-improvement
- Big challenges
- Like-minded peers
- Support from others
- Time for myself
- Productivity
- Focus
- Discipline

Use the next page to describe some of your peak experiences and begin to articulate your values.

Values

PEAK EXPERIENCE EXERCISE (CONT'D)

Describe in the space below one or two of your peak experiences. Where were you? Who were you with? What were you doing? Describe any details you can remember (e.g., the weather, the music in the background, etc.) that made this time so special. If possible, focus on nonprofessional experiences to avoid inadvertently incorporating values you think you "should" have.

Values

VALUES LIST

Think about one of your peak experiences described on the prior page. What core aspects made this experience so special? What values are present?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

If you examine several peak experiences, you will find that with each additional peak experience, there will be some overlap in the underlying values that are present, and each additional experience may shed light on other values. The bottom line is that these were your peak experiences because these were times when you were completely living your values. That is, you were being completely who you are! It is only when we are able to express our values that we can be who we really are — and therefore thrive and succeed!

After identifying your underlying values from your peak experiences, you may check the values list on of the *Appendix* to see if there are any you may have missed. If you have not completed the peak experience exercise, we recommend that you go back and do so before looking at the list in order to generate your core values, as opposed to just choosing from a list.

Values

**VALUES
RANKING**

Once you have identified your values, prioritize your top 10 values by force-ranking them starting with the most important. A good way to determine the values that are most important is to ask yourself, *"Which value(s) would I be most miserable without?"*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

We will revisit this list in *Part 4* when we discuss *Evaluating Job Offers (see pages 174–176).*

Values

Using your values list from the previous page, label each bar below with a value that is important to you. When you have completed labeling each bar, rate the extent to which your current or prior job allowed you to live or express each value on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 meaning *"I was not at all expressing this value,"* and 10 meaning *"I was completely expressing this value."* For example, you may have a value of autonomy and previously worked in a role as an individual contributor, which gave you a fair amount of autonomy. However, your boss may have been somewhat of a micromanager, so you might rate this value at a 7 overall for your last job.

VALUES CHART

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Example: Autonomy										
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
7.										
8.										
9.										
10.										

Your values rating of your most recent job should be indicative of your overall level of satisfaction or fulfillment in that job. For each value, ask yourself: What would a 10 look like (where a 10 represents your ideal amount of that value, not necessarily a lot of it)? What would the role need to be like to reach a 10?

The values listed in the above chart will also serve as an important screen — or set of decision-making criteria — when it comes time to evaluate actual job opportunities ().

Values

In addition to helping you focus your job search, your list of values can inform the questions you should be asking in both informational interviews and job interviews. Essentially, taking into account your values will help ensure that you are collecting the *right* information throughout the course of your discussions. In a meaningful job search, the goal is not just to get a job — it's to get the *right* job for you — and the definition of what is right for you will depend on your own values.

Here are some examples of how you might pose questions related to specific personal values:

VALUE	POTENTIAL QUESTIONS
AUTONOMY	● *To what extent would I be free to decide how to best approach specific projects?* ● *Which decisions would I be primarily responsible for and for which decisions would you expect me to ask you for guidance?* ● *On a scale from 1–10, how much autonomy do you have at this company? In this department? In this job?*
COLLABORATION	● *On a scale from 1–10, how much does this work lend itself to collaboration?* ● *How collaborative is this team? This department? This company?* ● *What are some examples of projects where you collaborate across departments or functions?*
INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE	● *What are the types of problems you are charged with solving?* ● *What are some of the more complex problems or projects you've been working on?* ● *What do you find intellectually challenging about your work? What do you find less challenging?*
SUPPORT	● *What type of training and development opportunities are available at this company?* ● *What type of budget would I have to work with in this role? What other resources would be available to support me being successful?* ● *To what extent does this company hire ahead of growth in revenues versus after?*
RECOGNITION	● *How are people typically recognized at your company for their work?* ● *What's an example of a time you were recognized for something you did well at work?* ● *How much do titles matter at this company? What are other ways that people's value is recognized?*

NEXT STEP
PARTNERS™

TRANSLATING VALUES INTO QUESTIONS
(CONT'D)

For your top 10 values, draft some potential questions that you can use, in both informational interviews and job interviews, to provide additional insight into how much you'd be able to express those values in a given job, company, or career path.

VALUE	POTENTIAL QUESTIONS
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	