

THE Introvert's
Complete
Career Guide

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Career Guide

From Landing a Job,
to Surviving, Thriving,
and Moving on Up

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INTRODUCTION: PEOPLE LIKE US

I am an introvert. This reality revealed itself when I was very young. My mother would hand me a pot and a few utensils, and sit me on the tiled kitchen floor where I'd play on my own for hours. My older brother, on the other hand, was not tuned inward. Speaking freely to any stranger in his path, he demanded my mother's attention with his nonstop chatter. So when I came on the scene, my mother was amazed by the difference in our personalities. It pleased her that I could entertain myself with the simplest of props and required minimal human interaction. Of course, I was not the first of our family's introverts—in fact, I come from a long line of them. My grandmother's entrepreneurial spirit supported my quiet immigrant grandfather, who was content staying behind the scenes. And my socially timid father chronically complained of upcoming social gatherings, though in the end he thoroughly enjoyed such events despite his reticent nature.

Throughout my early years, as the floor tiles yellowed and life unfolded, I remained soothed by tranquil activities. Arts and crafts and reading provided a welcome balance to the drama of school interactions and social events. However, my quiet and reserved manner didn't prevent me from cultivating friendships. In fact, my reluctance to trumpet myself as bright

and bold proved instrumental in attracting many friends. Like reading a good book, I enjoyed listening to their stories and coming up with ways to solve their problems. Most of all I took pleasure in helping them rewrite a chapter in their lives that would lead to a happy ending. Looking back, it is no surprise that my particular form of introversion led to a career in counseling.

Extraversion Versus Introversion

The nature of extraversion versus introversion sparks lively conversations regarding who demonstrates which of these tendencies and why. You may have already taken one of the online tests or the formal Myers Briggs (MBTI) inventory to discover where you fall on the spectrum. The MBTI assessment is a psychometric questionnaire that attempts to measure psychological preferences for how people perceive the world and make decisions. Conceptualized and developed by Katherine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Myers, the MBTI is based on psychiatrist Carl Jung's personality theory of psychological type. According to CPP Inc., the publisher of the MBTI instrument, it's "the world's most widely used personality assessment."¹

It is natural to want to fit into a category that gives us an identity, especially if that identity provides a better understanding of ourselves and others, and explains the nature of our interactions. But be careful of type-casting yourself. Instead, try to think of extraversion and introversion as natural preferences, rather than hard and fast, glued-on labels.

The Theory

Where did all the hype about introversion and extraversion start? Carl Jung developed the theory known as "psychological type," which characterizes people into personality patterns. According to Jung, extraversion and introversion represent two of these personality patterns that focus on a person's expression of energy.² Extraverts are more energized when they have access to a wide and colorful palette of opportunities in the external world. Their energy expands and blooms when they are in the company of other people and engaged in a flurry of activity. An introvert's energy, on the other hand,

draws deeply from their internal world. Less showy and overt, they enjoy a life of solitude, so they can explore their feelings and ideas from within and reflect undisturbed on life.

The Myth of Introversion

An introvert is often portrayed as someone who lacks social skills, a person who prefers to peek out from behind the curtain, satisfied to remain a spectator. In contrast, extraverts are viewed as social butterflies who bask assuredly in the limelight, assuming their place is at center stage. Although the social swirl of life in which we engage can reflect our personality type, this common perception is not entirely accurate: The difference between introversion and extraversion has, in fact, much more to do with how we express and channel our energy.

Contrary to popular belief, introverts are not necessarily shy or anti-social. Instead, they are often sharp observers and listen well. Generally disinclined to barge in at the beginning of a meeting or social gathering, an introvert will likely stay quiet and reflective as the more effusive extraverts jump in to offer comments. Good listeners by design, introverts prefer to take in all pertinent information before speaking, but then very often surprise their audience by making relevant, thoughtful contributions.

Are You an Introvert?

Answer the following questions to help determine whether or not your personality type falls within the spectrum of introversion:

- a. I love chatting people up.
- b. I hate small talk and like to get to the point.

- a. I am more interested in what's happening around me.
- b. I am more interested in my own thoughts and feelings.

- a. I am often described as energetic and active.
- b. I am often described as calm and reserved.

- a. I enjoy working with groups more than working independently on my own.
- b. I can work with groups but crave time to work alone.
- a. I am one of the first to respond to a sudden or unexpected question.
- b. I hope that someone else responds first to a sudden or unexpected question.
- a. I tell it like it is.
- b. I keep my thoughts close to the vest.
- a. I tend to think out loud.
- b. I think before I speak.
- a. I easily initiate conversations at networking and social events.
- b. I enjoy listening to people when I first meet them at networking and social events.
- a. I enjoy going out with friends or family on a weekend night.
- b. I enjoy staying at home with a good book or movie on a weekend night.
- a. I have a general idea of what I will talk about at a meeting.
- b. I plan in advance specifically what I am going to say at a meeting.
- a. I can stay to the bitter end at a good party.
- b. I am ready to leave the party after a few hours.

If you answered **b** more frequently than **a**, it is likely that you lean toward introversion. However, if you still feel unsure of where you fall on the scale of extraversion and introversion, check off the following words that describe you best and see where your instinctive tendencies place you.

Introversion	Extraversion
Give people energy	Draw energy from people
Reflective	Active
Reserved	Outgoing
Quiet	Expressive
Day dreamer	Reality
Observer	Highly active
Private	Open
Solitude	Attracted to groups
Depth	Breadth
Don't enjoy small talk	Talkative
Serious	Easy going
Think before speaking	Think and talk at the same time
Deep concentration	Easily distracted

If you selected eight or more words from the introversion list, you likely lean toward an introverted personality type.

Are You an Intro-Extravert?

If you came out in the middle when you completed the questionnaire or found yourself identifying with both sides of the word chart, you might be what I like to call an “intro-extravert.” As I mentioned earlier, these personality types are merely preferences—not set in stone—and can therefore

be influenced. The environment, for example, can enhance or otherwise affect personality type. Even if you consider yourself naturally introverted, you might experience situations that require more extraverted skills. As you develop these skills, you might achieve a higher comfort level, moving the needle of personality type a bit further to the extraversion side of the scale.

When I worked at the University of Pennsylvania, it was crucial to reach out to students, faculty, and staff to develop programs across different divisions. Equally important was to build relationships with key stakeholders. Even though I considered myself firmly placed on the introvert side of the scale, I was forced to employ more extraverted skills. Though at first this felt neither natural nor comfortable, the need to exercise new muscles built my confidence and proved to be a satisfying surprise. As time went on, I found that I began to actually enjoy stepping out in person and online to build my personal and professional network. However, even today my personality combines the two types; as good as I felt about discovering pleasure in situations challenging to introverts, I admit that I often dread large network events.

Cultural Differences

To determine where you fall on the introvert scale, consider that introversion may also be characteristic of your culture. A recent study by psychologist Robert McCrae revealed that out of thirty-six cultures, Asian cultures and some African cultures identified more closely with introversion.³ This is likely a result of both cultures' emphasis on tradition, conservatism, and compliance. This prevalence of introversion has by no means impeded the success of these cultures. On the contrary, a recent nationwide survey conducted by PEW Research Center revealed that Asian Americans are the best educated, earn the highest incomes, and constitute the fastest growing racial group in the United States.⁴

In America, we live in a culture that favors extraversion. Initiative is rewarded, speaking out is cheered, and taking action is applauded. For an introvert, unfortunately, this reality can leave one walking in an extravert's shadow. To lead happy, productive, and successful lives in this culture, introverts must first understand and appreciate their personal value, and then balance the introversion with a sprinkling of extravert skills.

In working with introverted clients, I often found that regardless of their circumstances—whether meeting with great success in their workplace or on the job hunt, seeking a new start—many questioned their personal value and ability to compete in the face of market changes. Taking cues from their experiences as well as my own personal challenges, I felt compelled to explore and uncover ways introverts can build on their strengths and confidently compete for new opportunities. These discoveries helped me create tools to help my clients at all life stages and professional levels succeed in their careers; this, in turn, inspired me to write a book that would pass this knowledge on to other introverts, endowing them with self-acceptance, and enabling them to shine.

Today's Whirlwind of Work

As a naturally careful and astute observer, you might have noticed the momentum of change in the workplace in recent years. Latching onto a job you think will whisk you along within the company as you make a steady climb up the corporate ladder until retirement is a thing of the past. With all the mobile gadgets at our disposal, we spend hours at work and beyond responding to chats, Instagrams, texts, and emails. *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman refers to this current phenomenon as the “age of acceleration.”⁵ In our attempt to keep up with the fast pace of technological advances and withstand the undeniable impact of globalization, we find ourselves in a breathless race.

These trends are producing a new kind of uncertainty in the workplace. Artificial intelligence and automation have displaced workers in many traditional jobs. And although new jobs are still being created, many employers are finding ways to streamline costs by hiring independent contractors or temporary workers as opposed to filling permanent positions. This reality has set in motion the gig economy (hiring for a single project or task), adding to the unpredictability of the job market. There are no firm statistics on the current percentage of US gig workers compared to permanent ones, but research conducted in 2015 by labor economists Lawrence F. Katz of Harvard and Alan B. Krueger of Princeton found that gig workers already made up 15.8 percent of the US workforce.⁶ It's predicted that the number of gig workers will rise significantly by 2020.

One of the most essential survival tools in this age of acceleration is entrepreneurial skill. Although you don't actually have to become an entrepreneur yourself, your task is to think like one. Consider this new approach to your career as the "start-up of you," a phrase coined (and discussed in their bestselling book of the same title) by LinkedIn founder Reid Hamilton and entrepreneur Ben Casnocha.⁷ From this view, your professional success depends on keeping yourself directed and creating your own professional opportunities. As an investor in your personal start-up, you will achieve a competitive edge by building problem-solving skills, exercising creative thinking, sharpening written and verbal communications talents, and furthering relationship-building and collaboration. In the current workplace, the never-ending flux and controlled chaos flowing from technological acceleration will also call upon personal qualities such as initiative, curiosity, flexibility, adaptability, and resiliency.

To keep that competitive edge sharp and bright in the fray of the work world, you will need to take a deep breath, accept risk, commit to lifelong learning, and tap into professional networks. So how does this environment affect introverts in particular? How do they overcome their natural anxieties to compete with extraverts and get the credit or promotions they deserve? Introverts in the workplace confront two major challenges they find especially difficult, but there are solutions.

Problems Introverts Face and How to Solve Them

Competitive, rapidly changing, and unstable (especially in the gig economy and age of acceleration) are the norms in today's workplace. It's an environment in which extraverts thrive but introverts often struggle. Two areas in particular cause introverts to stumble:

Demonstrate Values to Employers

Employees must perform at the highest level by solving problems, delivering positive outcomes, and introducing and/or implementing innovations and new ideas. Most important, they must shine a light on their accomplishments, as well as on their talents and skills that generated them.

This can be particularly difficult for introverts, because achieving success in this environment will require speaking up, promoting oneself and one's ideas, and taking initiative beyond the basic responsibilities of the job—all areas they can find challenging. As a result, they tend to stand on the sidelines while social dynamos with the skills and confidence to take initiative and toot their own horns get the jobs, the promotions, and all the attention.

This book will teach you techniques that help introverts use reflective skills to formulate their thoughts and ideas so they can express themselves clearly and confidently in a network meeting, interview, or a variety of workplace situations. You will also find tools such as a personal characteristics exercise that generates a list of top ten personal adjectives—versatile terms that make it easy to add color and depth to a resume, or to respond to the common interview question, “Can you tell me about yourself?” Last, I provide sample scripts for presenting oneself in a powerful thirty-second introduction that will alleviate the introvert's anxiety about meeting people they don't know.

Cultivate and Maintain Relationships

Relationships in the workplace offer mentoring and support on important projects, knowledge on current trends in that field or industry, and reinforce chances for future career opportunities. Introverts are fully capable of sustaining good relationships, but because they tend to favor privacy (that is, be loners), they often don't recognize the essential role relationships play in their ability to succeed in a job or career. Nor do they understand how best to reach out to initiate such relationships.

To support relationship-building, this book offers seven steps for cultivating and communicating effectively with a new employer or client. It also includes five keys to staying on top at work and moving ahead in one's career, outlining steps you can take to ensure you get noticed, either in your office or in a virtual context. These are just some of the tools that will help you confidently build rapport and effectively communicate with senior leaders and colleagues.

My Story

As an introvert, I approach this topic with understanding, compassion, and some hard-earned wisdom. I was a career counselor at the University of Pennsylvania working with undergraduate liberal arts and business students, as well as alumni. My track record of finding employment for the students was very good, but because I was too shy to speak up at staff meetings, I couldn't get attention for my new ideas and programs, let alone my past accomplishments. As a result, my colleagues and supervisors were not aware of my previous achievements or current projects, and I missed out on valuable opportunities and promotions.

Fortunately, my new boss observed my capabilities and encouraged me to take more credit for my counseling successes and innovative program ideas. She selected me to serve on various university committees and present reports to senior level staff. In time I won my battle with fear by taking risks that led to building confidence. When I finally spoke up and took credit for the good work I was doing, I was then promoted to the position of associate director for Wharton undergrads, directing career services and supervising staff and graduate interns.

I knew I had to conquer my fear of self-promotion if I wanted to move toward my ultimate goal of becoming an entrepreneur with my own consulting business in career counseling. I simply had to overcome the "invisible woman" syndrome I had brought on by my own introverted tendencies!

Once again, I accomplished this by acknowledging my fears and gradually taking action. I reached out to my many professional contacts for advice and started to develop my expertise as a public speaker, presenting workshops at a variety of organizations. I designed and wrote content for my website, forced myself to grow my professional network substantially through LinkedIn, and took on leadership roles in professional associations. I also wrote and posted career advice articles on my blog and on social media.

Although I tried to conquer the introverted tendencies holding me back, I noticed that some of these characteristics could actually be used to my advantage. For instance, I discovered that my quiet manner of listening carefully to a client's story allowed me to observe her or his problems in a deep and focused way—this translated to a real listening skill. Then,

because I needed time to arrange my thoughts until I felt ready to speak up and offer advice, I found that I possessed a deeper understanding of the roadblocks he or she faced than if had I spoken up immediately. This contemplative approach transferred to a strong analytic ability on my part and, in turn, led to becoming an effective problem-solver who is capable of devising good solutions for my clients.

Eventually, I developed a series of successful tools specifically designed to help introverts overcome blocks to strong performance. To accomplish this, I combined insights from my observations on my clients' problems and behaviors with those from my deep study of the psychological literature, especially *Planned Happenstance Theory* by John Krumboltz, *Learned Optimism* by Martin Seligman, and Aaron Beck's cognitive behavioral theory. I also utilized my formal training as a Myers Briggs assessment specialist. (I evaluated results of the inventory given to those who wished to find out more about their personality and its impact on career choice and work environment.)

My system proves to be successful because it focuses on the areas in which introverts struggle most: self-promotion, taking the risk of revealing oneself in person and online, taking initiative, speaking up at meetings and networking events, reaching out to colleagues to form good relationships, and being forceful in meetings. After my clients use the tools and techniques, they report that they feel less fearful and more confident about expressing who they are and what they have to offer when networking, using social media, and in interviews. Meanwhile, those already employed say they now they understand what steps to take to advance in their existing job. This system constitutes the heart of *The Introvert's Complete Career Guide*.

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GIVE THE WALLFLOWER A VOICE

Introverts tend to possess the ability for intense concentration and a sense of calm and compassion, as well as being perceptive, observant, and good listeners, according to the Myers Briggs personality type definitions and studies by psychologist Marti Olsen Laney, PsyD, MFT, author of *The Introvert Advantage: How to Thrive in an Extrovert World*.¹

However, when you think about your own introverted personality, you're likely to focus on the negative aspects of your reserved nature, such as not speaking up or taking action. Like a wallflower, you may feel invisible and ignored as the laughter and fun of the party swirl around you.

Being quiet and thoughtful can have a calming effect on your friends and colleagues, but those personality traits won't propel your job search or win you that promotion. However, if you take advantage of your ability to concentrate and think problems through, you can become as successful as any extravert. After all, even wallflowers can blossom! It all begins with focusing on your positive personal attributes and having a clear and deep understanding of what you bring to the table.

I found that one of the big challenges for many introverts is expressing what makes them unique, especially in situations when there's no time

to think through possible answers. Questions such as, “How would you describe yourself?” or “What are your strengths?” are examples of what you’ll be asked when exploring a new career, looking for a job, talking to an acquaintance who may have a lead, or sitting in an interview. As introverts, we share information about ourselves as if we are peeling away the layers of an onion, gradually opening up as we get to know someone better. However, employers and professional contacts may expect answers they can sink their teeth into immediately—a full-fledged “meal” of information, complete with details and insights into what makes you tick and how you might add value to the industry or field.

Self-Assessment: Who are You, Really?

If you want to succeed in your career now and in the future, it’s essential to understand how to clearly articulate who you are and the scope of your experience. Most introverts know deep down what makes them special, but finding the right words to express their uniqueness can prove to be challenging. Even when you embrace the words, it’s not your nature to boast, so understanding how to come across as talented and competent without sounding egotistical can be equally tricky.

Going through a self-assessment process is like unwrapping a gift of self-awareness that offers you both insight into your strengths and the language to sell yourself to the professional world. I designed the series of exercises in this chapter to help you identify and evaluate your achievements, values, skills, interests, and personality, providing a keen awareness of what you bring to the table and the confidence to express these attributes to a contact or prospective employer.

Maybe you don’t trust that completing a series of exercises will help you overcome your panic about what to say when a prospective employer or networking contact asks those big questions. Stay tuned, because I am about to show how a full inventory of *you* will offset your fear or self-doubt. The self-assessment process takes advantage of your natural, introverted penchant for “digging deep” or seeking within. You’ll uncover unique strengths and capabilities and discover what’s important to you. These insights can be used to create an engaging story that you’ll be eager

to tell about yourself at a networking event, in an informational meeting, on a LinkedIn profile, or during an interview or performance evaluation.

First, let me tell you about a young, bright, and introverted college graduate who lost her way on the journey from college to the real world.

Achievements Exercise

Throughout your life, you can no doubt list a variety of achievements of which you deserve to be proud. They might be personal accomplishments like learning to fix a flat tire, running a 5K, cooking a gourmet meal, and organizing a family event, or career-related successes like writing a proposal, training staff, introducing a new program, or creating a database. Whether simple or complex, achievements can instill a sense of pride and boost confidence. They also offer clues into your overall interests, skills, and values, and will generate words and phrases you can use to describe who you are and what your goals are. After you complete these exercises, you'll know exactly what to say about your achievements and how these reflect your added value to people who can support your job search or as you promote your career to potential employers.

Shining a bright light on your achievements is one of the most positive ways to understand what has been most meaningful to you in your life. Completing the following achievement exercise is also a great way to get out of your introverted modesty zone and give your ego an overdue massage as you take pride in your many accomplishments.

When I taught a career evaluation course at the University of Pennsylvania, I used myself to model the Achievement Exercise by listing three of my favorite achievements, and then asking my students for feedback on what they learned about me based upon these accomplishments.

My Three Accomplishments

1. Creating my first flower garden.
2. Getting selected by my high school English department to recite the Gettysburg Address before a large audience at the end of the town Memorial Parade. I managed to do it in spite of my fear of being in the spotlight.

3. Designing, planning, and presenting the first career discovery course for college students at the Wharton School of Business.

I asked the class to help me identify any interests and skills related to my three accomplishments as well as corresponding values (standards or ideals important to a person, such as using one's creativity or obtaining recognition—the two values demonstrated in the following Gettysburg Address example). What they came up with for each of my achievements expanded on what I knew about myself!

My Three Accomplishments' Skills and Values

1. Planting my first flower garden

- ⇒ **Skills:** visual design, creative thinking, planning, problem-solving
- ⇒ **Values:** aesthetics, creativity, learning

2. Gettysburg Address

- ⇒ **Skills:** public speaking, performing
- ⇒ **Values:** recognition, creativity

3. Career discovery course

- ⇒ **Skills:** research, writing, interviewing, teaching, advising, organizing, problem-solving, creative thinking
- ⇒ **Values:** creativity, knowledge, recognition, helping others, thinking, planning

My Essential Skills and Values

From this point, I asked my students to boil down all this information to the essence of my key skills and values. The result was as follows:

- ⇒ **Skills:** written and verbal communications, problem-solving, public speaking, and counseling/advising
- ⇒ **Values:** creativity, recognition, and knowledge

I have used their analysis many times to respond to the request “Describe yourself” and to answer the question, “What are your strengths?” Keep in mind that you don't have to be an Olympic champion to feel

accomplished. Achievements can be career related, personal, or a combination of both. These can be challenges that you've met, successes you've achieved in creating projects or initiatives, or even a simple act of kindness.

Identify at least three achievements that make you proud, plus the skills and values attached to each and write them down in this order:

⇒ Achievement

⇒ Skills

⇒ Values

Think all the way back to high school. Maybe you were on the track team, wrote for the school paper, or served as class or club officer. In college, writing an outstanding research paper, studying abroad, and volunteering for Habitat for Humanity are all examples of major achievements. At work, consider your successes with challenging projects or tasks, reports, presentations, leadership roles, and innovations.

You may also want to ask colleagues or friends to review your list and see if they can add others. If you're an introvert, you might well have overlooked some gems.

Values: What's my Purpose?

To gain the most insight into what you find meaningful, let's consider what "values" mean and why this is significant. On its own, the term can imply one's principles or criteria, but here it reflects the many potential facets of how you envision your ideal work—your physical environment, the type of work you are doing, or the philosophy behind it.

Why Values Offer Important Clues to Your Happiness

As you look for new job opportunities or promotions, you want to make sure the jobs you're pursuing support your most important values. If you feel something is missing in your work, it is a sign that some of your values are being compromised. On the other hand, when your work is clearly rewarding, it means that your daily tasks and work environment are aligned

with your career values. For example, if you value creativity, you likely enjoy working in advertising or graphic design.

To pinpoint your personal values, ask yourself the following career value-oriented questions.

1. Is working with other people more appealing than working alone?
2. Do you like your responsibilities to be clearly structured, or do you prefer some room for creativity?
3. Do you want to work in an environment that helps people? Or one in which you make systems or procedures more effective?

Understanding which values are most important to you from the outset will provide a compass for carefully navigating your career choices and decisions in your work life. It will also provide direction on how to articulate your motivations and goals. When it comes to values, an introvert's natural tendency to look inward will work in your favor since you're always on a quest for meaning.

Values Exercise

Review the following list and select five values that you feel best support your career and life goals right now.

- ⇒ **Social concerns:** Do something that contributes to the common good.
- ⇒ **Help others:** Get directly involved with helping people individually or in small groups.
- ⇒ **Public contact:** Have a lot of day-to-day interaction with people.
- ⇒ **Supportive relationships:** Have rewarding relationships with colleagues.
- ⇒ **Professional accomplishment:** Achieve high performance and career advancement.
- ⇒ **Make decisions:** Have the power to decide on courses of action and policies.
- ⇒ **Solitude:** Work on projects on your own.

- ⇒ **Competition:** Engage in activities that clearly compare your abilities to others.
- ⇒ **Power:** Influence and impact people and/or systems.
- ⇒ **Fast pace:** Work in situations where there is a lot of activity and tasks must be completed quickly.
- ⇒ **Work-life balance:** Achieve a healthy balance between work and personal life.
- ⇒ **Excitement:** Experience a high or frequent level of excitement and risk in your work.
- ⇒ **Wealth:** Earn a substantial salary for your work.
- ⇒ **Recognition:** Receive public acknowledgement for the quality of your work.
- ⇒ **Independence:** Determine the nature of your work without significant direction from others.
- ⇒ **Integrity:** Feel that work contributes to a set of morals that are important to you.
- ⇒ **Location:** Find a place to live that is conducive to your lifestyle.
- ⇒ **Knowledge:** Engage in the pursuit of knowledge and truth.
- ⇒ **Intellectual status:** Become an expert in a given field.
- ⇒ **Creativity:** Generate new ideas for programs, written materials, and organization.
- ⇒ **Vision:** Get involved in future direction and big-picture thinking.
- ⇒ **Aesthetics:** Study or appreciate the beauty of objects and ideas.
- ⇒ **Change and variety:** Have work responsibilities that frequently change.
- ⇒ **Challenge:** Take on difficult or demanding tasks or advance your skills.
- ⇒ **Accuracy:** Work in settings where details are important and there is little margin for error.
- ⇒ **Security:** Feel confident about keeping your job and reaping a reasonable financial reward.

Now determine how many of your top values are satisfied in your current work situation. Also consider how you would like these values to support you in the future. For example, if “Power” and “Make decisions” are priorities, consider what you can do to incorporate these in your everyday life, like starting your own business or looking for new job opportunities that will advance your leadership skills and responsibilities. If you’re not working right now, think about how these values can help with your job search. For instance, if some of your foremost values are “Creativity,” “Aesthetics,” and “Excitement,” then fashion, entertainment, and advertising are examples of career environments that could satisfy these choices. If your combination of essential values includes “Help others,” “Social concerns,” and “Professional advancement,” you should express clearly in an interview with a professional contact or employer why choosing to work in a mission-driven organization is so important to you. Assessing and identifying what you find meaningful will allow you to articulate to a potential employer how you can add value to their company or organization.

In short, you should highlight your values in every stage of your job search strategy and career development, from writing a resume and preparing a social media profile, to engaging in an interview and seeking a job promotion. Your values remain important themes throughout the entire story of your career.

The Seasoned Wallflower: Tom's Story

Tom is an introverted mid-career Senior IT project manager who was laid off by a large corporation. Tom hadn't looked for a new job in fifteen years and wasn't sure if he wanted to return to a corporate environment that required being on call and working overtime. As we talked, I could see that Tom was slinking deeper into his chair. Like many talented introverts he wasn't sure how to market his skills or experience, or how to speak in the kind of language that translates well to an employer via a resume, networking meeting, or interview.

After completing the values exercise, Tom saw that his top values were “Work-life balance,” “Security,” “Supportive relationships,” “Creativity,” and “Social concerns.” This helped him consider new options such as foundations, government, and universities, all of which had the potential to

support his values. More important, understanding his own values contributed to Tom's ability to answer interview questions about what made him a strong candidate besides his experience and technical skills.

Tom was able to respond to the question, "What makes you a competitive candidate?" by telling the story of his career in a way that highlighted his values.

I have a strong record of assessing organizational IT problems and generating creative solutions ("Creativity") combined with a talent for cultivating relationships with colleagues, executive staff, and customers ("Supportive relationships"). I have been involved in community theater and enjoy an environment that is focused on providing cultural programs to the public. I would now like to contribute my experience and skills in a mission-driven organization" ("Social concerns").

Using the profile, Tom found a new and exciting opportunity working in IT at a large foundation.

The process of evaluating your values and understanding what's meaningful to you will lead to the right words and phrases to use in all phases of your job search and working toward promotions. Armed with this information, you will find that your fear of not knowing what to say or how to say it will fade away.