

OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

By Jack Geary

Many people have not made a sound decision on the choice of an occupation, major field of study (Major) or training program. Many individuals who made a decision do not feel comfortable with the choice they did make. SO! You should not feel inadequate or indecisive. I think the reason for this frame of mind (the uncertainty) is people place too much emphasis on a career or occupation to satisfy too many needs and wants. Let's begin this course with a few basic principles.

PRINCIPLES

- ❖ The first (1) principle is that you work because you have to work to support yourself. (It does not take a rocket scientist to figure that out.)
- ❖ The second (2) principle is that you should select the occupation that provides the highest earnings (given your talents) to achieve the first principle; or at least sufficient earned income to support yourself without government or family support.
- ❖ The third (3) principle is that you should become an 'educated person' independent of the occupational choice and the preparatory training or education.
- ❖ The (4) fourth principle is to pursue your interests (consistent with your values) regardless of its occupational considerations.

EDUCATION vs. JOB SKILLS

In practice, the education or training includes selecting a course of study that achieves the goals of education and earnings need not be mutually exclusive:

- ❖ One end is to become an educated person (the ability to read and compute, the liberal arts, the humanities), a basic requirement in a democratic republic and for the enjoyment of life, e.g., your interests;
- ❖ The other end is to acquire the skills necessary to achieve sufficient earnings that offer self-support- certainly, at a level that avoids a government subsidy (welfare) or extended family support. Hanging out at college or delaying the completion of a degree or program for no good reason is a waste of your time and resources- perhaps a waste of the taxpayer's resources as well. So, complete the English and Math requirement and move on.
- ❖ The theory that you should select an occupation to fit your interests to the exclusion to other factors is junk. Period.

ON BECOMING AN EDUCATED PERSON

Before we go any further in the discussion about occupational choice, let me suggest, that obtaining a solid educational foundation must precede the questions about the choice of occupation, college majors, or preparatory training. Attaining an educational foundation is the purpose of the hours you invested in grades K-12. Essentially, completing the General Education pattern or CSU/UC Transferable Classes (not necessarily those specific schools) at the SRJC would provide an excellent supplement to the foundation you developed in grades K-12. Need I remind you that you actually started building an educational foundation in grades K-1? The taxpayer and your parents had a plan for you!

INTERESTS vs. QUALITY OF LIFE

You can pursue your interest independently of the educational foundation and your vocational or occupational pursuits. Many people do all three simultaneously all the time! Having said that, asking the question about what occupation you should select may be the wrong question at the OUTSET. Perhaps, the question should be framed to say, what occupation(s) would help me achieve the quality of life I want. Moreover, the quality of life depends on your earnings and wealth creation.

QUALITY OF LIFE IS BASED ON YOUR LIFE'S MISSION

What quality of life is most consistent with your mission in life? Your mission in life will certainly reflect your values. I hope that your values were developed at home and in your community. The university is the last place to find your values. More than likely, your values will be challenged at a university. How should you prepare to achieve the QOL, when do you want to achieve the QOL, and what will you give up to achieve it? These are not simple questions. Perhaps they are never fully answered. Once you have an idea about the answer to the question on QOL and your mission, begin working backwards to the first steps you must take to achieve the quality of life (QOL) you want. Some of the relevant questions or steps follow:

THE STEPS

Step 1: Employee- Do you want to work for someone else as a vehicle to achieve the QOL you want? Most people start here. But work as a 'job intreprenuer' not as a 'job beggar.' (A 'job intreprenuer' is an employee but acts like an entrepreneur.) An education, statistically, improves your chances of getting a good job- but it is still only a JOB (just over broke) and not all educational pursuits lead to a "good job."

Step 2: Self-employed- Do you want to be use an independent contractor or professional vehicle for achieving the QOL? To begin at this step you need to know something. You must have skills or special training. The difference between most self-employment vehicles and employee status is that you "bought" the job. There is not much difference. In both cases, you are trading time or dollars. There is some tax benefits here- but the risks level things out. A research study estimated that a person statistically earns a greater total compensation (cash wages and non-cash earnings) by working for someone else.

Step 3: Business Owner- Do you want to own businesses (plural) and delegate the work to others to achieve the QOL? You need to associate with workers who are smarter than you and put them to work for you. You are on your way. There are real tax benefits here and greater earning potential.

Step 4: Investor- Do you want to become an investor and achieve 'passive' income as soon as possible? Do you want to reach "critical mass" to achieve the QOL you want? In other words, the income needed to fund the QOL you want is not based on the *investment of your personal time*. That's right; you invest time as well as money. Time is a finite quantity. That is why you cannot "maximize your earning yield" trading time for dollars.

PAYING YOUR DUES

Assuming your goal is to achieve the QOL you want by becoming an *Investor* you need to start paying your dues. You pay your dues by going through the steps of being an Employee, Self-employed/Independent Contractor, and Business Owner/Professional - and learning, learning, and learning. Along the way, you are looking for opportunities. They will find you. Will you be ready?

ADD VALUE TO YOURSELF AND THE COMPANY

Assuming you are starting at the *Employee* stage (like most of 'unwashed'), select the occupation that will give you the most experience and training you can get- and prepare to move on to another occupation, and then another when you have learned all you can from an employer. (Add value to yourself as well as the company.)

A job is not **PARKING PLACE. NO PARKING!** Where do think you can deliver the added-value to a company? Do not work for a company that can not teach you anything! Leave, as soon as you reach a point where you can not learn anything more.

EMPLOYEE STAGE- THE OCCUPATION

We will stop here and concentrate on the *Employee Stage or Occupation Stage*- because that is where most of you are. The question is, given your talents, what group of occupations would offer the best chance of learning and *maximizing your earning yield?*

GO THERE! BEGIN THERE! WHERE TO START

But! Like most people you most likely need to have more information about the possibilities. The economy, labor market, and variety of occupations out there are staggering. However, you do not have time to learn about even a fraction of the occupations- nor do you need too. A simple process will guide you in exploring occupations. The process is outlined in the PROJECTS for this course. Do not worry about making a decision at first. Let the process increase your knowledge about occupations first. The process is not rocket science, but it takes time, reading, more reading, research and more research. Isn't this exciting?

When you complete the Projects (all of them, Projects 1 through 6, plus the Extra Credit Project # 1) you will be in a better position to make a decision. Good luck!

Go to Project 1.