

Understanding Yourself



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UNDERSTANDING *Yourself*

Three reasons you need to understand yourself before job searching.

When you need a job – particularly when you need one now – seems like the wrong time to be thinking about “finding yourself”. After all, you have resumes to send out, cover letters to write, and interviews to attend. And besides, it’s not like there is a well-defined path to follow that leads to personal understanding.

However, there may be no better time to begin exploring who you are than during a job search. First, you are likely to have additional free time as you contemplate your next career move. Having a full-time job can easily consume 50+ hours a week, especially when you consider time spent preparing for work and commuting. Searching for a job itself is a full-time job, which takes a lot of hard work and energy. As a job seeker, however, you’re likely to have a few extra hours on your hands throughout your job search, time you can spend well by exploring who you are.

Second, actively working to “find yourself” during a job search is going to pay off – if you know who you are, you’ll be more likely to seek out jobs that are a good fit for you.

These are the three main reasons why having a strong understanding of who you are is critical to an effective job search:

1. It will help you identify jobs that would be a good fit

Certain jobs appeal to each of us, and certain jobs don’t. It’s only by exploring the intricacies of who we are that we can really understand what it is about a role that attracts us to it. For example, by accurately identifying yourself as an extrovert, you know that you should seek out roles that allow for interaction with others – customers, suppliers, or even other employees. If you are introverted, on the other hand, you would be wise to apply for roles that do not require significant amounts of personal interaction – rather than a sales role, you might choose to pursue roles related to finance or accounting. Of course, this will only help you to get a general idea of the types of roles that would suit you: It is important to look at each role at each company individually, because every one is unique.

2. You’ll perform better in interviews

Interviews are about determining whether you have the right skills, knowledge, and experience for a role. They are also about determining whether your personality is a fit for the company, and whether the company is a fit for you. The best way to perform at a high level during interviews is to have a strong understanding of who you are and what you’re looking for in a role. This will enable you to answer questions with confidence and accuracy. For example, if you have taken the time to

explore yourself and now understand that a strength of yours is empathy, you can respond to a question like “Tell me about a time you were really proud of yourself” by making reference to this strength of yours. Since you have predetermined that this is one of your key strengths, you’re likely to have several real-world examples of how you’ve productively applied it in the workplace.

3. You’ll learn and develop more quickly on the job

Knowing who you are and the situations in which you do your best work will help you adapt (where possible) your new employment situation so that it best suits your needs. For example, if you know that you are competitive, you can let your manager know that targets and quotas are a motivator (and not a de-motivator) for you. In this case, you may also choose to record your weekly progress on a whiteboard and prominently display it on your desk. By making small changes like these, you’ll be able to create a situation in which you can do your best work, based on your personality and your strengths. Plus, employees who know their personalities, strengths, and weaknesses are easier to manage, which can increase the speed at which you learn and develop within your organisation – and determine the pace at which you climb that corporate ladder.

How to Begin the Search for “Who You Are”

To begin to understand yourself, first complete a personality assessment. Dozens of assessments are available, and each of them has its strengths and weaknesses. You can search for an assessment online, or you can go directly to a company that offers talent management solutions, such as Drake International, to speak with a talent management professional who can refer you to the right assessment based on your needs. In this case, depending on the assessment you select, you will have the opportunity to meet with a subject matter expert within Drake International to discuss your personality and the implications for you in your job search.

Having completed one or several personality assessments, you will begin to understand some of your more dominant personality traits, as well as your strengths and weaknesses. Explore these. Ask for feedback from peers to better understand how they perceive your personality traits. Read books that are related to your personality to help you harness your strengths or minimise the impact of your weaknesses. Attend seminars or workshops to develop your strengths, help you understand how to work as a part of a team, and how to be a strong leader – all based on your personality.

One of the most important actions you can take to discover yourself is to keep a record of times when you feel great about what you’re doing – even if it isn’t work. If you notice that you’ve been so engrossed in an activity that hours passed by without your realising it, think about the activity you were doing and why you liked it. If you notice that a certain activity gives you a rush, think about what that activity was and why it makes you feel that way. Keep track of these feelings and, over time, you will begin to understand the situations in which you are using your strengths. The more you know about the situations, the better – because then you can adapt your job or your work situation to reflect your discovery. This is what people are referring to when they say, “Find a job you love, and you’ll never work a day in your life.” By seeking a job that is the right fit for your personality and uses your strengths, you’ll be well on your way to feeling like this every single day!