

Exercise: What Do You Value?

When it comes to charting a professional path, clarifying our own values can feel confusing. There are so many outside voices and perspectives that can clutter this very personal process: parents' expectations and advice, friends' choices, society's collective ideas about the "right" path. The following exercise can help. It includes a list of personal values that often accompany work life; assign each value a number from 1 to 4.

- 1: Absolutely essential to me
- 2: Desirable, but not essential
- 3: Of neutral value-neither important nor unimportant to me
- 4: Not of value to me; I would prefer to avoid

Don't worry about spreading the numbers out evenly among the different categories-this isn't an exact science-but do try to keep the number of 1's to around three. Most important, though, just be honest and candid with yourself.

MISSION AND IMPACT

- Social change: I want to make a contribution to society at large.
- Service: I want to be directly involved in helping individuals.
- Influence: I want my work to shape and influence the thinking of others.
- Decision-making: I want to have a meaningful role in deciding direction and policy in my field.
- Ethics: I want my work to connect directly with my own principles and morals.
- Community: I want my work to be of direct benefit to the community in which I live.

SOCIAL INTERACTION, COLLABORATION, AND TEAMWORK

- Sociability: I want to engage regularly with people as part of my daily work.
- Solitude: I want to work alone or mostly alone, without substantial engagement with others.
- Teamwork: I want to work as part of a collaborative team on projects and assignments.
- Management: I want to lead and directly supervise the work of others.
- Autonomy: I want to work independently, with minimal direction or supervision.

ROUTINE

- Deadlines: I want to work under time-sensitive conditions, where there is pressure to deliver.
- Variation: I want my tasks and responsibilities to vary regularly.
- Consistency: I want a routine of tasks and responsibilities that remains largely the same.

- Detail: I want to engage in work where attention to detail, precision, and/or accuracy matter a great deal.
- Flexibility: I want the ability to influence my schedule in a way that works for me.
- Travel: I want to travel regularly for work, experiencing new places.

REWARD

- Acknowledgment: I want to receive public acknowledgment for my professional accomplishments.
- Compensation: I want my work to deliver significant financial reward.
- Security: I want a position and a salary that are likely to remain secure.
- Prestige: I want to work in a role or at a company that is valued by others.

CHALLENGE AND EXPRESSION

- Expertise: I want to work hard toward expertise and mastery in my field.
- Creativity: I want my work to have a strong element of creativity.
- Competition: I want to work in an environment where my skills are tested against the skills of others.
- Risk-taking: I want to experience a sense of risk and adventure in my work.
- Thrill: I want my work to be exciting on a regular basis.
- Physical engagement: I want my work to involve being physically active and using physical skills.

Take all the values you've ranked as 1, or essential, and list them here. These are the values that are most significant to you at this stage of your career. We say "at this stage" because our values may not remain static throughout our lives. If you have more than three, pick the top three.

What's next?

You can use the values you identified along with what you know about your priorities to guide your career development exploration. As you head into more concrete research, you can always check back in with your values and priorities as guideposts.

Values exercise adopted from "The New Rules of Work: The Modern Playbook for Navigating Your Career" by Alexandra Cavoulacos and Kathryn Minshew.