

Career Day – 5/9/08

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Before we talk about writing, I think we should talk about identity.

It's my belief that we ought to have careers that best match who we really are. (In other words, were you born to be a writer?)

Socrates – “Know thyself”

Shakespeare – “To Thine own self by true.”

According to Joseph Campbell, in *The Power of Myth*, this is the great Western truth:

“...that each of us is a completely unique creature and that, if we are ever to give any gift to the world, it will have to come out of our own experience and fulfillment of our own potentialities, not someone else's.”

But the sad reality is quite the opposite. Arthur Miller and Ralph Mattson write about what they've observed in the workplace in *The Truth About You*. Their observation collides with Campbell's vision.

You enter the world of work...over a period of 40 to 45 years, we are given assignments, coached, appraised, trained, developed, promoted, transferred, given results/objectives to fulfill, put in work groups, exhorted to make a commitment, expected to align with group goals...without anybody at any time during near half a century spending a few hours to find out what we are good at and motivated to do.

Two descriptions of vocation help us to think about who we are and what our work should be:

Your vocation is the union of your greatest passion and the world's greatest need.

To find your vocation, ask, “What is it that I can't not do?”

An excellent online resource to read about careers:

Occupational Outlook Handbook produced by the U.S. Department of Labor

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

Find someone who can administer DISC. There may be a cost associated with this, but this personality profile helps you discover the kind of workplace you need to be happy and successful.

Read *Discovering Your Personality Type* by Ron Richard Riso. The Enneagram will help you understand yourself.

Read *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker J. Palmer. This beautiful little book will convince you to listen the life you already have in helping you make career and life decisions.

Using the separate document labeled Career Day Part 2, read the pair of columns in the upper left corner of the page and decide if you are more like an E or an I. Do likewise with the other 3 column pairs. You will end up with a four-letter personality designation (like INFJ or ENTP). Use *Do What You Are* by Tieger & Tieger to learn what careers in which people with your personality would excel at as well as enjoy.

Writing

Recently I received an email that had been forwarded from a person that knew I was a writer. The message of the email was:

“Yesterday our pastor told us a story about a mom who wanted her son to be a brain surgeon so that he could stop people from dying, but he told her he wanted to be an author so he could help people learn to live.”

Maybe the pen is mightier than the sword...

Writing Careers

Writers are involved with radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, commercials, advertisements, newsletters, manuals, textbooks, instructions, blogs and, yes, books. Job titles may be associated with marketing, advertising, public relations, research, teaching, reporters, editors, correspondents, lyricists, playwrights, authors, poets and internal/external communications specialists (to name a few).

Preparation

College. Writing seminars and workshops.

Salary

\$20,000 - ??? Some writers are paid well; many leave the profession due to low pay.

Places to start

Bookstores – to learn one end of the business and have steady income.

Publisher – to learn another aspect of the business and have steady income.

Writer/editor – in the communications section of an organization to get experience and steady income.

Upside

You might make millions. You might have countless adoring fans. You might change lives. You might be able to have a flexible schedule. You might get to work in your pajamas at home. You can have a non-writing job for income and write for the joy of it on discretionary time. You get a chance to present your message to the world.

Downside

You might starve. You might get depressed and cynical. You might learn that nobody cares how good your book is. You might turn to substance abuse or kick your dog. The industry is shrinking while oodles of books are being published daily. Shrinking – big name, established writers get their books published while first time authors experience closed doors. Oodles of books – means that you will most likely be lost in the crowd.

In the end

If you can't not write (see above), by all means dedicate your entire being to writing.

Never, ever, give up. The people who experience closed doors can be someone other than *you!*

Self-publishing

Every aspect of taking a book from an idea to one on the shelves at Schuler's or Barnes & Noble can be done by one person – you. The book to get on the subject is *The Self-Publishing Manual* by Poynter. Poynter makes it sound fairly easy. It's not. His perspective is one of being experienced and well known and doors do open for him. They may not for you or I.

Print on Demand

If you can get the numbers to come out right, this may be the way to go. A book is only printed when it is purchased. You don't have to shell out \$5,000 up front to print your books.

The numbers

When you buy a book in the local bookstore, the store receives 40%.

Amazon's cut is 55% of the list price and the publisher pays for shipping.

A distributor that handles a book gets 65%.

If you find a publisher, the publisher gets its cut after the distributor, leaving the author with 8%.

If a publisher sells its rights to an affiliate, the author receives 50% of 8% or 4% (sixty cents on a fifteen-dollar book).

Self-publishing – editor costs, computer equipment and software, formatting costs, book printing, web site development, credit card processing monthly fees, web site monthly fees, office rent and utilities, postage, envelopes and boxes for shipping books, 200 free books and postage to potential reviewers, entry fees for book award consideration, bar code payment, ISBN purchase, etc.

This above is not presented to discourage anyone; it's reality.

Advice

Find out who you are

Find out what it is that you are supposed to say to the world

Become an expert. Even a novelist is an expert at writing and human nature and maybe a region

Read, read, and read. Surround yourself with great literature so you know what the standard is

Write, write, write, (and get feedback from others, ala join a writer's group)

Keep writing when you have writer's block. A terrible first draft is still something to work with

Show; don't tell No- He was nervous. Yes- Beads of sweat appeared on his forehead.

Use action verbs No- It is a good book. Yes- The statement grabbed his imagination and...

Some good reads that come to mind

Poetry: poets Mary Oliver, Marge Piercy, Rumi

Fiction: *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Bel Canto*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Non-Fiction: *Let Your Life Speak*, *Artful Work*, *Leadership and the New Science*

Creative Non-Fiction/Memoir: *Disregarded* by Jack H. Bender (Hmm. How did *that* get on the list?)

Movie: *Shipping News*

What a pathetic little list! One muscle-building book to consult is *The Reader's Catalog: An Annotated Selection of More Than 40,000 of the Best Books in Print in 208 Categories* (Paperback) by Geoffrey O'Brien (Editor), et al. 1989. Some are under \$1 on Amazon Marketplace. Also, consult Book Page and bestseller lists (although, reader beware!). Use our Lakeland Library Cooperative!

Books on writing

If You Want to Write – Brenda Ueland

On Writing Well – William Zinsser

Bird by Bird – Anne Lamott

Books on publishing

The Self-Publishing Manual – Poynter

The Shortest Distance Between You and a Published Book – Page

Desktop publishing

The Make Over Book – Parker

Looking Good in Print – Parker

Writing activity

Hopefully, we'll have time to write a few brilliant sentences

Questions?

Two handouts available
5/9/08 to 5/16/08

Go to
www.Inner-Work.com
click on library
click on Discussion Guide...

Click on and print
Career Day
Career Day Part 2