

The Foundation For:

"The Business Plan for Your Life"



At some point in life you reach a crossroads of self reflection,
and you must answer the question

"What's next for me?"

SPISM

SearchPath International
<http://www.searchpath.com>
(216) 912-1500
info@searchpath.com

1350 Euclid Avenue, Suite 325
Cleveland, Ohio 44115
Fax: (216) 658-9711

Several times in your life you may find yourself looking at a variety of options that could change your direction and future. What college should I attend? What major should I pursue? Who should I marry? Should I accept a new position at a new company? Where should I live? Should I consider starting my own business? All these questions can have a huge impact on you and your family. There is no magic formula for considering change. However, throughout my years of advising individuals who are considering a major career change, we developed a very simple formula for evaluating options and making decisions. This format focuses mainly on making a career change, and considering an entrepreneurial avenue and starting your own business. However, the basic principals can apply to any situation or decision.

The process is fairly simple and straight forward, but you may want to consider the following story prior to starting this activity.

BIG ROCKS (Author Unknown)

One day an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students and to drive home a point, used an illustration those students will never forget.

As he stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said, “Okay, time for a quiz” and he pulled out a one-gallon mason jar, and set it on the table in front of him. He also produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, “Is the jar full?”

Everyone in the class yelled, “YES.”

The time management expert replied, “Really?”

He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. He then asked the group once more, “Is the jar fill?” By this time the class was on to him.

“Probably not,” one of them answered.

“Good!” he replied. He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in the jar and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, “Is the jar full?”

“No!” the class shouted.

Once again he said, “Good.” Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, “What is the point of this illustration?”

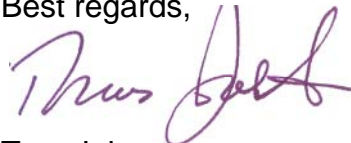
One eager beaver raised his hand and said, “The point is, no matter how full your schedule is if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it!”

*“No,” the speaker replied, “that’s not the point.” The truth this illustration teaches us is: “If you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all. What are the ‘big rocks’ in your lifetime with your loved ones, your faith, your education, your dreams, a worthy cause, teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put those **BIG ROCKS** in first or you’ll never get them in at all.”*

So, when you are reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question: “What are the **BIG ROCKS** in my life, and how are they impacted when considering a life-changing decision involving my career path?” The key is to figure out what are the **BIG ROCKS** involved in the decision and how important they are to you at a particular time of your life.

This assessment is a quick exercise that can you help you start to figure out how to evaluate options and what are the **BIG ROCKS** that are going to weigh in on a career decision. We all get pulled in many directions, and the things that are truly important can get lost in the hustle. Figuring out what you are really looking for can be such an exciting time in your life. Like the short story has shown, put your **BIG ROCKS** in first, and everything else will fit.

Best regards,



Tom Johnston
President & CEO

Why Take This Assessment?

This is a quick and simple assessment that is designed to help you sort out options when trying to make a major decision in your life, specifically oriented towards a career path choice.

We are going to touch on topics that we feel are usually considered when making a career change: location, life style, income potential (short and long term), personal growth, duties and responsibilities, who you will be working with or for, security, and personal goals. This is not a scientific test. It is solely a tool that can help you take a step back to think and evaluate your current situation and compare it to other options.

Assessment Format

This assessment is separated into three sections:

Step 1: We have listed 8 categories to outline during this assessment. Feel free to add as many as you feel necessary. Customizing the list of categories will help you to focus on a specific decision. All decisions may have some additional aspects to consider. The ones we outlined really focus on a career change.

Step 2: We are going to present some general questions and comments about each category to help you prioritize and weigh each category. The goal is to help you attach a level of importance, using a scale of 1-10, on how important they are to you at this time in your life. (*“10” being the most important and “1” being the least important*)

Step 3: Is a chart that will show you a way of mathematically looking at each of your categories and compare the various options that you are considering. Usually the baseline is your current situation followed by each of the options you are considering. The net result will be a score for each option. The one with the highest score will typically be the most desirable.

Ranking Categories

The following comments will help you to focus on aspects to consider for each of our suggested categories. You will be ranking each item on a chart, using 1-10 according to the level of importance. Further instructions will follow, but as you are reading through these items, think about how important each item is to you personally at this time in your life. The following section offers additional questions to ask yourself prior to making a final ranking decision on these topics. You will later come back and evaluate each item according to your potential career options. *(Rank items as 10 being the most important and 1 being the least important).*

Location

Being happy where you are geographically located, and having the ability to move about the world as you please. The importance level of being near your family and loved ones. Will the options you're considering require you to move your family?

Lifestyle

Having the ability to decide how you are going to spend your time. Weather it be working, traveling, or with your family. What is the level of importance of having a life outside of work? What work/life balance will make you happy? This is becoming a very important aspect when considering making a career change. It really comes down to control. Running your own business puts you in control, working for someone can limit that freedom.

Income Potential

Every option can have an impact on your income level. Evaluate each option based on what you can make today as well as in the future. Comparing the amount of money needed to maintain current lifestyle will vary based on where you are in your life. Consider the long-term upside as well.

Personal Growth

How does each of the options make you feel about where you want to be? Is it important that the options will allow you advance and get promoted, specifically down the career path your have your heart set on? Will the option get you where you want to go in the future? Are you going to be able to build on your experience and skill sets?

Duties and Responsibilities

Determine what you want do all day/night. If one option requires you to dig ditches all day, it may be a great job with great income, but do you really want to spend your day doing something you do not like? How you spend your day should get you excited and passionate.

_____ **Who Do You Spend Day With**

This is something that people rarely consider. But having to work all day with someone you do not like or respect can be very difficult. Spend some real time evaluating each opportunity and the people you will spend the vast majority of your time with.

_____ **Security**

How important is it that you know you have job security? Knowing you're your company is financially sound and stable. If a steady paycheck is important, considering becoming an entrepreneur is probably not a good option.

_____ **Personal Goals**

This topic centers on the big picture. Where do you want to be in five years? How much do you want to earn, how do you want to spend your days? If you have a burning desire to build your own business, what option will help you achieve that goal? Take some time to list your personal goals. The questions in following section will assist in this exercise.

_____ **Insert your own:**

_____ **Insert your own:**

_____ **Insert your own:**

_____ **Insert your own:**

Questions to Consider

The following questions take into account the eight categories previously discussed. This section is designed to get you thinking about your current situation and what you want in the future.

- Do I have enough time to spend with my family and friends?
- Do I have enough time to do the things I truly enjoy?
- Do I have weekends for myself?
- Am I happy with my current lifestyle?
- Am I actively engaged in social activities outside of work?
- Do I have a good work/life balance?
- Do I have a solid support system?
- Do I have a say in my daily schedule?
- Am I happy with my current geographical location?
- Is relocation an option at this point in my life? (Why?)
- Do I have the ability to work from where I want?
- Will my current industry allow me to stay where I am at? (If desired)
- Do I enjoy the current climate where I live?
- Is living close to family important?
- Is the school system one of the best in the area? (How important is this?)
- Have I thought about moving in the past six months? (Why?)
- Am I happy with my current income?
- Do I make what I feel I am worth? (If No, Why?)
- Do I have financial freedom with my current income?
- Am I in the social class I want to be in?
- Can I increase my current income where I am at?
- Am I the sole bread winner? (What would happen if my income were to change?)
- Have I been promised a raise in the past year?
- Did I receive that raise?

- What factors in my life make me need job security?
- Does the idea of starting a company excite me?
- Do I like putting my reputation on the line?
- Do I enjoy taking on new challenges?
- Do I shy away from financially risky situations? (If yes, why?)
- Am I afraid of failure (personal & professional)? (If yes, why?)
- Can I accept rejection?
- Do I shy away from the unknown (personal & professional) (If yes, why?)
- Am I passionate about what I do? (If no, why do I continue to do it?)
- Do I get to utilize my skill set as much as I would like?
- Do I still feel like I have a lot to learn?
- Do I like my current working environment? (If no, why?)
- Am I in line for a promotion in the next year?
- Is there growth in my current industry?
- Do I have a great training/mentoring program at my current position?
- Are my ideas taken into consideration?

Career Chart Instructions & Example

This chart is going to help you assess your personal satisfaction using the same categories outlined in the previous sections.

Using the chart on the following page, determine first your personal ranking. On a scale from 1-10 how important is each item to you personally. (*Rank as 10 being very important and 1 being not very important*)

You will then go through each of these items again and evaluate your current situation. Do they match what you personally desire?

The following columns are for new opportunities that you are potentially considering. Rank each of the options you are currently considering, and you may want to include something with an entrepreneurial twist. Use the same scoring system of 1-10. How do these options compare to your current situation and personal desires?

Example: John is currently the VP of Marketing at a bank. The bank has been sold and he will be receiving a generous severance package. He is currently evaluating 3 situations. The first is an internal transfer with the new bank that will take him to Chicago, but in a junior role. The second is a position outside the industry that will allow him to stay in Columbus, but the income is significantly lower than his current salary. The third option is starting his own business and John has been considering a wide array of options, including purchasing a Recruiting Franchise. He and his family love Columbus and would like to stay. At this point in his life, lifestyle is very important and retirement is becoming more important and could be less than 10 years away.

	Personal Ranking (1-10)	Chicago	New Industry Position in Columbus	Starting My Own Business
Lifestyle	7	6	4	9
Location	10	1	6	10
Income Potential	8	8	5	9
Personal Growth	5	7	9	8
Security	3	7	2	4
Personal Goals	7	6	9	7
Duties/Resp.	8	7	4	9
Spend Day With	6	8	6	10
	TOTAL	50	45	66

The columns outline John's options. After totaling up all scores, John can then look at which one is really the right fit. Based on John's scores he should probably consider going into business for himself.

Your Career Chart:

Fill in the blank columns with any options you choose.

	Personal Ranking (1-10)	Current Situation	<i>Option One</i>	<i>Option One</i>	<i>Open Business</i>		
Lifestyle							
Location							
Income Potential							
Personal Growth							
Security							
Personal Goals							
Duties/ Responsibilities							
Who You Spend Your Day With							
Total:							

Conclusion:

The goal of this assessment is to simply get you stop for a minute and put down on paper what is really important to you as you consider a career change. Once you have identified your **BIG ROCKS** you can put them in your jar first and rest becomes easy. Many times we never stop to think about our **BIG ROCKS** because life goes by so fast, if nothing else I hope this helps you to stop and think about what is most important in your personal and professional life.

Good luck and may you find success no matter what path you choose.

Thomas K. Johnston
Chief Executive Officer
SearchPath International
tj@searchpath.com

Additional Resources:

- **The Entrepreneur Next Door:** www.theentrepreneurnextdoor.com
If you have ever thought about starting your own business we recommend visiting this site. They have discovered that successful entrepreneurs have similar personality traits, and have designed a test that will see if you possess those traits. The test takes 20-30 minutes, and will score you on: Drive to succeed, Social Network, Outlook to Success, and Openness to new ideas.
- **SearchPath International:** www.searchpath.com
The option of utilizing industry experience and skills to open a search and recruiting business is a very viable alternative. It can offer a fantastic lifestyle with a very appealing income opportunity.

Recommended Books:

- What Color is Your Parachute?, Richard Nelson Bolles
- The 5 Patterns of Extraordinary Careers: The Guide for Achieving Success and Satisfaction, James M. Citrin and Richard A. Smith
- What Should I Do with My Life?, Po Bronson
- Personal Marketing Strategy Program for Transition Candidates: Get That Job, Bruce Dreyfus
- Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You through the Secrets of Personality Type, Paul D. Tieger, Barbara Barron-Tieger
- The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success, Nicholas Lore
- Life's a Bitch and Then You Change Careers: 9 Steps to Get out of Your Funk and on to Your Future, Andrea Kay

Recommended Job Sites:

- [Monster.com](#)
- [Hotjobs.com](#)
- [Careerboard.com](#)
- [Usajobs.com](#)
- [Careerbuilder.com](#)
- [Theladders.com](#)
- [Job.com](#)
- [Flipdog.com](#)
- [Execunet.com](#)
- [6figurejobs.com](#)
- [Careerjournal.com](#)
- [Executivesonly.com](#)