

CAREER INFORMATION AND INFORMED CHOICES

By Carol Christen, Career Strategist

For those of us who loved the old Police song, “Too Much Information” the digital age has become rather overwhelming. According to author Baratunde Thurston, not only is data the new common language, but we’ve collected more information in the past two years than in all the years before. (FastCompany, 11/26/2012). As Mr. Thurston implies, the challenge is to do something creative with all that information.

On an individual level, one of the most creative uses of information is career planning and development. Eventually, many categories of information will be needed to develop a satisfying career. Initially, however, the information needed can be divided into two kinds, information about the self and information about the world of work. Both types of data are needed to begin increasing your awareness of fields and jobs that may suit your interests and ambitions.

CACAREERZONE.org is an excellent website to start investigating careers because, in addition to being fun to use, it will add to your self-knowledge and to your knowledge of jobs. While there’s no right or wrong place to begin using the site many teen and young adult readers like to go straight to **Getting a Reality Check**, <http://www.californiarealitycheck.com/>. This section helps teens and young adults learn about salaries and financing their lifestyle.

One sure way to stall your career planning is to be ambiguous about the type of lifestyle you hope to build in your twenties. Whether you intend to continue the lifestyle you had while living with your parents, or go in another direction, until you know what direction that is, you’ll be in the dark about whether the jobs you are considering are likely to give you a salary that gets you where you want to go.

For example, if you don’t have big material needs, but want to do a lot of international travel, a job as a carrier with DHL, FedEx or UPS might be a perfect fit. If your dreams include a Ferrari parked in your garage, well, that will lead you to other types of work.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Next, after you get your reality check, you can try out the first choice on the Assess Yourself page, Quick Assessment.

<http://www.cacareerzone.org/assessments>

This whisks you off to short electronic version of the SDS, aka The Self Directed Search, <http://www.cacareerzone.org/quick>. Follow the instructions on the screen to select your choices. The Self-Directed Search is an assessment created by Dr. John Holland that will give you a three letter Holland code. This code will give you information about your skills, interests, values and jobs that might match them.

You'll very likely take the SDS several times over the course of your time in the world of work. Your letters of preference may change, so don't be surprised.

This time, I chose the following letters R, I, A, (Realistic, Investigative and Artistic). Which do you choose?

One of the valuable aspects of this site is that it quickly lets you see jobs that people with certain Holland Codes tend to gravitate towards or be more satisfied doing. For instance, I can follow my RIA code through to see what jobs were recommended at <http://www.cacareerzone.org/quick/ria>

When you go to this section, a useful set of filters are provided which help you compare information about the different jobs. The box on the left side of Job Zone moves so that you can narrow or expand your range. You can see the jobs related to all job families at once, or check out job ideas within one of 23 different job families. You can also see a list of STEM only jobs. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. As STEM jobs are growing in number at a rate faster than other types of jobs, this information may be quite important for your career planning.

On this site the job families listed are used by the California State Department of Employment. Other organizations may use more or fewer job families. If you are not a California resident, check to find out what similar jobs are available where you want to live and work. Is there a careerzone.org for you or state? Do an Internet search to find out. Type the two-letter abbreviation for your state in front of the letters *careerzone.org*

GROWTH = OPPORTUNITY

An additional piece of information that would be very helpful for people just starting in their career search is the projected growth of a particular occupation. The job links which are accessed through the Quick Assessment give you some idea of projected growth for each occupation. I clicked through to the information on Tree Trimmers and Pruners, or Arborists, one of the jobs for people who pick the 3-letter Holland Code - RIA. In California about 250 people annually are hired to do this sort of work. Think about how big the state of California is. If only 250 new people per year can be absorbed into this kind of work, that's not very many. This means the demand for people in this occupation is low.

However, if you really want to do this work, getting training while still in high school will help you stand out and begin to build a portfolio of experience. Don't overlook expanding your credentials with formal learning over time, although gaining an academic degree may not expand your employability. Make sure you consult local employers and determine what kinds of training and education they prefer for the

entry-level positions you want. Unless you are an engineer, other professional or skilled tradesperson, all new hires start at entry level.

If you would like more help crafting your future work, another very useful website is CACAREERCAFE <http://www.cacareercafe.com/>.

This fun and informative site is sponsored by California's 100+ community colleges. Again, if you are not in California, you'll need to check out the possibilities for applying your findings where you live.

If you are working with a career coach, or taking a career class, bring along the results of any assessments that you take online. Your coach or teacher can help you get the most out of your assessment information. And, no matter what jobs any assessment recommends for you, these jobs are where you start your research. No assessment knows you well enough to say any particular job will be a perfect fit.

These two sites can help you as a teen or young adult begin to learn about yourself and occupations that you might want to investigate further. The information about assessments and occupations is presented in a user-friendly way and the data is reliable. Have fun as you creatively use the web to begin exploring career possibilities!