

## Achieving Career FIT

### Your Personal Market Plan: 'PRODUCT' ANALYSIS

In order to market yourself, you must first know yourself. The job search process is essentially a highly personalized marketing process. The process starts with your candid self-assessment, which allows you to gain a thorough and workable understanding of who you are in product marketing terms.

When a Company looks for qualified employees, they seek functional evidence that demonstrates a job seeker's ability to perform to expectations... JOB REQUIREMENTS represent the HR screening process!

Especially if you are starting a resume "from scratch", or if you are truly unsettled on next steps along your career path, this becomes a necessary first step in the process.

#### **What YOU Do Best, and are motivated to do for a future employer...**

What do you do best? What are your strongest transferable skills? Think broadly in terms of managerial and technical/ *functional strengths* involved in what you have to offer. Discovering your "pattern of success and satisfaction" is your goal, here.

Your ability to express the collection of your functional strengths will measure your marketability. This collection of keywords and their supportive evidence creates your *communication strategy*, the basis of your value proposition.

The old "round peg in a round hole" theory of career planning is dysfunctional. In the typical professional environment today, job descriptions are changing faster than ever before to keep up with the challenges of an economy in transition. In the traditional job market, job seekers are the sellers and their potential employers are the buyers. The commodity is JOBS and the competition is fierce.

In **The OTHER Job Market**, buyers and sellers hold equal responsibility for the recruitment process. The commodity is available, productive WORK... When employers have a need for someone to fulfill a specific role, often the most desired candidates are employed individuals with the credentials they seek. Thus the employer must sell their Company to potential employees in the marketplace in order to attract the best of the lot. Once identified, they simply select their choice and buy their services.

#### **Seize control of such challenges. Understand the nature of FIT.**

**What is a Good, Career FIT For You?** To achieve a good "fit" between you and any future opportunity, you have to ask yourself some basic questions about yourself and your prospective employers. The fit depends on how well the jobs meets your needs and how well your skills and abilities meet the employer's needs. The employer will make a decision and extend an offer to you: now it is time for you to make your decision.

Write out the factors that are important to you in a job... actually write out your list. During your career transition, learn the value of setting your offer criteria, a key element of your Personal Market Plan:

- Creates an objective target for your efforts ahead;
- Gives you a meaningful set of questions to ask during research (factual information) and networking (more subjective information);
- Provides an objective way to analyze and react to offers as they occur.

## OFFER CRITERIA

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3. Provides an objective way to analyze and react to offers as they occur.

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- Keep your "offer criteria" in that dynamic state of change that allows you to adapt to market conditions.
- If your current goal is to find a new position, then you should prepare your search as a "business model", manage it accordingly, be flexible, and be ready for the unexpected.

You understand that managing your own career involves three key ingredients:

1. **Confidence** in knowing that your career is on the right path;
2. **Continuous research and networking** leading to awareness of potential "next steps..." to keep your career moving forward;
3. **Competency** with job-changing skills.

To manage your career wisely has you extending the same concept. Consider some of the factors listed below ... Examine each factor through the questions listed – and then ask "does this opportunity fit me?"

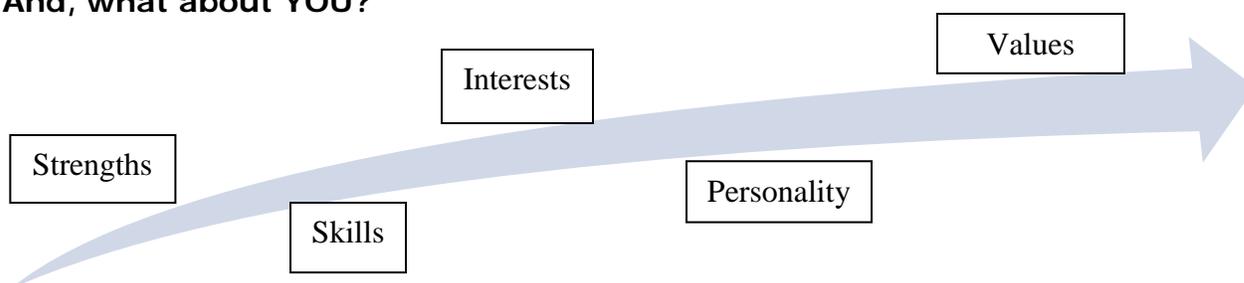
**Work Requirements and Expectations:** What is the next *appropriate work* for you? Is the work process or project oriented? If it's process oriented, are the requirements and expectations clear? What kinds of projects will you work on? Will you work on one project at a time, or multiple projects? Are the projects long term or short term? Will you work on a project long enough to see the end result? Is it important to you to be able to see the project as a whole, including the result? Or will you be content to do the work without a big picture understanding?

**Work Environment:** Will the work space be a source of comfort and confidence for you? How formal or informal is the environment? Hectic, fast paced? Will you have the opportunity to have flex time, or to tele-commute? How many hours a week does the employer expect you to work? Will you have the freedom to wear casual clothes? What is a typical day like at the company you are considering? Would they allow a "trial visit" or at least a site visit?

**Career Path:** Is there a defined succession plan? What position(s) can you move to next? How long do new hires generally stay in the same job? How quickly do people get promoted? Are your opportunities for professional development well defined and available to you? Are mentors available?

**Training and Personal Development:** what kind of training will you get from the employer to do the job? What kind of training will you get to stay current in your area of interest? Are the answers to these two questions different? Does it matter to you if the answers are different?

**And, what about YOU?**



**Strengths** Strengths differ from skills, in that your strengths were not learned or taught, but inborn. The kind of things which you find easy to do, when others struggle with the same task, can be thought of as a strength. Perhaps you have used strengths on the job in the past, and if so, you should consider leveraging that strength in your future.

Unfortunately, many people never recognize their strengths, or don't see a way to use them in the work roles they have played. But, what if you could....?

**Skills** What we have learned, developed, or have experienced in the workplace. Those tasks you have performed for another employer, for pay, in the past. You need to consider skills in two ways:

1. Competency, or how good you are at the skill, as well as
2. Motivation, how you feel about performing the skill.

You want to focus on skills where you have both High Competency and High Motivation for your future career development. Be careful about those skills with High Competency, but Low Motivation. If you would rather never perform a skill that you have done well for years, it might not be wise to include that skill in your personal marketing collateral materials.

**Interests** What kind of things would you enjoy doing, or learning about, even if there was no paycheck involved? Can you identify some topics or activities to which you are, and have always been, naturally drawn? These might be called your Interests, and they are a key to career success.

Passions are simply very strong interests, and you may have heard someone give career advice about “following your passion!.) Interests combined with skills can be very rewarding in the workplace.

**Personality/Emotional Intelligence** We are all different from one another, in many different ways. Those differences do not make us wrong, or bad, but they can create conflict or poor communication between people who do not appreciate or understand natural differences.

Learning how you “see the world” differently than other people do can provide clues to how to better understand or relate to people. This can provide a major advantage in a person who has to work with others, or lead others. What are your natural preferences? The answer to this question can guide a person to make better decisions regarding their career.

Another difference that has gotten a lot of attention in recent years surrounds the issue of Emotional Intelligence. This is the degree by which a person is both aware of their and other’s emotional state, as well as the degree by which they manage those emotions. It seems likely that the higher your EQ, the more likely you will find success in relationships and in the workplace.

**Values** What is most important to you, and what will you protect or defend if necessary? How do you expect to be treated in the workplace, by co-workers and leaders? What are the “rules” by which you choose to live your life? These are the rules that define how you, and others, should behave in society. These “rules”, or values, can be the most important self-awareness a person should draw from when considering career moves.

If the work you do, or the people and organization where you perform you work, share some of your highest values, you are more likely to feel satisfied and fulfilled in that work. Where our higher values are routinely violated, or when we are required to abandon some of them on a regular basis at work, the result can be frustration, anger, dis-engagement, and ultimately burn-out.

The problem is that we rarely think about our values, and probably can’t list them if asked. Even though we constantly use them to react to people or events. Most values are buried deep in our minds.

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Ultimately, your goal is to secure the *right employment* for yourself... that must start with your identification of what right is. THAT requires some exploration, identification of key elements of your **Career FIT**, and planning to pull it all together, create focus... make it happen.

Yes.... FIT Happens! Creating an action plan, your **Personal Market Plan**, during career transition, will reap rewards during your implementation campaign.

Success in career management confers rewards not unlike those in the workplace:

- A sense of accomplishment;
- Pushing oneself beyond expectation, often acquiring new skills or knowledge;
- Identifying developmental goals to assure continued career success;
- Gaining the respect of those around you, colleagues and customers;
- Being requested for future challenging opportunities!

But, let's not get ahead of ourselves. To achieve a good "careerFIT" between you and any future opportunity, you have to ask yourself some basic questions about yourself and your prospective employers.

The FIT depends on how well the jobs meets your needs and how well your skills and abilities meet the employer's needs. This is your *value proposition* and is reflected in your **QUALIFICATION SUMMARY**. The employer will make a decision and extend an offer to you: now it is time for you to make your decision.

## **GETTING RECRUITED and LANDING HIGH QUALITY OFFERS**

**Determine your career objective**...Know what your *next right employment* is. This will help focus your actual search. With clarity in your *positioning* goals, you can write a **great resume** to convey your story.

**"WORDCRAFT" your resume and other collateral materials**...Create a forward looking "story" of what YOU CAN DO. Target your accomplishments, such as increased sales and profits, reductions in costs, etc. Focus on achievements that support your qualifications for your job goal.

Are you challenged in finding the right words? LinkedIn can be a valuable tool for you to use in self-assessment. Access the LinkedIn Profiles of other professionals like you... experiment by searching for a person like you in LinkedIn.

*KEYWORDS* become *personalized phrases* by incorporating adjectives and adverbs that uniquely FIT you... Those phrases should be confirmed for the reader and listener with high-impact *accomplishment statements* (think behavioral evidence, like the bulleted information in a well written resume)... a well-'crafted' accomplishment statement can trigger appropriate questions that allow you to expand on your strengths, with *positive, supportive examples*, elements of your career story—PROOF of your value proposition.

# Your Personal Market Collateral

## WRITTEN COLLATERAL...

1. **A GREAT Resume** that positions you clearly as a terrific FIT with your career objectives... and in today's technologies, a database-friendly, *ascii* version;
2. **A correspondence template package** that consistently carries your communication strategy, your message... and in today's technologies, a reformatted, text only version of your resume ready for email needs;
3. **A high impact, personal biography and/or NETWORKING PROFILE** that you can lead with in your referral based networking strategies.
4. **A clear and complete LinkedIn Profile**, one that is based on your communication strategy and in synch with your other written collaterals.

## VERBAL COLLATERAL...

1. **A well rehearsed "two minute commercial,"** your answer to the most asked question during career transition, "Tell me about yourself."
2. **Several, well thought out, "elevator speeches,"** examples that support your primary, positioning, key words. These are usually your representative accomplishments under the SUMMARY of your resume. (30 seconds to 1 minute)
3. **A succinct "qualification statement"** that you can use as an introduction at networking events. (usually 20 – 30 seconds)
4. **An "exit statement" which explains your availability,** to address the second most asked question during career transition.

Having your collaterals prepared and rehearsed prior to active personal marketing is central to your success and builds confidence.

**Consistency** in the delivery of your message is what creates memory... and **frequency** of your message helps you get there.

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1. Our public Group on LinkedIn: **DFWCareerpilot**
2. **GO TO:** [www.dfwcareerpilot.com](http://www.dfwcareerpilot.com)
3. Follow **DFWCareerpilot** on Twitter!
4. **FREE Subscription to his occasional e-newsletter**



*Bob Maher created his online presence, [www.careerpilot.com](http://www.careerpilot.com), in 1994. He has over thirty years of successful experience in Corporate Recruitment, performance management and Career Management Services. He is an entrepreneur and innovator in the use of information technology in the recruitment and employment process.*

*On the Founder's Council of the Association of Career Professionals - International and quite active in their Professional Development, Technology and Chapter Growth initiatives--a frequent speaker at industry conferences and seminars. Active from its inception, Bob was on the Professional Development Committee that spawned the Institute of Career Certification—to this day the ONLY independent and international credentialing body for career-oriented professionals. Currently he reviews and approves the portfolios of incoming applicants.*

*Bob was presented with the prestigious LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT award by The Association in 2006.*