

## WHAT MAKES FINDING WORK SEEM SO DIFFICULT?

by **Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D.**  
**Career & Life Management Consultant**

Directions: Skim the following three pages first for an overview. Then return and check the top several issues that affect you significantly in each category. Adapt the language in your choices to reflect your unique situation. Use those choices as a road map for identifying strategies and action for easing your work search. In the space on the third page, jot down one or two productive strategies with related actions you will start immediately. Finally, return to your other choices for follow up.

### ***Issues of Self-Management: Opportunities and Strategies for Action***

- Don't know how to describe what I want to do based on who I am first instead of focusing just on a job title, field, track, path or slot --- or what's out there. (Starting with yourself rather than a superficial sound bite can expand work options and result in better matches.)
- Uncomfortable with exploring what I truly want to do for fear of finding out that previous education and experience may no longer be relevant.
- Don't have much work experience in areas related to true interests.
- Previous work experiences have been unpleasant, negative, boring or uninspiring.
- There are tensions among what I want to do, should want and need.
- There are tensions between anticipated work demands and other important aspects of my life.
- Work search brings up unresolved issues such as identity, confidence level or relationships with parents, spouse, significant others or close friends and colleagues.
- Experience is mostly in sheltered situations such as school, internships and family business or in one function for a long time.
- Feel anxiety about repeating mistaken choices and detours as well as possibly making a bad decision.
- Fear rejections and tend to make decisions to avoid them.
- Prefer using an entirely rational approach and honing techniques rather than add the power of positive emotion as a motivator. (See Damasio: *Descartes' Error: Emotions, Reason and the Human Brain.*)

- Tend to use my energy to focus on what's beyond my control, even influence, rather than take concrete steps I can that will lead to strengthened motivation and confidence.
- Let concerns of prestige and money, which can be important, muddy thinking about other values and priorities.
- Have limiting attitudes such as entitlement, "it's who you know," rewards should be based on merit, work is \_\_\_\_\_ (a pain, necessary evil, just a way to earn money or create security, etc.)
- Unused to sustaining, nonlinear, naturally challenging work search efforts with much ambiguity, little immediate reward, weak relation between what I do and what happens and lack of predictability.
- Jump to judge whether or not an idea is practical, immediately viable, comfortable or familiar rather than find out its relationship to my true interests and value for the future.
- Uncomfortable in work search and related situations geared to extroverts.

***Issues Involving Myself and Others:  
Opportunities and Strategies for Action***

- Much previous development, education and experience has been determined in large part by external authority (family, educators, employers). Used to reacting to such externals rather than starting with my own preferences and interests.
- Information about actual work opportunities imperfect: Not organized in relation to my preferences and interests, but in conventional categories and formats prospective employers use.
- Little or no personalized guidance in career definition obtained. Emphasis has been on getting education and other credentials, without clear focus on purpose.
- Peers and mentors use sound bites and stress work search technique rather than start with what's unique about me. They emphasize practicality over meaning and authenticity, which contribute to longer-range success.
- Groundwork for work search not laid incrementally with others, over time. Examples are:
  - Contacts/networks: cultivation of professional relationships and memberships in professional associations; creation of links between studies and established professionals in areas of interest; experience in work/study arrangements related to interests; stretch beyond known or comfort zone; experience with a variety of

- people, including different genders, styles, ages, cultures, religions, generations; exploration of contacts in new, but relevant, subjects, ideas and fields.
- Conversations with people who think critically, are curious about matters beyond what they know and question their own assumptions.
  - Exposure to and experience with range of work arrangements and situations to test assumptions and ideas.
- Taught and rewarded for analysis, not synthesis or integration of complex information about self and situations.
  - Accept superficial information provided by others about possibilities rather than probe about complexities and actual situation or limitations. Interest in getting work or escaping current situation substitutes for due diligence.
  - Opportunities rarely present all at once, permitting useful comparison and decision making.
  - Competition for preferred jobs or work.
  - Politics and power plays.
  - Discrimination and prejudices.

***Issues Stemming from the Environment:  
Opportunities and Strategies***

- Economic downturns.
- How work is organized in most organizations (hierarchy).
- Foreign competition.
- Employment shortages in your area of interest.

Jot down below one or two productive strategies and related actions you will start immediately. Schedule them on your calendar.

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Career & Life Management Consultant  
202.862.5484 [ruth@ruthschimel.com](mailto:ruth@ruthschimel.com) [www.ruthschimel.com](http://www.ruthschimel.com)**