



Advice for Young People Looking to Decide on a Career Path

I am often approached by recent graduates and people early in their careers trying to figure out what it is they “really” want to do. They are looking for their “mission” or “purpose” or a job that provides “meaning”. Here are some thoughts that I share:

1. Think in terms of both horizontal and vertical. For example, I want to be a lawyer for environmental causes. I want to be a financial executive at a nonprofit organization. I’d like to be an event planner for Apple. I would like to do ad tech for the cannabis industry. I want to be an HR at a startup. So, what do you want to do and who you want to do it for?

2. Once you get clear about the horizontal and the vertical, then you can better focus your efforts. You know what the bull's eye looks like. Now I suggest that you go on LinkedIn and using the search functions, identify ten people who are experts in that position. People who already having your dream job. Study their profile. See the path they took to get those positions. What patterns did you notice? What are the similarities in their career paths?

3. Once you've learned everything you can about them, now try to have a conversation with them. Your goal is to get past your story about that career possibility and find out the reality of it. That was something I did not do as a young trial lawyer. Once the reality of my career choice caught up with my story about it, I ended up quitting litigation. The work I do is much more fulfilling now. I wish I had been smart enough to speak to some experienced trial lawyers to look deeper into the data. I would have discovered that most are dissatisfied with their career choice and wouldn't advise their children to do the same thing. They have a high rate of alcoholism, drug abuse, divorce, and stress-related illness. I wish I had known that before I decided to become a trial attorney.

Don't you make that mistake. Get past any story about that position and get to the reality of it!

4. Now the question is how do I get to have a conversation with them? My answer is by beginning the conversation. You can send them a LinkedIn

connect request. Let them know you're considering moving into their expertise and would like to learn about it from somebody such as themselves. You want to learn what they like best about their jobs and where they have challenges with it. What did they learn that they could share with a young person such as yourself?

I tell my clients that if three out of ten people agree to have a conversation with you, that's an enormous win. Those are three powerful conversations you'll have, that you wouldn't have had, if you didn't make the effort.

In my experience when people have approached me like that, I love giving them some of my time. Enough young people don't take advantage of this opportunity.

5. Let's say they don't respond to your LinkedIn request. Most people would be to give up at that point. But not you. This is when you get to show your creativity. Ask how you can be of service to this person, even though they are the "expert." Share with them something that you've noticed about what's going on amongst the people your age. You can share with them things they are disconnected from simply due to their age. You can send them a list of some ideas that you've been thinking about that could benefit their company, project, or career. See how you can serve before being served.

This is a sales and marketing job you have to do. If you want to succeed in your career, you have to build the habit of going for it. What if you contacted

100 people with the expertise you want to have and have conversations with 25 of them? That alone will accelerate your career path.

Be persistent. Until somebody tells you they are not interested. Typically, these are very busy people with many other people vying for their attention. It might take you contacting them ten times before they respond. Send them a note. Send them a handwritten letter, a postcard. A book on the subject you know that they like. Be persistent!

6. When somebody does have a conversation with you, the first thing you do is follow up with a written thank you note. Yes, send an email but also go high touch. Show them you appreciate and value their time. Let them know what you are doing with the information that was provided. Then follow up with them every few months to let them know of your progress. Before you know it, that executive may tell you about an opportunity they are aware of.

For many years, I was a mentor for seniors and recent graduates of my alma mater, San Diego State University. I would spend valuable time with mentees. Unfortunately, there were those who did nothing with the time I devoted to them, and did not follow up. As a result, I left the program and now better filter who I am willing to mentor. I've learned I can't help people more than they are willing to help themselves. Don't be that mentee.

7. Now for you potential mentors out there...please be generous and giving with your time. Know that a 15 min phone call can help a person take the

rights steps in their career. I have personally found it one of the most gratifying things I can do, and so will you!

Here's to finding a career path that works for you!



All the best, Don Phin, Esq.

PS go to <http://www.donphin.com/tools> where you find a ton of free tools, reports, books, checklists and more, including an article on Career Strategies!