



SUCCEEDING IN YOUR CAREER

LOOKING AHEAD

After completing this chapter, you will be able to

- Differentiate between a career and a job.
- Discuss the aspects of the self and work orientations related to career and job satisfaction.
- Recognize the importance of wise choices of career and jobs.
- Name several characteristics of a valued employee.
- Recognize the many choices you have regarding career.
- Identify ways you can improve your job search.
- Describe behaviors that lead to positive work relationships.

We are responsible to ourselves for the quality of our own lives. We can be friends or enemies to ourselves by the choices we make, which in turn make up the lives we lead. Real caring about ourselves is the first step in caring for others and in solving global concerns. May your career choice contribute to your dream of the future.

—Betty Neville Michelozzi

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” is a challenging question to answer when you are 3 years old. At age 18, or sometimes earlier, there comes another one: “Have you decided on a career?” Then be prepared for an inquiry heard over and over before retirement: “What do you do for a living?” Our self-identities are linked to career choices and current jobs, and the workplace is the source of much of life’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction. A positive professional experience is of prime importance.

When you consider how much time people spend pursuing their careers and actually on the job, it is not surprising that so much of what we think about ourselves is related to work. Additionally, our careers may affect our relationships. Years ago we were told that with technology our lives in the future would offer considerably more leisure time. That “crystal ball” prediction was extremely inaccurate. According to *U.S. News & World Report* (2000), the 40-hour workweek, or about 10,000 days of one’s life, has expanded into an average workweek of 47 hours!

Even more enlightening is the concept of “24/7,” which means that many people find that they are “on call” and are often doing something related to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (*U.S. News & World Report*, 2000). According to a study by the National Sleep Foundation, the average American employee works a 46-hour workweek; 38 percent of the respondents in the study worked more than 50 hours per week (National Sleep Foundation, 2005). Additionally, a number of people take work home with them. Because of the time and effort spent, what happens with our careers and at our workplaces is closely related to life’s satisfaction and the quality of our relationships. This chapter will focus on careers, jobs, and interactions at work.

Seeking Satisfaction in Careers and Jobs

How do you differentiate between a career and a job? Did you have a job before you selected a career? Most of us did. Maybe you have a job now and either you haven’t decided on a career or the job is not related to what you eventually plan to do. Think of a **career** as a broad field of occupational endeavor that includes a series of work experiences over a span of time. A career path includes planning, training, and dedicating your time and talent. Within each career field are numerous job possibilities. A **job** consists of tasks or duties a person does for pay.

Because career and job satisfaction will dramatically affect the quality of your life, learning what makes a difference is time well spent. A Gallup poll showed only 39 percent of workers had complete satisfaction with their jobs. Complete dissatisfaction was voiced by 14 percent. The most satisfied workers were self-employed people in their own business or professional practice. Significantly, two-thirds of those who were completely satisfied in regard to job stress, personal recognition, and salary levels were also completely satisfied with their jobs. Those most dissatisfied were unhappy with coworkers, their boss, job security, and opportunities to learn and grow (Saad, 1999). To avoid being discontented and to be counted among the number of satisfied individuals, look over the list “What Makes a Difference?” and then think about what you want (Fig. 11-1).

What Makes a Difference? (from a Gallup Poll, 1999)	
What Is Most Satisfying?	What Is Most Dissatisfying?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relations with coworkers • Physical safety of workplace • Flexibility of work hours • Amount of vacation time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-job stress • Salaries and certain benefits • Lack of recognition for accomplishments

Figure 11-1

Career Choice

When thinking about satisfaction, it's best to consider career and job separately. In the past, many individuals gave little consideration to career choice. For example, Carl farms because his father and grandfather were farmers. Nathan wanted to remain in his hometown, so he took a job in a local bank and made it a career. Tina chose hairdressing because there was a school near her home, and she did not have other aspirations. People today seem to be more concerned with career selection; however, they can still limit themselves. Most people reply to the question, "What do you want to be?" by naming a title or position; this does not tell you what is required in a job. The critical challenge, instead, is, "What do you want to *do*?" Does your choice afford you opportunities to do what you enjoy? Other important questions to ask yourself may be whether there are the opportunities for growth or responsibility changes within the company and whether there are travel options and other benefits. Personal aptitudes and interests are important factors as people begin to identify career opportunities. Programs such as Career Pathways give flexible identity and structure to the student career choice process as well as to educational programs and services that contribute to career preparation (State of Michigan, 2006).

As pointed out in Chapter 2, women, in general, still sell themselves short and opt for lower-paying, lower-status career fields. Men continue to feel forced to be financially successful and often choose higher-paying fields even if they have little interest in the work. Other men feel pressured to take over a family business. Both sexes can limit themselves by not considering all possibilities. Before you choose a career, it's wise to know yourself. Reading and applying the material in this book will help direct you. Now focus on specific career-related aspects of your-self. The widely read book *What Color Is Your Parachute?* (Bolles, 2001) can lead you through a series of exercises to identify skills you enjoy and those you do best. The key to being able to find pleasure in your work is the sense that you are using your abilities, not wasting them, and that you are being appreciated (Kushner, 1986).

An activity in Reflections and Applications can help you link enjoyment and job duties. No matter how much you might enjoy certain tasks and activities, satisfaction is still unlikely if you are not skilled in what is required of you. Greg said he wanted to be a journalist, and his personality type was well suited to that field. However, his writing was stilted, uninteresting, and prone to errors. Unless he improves his skills, his pursuit of journalism would likely lead to frustration and dissatisfaction.

Your values also play a part in the process of choosing a satisfying career. If you highly value money or what it can buy, you cannot expect career satisfaction in lower-paying fields no matter how much you enjoy the work. Is prestige important to you? Sociologists have studied prestige statuses of various career fields and, if this is of concern, acquaint yourself with the status ranking of your career choice. Maybe you value advancement and upward mobility. There is a difference between managing a child care facility and being CEO of a large corporation.

Personality type plays a vital role. Do you tend to be more extraverted or introverted? Ask yourself how many interactions you will have on a regular basis.



Figure 11-2 Enjoyment of work is priceless.

Do you want to provide ideas and possibilities and have variety and flexibility in your work, or are you more comfortable with established procedures and prefer to work with facts and figures? The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, described in Chapter 2, provides insight into preferred work situations for each personality type. For an insightful approach to career choice related to personality type, the two books *Do What You Are* (Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 1995) and *What's Your Type of Career?* (Dunning, 2001) are highly recommended.

How well do you cope? Preferences regarding people environments and living and working conditions can be just as important as what a person chooses to do. Work environment can play a large part in how people feel about their jobs. Often a person's comfort level with the work environment can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful career choice (University of Washington, 2003). The essence of career planning is finding a match between who you are and an environment that suits you (Fig. 11-2).

Finally, commitment is a key element. Some career fields require more time, energy, and effort than others. A fire department chief caused a few eyes to widen when he said that a fire-fighting career means spending one-third of your life away from your family. It is important to match your career choice with your degree of commitment.

Wise decisions in the beginning can save you years of wasted energy. Even after starting a career, people may realize they have made a poor choice and change directions. Relatively few decisions are as influential in determining the course of your life as the choice of a career path. Occupational choices have an impact on several aspects of life, including standard of living, lifestyle, friendships, intimate relationships, how you dress each day, and where you live. Sharon Hanna (2004) stated that her daughters were pursuing careers in California. Even though she applauded their choices, their decisions meant that they would see each other less often, and their life choices would be quite different than if they had stayed in the Midwest. Career decisions are choices about the way we live.

Selection of a Job

Within a career pathway there are many possible jobs, and anyone looking for the ultimate in satisfaction does not just settle for the basic choices. For example, in England of the over 40,000 students studying psychology each year, it is estimated that around 15 to 20 percent will become chartered psychologists. In 2004, nearly half of psychology graduates had entered full-time work six months after leaving school, moving into a wide range of jobs in a variety of sectors. A

significant number of graduates go into occupations related to health and child care (16.2%), clerical and secretarial jobs (14.6%), and other professional and technical occupations (17.4%). Nearly one in ten psychology graduates works as a manager either in the public or private sector six months after graduating (Prospects.ac.uk, 2005). Take advantage of library and online resources (see list at end of this chapter).

Have you ever had a job you did not like? Do you know why it was not desirable so you can avoid a similar situation? What have you enjoyed in previous or present jobs? Being aware of satisfying factors can be helpful. Using more than your own experiences to make decisions is even more advantageous. In terms of both career and job choices, consider your own work orientation (Derr, 1986). Check the following to see which are significant.

- Valuing upward mobility points to a career field and a job position where you can advance and “move up the ladder.”
- Seeking security means you want job security in a stable industry with an established firm.
- Valuing job freedom relates to independence and flexibility to “do your own thing” at work.
- Welcoming risks indicates you want excitement and challenge in your career or job.
- Seeking balance and harmony between personal and professional life indicates you want a career and job that allow time for family and other interests.

The last orientation is a significant one for most people. In fact, the primary career concern of most people is the ability to balance family and work demands (Carrig, 1999). Feeling that your life is out of balance is extremely stressful and a factor in poor job performance. Picture yourself in careers and jobs related to the five identified orientations. Where do you feel most comfortable? Which have little appeal? More than one orientation is possible (TA Revisited).

Other ideas can be used to explain satisfaction in the workplace. You may want to apply Maslow’s hierarchy of needs discussed in Chapter 4. If you are struggling with survival, money is a critical factor, and you may postpone other ingredients for satisfaction until your basic needs are met. Because many

TA Revisited

The “child” ego state may be tempted by glamorous choices or those that seem fun. “I want to be a truck driver so I can just get behind the wheel and travel and be free as the breeze” is an example of the “child” at work. The student who made this statement, by the way, soon realized that truck driving was not that simple!

“The parent” ego state can send messages of “Get a job—any job—just so you are working” or “Get a job that pays well” or “Be a doctor because your father is one.”

“The adult” ego state recognizes the wants and feelings of the “child,” analyzes the “parent” messages, and then thoughtfully and logically selects both a career and a job.

individuals are on the self-esteem level, a job that enhances feelings of self-worth would be important.

Considering how many other life choices are influenced by career and job selection, the relationship between professional and personal satisfaction, and the actual time spent at work, your attention to these choices is imperative. How much satisfaction you get from your career and job will directly influence all other aspects of your life. Choose wisely!

Identifying Desirable Personal Qualities and Work Habits

Suppose you own a business and you need employees. What qualities would you seek in your employees? Certain jobs demand special qualities or abilities, yet a common thread of desirable traits runs through most positions. If you have achieved the objectives presented in this book, you possess several of the positive qualities in Table 11-1 listed by employers and career experts. Check to see how many honestly describe you. If you lack any, go back through the book and seek to develop them.

Of utmost importance are interpersonal skills. For workplaces of the present and the future, publications in the United States (Carrig, 1999) and Canada (*Canadian Manager*, 1999) rate interpersonal skills and communication abilities as essential. Executives who eventually fail do so most often because of an interpersonal flaw, not lack of a technical ability (Gibbs, 1995). Workers are often fired for negative personal characteristics and poor interpersonal skills. An employer remarked, "I can help them improve technical skills; however, I do not know how to change a negative attitude and lack of 'people' skills."

As expected, employers list education, training, and experience related to the job as part of the profile of an ideal employee. Other characteristics are **transferable assets**, defined as desirable traits and skills valuable in all career fields and useful in almost every job. Owners and managers have identified the following 10 desirable assets.

Enthusiasm is a quick response. "During an interview, if I do not pick up on some interest and enthusiasm, I will not hire the person, no matter what the other

High self-esteem	Understanding of self, including personality and thought-processing
Positive attitude	Freedom from stereotypic thinking
Ability to meet deadlines	Interpersonal communication skills
Ethical character	Ability to feel and manage emotions
Spirit of contributing	Goal orientation and desire to improve
Stress-coping abilities	Sense of responsibility and control
Motivation and action	Ability to give and receive criticism
Ability to see alternatives	Realistic expectations about self and others
A zest for life	Willingness to give positive strokes

skills are,” said an owner of an automotive service business. Demonstrating enthusiasm about the career field and the job itself is recommended.

Desire to exert effort is another. During an employers’ panel discussion, a child-development student mentioned that she had detassled corn on a farm (a tedious task on a hot summer day). A director of a day care center applauded, “Great! When I have applicants who have stuck with that job, I am convinced that they can work hard—which day care requires.” Being a hard worker is a winning quality. Even if you initially lack desired skills, your zest for hard work will compensate, and your efforts will be rewarded.

Work hard, not only because it will bring you rewards and promotions but because it will give you the sense of being a competent person. (Kushner, 1986, p. 147)

Likability or congeniality, the ability to get along with others, is highly desired. Conflicts will occur; however, people who are congenial and who like others will manage them effectively. Having an appropriate sense of humor is a plus. Qualities such as sensitivity, cooperativeness, and fairness contribute to a positive workplace.

Dependability is invariably a necessity. The fundamental responsibility of any employee is getting to work on time on a regular basis. “I have to be able to count on my employees,” says a business owner. “My company has a responsibility to the customers, and they cannot be served if people do not show up.” If you have a positive record of attendance and punctuality, be sure to maintain it and use it to your advantage. Dependability goes beyond your physical presence. When you are given a job, can your employer count on you to perform? Productivity is the key to success in businesses and organizations, and hard-working employees are almost always productive. Your employer will expect you to do your share, and if you are interested in advancement, you are wise to do even more.

Three additional qualities go hand in hand and are popular with most employers in today’s job market: creativity, innovation, and initiative. *Creativity* is the ability to develop good ideas that can be put into action; it is not confined to artistic pursuits. *Innovation* means change and is closely related to creativity. Being imaginative at work could result in a better product or idea, an easier way to perform a task, or a more spontaneous environment. My husband, a business owner, sees a major contrast between employees who can figure out a way to solve a problem and those who seem to have little ingenuity. You may be thinking that creativity and innovation are rare talents. Keep in mind that everyone has a degree of both, that you can employ each in any job, and that many creative, innovative ideas are simple ones. Critical and creative thinking abilities are a definite plus. Individuals who are ambitious and motivated show *initiative*. Instead of standing around waiting to be told what to do next, they seek productive activity. At times, caution in going ahead is advisable; however, chronic lack of initiative is not appreciated. With almost any job, you can usually find more to do if you look!

Flexibility is like a breath of fresh air. In many work situations, adaptation or adjustment is practical. Jo was considered one of the most valuable employees in

an accounting firm, and her flexibility was a major strength. She could adjust her demanding schedule when necessary. During busy times she offered to work overtime or come in early. When new ideas were suggested, she exhibited an open attitude, which made others like her. Being able to “go with the flow” creates possibilities!

“It may seem old-fashioned, but I expect my employees to be loyal,” stated the president of a large corporation. *Loyalty* does not necessarily mean that you will never leave a company; however, it does imply that while employed, the employer’s best interests will be of concern to you. Speaking negatively about a current or past employer, even if it is deserved, is not recommended.

In contrast to the workplace of years ago, when employees were expected to be “seen and not heard,” today’s employers value *assertiveness*. There is a difference between being assertive and aggressive. Being aggressive means standing up for yourself in ways that violate the rights of others. Aggressive behavior is typically punishing, hostile, blaming, and demanding. It can involve threats, name-calling, and even actual physical contact. It can also involve sarcasm, catty comments, gossip and “slips of the tongue.” In *The Wellness Workbook*, Ryan and Travis (2004) advise, “Assertiveness basically means the ability to express your thoughts and feelings in a way that clearly states your needs and keeps the lines of communication open with the other”.

At work, you gain little by being overly aggressive or passive. Lori was determined and ambitious. In business meetings she frequently and loudly interrupted. She was intense and hostile whenever she felt challenged. Her aggressive attitude and behavior made her unpopular and, ironically, blocked the advancement she desired so much. On the other hand, Chad was a “yes” person who was meek and humble. His supervisor and coworkers took advantage of him. At his yearly evaluation he was told he was not ready to move to the management level.

Assertiveness training would have helped both Lori and Chad. On the job, being able to say no to unreasonable requests is important. Otherwise, you can feel overloaded, taken advantage of, and frustrated. Being assertive during an interview can enhance your chances of being hired. Employers share the belief that behaviors during an interview indicate actions on the job.

Keeping in mind these characteristics of valued employees, a practical way of preparing for an interview is to note the qualities and work habits you possess and emphasize them in résumés, cover letters, and interviews. If you can also document when you have displayed them, you stand an even better chance of being the top applicant.

The more positive qualities you demonstrate, the more likely you are to achieve career success. Because individuals differ in their perceptions, success is difficult to define. If you are a positive person who wants to realize your potential, who sets realistic goals, who takes responsibility for yourself, who is nonperfectionistic and strives for excellence, you can be successful. Success can be a feeling of having done as well as you could; see it as a process, not as a final destination.



Figure 11-3

Choosing Wisely: From the Job Search to Retirement

As in all areas of life, you have and will continue to have any number of choices regarding careers and jobs. Specific choices are related to the stage of your career.

The Search Itself

You may not recognize that you have a choice about how you will go about the job search itself. The majority of job hunters simply look. They do not prepare and seemingly give little thought to the process. The first step is to know yourself and what you have to offer. To help you, complete the “Assets and Liabilities”

exercise in Reflections and Applications. Does it seem sensible to spend years gaining knowledge in order to get the job you want and then fail to do so because your job-seeking skills are inadequate? Most individuals who are looking for jobs confine their search to the classified ads in a newspaper. Would it surprise you to know that most available jobs on any given day are not advertised? If you only answer ads, you are tapping into a small share of the job market.

According to Pat Sims, a personnel specialist, many job applicants are unprepared. They do not have any idea of what job they want, know nothing about the business, lack the information needed to fill out an application, and do not even bring a pen. “Several bring their babies, and a few even have pets with them!” Their choice, seemingly, has been to approach the job hunt in a lackadaisical way. Employers will be inclined to believe they will handle their jobs similarly.

Being prepared can make the difference between enjoyment and displeasure in your job search and between success and failure in your career. Begin with research into career and job possibilities and expand into the “how to” of finding a position. An increasingly rich source of information is online. You are also wise to use the Internet to actually search for openings and to post your résumé and cover letter. In regard to these important written pieces, impressive ways of presenting yourself are essential and worthy of your attention. (Hanna, 2002). See Resources at the end of this chapter for some online recommendations (Fig. 11-3).

Most never actually *learn* how to interview. Being unprepared for a job interview can lead to a stressful situation in which you give a less than positive impression of yourself. A common problem has to do with responses that negate or qualify the interviewee.

Jamie was nervous. When asked what her work experiences had been, she replied, “Well, uh, I have not done much except work in a restaurant—really

REFLECT AND APPLY**Reflect**

- ◆ *What do you want in a job? Think of at least three things that you are seeking in a job.*
- ◆ *In what other geographic location would you be satisfied? What type of work would you want to do there?*
- ◆ *How would you reply to the interview question: “What are your career goals?”*

Apply

- ◆ *Ask someone who has begun her or his career: “What is most satisfying? What don’t you like, if anything?”*
- ◆ *List five of your transferable assets.*
- ◆ *Write an employment ad that describes job duties you would want.*

nothing in the secretarial field.” The final question was “Why should we hire you over the other applicants?” She blushed and stammered, “Well, I do not think you know I am better than others so I do not really know uh, I feel I could do a good job, I guess.”

Contrast this poor performance with a well-prepared job applicant.

Jamie faced the interviewer with a smile and a look of confidence. When asked about work experience, she replied, “I have worked for two years in a busy restaurant. I developed many interpersonal skills as I waited on customers. I think these skills will be valuable in secretarial work. During college I had simulated office experience, which I really enjoyed.” In response to the final question, she replied, “I have my secretarial degree and had many hands-on experiences during my training. My work experience has helped me develop many ‘people’ skills. I am dependable, positive, friendly, enthusiastic about my career, and very interested in this job.”

This impressive interview would not have occurred if Jamie had not prepared by anticipating the questions and rehearsing her answers. Going to a job interview with no preparation can be as disastrous as jumping into deep water not knowing how to swim. If you have an opportunity to take a course to help you build confidence, write a better application, prepare a résumé, and learn to interview, take advantage of it. Detailed information is available in books such as *Career by Design: Communicating Your Way to Success* (Hanna, 2002) (Reflect and Apply).

Because rejection is an inevitable part of most job searches, it is wise to decide how you will handle it. Even though you may be offered the first position you want, for most it is realistic to visualize a job search as a series of “no’s” finally followed by a “yes.” Important to remember is that a “no” is not a rejection of you personally but merely an assessment of a match between you and the position. Thought-changing can do wonders. Do not think, “Something is wrong with me.” Instead, say to yourself, “They sure missed an opportunity to have a first-rate employee. It’s their loss!” Then choose to move forward to a better job.

Your Career Path

Worth thinking about before you accept a job is where it may lead. Several decisions will be made during your work life that will dramatically influence the direction of your career path.

Career goals. Just as you could not plan a trip without knowing the destination, you are unwise to begin a career unless you know your objective. This decision does not have to be made immediately; yet thinking about it can be beneficial. Young people may have aspirations of owning a business or being the head of a company, yet they have not seriously considered what is required to get there and whether they would like what they will find upon arriving. Ask yourself whether you enjoy being in charge and making final decisions. Are you willing to give the time and effort required to achieve higher positions? Advancement is rewarding, yet sometimes the status achieved is not worth the price.

Many overlook the need to integrate career and personal plans. Chris started his own business thinking that he would now be his own boss, be in charge of his life, and not have to work so many hours. He soon discovered that he had many bosses—his customers! He found little time to spend with family. Both his business and his personal life began to suffer. He made a difficult decision to sell the business he had recently established and accept a position elsewhere that did not interfere with his family life.

Another sound reason to establish career goals is because this information is frequently asked in a job interview. Having no goals or poorly defined ones is a liability. Also important is to have goals compatible with what the interviewing employer can offer. “I want to travel on the job, have relocation possibilities, and then eventually start my own business” could be the “kiss of death.”

Advancement. If you decide that you want to advance into different positions, planning becomes significant. First, select employment in which promotion possibilities exist. Then do the following:

- Perform as well as you can and do more than what is expected.
- Take advantage of learning and growth opportunities.
- Display professionalism and demonstrate a high degree of ethics.
- Document your accomplishments and keep your résumé updated.
- Research carefully.

The latter is important because promotion just for advancement’s sake may lead to job dissatisfaction. Most of us have been convinced that upward mobility is essential; however, this can lead into jobs we either do not like or don’t do well. Granted you may be required to take a position with responsibilities that is not satisfying on the way to a position that is. Be sure that your final goal is where you want to be.

The goal-setting techniques outlined in Chapter 3 work well in charting your career path. Action steps are a necessity. Some students write expansive career goals, such as “I plan to make a million dollars and retire within five years.” The critical question is, “How are you going to do this?”

Keeping records. Maintaining a personal career file is one of the most practical and worthwhile things you can do, yet many people neglect this. One day a frantic former student called: “Did you keep our résumés on file?” My negative reply resulted in a plaintive outburst, “I threw all my stuff from the class away, and I need a résumé right now!” Another individual missed an application deadline because he did not have a copy of his transcripts to submit. Poor organization makes the job search more time-consuming and stressful.

Making contacts. Networking, establishing contacts that may be helpful, can help you get a desired job, advance in your career, and change your job or career. Occasionally, a job seeker will balk at the idea of getting a job through contacts. “I do not want to be hired because of whom I know but on the basis of my abilities,” a man said. He was assured that even Albert Einstein found a job after graduation only through the father of one of his classmates (Fisher et al., 1977), a classic example of whom you know being, perhaps, as important as what you know. Besides, you probably will not be hired, even with the best contacts, if you are not qualified. Contacts that can be used as references and sources of job leads and influential sponsors are tremendous resources throughout your career. Begin building your network immediately. A good idea is to exchange business cards with people and keep them in a file. Almost everyone likes to help others. Cultivating multiple and diverse relationships in order to build a “personal board of directors” is recommended by Linda Hill, Ph.D., Harvard Business School (1994).

Continued learning. Some students are surprised to realize that their education is not over when they earn a degree. Take advantage of educational and skills-building opportunities. Lifelong learners are invariably career-success winners. A worthwhile question to ask in an employment interview is what further educational opportunities are encouraged or provided. Even if the employer does not pay for these, show that you are determined to continue to learn and grow and then do so. Also emphasize how important learning is to you.

Leadership. Training to become a leader will help in several ways. You may then decide that you really don’t want to lead, or you may acquire the skills that differentiate effective leaders from poor ones. Being an effective leader is an art that goes beyond successful job performance. Described in a presentation by Brian Tracy, who is a successful business executive, leadership consists of seven qualities: vision, courage, integrity, commitment, responsibility, concentration, and excellence. As ideal as this list sounds, an outstanding leader has even more obvious behaviors: effective communicating, organizing, delegating, seeing that responsibilities are carried out, giving and receiving constructive criticism, praising employees, and promoting teamwork.

As a leader, you will be expected to make tough decisions, including those of hiring and firing. A strong feeling (F) preference on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a hindrance in this regard. Using more of the thinking (T) preference is necessary. Able leadership requires much more than desire. The rewards can certainly be worth the effort it takes to develop the skills.

Challenges at work. On the job you will periodically face challenges not directly related to the work you do. Prejudice and discrimination based on such factors as age, sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability are possible. **Sexual harassment**—any uninvited and undesired verbal or physical behavior related to sexuality—is of concern in today’s work environment

To avoid being a harasser, assume that off-color jokes and sexual advances are not welcomed, recognize that a “no” means just that, and ask how you would feel if you or someone you cared for was harassed. Faulty communication is a factor in perceived harassment (Markert, 1999). You can take responsibility for sending and receiving clear messages. To handle harassment, be assertive and let the person know the behaviors are not acceptable, talk to someone about any incident, document both the harassment and your own job performance, seek witnesses, go through appropriate channels, and use the legal system, if necessary (Bravo and Cassedy, 1992).

Being sensitive to others by refraining from degrading comments and language is the fair and decent way to behave. Challenging your own stereotypes and eliminating personal prejudice will make this easier. Acceptance and equal treatment of others are keystones of positive interpersonal relations.

Concerns such as discrimination, equal pay for equal work, comparable worth, maternity and paternity leave, and quality child care have arisen and will continue to be consequential. Controversial issues such as drug testing, disease screening, and smoking policies will necessitate difficult organizational and personal decisions. Stay abreast of new developments, be objective, remain aware of the concerns, and be open to possible solutions.

Career and job changes. If you are unhappy at work or if a better opportunity arises, you will probably consider a change. Changing jobs is common, and even switching careers is not unusual. The average person can expect to change careers 5 to 7 times and jobs up to 12 times (Shakoor, 2000). A career change demands more thought and planning than a job change and is usually riskier. Look objectively at your present situation and note the costs of a career move as compared with the benefits. Critical thinking is helpful. As with any change, stress is a by-product, and any resulting satisfaction and pleasure are well deserved.

Retirement. The end of a career seems far away for most people; however, the most effective and productive planning for retirement is started years before a career ends. Women who have depended on a husband for their financial well-being are especially at risk. More than 80 percent of retired women are not eligible for pension benefits, and only 47 percent of working women participate in a pension plan. It is no wonder that nearly 75 percent of the elderly poor are women (U.S. Department of Labor 2006).

Both sexes often avoid planning for a retirement life style that can bring similar rewards to those gained from work. About 63 percent of adults have never discussed retirement needs with a professional financial advisor (Lach, 2000) and about 17 percent of workers in their 40s say they have not begun to save for retirement (Clifford, 2000). Thoughtful decisions will make the transition from a career orientation to retirement a positive experience. The earlier a person begins to invest, the better. A 22-year-old who saves \$50 a week at an 8

percent return will have almost \$1 million by age 65. Waiting a year reduces this amount almost \$77,000 (Chandler, 2001). Because people are living longer, you are wise to prepare carefully and then continue to be productive throughout your life span.

From the initial career and job selections to retirement, your career path will bring joy and sorrow, elation and disappointment. Each stage requires choices, and you owe it to yourself to consider all possibilities and make thoughtful decisions about this significant part of your life.

Enjoying Relationships at Work

To whom will you relate as you pursue your career? With whom will you interact on the job? Countless possibilities exist. Let's follow Antonio, a surgical technologist, through part of his workday.

Antonio said hello to three other employees as he entered the building. In the elevator he exchanged small talk with others. He met briefly with his supervisor and a nurse. He offered a reassuring word to a nervous patient. Later in the morning he had coffee with two coworkers. At lunch he complimented a cafeteria worker on the array of fresh fruit. During the afternoon he met with other members of the surgical team. Before the day was over, he had interacted with approximately 40 people. In almost any job you will have numerous relationships that are enhanced by your positive behaviors.

Personality Types at Work

An understanding of personality preferences from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, discussed in Chapter 2, can help you relate better to others. There are no good or bad types, only different ones, according to the book *Type Talk at Work* (Kroeger and Thuesen, 1993), which profiles personalities in the workplace. Also helpful is the book *Work Types* (Kummerow, Barger, and Dirby, 1997). Both describe temperament types that were covered in Chapter 2. Understanding personality differences and being able to utilize others' strengths will make enjoyment of work more probable.

Positive Relations

If you possess most of the positive qualities of a valued employee described in this chapter and are practicing the skills outlined in previous chapters, you will be able to cultivate positive relationships with those in your work environment. Some specific behaviors are especially important.

Give appropriate affirmations. Positive verbal and nonverbal acknowledgments of others can create a warm atmosphere and be rewarding to you in return. People generally react favorably to a sincere positive stroke. Although we miss many opportunities to affirm others, the workplace provides several. In addition to verbal praise, a written or e-mail thank-you, congratulations, or

acknowledgment will likely be well received. Praise is a powerful motivator for most people, so if you are in a supervisory position, make it your ally.

Appreciate diversity. Today's work world is a mosaic composed of various ethnic, racial, religious, and age groups. Review and continue to remind yourself of the recommendations regarding prejudice and appreciation of diversity given in Chapter 10. Except for some educational institutions, the workplace offers the most opportunities for interactions with all types of people. Take advantage of opportunities to meet and get to know those who reflect cultural diversity. Your career will benefit, and your life will be enriched!

Be helpful and supportive. Opportunities abound to provide help and support to others. Little actions mean a lot. In some cases, more is demanded. If a coworker is ill, handling additional tasks may be in order. Helping new employees learn their duties may take time but will be appreciated. If your job brings you into contact with people in stressful situations, realize that what you say and do not say and how you behave will make the situation better or worse. Knowing when to offer help and when to suggest professional help is important.

Be friendly and considerate. Congeniality and regard for others create a more positive work environment and usually bring rewards to the employee. The simple act of greeting may have an impact. Calling a person by name is an added positive behavior. If remembering names is difficult, you might want to try mental association. A man named John had a punctuality problem. Associating him with "Johnny Come Lately" was a simple trick! Another technique is to repeat the person's name. When introduced, say, "I am happy to meet you, Bob." During the time you are together, call Bob by name as often as practical and use it again when you say good-bye. When you are new in a job, you will probably meet several people immediately. In addition to repetition and association, you might write the names, check their names on a company list or directory, and rehearse them mentally. Do not be afraid to ask them to say their names for you again (Fig. 11-4).

Several other gestures are possible. Ask questions and express interest in others. Just be sure you do not go beyond what are sensible inquiries. Consideration means you will be careful to avoid irritating others. In a small office area, Jeff had his radio set on a loud rock-and-roll station. Four employees shared one phone extension, and Rhonda spent several minutes at a time making personal calls. Neither worker was considerate. Approachability checking, as recommended in Chapter 10, is appreciated in the work environment. Because time is a valuable commodity, a considerate person does not assume that a coworker or supervisor is available at all times (Fig. 11-5).



Figure 11-4 Positive relationships enhance the workplace.

The Power of Support

See if you can recognize the helpful and unhelpful, supportive and nonsupportive behaviors in each of the following situations.

- The nurse gave me a reassuring smile and said, “Do not worry. We see many patients with these tumors, and we know what we are doing!” This was such a relief after being told that mine was a rare cancer.
- The world-renowned specialist muttered to himself and to the medical students who were observing the scan of my eye, “Melanoma does not look like it, but I do not know what else it could be.” My stress level was at an all-time high. I knew what melanoma cancer was. I kept thinking, “Does he know that I can hear him?”
- The young radiologist greeted me warmly. Before the scans, she calmly explained to me what she was doing and what would happen. I thought that she was wise beyond her years and seemed to be aware of the psychological studies that show that the impact of stress is lessened when people know what to expect.
- The young doctor in residency said a brief hello and then sat behind a desk and looked at what appeared to be my medical records. I was there for a postoperative visit. For 10 long minutes he did not look at me or say anything except an occasional “Hmmm” as he read and cracked his knuckles! This was another stressful situation in which behaviors of a specialist created more tension.

Figure 11-5

Customer relations are considered the “bottom line” by business owners. Employees who turn customers away or even create negative impressions are usually fired. Being a positive salesperson or company representative is not easy and requires determination, patience, and an understanding of human behavior. As an example, do you like to stand in line for service and then have another customer who just arrived be taken care of first? A sensitive employee would note who was there first or, if necessary, ask. As much as possible, the best employees avoid letting customers wait.

Other tips include treating the customer as if your roles were reversed, greeting individuals with a smile, listening attentively and actively to the customer’s request or complaint, handling complaints in an accommodating and cheerful manner, and asking whether your service was satisfactory. All this may sound difficult, and customer relations are definitely a challenge. Remember that you will be rewarded for your efforts. The reward may come not from others but from your own inner self saying, “Great job!”

Interactions with customers or clients are often on the telephone. Modern technology has created some devices that can be helpful yet can also diminish positive impressions. For example, do you recall being put on hold without even being asked whether you wanted to be? Effective telephone skills can be learned and deserve attention. No matter how or when a customer feels slighted or demeaned, the company or organization suffers.

Do your fair share as well as you can. In most jobs, you are part of a team with a contribution to make. Lazy workers are not wanted, and an inefficient team

member is a detriment. While you are at work, your responsibility is to the job at hand. Maria worked in a law office as a word processing specialist. When the attorneys were gone, she used her time to play games on her computer. She was surprised when another employee told her how offensive her behavior was. Be sure not to cheat your employer and yourself in the long run by just getting by.

Be positive and realize the contributions of others. Employees with positive attitudes are greatly appreciated. Seeing the bright side of a situation helps everyone. In every company or organization, some times are busier and more stressful than others. You may be tempted to think that your job is the most demanding. Picture this scenario: Kent and Roberto are on their break in the cafeteria. Let's listen to their conversation:

KENT: I am so busy I do not know heads from tails. All the quarterly reports I have to do are really getting to me.

ROBERTO: Just be glad you do not have to fill all the orders that are coming in now. I probably will not even have time to take a break later. You think you guys have it rough. If I have to field one more irate phone call, I think I will find an easier job.

As they are busily trying to "one-up" each other, another employee walks by the cafeteria and thinks, "I do not see how those two have time to take a break. They must not have nearly as much work to do as I do!" Did you recognize the "one-upping" comments? Realizing that you aren't the only one with a heavy load and acknowledging others' workloads would be a refreshing change from this scene. Receptive listening is as important at work as it is in other situations.

Manage conflict effectively. Despite your best attempts to create positive relationships, disagreement will occur. You have choices. In several situations, your best bet is to ignore the irritation. Most work environments have at least one annoying employee, and even those who are not disagreeable will occasionally bother you. Keep in mind that your behavior is not at the mercy of another person. Only you can determine your actions. Using techniques to defuse your frustration and anger can turn potentially hostile situations into harmless ones.

At other times, avoiding an irritant is not advisable, and your time is well spent trying to resolve the conflict. Familiarize yourself with the chain of command. Be honest and address legitimate concerns. Complaining without suggesting alternatives is not advised, although voicing a concern may be advantageous. If perceived mistreatment comes from a supervisor, you are wise to address it; however, do not let your anger control the situation. All that may be needed is an "I" statement describing your annoyance or the perception-checking technique that was explained in Chapter 9. If criticized, using the suggested responses from Chapter 9 can keep the level of conflict manageable. The key is open communication. If more efforts are required, a negotiation strategy, as described in Chapter 10, can create a positive outcome.

Conflict management techniques, discussed elsewhere in Chapters 10 and 12, can be applied to work situations. Understanding is more likely if people recognize

personality differences. No type excels at handling conflict; in fact, disagreeable situations can magnify of our preferences. I recall explaining to a strong ESTJ type that what she had said to a coworker whose type was ESFP had indeed been insensitive. “Why would anyone be hurt by that?” she asked. Even after accepting that it could have hurt, she considered it a sign of weakness and illogical for her to apologize. The ESFP, in turn, had difficulty accepting that the lack of apology was not just a sign of dislike and rudeness.

The section in Chapter 10 on dealing with difficult people can also be helpful. What if the difficult person is your boss or supervisor? How to recognize, understand, and cope with a difficult boss is covered in the book *Coping with Difficult Bosses* (Bramson, 1992). Gripping with fellow employees is not recommended. Ask yourself what the person does that is bothersome, what your specific goals or objectives are, and what other people might need to be involved. As you decide on an action plan, you are wise to use a cost versus benefits approach. If you determine after a reasonable period of time that your supervisor is intolerable and you have done all you can to improve the relationship, seek other employment possibilities.

Your degree of satisfaction on the job is greatly influenced by the quality of relationships. The time and effort you spend improving them are well worth it!

LOOKING BACK

- Human beings are typically identified by their career and job choices.
- Career and job satisfaction have a tremendous impact, and thoughtful decisions influence the quality of life.
- Try not to limit your choices and then begin your search by knowing yourself well. Identify your interests, likes, abilities, values, personality, coping skills, and work orientations.
- After career and job choices have been made, possessing and using the personal qualities and work habits desired by employers can make success much more likely.
- Throughout your career you will have choices. Whether and how you prepare for the job search is one of the first ones. A well-prepared job seeker has a much better chance of landing a desired position.
- As you proceed along your career path, you will be faced with many decisions. Recognizing options and making wise choices lead to success.
- Building numerous relationships is common during one’s career. Several behaviors can promote positive relations.
- As in all walks of life, if you know yourself well, have a high regard for yourself, demonstrate a positive attitude, gather information, use thought-processing, are open and flexible, and can recognize and deal with adversity, you will direct your career path to success.

That which distinguishes the good teachers from the mediocre teachers is primarily not method, style, or personality—but attitude. They consistently project a positive attitude toward each student as an individual and toward the subject being taught. From such teachers, students intuitively receive the message: You are important, and it’s important to me that you learn.

—Bob Resz

RESOURCES

Career counseling and placement services at colleges and universities

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) 800-634-0245. <http://www.score.org> (local groups provide free business counseling)

Online sources

Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://stats.bls.gov>

The Career Interests Game: <http://career.missouri.edu>

Europages, The European Business Directory: <http://www.europages.com>

John Holland's Self-Directed Search: <http://www.self-directed-search.com>

JobHunters Bible: <http://www.jobhuntersbible.com>

JOBTRAK: <http://www.jobtrak.com>

Monster Board: <http://www.monster.com>

Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.stats.bl.gov/oco>

O*Net Online: <http://online.onetcenter.org>

The Riley Guide: <http://www.rileyguide.com>

The Salary Calculator at Homefair: http://www.homefair.com/Find_A_Place/Calculators/SalaryCalc/index.asp

Salary Wizard: <http://www.salary.com>

Small Business Administration: <http://www.sba.gov/starting>