

## DEAR DR. MAZIE,

*I've been involved in right of way for about three years, but I don't feel challenged in my present job. I really like the industry and know there are many different opportunities. At this stage of my career, I'm just not sure which way to go. Can you help me find the right direction?*

*Edward in Illinois*

A career path is not a straight line. Nor is it the same for everyone. Yet all career paths have a starting point.

As we all experience a multitude of career stepping stones along the way, I want to encourage you to explore your skills and experiences, personality traits and your general attitude about life. Think about your personal and professional goals. And be honest about what you do well and what you don't do well. Taking the time to think about these things will prepare you for the next step – finding your career target or “sweet spot.”

The better you understand yourself, the clearer your career target will come into view. It might surprise you to know that there are more people who don't pursue their career target than those that do. They simply end up in a job and get stuck there. Sometimes it's the money. Sometimes it's the relationships. And other times, it's just a lack of drive, risk aversion and/or fear of change. That's why you will see so many people who have settled for a lower level than to which they originally aspired. Generally, getting to our career target can be a lengthy process that requires some risk taking, as well as a strong will and enormous perseverance. Some folks just lack a sufficient amount of these qualities to run the second half of the race. That's why only a small percentage arrive at their career goal quickly and seemingly easily.

I developed a method several years ago to assist others in finding their particular career path. It involves analyzing all the elements that need to align in order to achieve your career goal. To get started, make a list using the intersecting factors provided here. Under each heading, make the longest list you can.

Once you have your lists completed, take a fresh look at jobs that appear interesting to you. Don't limit yourself by excluding positions that seem out of reach or ones you aren't exactly qualified for. Assess what skills are needed and compare these to what you now know thoroughly about yourself. If there is a job you find that looks like it fits your



personality, your basic skills and might even be your dream job, but you simply don't have everything that is required for that job, then devise a plan to get there. What are you missing? How can you acquire that training and/or education? Is there a similar but maybe a bit lesser job that you can use as a stepping stone? Do you need to take another job that gives you what you don't have currently? Move?

I've used this technique in workshops and executive coaching for years and know that once an individual goes through this exercise, they frequently see their career target much more clearly. Then, they can create a game plan directing where they are headed and what they want to accomplish.

The more you experience different life and work opportunities, the more you learn and grow. Over time you will discover that much of what you have learned and gained has come from the journey, struggles and sacrifices experienced along the way. If you use this technique, it can help lead you to that sweet spot of your professional life. ✪

### INTERSECTING FACTORS

- Personality Traits
- Interests
- What you DON'T Do Well
- Education
- Training
- Skills
- Weaknesses
- Strengths
- Economy
- Experience
- Business Trends
- What you do BEST
- Dreams



*A nationally recognized speaker, workshop leader and trainer, Dr. Mazie Leftwich, Psy.D has a clinical background in applied psychology with expertise in organizational and personal development. She is Senior Vice President of Contract Land Staff, LLC, where she oversees training and team excellence programs.*