

HAPPINESS is a balance

a personal framework

BY: FRANK DIGIAMMARINO



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Career happiness is about balance. This balance needs to happen in three areas: knowing who you are, understanding why you do the things you do, and identifying what you actually want to be doing. If you take a step back – away from the day-to-day rat race of endless tasks, meetings,

HAPPINESS is a balance

projects and people – and stop chasing after everything in front of you, you can find your balance. When you do, your career won't just be something you do and it won't just be a job. It will be what makes you happy. In short, career happiness *is* happiness.

There is no magic to this. From experi-

ence, this is a lifelong pursuit that takes a lot of work. It requires setting time aside just for you to work out the complex things that, at one point, used to be simple. This paper is an attempt to provide a few ideas and resources to help you make sense of this complexity.

WHO

ARE

YOU



A large, dark blue question mark is centered on a white page. The page is framed by a dark blue, textured border, possibly a book cover or a decorative frame. The question mark is simple and bold, with a curved top and a solid dot at the bottom.

WHO ARE YOU?

WHO ARE YOU?

Have you ever been lost in something to the point that you lose track of time? Is there a topic that you find yourself gravitating towards in every conversation? If you think about it, there is a core to who you are. The most important thing you can do is embrace it.

Let's start with the most important thing – YOU! Who are you? If you're like most people, this is a terrifying question to answer. It is hard to take time to reflect and confront what really makes you tick. And in the end, how do you know if the answers you come up with are right?

Realize that "right" is whatever you say it is. Self-discovery is a lifelong pursuit to find what- at your core- makes you happy. While a person can evolve based on experiences, I

would argue that this core rarely changes and, in fact, defines you. As a result, it is necessary to invest time in the pursuit of it. Finding your core will help you understand who you really are and will help you be comfortable with yourself. Learning how to do this is one of the hardest skills to master; however, by not being clear about who you are, you leave yourself open to being defined by others. The only person who really knows who you are, is you.



To help you answer the question, “Who am I?” sometimes you must first ask yourself a few other questions. “What am I most passionate about?” “What are the things that, when I do them, I am happiest?” “What are the things that I do that actually make me lose track of time?”

Too often we fall into situations where we do things because they pay the bills, pass the time, or because they are what we think we “should do.” What a waste! My challenge to you is to find the things you love to do, play, read, blog about, or discuss with your friends and invest in them **now**.

For many people this is the hardest thing to do. It requires honesty about what really gets you going. It requires not worry-

ing about what other people think and caring more about who you are. It may require you to stop doing things people expect you to do and investing time away from current family and friends. This is all OK and part of figuring out who you are. It’s much more fun to be fired up about a specific subject or issue than it is to run through life as part of the herd.

Over time, I have discovered some tools and asked myself a series of questions to help figure out my core. These are self diagnostics that have been proven over the years to help discover answers about who you are.

The first of these tools is the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (www.myersbriggs.org). Myers Briggs helps you understand how you

prefer to interact with the world. For example, it identifies which activities give you energy and which drain energy from you. Based upon Jungian philosophy, Myers Briggs can map your preferences in four areas that, when pulled together, represent a personality type.

Your type is simply a reflection of characteristics that, often times, portray how you move through the world around you. It is neither definitive, nor perfect. It does, however, offer a sense of why you enjoy certain activities over others. For instance, some people are built to be the salesperson while others are predisposed to managing finances. One is not better than the other, the results just speak to why some people get energy from public speaking and being with people and why others are happy when they are deep into the numbers and the analysis.

With this sense of self, you can begin to

shape ideas of things you are good at and like to do. This is captured very well in Paul and Barbara Tieger's book, [Do What You Are](#). Career consultants for over 20 years, the authors help demonstrate why certain careers may be more aligned with certain types. This book is a great refresher on Myers Briggs, as well as an informative read on various paths you can look into based upon your type.

For me, it was essential to understand my type, and hence, why I gravitated toward certain activities. Another book that has helped me explore who I am is [Now, Discover Your Strengths](#), by Marcus Buckingham. He argues that during early development, through external exposure and activities, people's brains become wired to work in a certain way. This leads to one's "talent" - something that we just naturally do well. One then supplements the talent with knowledge and skill, which basical-

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ly means doing it more and more. The more you do it, the better you will become. Buckingham argues that people should put themselves in a career that leverages their talent.

Sometimes people will tell me that they are good at many things and that they want to do them all. While this may be a reflection of the times we live in, my thought is that there are a lot of things to be passionate about and you should be aware of all of them and embrace them. However, when thinking about your career, you have to start by picking one

thing and committing to it. This “one thing” can focus on an issue, an activity, or a problem that you want to spend time doing or solving.

Once you open that door, you need to charge through it and lose yourself in it. Doors always lead to other doors. You never know, one door may lead you to things that intersect with other interests. Or, you may find that it was a bad selection and you need to back out and pick something else. Experimentation is OK, no matter what stage or age in life.



WHY
ARE
YOU
DOING
THIS
MORE
THAN
THAT



WHY ARE YOU DOING WHY ARE YOU DOING

We are constantly balancing – sometimes it feels like juggling – core values in our lives: finances, where we live, family, friends, community, hobbies and health. How do we decide what to do first and whether we can do it all? To get to happiness, we have to confront why we are doing these things and decide which are really the most important.

THIS MORE THAN THAT? THIS WORSE THAN THAT?

When thinking about what fires us up and things about which we're passionate, we are often confronted with some ugly truths. Our lives are all jam-packed and, as a result, there are some big questions we have to answer when it comes to prioritizing our values and balancing everything else. The way we do this forms our "Value Chain."

Specifically, the chain refers to 7 values

that you must prioritize to define the lifestyle that you want to lead. In doing so, you must understand the worth that each carries and, consequently, the trade-offs from prioritizing one over another. In carefully analyzing what each means to you, you will provide yourself with a context for your decisions and give yourself a stronger sense of your goals.

These values are:

Standard of Living

This refers to your income and how you live your life. How much money do you need? What kind of car do you want to drive? How big will your home be? When will you retire and how much money will you need when you do?

Location

This references the place where you want to live. Do you want to live in the city or the suburbs? How long do you want your commute to be? Do you prefer to be in a particular climate? Are there people that you want to be near?

Family

Based upon your stage in life, this covers a lot of ground and can overlap with Location. For instance, if just out of college, how close to your parents, siblings and friends do you want to be? If you have your own family, will you work only 9 to 5 to spend more time with your children or will you sacrifice family time to work longer hours and maybe get that promotion? As your chil-

dren leave the house, do you want to live close to them? As your parents age, will you want to live near them to provide support?

Friends

How important are your friends to your happiness? How much time do you want to spend with your friends?

Community

How involved do you want to be in local activities? Do you want to volunteer with government, religious, or local charity organizations?

Hobbies

How important are your hobbies to you? How much time do you want to devote to them?

Health

How are you taking care of your body and mind? How often do you exercise, meditate, or take vacations?

Every day, you are confronted with how you will act relative to these values. How often are you wishing you made more money, lived in a bigger house, and could get back to that golf swing or backhand that needs some work? How do you decide if you are going to spend more time with your friends, your family, at church or at the gym? Do you volunteer

with the PTA or community organizations? After rushing home from work, feeding the kids, helping them with their homework and putting them to bed, do you choose to read that book on your nightstand, call friends, or watch TV?

All of these questions – and more importantly – their answers, reflect your values. We all know people, however, who are end-

lessly running from one thing to the next. The trick is to realize that you can't do everything. You may try to delude yourself into thinking you can, only to find yourself burned out or stretched too thin and not doing any one particular thing very well. My observation is that you can successfully handle three of the areas above at one time. I've known people that can do four, yet I believe that is pushing it.

The interesting thing is that figuring out what you want from each of these values is liberating. It makes it easier to do some things better than others. I constantly remind myself, as I don't go to the gym and can't seem to find time for my book, that I'm not prioritizing- or optimizing -for those things. Some may think that's an excuse. I don't listen to them. I find that the things that I'm optimizing for don't care about it - especially when one of those things is my children!

Confronting the value chain is a critical balance to who you are and what you do. For instance, some of those things that you are passionate about - science fantasy books, tennis, the gym - are things that you have to put on the back burner. Your values will change over time as your life and circumstances change and it is good to periodically reevaluate them.

Let me give you an example. My father, a fantastic educator and administrator, was good at motivating people and working with numbers. Over the years, he accomplished a

lot, served in the military, built a nest egg, put his six children through college, and eventually retired. When he did, he was ready to do all of the things we knew he enjoyed, a little bit of tennis, some golf, lots of reading, and volunteer teaching. However, while he did these things and liked them, there was something else that he didn't even realize he was missing.

One day, my sister-in-law asked my father this question: "You've done a lot with your life. What have you always wanted to do that you've never tried?" What a freeing and eye opening question! The answer was shocking. My dad, the tough Marine, said without hesitation that he wanted to paint! No one saw that coming, yet we all embraced it. She bought him supplies and signed him up for classes. When he put the paint on the canvas it was magic!

It turns out that my father is really good at painting. He loses himself picking a subject, putting it to canvas and bringing it to life. Painting is clearly an untapped strength. The more he does it, the better he gets. I have several of his paintings in my house. They constantly remind me just how much I love him. The painting in my office, however, serves to remind me to not wait until retirement to figure out what I'm most passionate about.

Life is a marathon and you have to chart your course, track your progress, push ahead and even hold back along the way to make sure you finish strong.

WHAT
IS
YOUR
CAPSTONE



WHAT IS YOUR CAPSTONE?

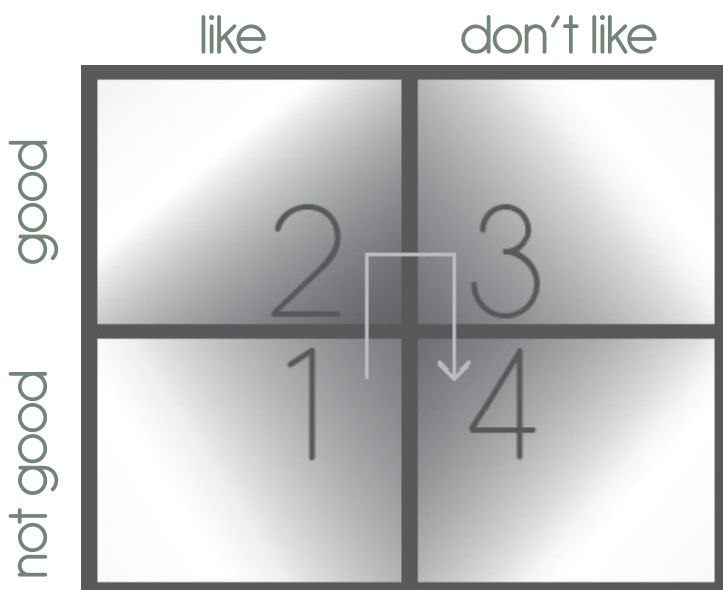
While working in a job, it can seem like there is no clear path to the next one. It is important to understand not only your current job, but also the one you want to have in the future and the skills it takes to do that job. Only then, will you have a clear sense of how to develop and make your vision a reality.

With clarity on who you are and why you want to do something, it is easier to address the question of what to do. By picking a problem you want to solve, a field you want to be in or a skill that you want to develop, you are creating a North Star. It helps you focus. Many people, however, don't have this North

Star because they don't know the "who" and the "why." This lends to doing a job that pays the bills as opposed to being happy. Incorporating Dory Hollander's doom loop from her book [The Doom Loop System](#) is a good way to start thinking about developing a plan for getting to your North Star.



As Hollander lays out, imagine the following diagram as a progression at a certain job.



You originally took a job because you liked it, not because you were good at it - Square 1. You are challenged every day to learn new things and to master the job. Eventually, as you gain knowledge and experience, you enter Square 2 where you both like your job and are good at it. As your time on the job progresses, you move into Square 3 where you are good at your job, but you don't like it as much as you used to. You are no longer challenged. Individuals who find themselves in this position don't understand that the fundamental problem with their job is themselves and their priorities. This often pushes the individual to not perform well and end up on Square 4, not good and not liking it. They blame it on their

manager, coworkers or the malfunctions of the office. They start to look for a new job.

In looking for their new job, they believe that their value is in what they've been doing and, with confidence that they are good at it, they find another place to do the same job where there won't be that manager, coworker or office problem. They go straight back into Square 2, which accelerates their journey through the loop. They do this because they feel they have to utilize their knowledge base instead of realizing they need new challenges and problems to solve.

Frederick Herzberg got to the core of this issue in his quintessential examination of corporate motivation, One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees? Herzberg argues that there are motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are those problems you get up to go solve every day. Hygiene factors are those things that get in the way of you doing that. Hygiene factors are things like how much money you make, your office environment, the people you work with, etc. Herzberg's point is that we work for those things that motivate us and we need to find ways to keep the hygiene factors from getting in the way of doing them. If you are re-

ally working on something that motivates you, you are capable of moving mountains to do it.

Our challenge is to find the motivators, the things that fire us up. What Hollander argues is that individuals who find themselves unhappy in their current career shouldn't go looking for a quick fix like the one above. The best move is to find a job that will land you in Square 1 where you have to learn new skills. Like Herzberg, she suggests that you get the most energy there and will stay motivated and committed to the cause in this square the longest. This will delay your trip through the loop and help you to feel challenged and satisfied with your career for longer.

Another aspect of this is deciding where you want to go in your development and Hollander argues that it is important here to make use of capstones. A capstone is a thing you want to do within a certain time horizon. Using our earlier work on who you are and why you are doing it, figure out a position that interests you. It may be a ten, five or one year goal. The important thing is that you have something to shoot for.

To realize how to reach your capstone, identify the skills it takes to do that job and rate yourself against it by saying if you like

CAPSTONE

project manager

skills needed	good	not good	like	don't like
delivery				
progress reports	■		■	
client management	■		■	
project billing		■	■	
team management	■		■	
personnel actions		■		■
administrative tasks		■		■
sales				
funding proposal		■	■	
cost estimation		■		■
production	■		■	
presentations		■	■	
communications	■		■	

it or don't like it and if you are good at it or not. As you apply yourself and get better at certain skills, find ways to take on others. For example, as an assistant project manager who wants to be the project manager, one of the skills you might need to work on is your presentation skills. Ask your boss for opportunities to present at internal meetings in order to practice presenting materials to clients. Another example might be to provide opportunities on the things you have mastered to people more junior than you. This will give you the experience of managing other people while also freeing you up to work on other skills you need to acquire. If you know the skills you need, there are numerous ways to develop them.

One way to determine the skills you need is to seek out individuals who have the career that interests you and interview them. As Dale Carnegie said in [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#), an innate nature in all of us is to help people who are looking to you for advice. Take advantage of this and talk to people to see what they tell you about the skills they utilize in their work and how you can begin to learn those skills. I have found that alumni networks and career development offices at your college or university are fantastic avenues for figuring this out.



Finding balance among these three areas – who you are, why you do the things you do, and clarity on what you want to be doing – will change your life. The important thing to remember, however, is that life is a marathon with a changing end point. While you're running the race, you will at some point reinvent yourself. According to the Department of Labor, in today's workforce you will have over 10 different jobs over the course of your career.¹ When I've switched jobs, I have reinvented myself a little bit every time. The whole reason I developed this framework was to have a benchmark I could use along the way. It was something that I could use to gauge how I was doing and what I needed to be thinking of next.

Along this path, it is important to fight the myth of being able to do it all and get straight As. Realize that you are happier when you are *pursuing* the A. In addition, know that no one is expecting that you can do it all and get straight As along the way. If someone is demanding that of you, then share your value chain with him and see if he still feels that way!

It may also go without saying, yet I am compelled to remind you, that it is critical to focus on who you are and why you are doing anything before you figure out the "what." Too often we don't take the time to answer the hard questions first and use

the distraction and hunt for the "what" to inform the others. This is backwards and very hard to do. Until you take time to figure out the "who" and "why," you will have a hard time getting everything into balance.

In addition, it is necessary to involve mentors and advisors in figuring this out. Mentors and advisors can be family, friends, bosses, professors - whoever inspires and motivates you. Throughout your life, it is important to have honest conversations about yourself with these people. They will tell you if you are having a real conversation about who you are and why you are doing something. They will also know if you are really happy. If they are true mentors and advisors, they will tell you the truth and give honest feedback about your approach. These people are special in your life and you must cultivate and treasure them.

Finally, there is no quick fix. The short story of this framework is that it is a career to manage your career. The trick is that your career is not just about what you are doing. It is about understanding yourself first and then what you are optimizing for out of life. If you short change any of these aspects, you will be out of balance and will struggle with happiness. I hope that you are able to spend some time on all aspects of this framework, find your passion and GO FOR IT!

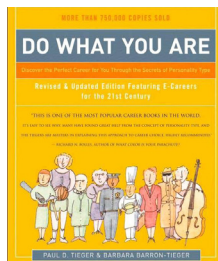
1. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf>

RESOURCES

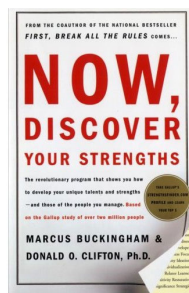
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THE Myers & Briggs FOUNDATION

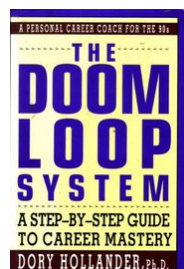
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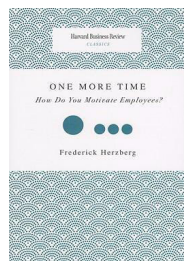
Do What You Are
by Paul and Barbara Tieger



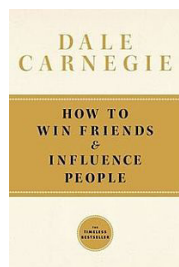
Now, Discover Your Strengths
by Marcus Buckingham



The Doom Loop System
by Dory Hollander



One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?
by Frederick Herzberg



How to Win Friends and Influence People
by Dale Carnegie



GovLoop.com, a knowledge network of 60,000 government employees, is proud to work with Frank DiGiammarino on providing this guide to its members.

For more resources on managing your government career check out:

-Podcast series with Frank DiGiammarino - <http://bit.ly/frankdigiammarino>

-GovLoop Career Guide - <http://www.govloop.com/profiles/blogs/govloop-guide-how-to-find-land-keep-leap-your-government-career>

MY CAREER FRAMEWORK

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GO
FOR
IT!