

# *From the Heart. . .*

## *. . . Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



## **Career Bound or Bound Up?**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 5., 2010)

When choosing a career, finances and core values are inseparable. So is the time you are given in your life. *Wherever you spend your career & money is where you spend your time & life!* With your core values in the center, you will choose a career that fuels your life purpose, passion, and personality.

Yet, the road getting there is not always a straight or level one—as we all know. The way we use our time, spend our money, or choose our career is all wrapped up in the integrity we express in our lives. Stephen R. Covey, well-known author of the 10 million plus classic seller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, researched all literature from 1776 written about success. He noticed a startling pattern emerging from the mass of publications. Almost all literature of the first 150 years focused on what Covey defines as the *Character Ethic*—as the foundation for success.

The qualities most prevalent were integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty, and the Golden Rule. This *Character Ethic* taught that there are basic principles of effective living, and that people can only experience true success and enduring happiness as they learn and integrate these principles into their basic character.

When it comes to your job, are you career bound or bound up? There is definitely

a difference and has everything to do with your core values that drive your career choices. Since we all know the road in life and choosing a career will not always be straight or level, we need to gain a forward glimpse into some clues that help us navigate what's ahead. With your core values or key principles setting the foundation, consider these eight guideposts for integrating your career with your use of time, finances, and core values:

1. Lasting career rewards are not calculated in dollars. Satisfaction comes from building a career or business without selling your soul.
2. Loving your work by living your core values at work and home.
3. Being content when the good times roll and when the bad times linger.
4. Being a team player that can lead *and* follow.
5. Being genuinely benevolent that requires no applause.
6. Seeking as well as giving support and encouragement routinely, not just in crisis.
7. Being a life-long learner of truth and wisdom.
8. Integrating your faith as an essential part of your personal and career life. No matter the environment, it may not be easy, but is certainly possible.

These eight guideposts expand your capacity for living your core values at home and on the job. They bring you balance, consistency, contentment, collaboration, generosity, kindness, wisdom, and transcending meaning to your life. Doesn't this sound awesome!?

Well, it's possible. How do you stand with these eight guideposts? Are there any that may need some improvement? Which guidepost attracted you the most? And why?

Give yourself time this weekend to consider your career choices in light of these eight guideposts. How does your current job fit? Are you thinking about another career move or advancing in the one you already have? Can you envision supporting these guideposts in your current career or something else?

As you consider these questions, see how your responses help you be career bound instead of bound up in a job that doesn't give you the freedom to live your core values and embrace these guideposts in your life. In the next article, we will focus on career skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are basically seventeen foundation skills needed no matter what career you may choose. Tune in to find out what they are.

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Sharon L. Benedict, MS, ACC, is a certified life wellness coach-consultant, specializing in life skills, wellness, and creative arts development for individuals, businesses and organizations ([www.harvestenterprises-sra.com](http://www.harvestenterprises-sra.com)). She welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at [seekreachachieve@gvtc.com](mailto:seekreachachieve@gvtc.com).

# *From the Heart. . .*

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## **Career Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 12, 2010)

After getting through high school and four-years plus of college, it's a great feeling to finally land a job. And for some, any job will do in this tough economy still hanging around. Often times the skills needed for that job plants us in an on-the-job training routine for at least the first year. We all soon learn that education never ends with the diploma or degree earned with hard work and grit determination.

Learning about the job and life is really only the beginning. Even after a decade in a particular career, there seems to still be some missing skills so basic that employees and bosses rarely have a clue as to what is missing in the job journey. To clearly experience high-performance success, there are basically seventeen foundation skills needed no matter what career you may choose.

Lawrence K. Jones of Career Key offers us an exceptional overview and detail summary of those seventeen foundation skills. Jones believes these basic skills are required in 21<sup>st</sup> century high-performance workplaces today. Jim Burge, Motorola corporate vice president and director stated, "At my company, Motorola, the only constant is change. Jobs that were once relatively simple now require high-performance work processes and enhanced skills."

For many 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs, in order to understand and effectively navigate through these high-performance processes and enhanced skills, the basics must be already routinely a part of your everyday life. Here are those seventeen basic foundation skills clustered in four groups:

- **Basic Skills**—Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Speaking, Listening
- **Thinking Skills**—Creative thinking, Problem-solving skills, Decision-making skills, Visualization
- **People Skills**—Social, Negotiation, Leadership, Teamwork, Cultural diversity
- **Personal Qualities**—Self-esteem, Self-management, Responsibility

When glancing over these skills, have you mastered these throughout your high school and colleges years? For many starting their first “real” job, they haven’t even begun to embrace most of them. They really haven’t had enough time to practice in the real world. Sure, reading, writing, and arithmetic you have down pretty well. You may say, “I don’t have to be scholar, just at least know my ABC’s enough and add/multiple/divide to get along well enough.” And as for the speaking and listening, you may consider yourself a great listener and can talk up a storm at the drop of a hat. Yet, are these really what these basics are all about?

The basics of reading involve identifying relevant details, facts, and specifications in what is being read; locating information in books and manuals, from graphs and schedules; find meaning of unknown or technical words and phrases; judge accuracy of reports; and use computer to find information. Writing involves communicating thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing; record information completely and accurately; create documents, including letters, manuals, reports, and graphs; check,

edit, and revise documents for correct information, appropriate emphasis, grammar, spelling, and punctuation; and use computers to communicate information.

With mathematics you will need to use numbers, fractions, and percentages to solve practical problems; make reasonable estimates of arithmetic results without calculator; use tables, graphs, diagrams, and charts to obtain numerical information; use computers to enter, retrieve, change, and communicate numerical information; and use computers to communicate data, choosing the best form to present data (e.g., line or bar graph, pie charts). For speaking, you must organize ideas and communicate oral messages appropriate to listener and situations; select appropriate language, tone of voice, gestures, and level of complexity appropriate to audience and occasion; speak clearly; ask questions when needed. For listening, you must listen carefully to what a person says, noting tone of voice and other body language to understand content and feelings being expressed; and respond in a way that shows understanding of what is said.

Just for a moment, go back and reread the previous paragraph a couple times. Consider each basic skill within your workplace and at home. How do you fair as you reflect over each action described?

As you move on to Thinking Skills, People Skills, and Personal Qualities, things get a little more in depth and personal. For thinking skills, you will find yourself musing on creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and visualization. How do you use your imagination? Do you imagine freely, combining ideas or information in new ways? Do you make connections between ideas that seem unrelated? In problem-solving, do you recognize a problem, a gap between what is and what should or could

be; identify why it is a problem; create and implement a solution; and watch to see how well solution works and revise if needed?

With decision-making, how about identifying the goal desired in making the decision; generating alternatives for reaching the goal; gathering information about the alternatives (e.g., from experts or books); weighing the pros and cons of each alternative (i.e., gains/losses to yourself and others, approval/disapproval of self and others); making the best choice; and planning how to carry out your choice and what you will do if negative consequences occur. Through visualization, do you see a building or object by looking at a blueprint, drawing, or sketch; and imagine how a system works by looking at a schematic drawing?

The last two groups, People Skills and Personal Qualities, offer you an opportunity to see how you relate to your co-workers, family, and friends. For many of us, we may have a number of technical skills in our occupational cache, but tend to leave behind these more relational skills. For people skills, social gatherings abound at work and at home. Hopefully, we show understanding, friendliness, and respect for the feelings of others; assert oneself appropriately, stand up for one's self and ideas in a firm, positive way; and take an interest in what people say and why they think and act as they do. Other people skills include Negotiation, Leadership, Teamwork, and Cultural Diversity.

Personal Qualities include having Self-Esteem, where you are able to understand how beliefs affect how a person feels and acts; you listen to what you say to yourself to identify any irrational or harmful beliefs you may have; and understand how to change these negative beliefs when they occur. Other personal qualities are Self-Management, and Responsibility. I encourage you to access this link to finish studying each

foundation skill to help you experience high-performance success in your career and life

[http://www.careerkey.org/asp/career\\_development/foundation\\_skills.asp](http://www.careerkey.org/asp/career_development/foundation_skills.asp)).

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## **Career Choices: Matching Up with You**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 19, 2010)

For many in the workforce, the job you may have pays the bills but really doesn't match with who you are and your core interests. Yet, today, there are many helpful tools for matching up with your career choice. One of those proven tools is a Career Match Rider that accompanies a DISC Personality Style Report. If you are not familiar with this valuable tool, you can complete a personality report by visiting my website. After completing your DISC report just click on new report again, and scroll down and click Career Match Rider (which will automatically be added for free to your DISC report).

Once completed, save on your computer as a pdf and print off a copy to review. How do your results reflect your current job, personality style, and career interests? Get out a piece of paper and make three columns: "Current Career Interests," "Best Career Match", and "Close Career Match." Write above the column table, "Your Current Job." Then in the Current Career Interests column, write down those careers you are currently pursuing or are of interest to you. From your DISC Personality Style Report rider, write down in the related columns those you believe are your top five *Best Career Match and Close Career Match*.

Within each column just to the left, rate each column list separately (score 1-lowest, 5-highest) in order of preference at this time in your life. ***What do you like to do so much you would almost feel guilty being paid for it?*** On this sheet of paper,

write down your responses to these questions:

- **Why do I love my job?**
- **What one significant contribution has my job benefited my life? Be as specific as possible.**
- **Why I'm not happy with my current job?**
- **What would I like to see in improvements or changes?**
- **How do I see my current job as a stepping stone toward my life career?**

Over the weekend, consider which areas got your greatest attention. Share your thoughts with your family or trusted friend. Have any of your responses given you some immediate actions to put into play? If so, how do they fit with the following steps recommended for Career Planning?:

1. Determine your appropriate and required skills and talents.
2. Create a realistic short-term and long-term career path with a competitive edge.
3. Create a first-class resume for the targeted industry/profession.
4. Strategically investigate the targeted industry/profession.
5. Create a personal and professional networking group—short-term, long-term.
6. Design a high visibility marketing plan for yourself.
7. Learn how to negotiate preferred salary/wage.
8. Be true to who you are, no matter the source of help you use.

For a wealth of information to study on career building and starting/managing a business, you are encouraged to visit these sites, [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov), [www.toolkit.cch.com](http://www.toolkit.cch.com), [www.toolkit.cch.com](http://www.toolkit.cch.com), [www.sbdcnet.org](http://www.sbdcnet.org). My self-paced lifeskills manual (available at my

website store) will also prove helpful in building synergy between your career and life. I recommend you also get objective, professional help with each career choice step (e.g. career counselor/coach, online, local resources). The next article will focus on the basics of money management for life management.

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# *From the Heart...*

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## **A Closer Look at the Money Side of Life**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 26, 2010)

***“When it comes to money, freedom starts to happen when what you do, think, and say are one.”*** In *The Nine Steps to Financial Freedom*, Suze Orman strikes at the core of our belief and actions about money. “You’ll never be free if you say that you have more than enough, then act as if and think you don’t. You’ll never be free if you think you don’t have enough, then act as if and say you do.”

Your thoughts about money have everything to do with how you earn it and spend it. Orman gives us another gem of wisdom with the following:

***“...most peoples’ biggest problems in life—even those that appear on the surface not to be money related—are directly connected with their early, formative experiences with money.”***

So, here’s your first step toward financial freedom: **Step back in time to the earliest moments you can recall when money meant something to you, when you truly understood what it could do.**

For many of us that means remembering our childhood encounters with that 50 cent allowance you were given by Mom and Dad back in the 1950s; or that whopping \$1 you were given in the 70s or 80s. Yet, with inflation over the years, you still couldn’t buy too much with it! But it really didn’t matter, did it? You had money in hand! And you wondered, “Boy, what I can buy?” Just the excitement of having some money burning in

your pocket flamed your dreams of maybe buying that latest radio or audio tape player. How about that 1950s Zippy the Chimp stuffed animal with the Howdy Doody hat? Or in the 70s, when every kid wanted the Super Sonic Powered Racer & Smash Up Derby Set by Kenner—with "ripcord" pulls that made the wheels go super fast. The smash up derby set had ripcord racers that also smashed apart upon impact & then were able to be put back together each time.

Let's not forget Kenner's most popular toy from the 1959-1970s, *Give A Show & Other Kenner Projectors*. Battery operated showing short slide strips of cartoons & TV characters with narration written on them, set in cardboard so that they could slide in & out. The light was behind the slides, and you could focus the lens in front. Then one of the all time favorites of the 1960s and later in 1970s was Rock'em Sock'em Robots by Marx. It came in a large display box with a boxing ring scene insert and score cards. Ring measured approx. 15" square. "Red Rocker" & "Blue Bomber" were the two robots names.

And who can ever forget the famous Frisbee, no matter your age! It was once called in the 1950s the *Pluto Platter* disc. When Wham-O bought the rights, the company named the disc the *Frisbee* to stimulate brand sales. In 1964, the first "professional" model went on the market. Sales soared for the toy, marketed as a new sport.

With all this nostalgia, begin to reflect on how those early life experiences have directly influenced your feelings and actions about money today (fearing it, enjoying it, loving it, hating it). Whether you did or didn't get a childhood allowance, your early life experiences, your relationship with your parents and how they handled money directly impact how you see money today. So, reflect on these things. And as I always

encourage you to do—write your thoughts down and share them with your spouse, close friend, or a trusted professional financial advisor. Believe me, this exercise will more significantly reflect the way you manage your money and life today than any other worthy exercise.

Give it a try and see what happens. And always be kind to yourself and others with what you discover. Next article will begin our month's focus on probably the least fun lifeskill for most of us--*Recordkeeping*. But stay tuned. I'll try hard to make it worth the read and maybe a chuckle or two along the way.

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