



Passion: A Priceless Graduation Gift for High School and College Students

By Carl Nielson, CPBA, CPVA



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Passion – a calling, a purpose, a joy for what you do -- leads to fulfillment and success in life. Unfortunately, few students who complete the academic requirements for graduation have any idea where their passions lie or what talents they possess. These same students will enter college or the job market with little concrete information to make informed choices about career or educational direction. Most of them will make a “job match” (one based on an ill-chosen major or high school strength) rather than a talent fit. A strong talent fit is necessary to ensure passion in a job. Besides selling themselves short, students who make college and career missteps incur debts, encounter frustration and delay getting on with the “business of life.” Is it possible to help someone find passion? Success Discoveries now offers a product and a process to do just that.

As graduation time nears, students are pressured to make career direction decisions often without feeling prepared to do so and with limited strategies and resources. While employers of all sizes are now using sophisticated assessment tools to help determine an applicant’s talent fit to a particular job, students do not have access to any helpful tool to determine their own talents as a means of selecting a major or a career. Most students continue to be encouraged to select college majors and jobs based on academic achievement, college literature, a parent’s desires, job curb appeal or first offer. A Dallas Morning News article in May 2005 by Diane Jennings and Amy Eiermann provided these excerpts from college commencement speeches around Texas. See if you can pick up the message:

- ❑ “...find meaningful work...”
Dr. Mikki Hebl, Rice University Professor of Psychology
- ❑ “Be passionate about what you do.”
Karen Katz, President and CEO, Neiman Marcus Stores, University of Houston College of Business
- ❑ “Do what you love. When you enjoy what you do, when you pursue your passion, neither fatigue nor failure ever seem possible.”
Alberto Gonzales, U.S. Attorney General, Houston Community College
- ❑ “As important as anything is something that only you control: your attitude, commitment and enthusiasm.”
Marvin J. Girouard, Chairman and CEO, Pier 1 Imports, Texas A&M University government, business and science graduates
- ❑ “Be true to yourself. I found myself when I found my heart, my purpose. Know – if your cause is true – your work will never be done. But you’ll never lack the will or energy to do it.”
Sara Martinez Tucker, President and CEO, Hispanic Scholarship Fund, UT-Austin



- ❑ “Get excited about something. Enthusiasm will make it easier to solve problems and finish a job.”

Susan Combs, Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, Sul Ross State University, Alpine

While good advice can never come too late, a better time to speak to students about finding passion in work is in high school, preferably before their senior year. According to many print and web-based sources, including U.S. News & World Report 2005 edition of America’s Best Colleges, CollegeBoard.com and many college web sites, high school students should begin drawing up a list of college majors early in their sophomore year and then begin attending college fairs to learn about the various schools. One thing is missing from this valuable advice, however: the part about finding your passion. In his book, Major in Success, Patrick Combs spends the first two chapters emphasizing the importance of finding your passion. Yet, the author also states, in all caps, that “MOST PEOPLE DON’T DISCOVER WHAT THEY’RE TRULY PASSIONATE ABOUT UNTIL AFTER COLLEGE, MUCH AFTER... THIS IS PERFECTLY FINE.” Is it really fine? What is the cost of finding one’s true passion or calling at 30, 40 or even later? Obviously, there are monetary costs, but what about the emotional costs?

Statistics show that anywhere from 40% to 65% of workers are unhappy in their current job. While some colleges and educational institutions have begun to use assessments to determine a person’s intrinsic talents and passions, they are rarely comprehensive and usually prove to be ineffective. Many employers, however, *do* use a sophisticated and comprehensive battery of assessments to find the right employee for the right job. If these kinds of assessments are available in the corporate world, then why not make them available to students who want to match themselves to the right career?

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The costs of undirected searching for talent and passion also impact the peace of mind and the bank accounts of both students and parents. The average college student changes majors at least once during college. Some studies show over 50% of college students change majors as much as three times before graduating, and most take 5 years to graduate. The extra time it takes to graduate due to a poor choice of career direction results in thousands of extra dollars per student. Based on numbers from a 2003 congressional analysis of college costs, the average annual tuition and fees for public college students were approximately \$4,000, not including living expenses. For private universities, the average cost for tuition and fees in 2003 was over \$18,000 per year. With over 17,000,000 students



registered in college according to a 2004 U.S. census report, missteps in career planning cost U.S. students, their families and taxpayers over \$36 billion per year. Not surprisingly, the congressional analysis also found that Americans believe institutions of higher learning are not accountable enough to parents, students and taxpayers – the consumers of higher education.

The consequences of increased costs due to poor career choices may have greater social implications, too. The average college student now faces over \$19,000 in debt due to student loans at graduation. According to the Family Research

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Council, this heavy debt load tends to delay marriage and childbirth, undermining the material basis of family formation. A delay in marriage and childbirth will eventually show up as a decrease in the country’s tax base and a shortage of workers, according to the council’s forecasts. Obviously the costs of

missteps with regard to college and career are high. Is there a way for students and parents to avoid these missteps? The answer is yes and has its solutions in the hiring practices of many progressive companies that now rely on talent fit to find employees. But exactly what is talent fit and how can a student benefit from their own talent information to find their true passion and career direction? Success Discoveries, a division of The Nielson Group based in Dallas, Texas, believes that the first step to finding passion and direction is self-awareness. Becoming self-aware should focus on two areas: personal motivators and behavioral style. When companies hire, they look at what motivates the person to see if that motivation is aligned with the rewards and culture of the job. They also look at the person’s behavioral style to see if there is a match to the behavioral requirements of the job. Personal motivators are what drive a person and are “why” a person does what they do. A person’s behavioral style has to do with “how” a person does what they do. Companies that use these types of job-talent matching strategies tend to experience lower turnover, higher levels of internal promotions, greater job satisfaction and greater returns to shareholders – all traits that make a company a good place to work and build a successful career.

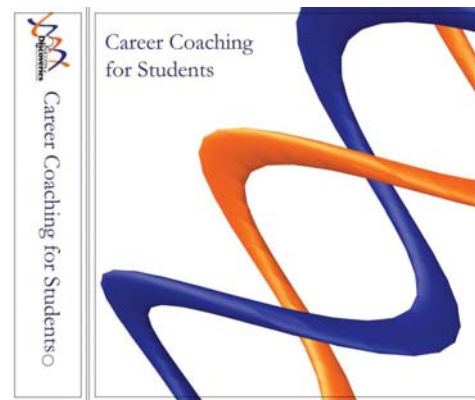


The question remains: if companies have access to effective and comprehensive assessments to match employees to jobs, then why are these same assessments not available to students who want to match themselves to careers? One company decided to address this disparity. Success Discoveries now offers a career planning and research program called Career Coaching for Students™ that integrates a person’s behavioral fit and personal



motivators via online assessments. Motivation is directly related to personal values or attitudes. “We know a lot about the different values that exist in people and how those values align with the rewards found in different jobs,” states Carl Nielson, Chief Discovery Officer and founder of Success Discoveries. “By identifying your values, we can map general career categories such as research and development, ministry, healthcare, historian, law, engineering, art or architect to name a few. It is a good start. We found that by looking also at your behavioral style we connect the dots more precisely within those areas of motivation. Many college web sites such as Rutgers and some state government web sites offer some type of career assessment. Some look at your values while others look at behaviors and still others look at a person’s positive or negative perception of specific job tasks. With the Success Discoveries process, we integrate behavioral style and personal motivators by mapping the person’s behavioral style to jobs requiring similar behavioral traits and then aligning those potential career options with personal values. By doing this, the student identifies unique job/career patterns that allow them to narrow their research and more easily make intelligent career choices that create passion and energy – and greater success and satisfaction.”

Companies like that idea. The Nielson Group, a management consulting firm and parent company of Success Discoveries, provides companies with job profiling and candidate assessment tools to determine job fit. The assessment tools The Nielson Group offers to their corporate clients use the same personal value and behavioral theories and assessment administration technology as the tools Success Discoveries offers to their student clients. “Our corporate clients are astounded by the accuracy of the assessment tools,” claims Nielson. “Our hiring-for-fit profiling services are applied to all jobs including non-degree residential service technicians, B-2-B sales professionals and President and CEO jobs. To offer these same tools to students is very rewarding, and over time, I think will make a significant impact on reducing the missteps for millions of students.” According to Nielson, “We’ve left the real work of career research to the student, but the assessment results, tools and guidance they receive allow the student to feel much more in control of the process and gain confidence about the future.”



“My high school senior has many interests,” said a recent mother whose daughter recently completed the Career Coaching for Students™ program in Plano, TX. “Taking the



assessments and then working through the guidebook was easy and gave my daughter the clarity and confidence to identify three career directions she was strongly interested in researching. The guidebook coached my daughter on how to research the choices. But the amazing part was how cross analyzing job/career options based on her assessment results pinpointed some areas of interest she had already mentioned in passing but didn't seem to have the confidence to pursue. Her level of confidence and focus increased exponentially. You could hear the passion in her voice after that."

As writer Jeffrey Allen states, "Most successful people enjoy their work. The real issue is not what's "hot" but what you like to do."

For additional information on the news that is the subject of this release, contact Carl Nielson or visit www.successdiscoveries.com/ccfs. [Success Discoveries' Career Coaching for Students™](#) is available for purchase through the [Success Discoveries shopping cart](#). Career Coaching for Students™ is being used by families, in home school settings, as weekend group workshops and in small and large school districts. Volume discounted pricing is available.

About The Nielson Group and Success Discoveries: The Nielson Group was established in 1998 to serve large and small businesses wanting to do a better job of hiring and managing talent. Success Discoveries, a division of The Nielson Group, was founded in 2004 as a professional coaching consortium and program developer dedicated to helping people find success at any stage in life and career.

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