

## LOST?

### **(You can't be lost if you don't know where you are trying to go.)**

Today's challenging economy is not so challenging for those individuals who are clear about who they are and what they are seeking in a career and job.

"Too many people have let their careers be dictated by someone or something else," according to Jane Allen, President of Smart Work | Network, Inc., an Executive Selection, Development and Career Management consulting company here in Greenville. "We regularly see individuals who followed in someone else's footsteps, into careers that looked promising but now are gone or no longer fulfilling. Or, we see individuals who have drifted from one position to another over several years, never quite sure of what they want and assuming the next job needs to be similar to the last job."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics says that people change jobs on average once every five years, a vast difference from a generation ago when a person often started work with an organization immediately upon graduation from high school or college and stayed there until retirement, some forty years later.

People change careers today for a multitude of reasons: a job layoff, a location transfer by a spouse, or unhappiness in the previously chosen career. Those people who first carefully assess what their next steps should be are the ones who, more often than not, find success in their next endeavor.

"Assessing your skills and values is critical when moving to your next position," said Allen. "People get caught up in labeling themselves as 'Director of Operations', 'Accountant' or 'Marketing Support Administrator', rather than carefully acknowledging their variety of skills and identifying what is important to them in a career."

Allen details steps that an individual can take in determining their ideal career.

The first is to assess and objectively calibrate your "inherent self" or the true you. You want to identify those traits that make you truly unique as an individual and determine why certain tasks or activities are easier for you, maybe even effortless.

Second, is to explicitly identify your skills, knowledge and values. They provide the "context" for the third step which is to do a "scan" to identify potential opportunities or job types that would be of interest.

Fourth, narrow your focus to target your ideal opportunities which meet all or most of your ideal criteria.

Finally, develop your plan to market yourself, your newly defined "brand", in a way to stand out from the thousands of simple job seekers. The typical job seeker uses a "shotgun approach", just throwing their résumé out to as many places as possible, simply hoping to hit something.

"Opportunities abound for those who know what they are looking for and where to look."

While the process takes some effort and soul searching, there are resources available for individuals who are willing and interested in doing the self analysis necessary for success.

Allen's team offers "Smart Work | Career", a process to guide an individual in self-assessment and career interests.

"No one should remain in a position or career *just because*." said Allen. "With all of the available tools and information resources, a person can know what they want and with the effort, can find it."

She goes on to quote Sydney Smith with "Be what nature intended you for and you will succeed."

This appears to be a perfect time for people who may be struggling with their situation to look at the new economy through new glasses. This is a time unseen in most everybody's lives unless you were born a hundred years ago and therefore will require a new approach to find your life's work. The rules are changing and the people who are not trapped in the old model will come out on the other side the big winners.

For more information about Smart Work | Career contact Jane or her staff at 864.233.3007 or visit their website at [www.smartworknetwork.com](http://www.smartworknetwork.com)