

If your interests and values are well-matched to your job you are likely to be happy and successful. But for many people, interests change over time, passions are discovered or rediscovered, and the old job may no longer seem such a good fit. If you are in this position, a good starting point is to set aside some time to describe the person you are now and your dreams for the future – assessing your inner self.

This will generate emotional responses and lots of ideas, some comfortable, some not. Perhaps issues and feelings you thought were long gone or that you have not recognised before will rise to the surface, so proceed gently and at a pace that works best for you.

What are you passionate about?

Really concentrate on what inspires you. The more you know about what drives you to be happy and successful, the better decisions you will make about changing direction. Good questions to ask yourself include:

- What would you do for free? This focuses your attention on the big things that matter in your life.
- What might you regret not doing in life? Is there something that you always wished you had done?

Knowing your values

There are two types of values that you will experience in your lifetime.

Core values are principles that you hold dear. Unlike passions, they rarely change. They determine your sense of self and help you know what is right for you in situations requiring moral judgement.

Variable values – the ones you mostly likely focus on when thinking about changing career direction – often change depending on where you are in life. For example, people starting out in the workforce can be driven by success and status, but as life moves on, balancing work with daily responsibilities may well become more important.

Defining your values acknowledges what is really important to you. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' values, just different ones. Finding an employer whose values match yours has a big impact on your work satisfaction.

Examples of values might include things such as:

- balancing family, work and social aspects of your life
- helping others, either individually or in groups
- learning from others

- developing ideas, programs and products
- determining your own work schedule and priorities
- working in a team to achieve outcomes
- managing others and directing their work activities
- enjoying close personal relationships at work
- competing with others to achieve results
- sticking to a routine and being able to predict the structure of your working day
- responding to frequent change
- studying to enhance job knowledge and career prospects.

Good questions to ask yourself as a way to uncover or define your values include:

- When were you happiest and what was driving that happiness? Think about your personal as well as your work experiences. You may have been happiest at work when a new product came onto the market and you believed the sales campaign aligned closely with your values. School days may have been gloriously happy because you loved learning stuff about mechanics or history.
- When were you the most fulfilled and satisfied and what contributed to this experience? By answering this as honestly as you can, you will uncover what gives your life meaning. Perhaps your satisfaction levels were highest when you managed a catering project involving new migrants, or perhaps they soared when you signed off on a sponsorship deal for your sports club.

Your answers will indicate a list of values. Try to choose your top five. These are the values that you will need to keep in mind when choosing your job.