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“No Regrets' in True Professionalism” Answers To Common Career Questions

This was written in 1982 for MBA students who came to me with questions about career choices. It has since been reproduced around the world in a variety of books, magazines and journals, including a few editions of 'What Color is Your Parachute?' I used it as the basis for the chapter 'No Regrets' in True Professionalism. This is the original version.

1. You can't decide what you want from a job until you're clear on what you want from life.
2. Some people have been too busy 'succeeding' to figure out what success means to them. Don't look for a job until you've thought it through.
3. First figure out what you want in life. Then go look for it.
4. It's easy to fool yourself as to what you really want from life.
5. There are a lot of people around who will tell you what you should want from life: parents, teachers, friends. You don't have to accept their answers. Don't get stampeded.
6. Ban the word 'should' from your job search.
7. We all want to impress people. The tough part is figuring out precisely who we want to impress and why.
8. You can't impress everyone simultaneously. Different people are impressed by different things: money, status, intellect, character, contribution to society, and so on forever. What do you want to be admired for? By whom?
9. We all want respect and prestige. But in whose eyes? It ain't necessarily other (students): six months from now you won't see most of them ever again.
10. The keys to what you really want are the things you don't like to admit. 'I don't like to admit it, but I need to be the centre of attention': O.K., find a job that will let you show off. 'I don't like to admit it but I really want to be rich': Fine, go out and get rich. 'I don't like to admit it but I'm a snob.' That's all right, go work with 'upper class' people.
11. Play to your 'evil secrets': don't suppress them.
12. You are a lot less flexible than you think.
13. Some people are big-city types: others are happier in small towns. Which are you? It's more important than you think.
14. Changing jobs is easier than changing family: and a lot less painful.
15. Your happiness will be determined much more by what job you've got than by what company you're working for or what industry you're in. Most people choose an industry, then choose a company, then choose a job. It's the wrong order.
16. You can't figure out what you want in life by going to inter views.
17. The more interviews, the more confusion you'll feel.
18. The more confusion you feel, the worse the decision you'll make.

19. The goal is to get the right job offer, not the most job offers.
20. There is nothing so pathetic as someone getting depressed from being turned down by a company they didn't want to go work for anyway.
21. Don't sell: buy! You can either buy yourself a job or be bought by one.
22. If your new job doesn't work out, the divorce will be a lot more painful for you than for your employer. So you should be a lot pickier than they in deciding whether to 'get married.' Don't sell: buy!
23. Nothing impresses an interviewer more than someone who knows what they want and why. Don't sell: buy!
24. What do you really need to know about the job you'll be doing for you to be sure you'll be happy? Don't be afraid to ask about that. Go check it out to be sure. Don't sell: buy!
25. You'll be happier if you like and respect the people you'll be working with: boss, peers, subordinates, customers. Do you know who you like and respect? Are these the people? Don't sell: buy!
26. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Enthusiasm and the hard work it inspires count for more than an extra piece of ability.
27. Don't worry about whether you'll be good at it: if it turns you on, you'll be good enough. If it doesn't, you won't.
28. Your 'strengths' are irrelevant: what you like is critical.
29. Don't plan too far ahead. In five to ten years, you'll be a different person who wants different things from life.
30. Do it because it will make you happy now: not because it will (if it works out) make you happy tomorrow.
31. Don't serve any pure apprenticeships, things that you'll hate and will do only because it will lead somewhere. If you hate it, you'll never get through it.
32. All job choices are risky, so think how you'll feel if it doesn't work out. If you can see being able to say, 'I'm glad I tried it anyway,' then consider the job. If you can't imagine saying that, don't bother pursuing it any further.
33. Remember, the point of life is to be happy.
34. All other goals (money, fame, status, responsibility, achievement) are merely ways of making you happy, and are worthless in themselves.'

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