

# Finding the PERFECT Job

*She found her passion; now she can help you find yours*

by michelle groleau engel '97

After 15 years of writing code for a large telecom, Joe was burned out. A degree in information systems had seemed like such a practical idea. It was a growing, high-paying industry with a bright future, and Joe was good at his work. But something was missing. His real passion was medieval history, and Joe began thinking about going back to school to become a history professor. He just wasn't sure that starting over was a good idea, so after talking to a friend, he decided to look into career counseling.

**Sue Ekberg '72** is a licensed professional counselor with her own career counseling practice, Career Focus, in St. Louis, Mo. She works with people like Joe on a regular basis.

People seek Sue's help for a variety of reasons. Some feel stuck in their job or career. Some don't like their boss, some have been downsized, and others, like Joe, wonder if they're in the right field in the first place.

"It could be anything," Sue said, "Sometimes it's simply a matter of helping someone in their job search. They have good skills, but aren't getting the results they had hoped for in their job search. I've also helped people negotiate a better salary when they get a job offer."

Sue starts every prospective client with a Career Action Planning (CAP) session, essentially a guided tour of the client's career to date, to gather information and come up with a plan for proceeding.

"The CAP session can stand alone or lead to other things," Sue said. "About half the time, people will take what we've discussed in the CAP session and decide to proceed on their own, and about half the time they decide to continue to work with me."

When people choose to pursue career counseling, Sue provides a project proposal that could encompass weeks or months of unlimited access to her services.

"Work is such an important part of life," said Sue. "I help people leverage their strengths and interests. It isn't just about

putting a square peg in a square hole. It's about what you like and are good at, who you are, and what works for you at a particular point in life."

Sue transferred to Adrian from Kalamazoo College after her sophomore year, and graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology. She earned a master's of science degree in psychology from S.U.N.Y. Cortland and a doctorate in education with a counseling emphasis from Saint Louis University. She is a graduate of Coach University, a virtual training company for coaches.

Sue worked for 12 years as a career counselor at Saint Louis University, then six years as director of the Career Center at Webster University. Although she enjoyed the work she was doing, Sue was ready for a change.

"I had a dream that wouldn't go away, and that was the dream of self-employment," she said. "I had a good job, but I started thinking, 'I don't know if I want to be 85 years old and wondering what would have happened if . . .'"

## "Work is such an important part of life"

"I love being my own boss," she added. "There is a lot of flex in my day. I may meet with clients for a few hours, work on building my network of referral sources, meet with colleagues and respond to emails that come in through my website. I also prepare a newsletter and try to touch base with the people on my mailing list."

"I consider career counseling to be a very personal and practical education that will pay for itself," she added. "The things you will learn from career counseling can be used over and over again throughout your career."

# Job Satisfaction QUIZ

Everyone wants a job that leaves them feeling satisfied at the end of a long day of work. Not everyone realizes just how important that satisfaction can be, both to their mental health and to their career potential.

“Having work where you feel you are treated respectfully and you have some sense of belief in what you are doing can go a long way toward good mental health,” said **Sue Ekberg '72**, career counselor and owner of Career Focus. “Getting relief from an unbearable work life can do a lot to improve your general outlook.”

Even if your job isn't making you miserable, your overall satisfaction can improve your performance and your long-term

income. Satisfied workers do a better job, which leads to promotions and raises.

Sue offers some pointers for improving job satisfaction: 1) Work on the communication and relationships at work to make the environment satisfying; 2) Make sure that you spend your day on tasks you perform well. Get rid of the ones you don't, or if that's impossible, then get a transfer or a new job.

The following quiz from Sue's website can help you analyze your overall job satisfaction and help you work on areas that may need improvement. Add up your “yes” answers – how satisfied are you?

1. Have you considered a career change for over six months?
2. Have duties been taken away from you?
3. Has it been longer than three years since you had a promotion?
4. Are you concerned about job security?
5. Do you feel underpaid?
6. Do you feel unappreciated?
7. Is your job affecting your health?
8. In your present position, are you repeating yourself (not growing in responsibility)?
9. Has a colleague, a member of your family, or a friend suggested you search for another job?
10. Are your duties increasing without a pay increase?
11. Does work interfere with your personal life?
12. Do you suspect a layoff, takeover, or company merger?
13. Are rewards and recognition for your work hard to come by?
14. Are you concerned about the quality of your company's product or service?
15. Is your company falling behind competitively in today's tough market?
16. Are you excluded from the decision-making process?
17. Is your present position keeping you from meeting your goals?
18. Are you in need of more income than your job is providing?
19. Have you already mentally shut yourself off from your job?

## Key Add your yes answers to see how you did.

- 1-5 Good job! Use those as indicators of where to apply yourself to make your present job better.
- 6-10 You may have peaked or begun a transitional period. It may be time to investigate ways to expand. Look within your company first. You may discover a new project or opportunity that may use your abilities as well as incorporate your goals.
- 11-19 Serious work is needed for your security and financial future. If these things go unchecked, you'll find yourself one of the first victims of a downsizing, or stuck in a no-growth situation. Remember, always work on the present situation along with any job search.