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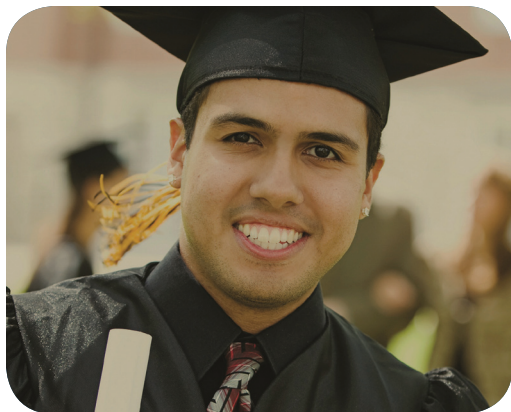


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The people development people.

The Next Generation's View:
Career and Personal Fulfillment

A REPORT BY CPP, INC.



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Introduction

For many of today's career seekers, the size of their potential paycheck is not all-important. Above all, they want a career that offers opportunities for both professional and personal fulfillment. Career satisfaction now affects everything from individual happiness and family stability to company profits and national economic competitiveness. It contributes to motivation and plays a crucial role in people's performance of and commitment to their work. Simply put, the more people like what they're doing for a living, the more motivated they are to put forth the effort and focus that success demands and organizations need.

Planning is a vital part of a successful career, and it is rendered even more critical by factors such as an increasingly competitive—and increasingly global—job market and the surging cost of a college education. For students, identifying their ideal career path early on gives them a clear jump-start in life. However, with more careers than ever to choose from, the question for today's high school and college students is, "Which career will lead to personal satisfaction and professional fulfillment?"

With these challenges in mind, CPP, Inc., the publisher of the Myers-Briggs® and *Strong Interest Inventory*® assessments, recently surveyed 87 high school and community college students on the subject of career planning. CPP's research aimed to identify these students' perceptions of future careers, motivation, and definitions of "success" as members of a generation that will soon enter the workforce.

The study's results showed that the trend toward increasingly viewing career as a vehicle for personal fulfillment—a trend set in motion decades ago—

continues with today's high school and college students. The study also identified a potential correlation between students' academic performance and their perception of a clear connection between their studies and their future career. In addition, survey results indicated that there is room for improvement when it comes to helping students identify their career path.

Key Findings

A GENERATION FOCUSED ON CAREER

First and foremost, the study showed that career is high on students' priority lists. An overwhelming majority of participants (81%) said they either "constantly" or "frequently" think about their future career, and 42% (the largest group of respondents for the category) reported that career is "top of mind." Interestingly, while 12% reported thinking about their career only "occasionally," not a single respondent reported "rarely" or "never" thinking about it.

As 83% of participants reported grades averaging B- or higher, the high incidence of focus on career may also illustrate a correlation between students' focus on their future career and their academic performance. A possible related correlation between study efforts and well-defined career direction is observed in the section of this report titled "Connecting Career Planning to Academic Performance."

CAREER AS A VEHICLE FOR PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

Regardless of personal interest and motivation, the students surveyed seem idealistic about their career prospects. Of the respondents, 80% believe a career should be something that brings enjoyment and fulfillment to their life and 53% believe their career will play a role in defining them as an individual. They also want their

personal interests to define their career path: 72% want to choose a career that aligns with their passion and brings joy to their work.

At least among the students who participated in this survey—50% of whom are or will be the first person in their family to attend college—this attitude may represent a departure from that of previous generations. While only 25% of respondents believe their parents “love what they do,” 30% think their parents “like what they do, but suspect they’d rather do something else.” Another 27% believe their parents “don’t like what they do, but feel they need to do it for the money” (notably a statistical dead heat with those who believe their parents “love what they do”).

The idealism toward career may spill over somewhat into students’ view of college. While motivation for obtaining a college degree was split along several lines, the largest group of respondents (36%) identified “the pursuit of personal interest” as their primary motivation for seeking a college degree (compared to 24% who identified “financial gain” as their primary motivation)

PERSONAL INTEREST AS AN INDICATOR OF CAREER SUCCESS

Importantly, participants in this survey saw a definite link between success and personal interest, as 78% believe they will achieve the most success in a career for which they have a passion and that they enjoy on a daily basis. Furthermore, the largest group of respondents for the category (58%) believe “enjoyment of the work itself” is the primary motivator for people who are highly successful in their career. (Other motivators include money and a desire for power, influence, and respect.)

CAREER DIRECTION STILL LACKING

Despite the participants’ emphasis on career, the survey showed a surprisingly low degree of solid career direction on the part of students. While 31% of participants reported knowing “exactly” what they want to do for a living, a significantly larger group, 43%, were less certain, reporting having “an idea” about their direction, with the remainder expressing little to no defined career direction.

Moreover, while 33% reported being “completely sure” that their current course of study is the best choice, 50% (the largest group for the category) were only “somewhat sure” that this was the case.

CONNECTING CAREER PLANNING TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Ultimately, the survey found that students see the value of early career planning relative to both their future career and their current schoolwork. The majority of participants (55%) believe that knowing their ideal career path will improve their college performance.

The study also showed that students are motivated to study when they are interested in what they’re learning. The largest group of respondents for the category (27%) cited interest in the subject as their primary motivator to study, compared to only 9% who cited “getting into a good college” as their primary motivator. Moreover, 45% of participants reported that they study “much harder” when they perceive a direct connection between their course work and their planned career.

These findings reinforce the value of career planning as a means of ensuring that students optimize their current course work to fit their future career goals. As students work toward obtaining a college degree, they will be more likely to succeed if their course work is explicitly tied to their career goals.

ASSESSMENTS CAN HELP STUDENTS PLAN THEIR CAREER PATH

The majority of students surveyed (72%) reported that they were “much” or “somewhat” more enthusiastic about their future career after taking the *Strong Interest Inventory* assessment and receiving their iStartStrong™ report, which identified career options that supported their personal interests and passions. Additionally, 85% said they became aware of more appealing career options after reviewing their assessment results, while 47% (the largest group of respondents for the category) said that they were considering additional career plans. Also, 50% of the survey participants reported that knowing their results made them more likely to study.

These numbers clearly indicate that knowledge of career options linked to areas of personal interest can have a positive effect on students’ view of career and their willingness to work toward achieving career-oriented goals.

Interestingly, while knowing their assessment results significantly increased participants’ enthusiasm about future careers and current studies related to those careers, it only moderately influenced participants to “think more frequently” about their future career. This may reinforce the observation that career is already top of mind for today’s students.



Conclusion

Students who venture into a profession without first assessing what is right for them may later find themselves in an unfulfilling and unsatisfying career. While this obviously has negative implications for the individual, it is also something we should be concerned about on a national level. As we struggle to maintain our edge in an increasingly competitive global economy, productivity, innovation, creativity, and overall performance—all of which are directly connected to career satisfaction—serve as indicators of our progress.

As we seek to improve our educational system, we may do well to expand our emphasis on helping students identify their ideal career and embark on a path that connects the day-to-day demands of work to their interests. With rising tuition making it impractical to delay serious career exploration until one enters college, *early* career planning becomes more appealing—offering significant advantages such as increased motivation to study in high school and better preparation for both college and the workforce. Using the right tools to help them identify their skills and interests, students can better focus on a specific career that offers them the greatest opportunity for personal fulfillment.

“

I like how you can go through and see specific job details; that detail would be interesting to me since I wouldn't know otherwise and I could learn about it. ”

— High School Student

Your Guide to Performance

At CPP, Inc., our only job is to help you guide your students to richer, more fulfilling academic experiences and career choices. CPP's *Strong Interest Inventory*® and *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) assessments have provided reliable insights to career counselors and academic advisors for more than 50 years. And while we're best known for these products, CPP also offers you the information, guidance, and support you need. Our ranks are filled with educators, career counselors, and other experts dedicated to helping people develop in both their personal and professional lives.

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