



Skills vs. PASSIONS

I recently received a call asking if I was interested in a Project Manager engagement. When I declined, the caller responded with "But you are so GOOD at it!" in a tone that implied surprise at my refusal. After hanging up, I marveled at myself for turning down work I would have previously jumped at. Then, I stopped, and gave myself credit for being smart enough to realize that simply because I'm good at a thing, doesn't necessarily mean it's something I want to do. There's a difference. And in that difference is a world of self-understanding and serenity. It's the difference between skills and passions.

WE ALL HAVE SKILLS

Let's talk about skills. I've got skills, you've got skills; we all have skills of some kind. A skill is something I can do with competence, or possibly expertise. The number of skills is infinite; writing, painting, fixing cars, performing brain surgery, carpentry, plumbing, and doing whatever it is theoretical physicists do. Some of my skills came easily to me: washing dishes, pumping gas,

tending the garden. Some took more time to learn: programming, systems analysis, data base design, project management, etc. And at some point, I became competent in each and proudly added them to my mental and physical resume.

QUIT SHOULDING ON YOURSELF

Sometimes I think that if I possess certain skills, I should be using them. ("Should" is the key word here.) And the fact is, I don't honestly enjoy using all my skills. There are only a small percentage of my skills that really jazz me when the opportunities arise. And for me, "jazz" equals "passion." For example: I have a skill for writing non-fiction. I've written lots of articles and papers on a broad range of topics, but I'm not always eager to write. Writing in general isn't a skill I necessarily love. Yet I willingly spend hours writing about certain topics at little or no charge. What's the difference? Why would I be happy turn down higher paying work to write about business or about wolves at length at no charge? The difference is passion. When I'm driven by

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my passions, I can't wait to sit down at the keyboard. When my passions are absent, I seem to find new and highly creative means of procrastination. And the result is lower in quality than my skills would predict.

Wouldn't it be great to spend all my waking hours only using my skills for those things about which I have great passion? Wow, just imagine. Wouldn't you kill for that kind of work? And, if all the choices in my life are mine, then why couldn't my life be like that?

So, let me reflect for a moment on the times I have worked from my passions, rather than simply from a skill I happen to possess. These are the times when I apply my skills to areas that interest me so much that I would crawl over broken glass to work with them. Time seems to fly, the work flows through me with little effort and the results are pretty marvelous. Hmmmm... what if I approached all of my life that way? Time for a matrix...

TRY IT YOURSELF

Maybe this would be a good time for you to create a matrix of your own? It's simple. Create three columns on a piece of paper. In the first column, make a quick list of your own skills, like I did above. In the second column, try to decipher what you enjoy the most about each skill. For instance, in cleaning house, I really enjoy organization, but am happy to leave the rest to someone else. In the third column, ask yourself where in your life you can apply that skill to your passions. The beauty of this is that you can apply it to any area of your life and begin to customize the ways

in which you use your skills to align them more with your real passions.

If you work for someone else, this is something you could share with your supervisor and influence the direction of your career. If you *are* a supervisor, it would be a great tool to help discover where each of your employees find their passion. We each possess many skills, and just because we have these wonderful skills it doesn't mean we will leap at the chance to use them. But, link them to our passions, and nothing can stop us!

Skill	What Do I Like About This Skill?	Where Is The Passion?
Writing non-fiction	Creativity	Wolves, leadership, obesity turning points, family history.
Changing oil in the car	Sense of competence, knowing what the boys know	None, did it a few times, didn't like the mess. Fughetaboudit.
Project Management	Creativity, connection, influence	None left, but teaching it to others is fun.
Computer programming	Creativity, problem-solving	None, got to be boring, but teaching people about managing programmers is fun.
Gardening	Creativity, connection, variety	Passionate about perennials, but annuals getting to be too much work. So I'll plant different next year!

The German poet and dramatist, Christian Friedrich Hebbel once said, "Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion." I wonder...what are *you* passionate about? ▲

Diane Vasarkovy & Wolf Consulting would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank You!" to each of our clients for your business, and to each of our friends for your support throughout 2008. We wish you a holiday season full of peace and joy, and a 2009 full of hope.

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