

Help! I've Graduated With the Wrong Major!

"What am I gonna do now?" asked a young man, wearing a look of disgust and angst, as he vented to a friend. "I just put in nearly five years and over \$100k into a major that I have no idea what to do with." I tried not to eavesdrop, but the story I overheard at a coffee shop sounded very similar to my experience in college.

Fifteen years ago, I graduated from a great private university with a bachelor's of science in environmental biology. Not only did I not know what to do with it, I didn't want to do anything with it. And it's not just me.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that only 27 percent of graduates have a job in their field. Working as a career consultant and adviser with Crown Financial Ministries, I've learned that in five steps, a graduate can be back on track toward meaningful work that truly suits his or her skills and passions.

Step One: Learn Your Design

Immediately go through a self-evaluation career assessment like Crown's Career Direct. The haphazard way that too many of us choose a major clearly isn't working. Career fit testing is effective, scientific and reliable. I like Career Direct because it fully assesses four dimensions of who you are: personality, interests, skills and work/life values; and it can be taken with the aid of trained consultant or as a stand-alone tool.

Regardless of which assessment you choose, you must begin your career search knowing how God has wired you, and therefore which type of career field fits your specific and unique design. As it says in Psalm 139:13-14 of God's design,

“You brought my inner parts into being; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will praise you, for You made me with fear and wonder; marvelous are Your works, and You know me completely.”

Step Two: Get a Coach

Get connected with a career or life coach with experience navigating the upheaval of building a career. This time of unknown transition is usually emotionally charged, and most folks struggle to be objective about themselves, opportunities and decisions. A good consultant or coach should be able to read an assessment report, ask probing questions and help you get to some concrete understanding of your design, career field alignment and next steps. Consider this advice from Proverbs 11:14, “In the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

Step Three: Become an Intern

If your financial situation allows, pursue an internship that aligns with your design. You’ll develop and maximize the strengths of your personality, interests, natural skills and work values. This can also give that company a look at the value you bring to their organization, leading perhaps to full time employment. Internships can be paid or volunteer, but the financial component isn’t what matters here. The key is to work in a field that you are interested in and one in which you and your coach think fits your personality and skills.

I once coached a young man who graduated with a ministry degree, but didn’t really want to be a pastor. After reviewing his assessment report and finding his design, we discovered that his true fit was serving as a coach in the nutritional health and fitness industry. I encouraged him to find a job or internship in that field to see if he actually liked it. A few weeks later, he landed a job at a university’s health and wellness center. He is ecstatic about the environment and

work, and is also developing key relationships in that field. Don't be afraid to do several internships along the way. Each time, choose an internship that fits more specifically with your unique design.

If money or time is not a luxury you have, then seek part-time employment in a field that aligns with your career goals. As quickly as possible, take any job in a company doing work that interests you.

Step Four: Pray Unceasingly

You must know that your Creator actually cares about who you are and what you do. After all, He specifically created you. Prayer keeps our trust aligned above, our sight focused ahead and our heart soft to be lead. Pray, trust, see and follow. Fear not, and remember God's words in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Step Five: Delay Further Education

Do not pursue another degree immediately unless specific circumstances warrant it and means are available. Your current degree has much value and merit to employers, in part because it shows that you were disciplined and faithful to complete it. Work on building your resume with practical experience, which also may lead you to consider a different educational choice down the road. Too many people park themselves in grad school to delay the realities of a career. As you have already learned, picking a degree doesn't mean you are ready to find a dream job.

The college degree you've earned opens doors for you and is a tremendous accomplishment. About 70 percent of people do not have a bachelor's degree. Maybe you are like the young man at the coffee shop who didn't choose the right major. But by following these steps, I believe God can help you turn your lemon of a degree into the lemonade of a career. {eoa}

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