

up with the superficial that it can be heard to feel good about the fact that I *am* different. It can feel lonely. But it's better to be true to myself and celebrate that difference. There is meaning in every day and I need to find it. Reaching and helping a student to harness the power of language is really rewarding. I hope I can continue to do that and still write a good poem or two."

### *Why This Career Works for Anne*

It is not just helping her students develop a technical skill that Anne finds so rewarding. As with many NFs, the satisfaction comes from empowering people to grow and realize their potential. She also enjoys the tremendous variety of interactions she has with students, faculty, and staff of the university. And due to her seniority, Anne has freedom and flexibility (something most INFPs enjoy) and can teach whichever courses she wishes each semester.

An introverted Feeler (dominant), Anne runs the learning center in a way that is consistent with her own values and beliefs. She feels strongly about its mission and works hard to help students achieve results. It is clearly the one-on-one relationships with students that are most gratifying as she helps them create quality work. Anne's efforts at her own writing also demonstrate her introverted feeling.

In running the center, Anne uses her extraverted Intuition (auxiliary) to monitor how things are going and to think up new approaches to solve problems. She listens carefully to interactions between students and tutors to make sure the student is getting the best help possible. In her own tutoring, she uses her Intuition to see what is lacking in student's writing and to explain connections that the student might have missed. She is an innovative administrator, as evidenced by the conference she developed for high school students.

Anne's developing Sensing (third function) is reflected in her interest in what she calls "the

realities of life," physical and outdoor activities and the discovery that her spirituality is very connected to the natural world.

### *Common Threads*

Although Emily, Dan and Anne have different backgrounds, experiences, and careers, there are certain common threads that weave through their stories. Specific interests and abilities may differ, but owing to their similar temperament values, the *same hierarchy* of their psychological functions, and the "world" they naturally use them in (inner and outer), there are certain observations we can make about the needs of many INFPs.

What follows is a list of the most important elements – the formula, if you will, for INFP satisfaction. Given the uniqueness of all individuals – even those who share the same type – this list will not describe each INFP equally well. The important thing is that these ten elements, with varying degrees of intensity and in different orders of importance, identify what INFPs need to be satisfied.

After you have reviewed this list, we recommend that you go back and prioritize the elements in order of *their importance to you*. When doing this, think of past work experiences as well as your present job, and what you found particularly satisfying or unsatisfying. Try to look for *themes* that run through several experiences, not just the events which might be true for one work situation but not for another.

### *As an INFP, career satisfaction means doing work that:*

1. Is in harmony with my own personal values and beliefs and allows me to express my vision through my work

2. Gives me time to develop substantial depth to my ideas and maintain control over the process and product
3. Is done autonomously, with a private work space and plenty of uninterrupted time, but with periodic opportunities to bounce my ideas off people I feel respect me
4. Is done within a flexible structure, with a minimum of rules or regulations, letting me work on projects when I feel inspired
5. Is done with other creative and caring individuals in a cooperative environment free from tension and interpersonal strife
6. Lets me express my originality and in which personal growth is encouraged and rewarded
7. Does not require me to present my work frequently in front of groups of people or be called upon to share before it is completed to my satisfaction
8. Allows me to help others grow and develop and realize their full potential
9. Involves understanding people and discovering what makes them tick; allows me to develop deep one-to-one relationships with others
10. Allows me to work toward fulfilling my ideals and not be limited by political, financial, or other obstacles

Work-related strengths and weaknesses of INFPs include:

#### STRENGTHS

Prefer working toward causes they endorse

Work well alone, with frequent, meaningful supportive interaction with others they admire

Faithful to duties and obligations

Inspired when working at a job they believe in

Able to understand and communicate one-on-one with other people

#### WEAKNESSES

Can be unrealistic in planning a project  
Want control of their projects and may lose interest if control is lost

Can become discouraged if work is not directed toward purpose they believe in  
May be inflexible about making necessary changes in their ideas

Can have trouble working in competitive environment

#### *Popular Occupations for INFPs*

In listing occupations that are popular among INFPs, it is important to note that there are successful people of all types in all fields. However, the following are careers INFPs may find particularly satisfying and some of the reasons why. This is by no means a comprehensive listing. It is included to suggest possibilities you may not have previously considered.

#### THE ARTS

- Artist
- Writer: poet/novelist
- Journalist
- Entertainer
- Architect
- Actor
- Editor
- Musician

The appeal of the arts to INFPs is the ability to express themselves and their ideas in creative and personal ways. The personal freedom and flexibility of a working artist is a lifestyle often embraced by INFPs. Whether they work with the written word, a paint brush or other medium, use their building designs or their own bodies as actors or musicians, INFPs strive to create original products that are authentic expressions of their inner voice. Many INFPs describe themselves

as artists "deep down," even if that is not how they earn their living. Some INFPs would even say that being an artist is not something they would choose to be, rather that it's a cross they have to bear.

#### TEACHING/COUNSELING

- College professor: humanities/arts
- Researcher
- Psychologist
- Counselor
- Social worker
- Librarian
- Educational consultant
- Speech pathologist

Both teaching and counseling are career areas that enable the INFP to work with others to help them grow and develop their human potential. INFPs can be truly noble in their desire and efforts to improve the quality of life for others. They often prefer the college atmosphere to elementary or even secondary education because the motivation of the students is higher. They enjoy the process of learning and enjoy exploring deeper and more meaningful levels of understanding as researchers or librarians. INFPs make compassionate and insightful counselors, psychologists, and social workers and strive toward helping their clients gain self-understanding and harmony within their relationships and their lives. As counselors, they enjoy the process of understanding others as they come to understand themselves.

#### RELIGION

- Minister/priest
- Religious educator
- Missionary
- Church worker

For many INFPs the commitment of a religious career is rewarding. INFPs enjoy helping other people develop their spiritual side and receive pleasure from striving for and attaining their vision for themselves and oth-

ers. They often prefer a one-on-one setting but with experience can come to enjoy preaching or lecturing. The bottom line for an INFP is to do work that is in harmony with their inner values and beliefs, and often careers within religion provide that.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Employment development specialist
- Human resources development specialist
- Social scientist

Although INFPs are not usually satisfied in business careers, there are some selected fields that offer potential for success and satisfaction. Some INFPs enjoy a corporate setting when their work involves helping other people find jobs that are right for them. They often enjoy jobs in personnel, or human resources development, or designing and instituting jobs within a company. They need to work with other supportive people and feel that their contributions are valued and unique in order to find satisfaction in the tough and competitive world of business.

#### *Implications for the Job Search*

Knowing the particular strengths and blind spots of your type can afford you a tremendous advantage in your job search campaign. In all aspects of the process, from conducting research into available positions, identifying and contacting prospective employers, developing personal marketing tools such as résumés, arranging and conducting job interviews, negotiating salaries to finally accepting a position, people will act true to their type. Being able to capitalize on your assets and compensate for your liabilities can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful job search.

Differences between types are sometimes subtle and other times dramatic. It is the subtle variations in advice we offer that

make the real difference between success or failure in a job search. The concept of "networking," or meeting with and talking to people to gather information about potential jobs, serves as a good example. Extraverts will naturally enjoy networking and are advised to do so on a large scale, while Introverts find more limited and targeted networking, especially with people they already know, easier. Sensors tend to network with people in a defined scope, while Intuitives will go far and wide to find people often seemingly unrelated to their field of interest. Further, Feelers take networking, like everything else, very personally and enjoy establishing warm rapport, while Thinkers will be more objective and detached in their style. Finally, Judgers tend to ask fewer and more structured questions during their networking, while Perceivers could ask questions of all sorts all day long! One valuable search technique, many ways to implement it.

### Pathways to Success

As we will detail in the following pages, your strength and talent for the job search lies in your ability to know what is important to you and to work tirelessly to find a career that will be an expression of your values. Beware of your tendency to be swept away by your idealism and, in the process, ignore practical realities.

As an INFP, your most effective strategies will build on your abilities to:

*Readily see possibilities that don't presently exist.*

- Use your creative energy to look beyond what is known, and imagine jobs that you might be satisfied with that meet the needs of the market or employer.

- Generate as long a list as possible of all the ways you can use your skills in fields that interest you. After you have created a lengthy list, research each option so you will be able to put together a more realistic plan of attack.

The staff at the magazine where Sarah worked as a research assistant was being cut back. Instead of waiting to hear whether the ax would fall on her, Sarah came up with an innovative staffing solution that would save her job and the job of another research assistant. Sarah and her co-worker offered to job-share the research position, thus saving the magazine the cost of two full-time researchers. In exchange, Sarah would write free-lance articles for the magazine on an as-needed basis and be free to write for other publications as well. Her solution enabled her co-worker finally to have time to finish her master's degree. The magazine accepted the proposal and Sarah saved her job.

*Give thoughtful consideration to all potential career opportunities.*

- Your patience with complex tasks will serve you well if you give time and thought to each possible career avenue, and you will be better prepared to talk about why you are the right person for the job.
- Time spent in reflection will give you the chance to clarify your true feelings and motivation before accepting or rejecting an option.

Greg was in the enviable position of having received job offers from three architecture firms. However, he felt overwhelmed by the decision he had to make. So he asked each for two weeks in which to consider the offers. One firm said they needed his answer

immediately, so he declined, confident in the knowledge that a firm in that much of a hurry was not a place he wanted to work. He spent the next two weeks carefully thinking through the advantages and disadvantages of the remaining options and what was most important to him in a work environment. Because he took the time, he was able to recall some factors about each office that he had forgotten in the excitement of the interviews. When the two weeks were over, he was able to make a thoughtful and confident decision.

*Express yourself well, especially after thinking things through ahead of time.*

- Whenever possible, find ways to express yourself in writing through letters of inquiry, cover letters sent with a résumé, or follow-up letters.
- Use words to help you verbalize your vision for your career or for the ways in which you see yourself adding to the growth and development of an organization.

Timothy, a career counselor, found *himself* looking for work after cutbacks at the community college where he had worked left him unemployed. Though Timothy certainly knew the tricks of the trade, the tight job market made his job search difficult. We suggested that he target a private career consulting firm and sell himself by what he could offer the company. Because he had many of the same skills as other candidates, he decided to set himself apart by expressing his personal motivation to help others find truly fulfilling work which would result in more referral business. The partners of the firm were impressed by his genuine concern and decided he would take the time to be sure their clients were well served, and increase the bottom line as well.

*Demonstrate your motivation and commitment to causes you believe in.*

- Allow prospective employers to see and hear your enthusiasm for a position you want. Most employers are impressed with a candidate who is direct and clear about his or her interest in a job.
- When discussing how a potential job fits with your ideals, use your natural persuasiveness to convince potential employers of the intensity of your desire for the position.

Each applicant was told to prepare a selection of music suitable for three church choirs for an audition for the position of choir director. Melissa chose to let her words and musical selections not only fill an assignment but also express her desire for the job. She spent hours going over her selections so they would reflect her love of music, her eagerness to work with singers of all ages, and her own personal faith. She wrote a statement that she read to the selection committee which explained her choices of music and how each was thematically connected to the other pieces so the choir was, essentially, singing chapters of a book. She went a step farther and left copies of her statement, hand-calligraphed, with her résumé and references. The committee was impressed with her diligence, care, and devotion, all the characteristics Melissa hoped they would associate with her.

*Use limited, targeted networking.*

- Start with close friends from your professional or personal life. Carefully select other people to help you, relying on people who know you well or are directly involved in the field you seek.
- Plot out your strategy, including a timetable for accomplishing objectives to

keep you from becoming overwhelmed or discouraged.

Before she even got started on her job search, Lilly felt that she was in over her head. She knew she wasn't very organized and wasn't even sure how to begin finding out about available jobs. Her sister suggested she attend a time management seminar being offered through the continuing education department in their town. Lilly at first resisted the idea of a prepackaged program but finally succumbed to her sister's urging and went. She found that while parts of the seminar were too regimented, it gave her an excellent framework. She modified and adapted the basic program to work for her. She also gained some added confidence because she now had a way of ensuring that she wouldn't let things slip through the cracks. She was able to get started, and feel as if she was much more in control of the process.

### Possible Pitfalls

Although all people are unique, there are certain *potential* blind spots that many INFPs share. We specify "potential" because some of the following *may* be true of you, while others may clearly not apply. While considering them, you may notice that these tendencies do not relate just to the job search, but rather describe pitfalls that you may have experienced in other aspects of your life as well. It is therefore helpful to consider each one in terms of your past experiences by asking yourself, "Is this true for me?" And if so, "How did this tendency prevent me from getting something that I wanted?" You will probably notice that the key to overcoming your blind spots is the conscious and thoughtful development of your third and fourth functions (Sensing and

Thinking). We recognize that many of the suggestions will be difficult to implement, but the more you use these functions, the fewer problems they will cause you in the future.

#### *Develop realistic expectations for yourself and your job search.*

- Realize that finding the right job takes more time than you expect or wish. Paying attention to the facts of the situation and including them in your vision of the right career choice will make you more efficient during your search.
- You may have to decide to compromise some of your less central personal values from time to time. There may not be the "perfect" job for you at the salary level or in the geographic area you live in — at least not at this time. Learning when to compromise on the less critical points is a valuable lesson.

#### *Try not to take criticism or rejection personally.*

- Bear in mind that many people offer criticism in a very objective fashion and expect that you will take it as it was intended. Try to look at it as *constructive* criticism and use the knowledge to improve your approach.
- Draw some boundaries and don't try to please too many people at the same time. A career search is a time-consuming task. Being willing to say no to others when necessary will help you conserve needed energy and maintain your focus.

#### *Look at the logical consequence of your actions.*

- Try not to make important decisions relying exclusively on your personal

feelings. Get input from trusted, more objective friends.

- Take a break from the situation to think more clearly about it. Imagine what might be the logical cause and effect of your choices so you will have a more balanced picture.

*Resist the tendency to avoid eliminating options and to put off making decisions.*

- Take charge of your job search by eliminating less desirable options rather than waiting so long that more attractive options are eliminated for you. You may find the whole process less overwhelming if you remove from consideration those possibilities that don't fit with your most important criteria for career satisfaction.
- Don't spend so much time in reflection that you leave no time for action! Develop a timetable and stick with it. Remember that getting started is often the hardest part, but once you do, you will gain momentum from your actions.

*Concentrate on getting better organized.*

- Use time management techniques to be sure you get things done on time. Employers will judge you on how well you follow through with commitments.
- Beware that you are naturally prone to perfectionism, which may delay you from completing tasks, hoping to find some way to improve them.

### *The Final Piece*

Now that you have a solid understanding of your type under your belt, you can see how your strengths and preferences suit you better for some kinds of jobs and for some approaches to a job search. But as an INFP, you've already noticed that you are not equally drawn to *every* career or field listed in the Popular Occupations section. The next and final step in the process is to look at how your type meshes with your personal interests. So turn to Chapter 24 to put your new knowledge to work by finding out how your interests, skills, and values can combine with your type to let you find the work you were meant to do.