



A Talent for All

For Job Seekers

The hidden message in President Kennedy's words is a repudiation of the notion that talent is only found in a select group of "special people." According to this view, talent is reserved for professional athletes, movie stars and the winners of made-for-TV dance contests. And, as the President noted, that's flat wrong.

We are all born with talent. It is an attribute of our species. **Talent is the capacity for excellence**, and all of us have been endowed with that gift. Like our opposable thumb, it is a characteristic that defines being human. Every single one of us can do superior work.

The challenge for job seekers, therefore, is three-fold:

- First, you have to make sure you have correctly identified your talent.
- Second, you have to make sure you've selected a career field in which you can work successfully with your talent.
- And third, you have to acquire the latest skills and knowledge in your career field so that you can actually use your talent to perform at your peak on-the-job.

Let's look briefly at each of those issues.

First, you have to make sure you have correctly identified your talent.

Talent isn't passion. You can love to play tennis, but never be good enough to pursue a career in the sport. Talent, therefore, is the intersection of passion and practicality. It is what you love to do and do well.

Some of us are lucky and discover our talent easily. We have "a calling" which points the way. For most of us, however, that voice speaks too softly to hear without some work on our part. We have to invest the time and effort to look around inside ourselves.

In *The Career Fitness Workbook*, I provide three exercises to accomplish this inner search. One explores what most engages you; a second looks into what is most relevant to you; and a third lets you make an unconstrained choice. Your talent lies where those three dynamics overlap.

Second, you have to make sure you've selected a career field in which you can work successfully with your talent.

Not every talent can be used effectively in every occupation. For example, if a person's talent is communicating complex ideas so that everyone can understand them, they are not likely to be successful in a field which requires the talent of athleticism. They can be a sports writer, perhaps, but not a professional basketball player.

Unfortunately, most of us launch off on our careers before we've discovered our talent. As a result, we may become competent or even expert in our profession, craft or trade, but we will never be fulfilled by our work. In fact, more often than not, a lot of us are just plain miserable instead.

How can you figure out if your career field is the right place for your talent? Take a look at the tasks you've performed in each of your previous jobs as you've listed them on your resume. How close do they match what you love to do and do well? If it's less than 90 percent, you're looking for a job in the wrong occupation.

And third, you have to acquire the latest skills and knowledge in your career field so that you can actually use your talent to perform at your peak on-the-job.

Talent is the capacity for excellence, not its achievement. In order to perform at your peak on-the-job, therefore, you have to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to express your talent fully. You must become expert enough to turn your potential for superior work into reality.

A person of talent sees themselves as a "work-in-progress." They are constantly improving their capabilities because each additional increment of expertise enables them to express a greater dimension of their inherent excellence.

To put it another way, they are so respectful of their talent they never stop trying to perfect it. They don't wait for their employer to offer training; they seek it out on their own. They don't put personal development on hold because they are in transition; they use ongoing education to plug the employment gap in their resume.

President Kennedy had it right. We all deserve "an equal opportunity to develop our talents." And, that includes those of us who are looking for a new or better job.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit me at Weddles.com

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