



careergasm

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**JUST  
GIMME  
A SIGN**

# Just gimme a sign

Career signs — signs from the universe about what you should do with your career — don't come in the form of specific job titles lit up in neon lights. They don't knock you over the head and drag you to where you're supposed to be. Career signs are a little more subtle than that.

**Most career signs show up as inklings and whispers and curiosities.**

And it goes without saying that you need to pay attention and notice the signs for them to be of any good to you. If noticing signs isn't your forté, no problem. We're going to keep it simple and just sort some career ingredients into two simple piles — yes and no.

## Swipe right or swipe left?

Let's pretend that scoring your ideal career is as simple as hitting up Tinder. It's totally not, btw, but let's play anyway. We're going to look at the stuff you find attractive in a career (swipe right), and also some of the shit you find unattractive in a career (swipe left), and we're going to consider three different categories — activities, environment, and people.

### WORK ACTIVITIES

Let's start with the easiest and most obvious stuff — the workish activities you do and don't like to do. You get to decide what you swipe right (yes please!) and swipe left (no thanks).

Need some help to get started? Here are some of my own preferences for work activities: I don't like boring, repetitive tasks, so nothing makes me want to swipe left like most administrative work. Same goes for most kinds of reporting and research. Zzzzz... Also, most statistical stuff and any super complicated technical stuff frustrates the hell out of me. No way, dude. Swipe left.

On the other hand, there are some work activities I find myself attracted to: teaching and nurturing, helping people grow, writing, telling stories, creating cool content, noticing patterns, connecting seemingly unrelated ideas, and creating systems to organize complicated things. All of that stuff is a hell yes for me. Swipe right.

Your turn. What are some work activities that really turn you off (swipe left)? And what are some that feel like a hell yes (swipe right)?

Side note: Don't be surprised if some of the stuff on my swipe right list is on your swipe left list or vice versa, or if you cook up lists of work activities I haven't even touched upon. There are gazillions of things people do at work, and everybody likes something different. You do you.

**Swipe left**

(work activities that are a turnoff)

**Swipe right**

(work activities that feel like a hell yes)

Work activities are all that people typically consider when thinking about career stuff, but there are two other kinds of things that can really make or break a feel-good career — your work environment, that is the systems and cultures and spaces you work within; and the people you work with, your colleagues, customers, and clients. We'll start with your work environment and get to the people piece in a second...

## WORK ENVIRONMENT

Which kinds of work environments, systems, and cultures do you find yourself naturally attracted to? And which ones are a turnoff? Here's a little glimpse of my own preferences to help get your gears turning...

Traditional corporate environments are not my jam. I don't like rigid rules or high-pressure situations. I hate being interrupted or feeling rushed, and I don't like juggling too many things at once or switching tasks frequently. I want to kick ass at whatever I do and so unclear expectations drive me crazy. So do large groups. Swipe left.

I love having lots of autonomy in my work, doing work that is mostly self-directed, where I can organize and plan on my own terms. I like to focus deeply and work on just one thing for a long stretch of time. I also really enjoy intimacy, so I like building work relationships with people (in my case, my clients) where we trust each other and where we can both be ourselves. My physical work environment also really matters to me. I dig open spaces that have a warm welcoming vibe. All of that stuff is a big swipe right for me.

What about you? What are some of the environmental factors that are a definite no (swipe left)? And what are some that light you up and turn you on (swipe right)?

### **Swipe left**

(environmental, system, and cultural factors that are a turnoff)

### **Swipe right**

(environmental, system, and cultural factors that turn you on and light you up)

This next piece is so important. The people you choose to surround yourself with can really impact how you feel about your work. You won't always have total control over the kind of people around you at work, but if you can get clear on who your kind of people are (swipe right) and who they're not (swipe left), you're much more likely to align with people who are DTF (that stands for definitely the former — get your mind out of the gutter!) versus drive you mental.

## PEOPLE

A little bit about my own preferred peeps to get you started...

I don't like being around or working with people who are pushy or inconsiderate. Rigid rule followers and people who are too buttoned up drive me crazy. Same for attention seekers. I find them exhausting. I don't like being around people who are all jacked up and super competitive... mostly because that triggers my own competitiveness and I don't like how that feels. And the worst kind of people for me to be around are the *poor me* victim mindset crowd. Those people feel like energy vampires to me. Too much time around them and I literally can't even. All of these types of people are a swipe left for me. No thanks.

I love people who don't take themselves too seriously — people who like to make work fun, who naturally look on the bright side, and who laugh a lot. I also love weirdos — those quirky oddball types who are comfortable enough in their own skin to rock an unconventional vibe and do their own damn thing. I'm a bit kooky, myself, so it's not surprising that I like to work with other kooky people. But none of these attributes matter to me if the people around me are not also real, and open, and warm. Those qualities are at the very top of my swipe right list.

Over to you. What kind of people would you rather not be around and work with (swipe left), and what qualities and attributes do you find really attractive in people (swipe right)?

### Swipe left

(qualities and attributes of people I don't want to be around or work with)

### Swipe right

(qualities and attributes I find really attractive in people)

Now that you're a little clearer on the work activities, environments, and people you do and don't like, let's take a look at your career history for more clues...

## Deleted scenes and the highlight reel

*Work history! But I'm just starting my career! I don't HAVE a work history!*

*Bullshit.*

You may or may not have a super impressive resume yet, or a long list of full-time jobs, but you definitely have a work history. And you may not even know it, but you've learned a thing or two about what you like and don't like based on your past experiences.

So what counts as your **work history**? For our purposes, pretty much everything. I'm talking about every little thing you've ever done to make some cash, thinking as far back as you can remember — babysitting, cutting grass, waiting tables, working at the local golf course, painting houses, retail jobs, working as a teaching assistant, all of it. Write it down.

### **Every job I ever got paid for:**

Let's also include volunteer work — the stuff you did to rack up your community service hours in high school, unpaid internships, collecting money for charity, and any volunteer work you did for a cause you care about.

### **Volunteer work:**



And just for our purposes we're also going to include **things you did just for fun**. These are things you probably wouldn't put on your resume — things like clubs and organizations and teams you were/are a part of (e.g., school newspaper, book club, track team, comedy group, theatre performances, etc.), and fun things you do on your own (e.g., reading, photography, making a web series, hiking, graphic design, painting, anything at all).

### **Stuff I do just because it's fun:**

Now here's the juicy part. We're going to take those lists and use them to create two others. We're going to call one **Highlights Reel** and the other **Deleted Scenes**. We'll use our list called Highlights Reel to list one or two things you really liked about all of the jobs, volunteer work and fun activities you listed previously — the highlights. We'll use our list titled Deleted Scenes to list one or two things you *didn't* like about all of the jobs, volunteer work and fun activities you listed — the stuff you wish you could delete from your memory.

Let's start with the Highlights Reel. What were some things you loved about your previous jobs, volunteer work, and fun activities? For example, maybe you loved the quiet solitude of cutting grass for hours, or your fun coworkers from the golf course, or motivating your track teammates, or creating the perfect scene for your web series, or how your volunteer coordinator always asked you for your ideas. Write it down.

## HIGHLIGHTS REEL

**Job, volunteer work,  
or activity:**

**Something I really liked about  
that (a highlight):**

For our deleted scenes list we'll do the opposite. We'll take your lists of jobs, volunteer work, and activities and write out the stuff you *didn't* like about those things — the shit you'd happily delete from your memory, the stuff that didn't make the cut.

It's important to be specific here. Don't just say that you hated that your boss was an asshat. Get specific. Like maybe it was that your boss didn't trust you or micromanaged or was disorganized or rude. Ready? Unleash the beast.

## DELETED SCENES

**Job, volunteer work, or activity:**      **Something I didn't like about that:**

If you look closely you'll probably see some themes emerge. The shit that drives you nuts almost always follows some kind of pattern. Same for the stuff that lights you up.

For example, if I were to make my own Highlights Reel list I'd notice that I love anything that involves teaching, and also helping people with problems, and writing (which I do when I blog, write a book, write web copy, or develop content for a course like this). Those are consistent highlights for me. You may notice some of these themes are visible in my Swipe Right list as well.

If I were to create a Deleted Scenes list of my own I'd see some themes there too. For example, much of my work history has shown that I hate high-pressure sales. I hate getting all up in someone's grill and hustling for the upsell or pressuring them to close the deal. I also hate research. I find it boring and tedious and isolating...a total fucking snoozefest. My years of babysitting as a teen tell me that working with kids isn't really my thing. Watching two 10-year-olds play basketball on the net screwed to the garage makes me want to nap indefinitely.

Your turn. Take a look at the stuff on your Highlights Reel and Deleted Scenes lists. Some themes will likely pop out at you. What are your lists trying to tell you about what you do and don't like?

**My Highlights Reel list is trying to tell me...**

**My Deleted Scenes list is trying to tell me...**

## High fives, hugs, and fist bumps

What are the things you're recognized for most frequently? Or what are the things people always seem to thank you for? In other words, where do you always seem to get fist bumps, high fives, and hugs?

We're going to look at this stuff not to inflate your ego (though it kinda will #BONUS), but because the things you're most recognized and appreciated for are often very good career clues.

One of my clients — I'll call him Jake — is easily able to tune into the abilities and potential of other people. He does this quickly and seemingly effortlessly, even with people he doesn't know very well. It's like he has a special sixth sense for noticing people's best qualities. People are always amazed by and grateful for his insights and they tell him so. It's no surprise then that Jake is a successful recruiter, placing amazing people into just the right jobs.

Chuck is another client of mine. He's always getting thanked for being a wonderful host. He takes care to plan gatherings down to the finest little detail. And once his parties are in full swing you'll find him roaming around introducing people to each other, refilling drinks, and making everyone feel comfortable. Chuck realized that his interpersonal warmth and his love of details isn't limited to hosting; he's on the hunt for work in training and development, helping new teams settle into their jobs, get to know each other, and grow together.

Another client — I'll call her Gail — has an incredible knack for bringing uncomfortable issues out into the open. She gets people to move past their discomfort and to openly discuss taboo issues like workplace sexual harassment and institutionalized racism. The people around her appreciate her ability to make them feel safe and open around such difficult subjects. Gail uses this particular superpower in her consulting work helping organizations raise and address difficult issues.

## Now it's your turn. What kind of things do people tend to recognize or thank you for?

In other words, where do you get a fist bump, a pat on the back, a handshake, a hug, or a high five? Try and think of at least three things. They might seem totally unrelated to work on the surface (that's okay), like Chuck's flair for hosting. Or they might seem work-ish, like Jake's ability to spot potential, or Gail's knack for addressing difficult issues.

### **Things that people recognize and/or thank me for:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now let's dig a little deeper to see what your personal superpowers are rooted in. Jake's ability to notice potential is really due to the fact that he pays close attention and is very perceptive. Chuck has a flair for hosting because he loves the little details, and also because he's relationally focused and wants to make people feel comfortable and get to know each other. Gail's knack for helping people deal with difficult, taboo issues is really rooted in the fact that she's nonjudgmental and makes people feel safe.

Dig a little deeper. What are the things that you're recognized and appreciated for rooted in? And why might those qualities be valuable in the work world? (Even if you don't know what kind of work you want to do yet.)

## DIGGING DEEPER...

### 1. One thing I'm recognized/appreciated for:

When I dig a little deeper, that's really rooted in:

That might be valuable in the work world because:

### 2. Another thing I'm recognized/appreciated for:

When I dig a little deeper, that's really rooted in:

That might be valuable in the work world because:

### 3. A third thing I'm recognized/appreciated for:

When I dig a little deeper, that's really rooted in:

That might be valuable in the work world because:

Excellent! This is a really cool way to see how even some of the stuff you thought was totally unrelated to work might actually hold valuable career clues.

Now that we're clear on some of the awesome stuff you naturally bring to the table, let's take a look at some of the areas where you'd like to grow. In other words, some of the stuff you're not so good at yet (or you're not sure if you're good at it because you haven't tried it), but would love to get a career fist bump, high five or hug for in the future. Because when you're a career newbie you've still got lots of time to develop new skills you don't have yet.

**What skills and experience do you want to build?** You can let these things serve as career inspiration alongside the areas where you're already killin' it.



## CAREER INSPO

**New skills and experience I'd love to develop as I build my career:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

And there you have it — some stuff you're great at, some stuff you'd love to be better at, some clues from your work history, some lists of the work activities, environments, and people you do and don't like, and some general themes that pull those things together. These things are like breadcrumbs — little bits of information pointing in a certain direction. You'd be crazy not to follow these delicious clues.

If after that you're still feeling totally clueless it's likely that you're putting too much pressure on yourself to come up with an exact job title or career path. If so, I'd like to invite you to simply do the following...

# Give a fuck

What are the things you care about? Even if these things have no fathomable connection to a career. (Spoiler alert: They do. You just haven't made the connection yet.) One of my clients was turned off by most things except for things related to kids and the environment. Most other things made her want to roll her eyes, but she genuinely gave a fuck about kids and the environment.

**What are some things you genuinely give a fuck about? Be as general or as specific as you like:**

Good. I want you to keep that stuff in mind as we move through the rest of the course. Because there are *always* ways to weave that stuff into what's next for you.