

Don't Leave Your Career To Chance

Inventory Your Ideal Job Environment



SPECIAL REPORT

by Randy Siegel
“The Career Engineer”

Don't Leave Your Career To Chance: Inventory Your Ideal Job Environment

Randy Siegel

Many job searches are “accidents” waiting to happen. When I ask businesspeople how they found their jobs, I am astounded at the number who answer, “I didn’t. It found me.” or “It was an accident.”

When we don’t take the time to define our ideal work environments, we leave our careers to chance. The choice is ours: we can roll the dice or stack the deck in our favor by creating an Ideal Job Environment Inventory.

While responsibilities, titles, and compensation are important, it’s the working conditions, personalities, and corporate culture that ultimately determine our true happiness at the workplace. Savvy job seekers take time to inventory the type of environments in which they thrive, and this simple investment allows them to plant their careers in fertile fields, instead of constantly looking for greener pastures.

Let’s examine the three components of an ideal work environment: working conditions, personalities, and corporate culture.

How important is physical environment to you? For Fiona, natural light is important. “I have to have an office with windows,” she told me. “Early in my career, I worked in a cubicle, and I was miserable. I cannot tell you how much it affected my morale.”

Other physical factors include temperature, air quality, privacy, noise, neatness, and size of office.

Style and skills are also important to review. Extroverts require interaction, while introverts prefer to work alone. For those of us who are technically challenged, technical support becomes paramount. For others, a small thing like dress codes contributes to our happiness.

I believe the most important consideration in finding your ideal work environment is identifying a team with whom you can identify. When I first started my career, I worked for a large Atlanta public relations firm that had an awful reputation as a place at work. Despite its reputation, I loved my job because I liked my boss and fellow team members.

In reviewing personalities, ask yourself:

- What traits are important for my boss, direct reports, and peers to possess?
- What level of competency do I expect?
- How much socialization and collaboration do I need?

A company culture is far more than its mission statement. What are the company’s core values? Traditions? Communications styles (open or closed)? Formality (casual or business dress)?

Structure or hierarchy? Sacred cows? Unspoken rules? Many times, we can “feel” a company’s culture by checking in with our gut when we first visit their offices.

“Looking back on it, I knew from the start this wasn’t the company for me,” a client recently shared. “But the money was so good, I ignored my instincts. Boy, do I regret it now.”

An easy way to figure out what we want is to identify what we don’t. Think about all the jobs you have had over your career. What did you dislike about each one? Start a list.

Once the list is complete, turn each negative into a positive. For example, instead of writing “I don’t want a boss who micromanages,” write, “I want autonomy.” Looking over your list, are there any other factors you left out? If so, add them.

I also use a simple worksheet to help clients inventory their ideal work environment. (You’ll find a copy at the end of the report.) Using the following scale, I ask them to rank a list of motivators.

1 = Very important to me

2 = Somewhat important to me

3 = Not important to me at all

Motivators include:

- Working in the outdoors and nature
- A flexible work schedule
- Variety of tasks, changing workplace
- Teamwork, working in groups
- Public contact
- Working independently
- Precise work with little margin for error
- Honesty, strong ethics
- Creativity and innovation
- Lots of opportunity for professional development
- Balancing work and personal life
- Friendship and warm working relationships
- Clear career track, opportunities for advancement
- Time to make thoughtful decisions
- Little conflict or competition

From the larger list, clients select ten criteria that are especially important to them. They then narrow their selection to five to seven “non-negotiables.” One client selected:

1. Lots of activity, multiple tasks, high-energy work environment
2. Helping people, benefiting society
3. Working independently
4. Starting new projects
5. Stability and security

After every interview, he referred to his non-negotiable list to determine whether or not the job was a good fit. “The list helped me be more rational and analytical about my search,” he reported. He has been happily employed for five years now.

Most of us will work a minimum of forty years, five days a week, and eight hours a day. That comes to 83,000 hours over a lifetime. That’s way too many hours to be unhappy. Stack the deck in your favor and take the time to inventory your ideal work environment. Your career is too important to leave to chance.

Exercise

Your Ideal Work Environment

Instructions: Rate the degree of importance that you place on each of the following workplace motivators with:

- 1 = Very important to me
- 2 = Somewhat important to me
- 3 = Not important to me at all

Please add and rank any motivators that were not included on this list but that are important to you.

I enjoy careers and jobs that include:

- _____ Working in the outdoors and nature
- _____ A flexible work schedule
- _____ Variety of tasks, changing workplace
- _____ Lots of activity, multiple tasks, high-energy work environment
- _____ Physically challenging activities
- _____ Helping people, benefiting society
- _____ Teamwork, working in groups
- _____ Order and structure
- _____ Problem solving
- _____ Public contact
- _____ Working independently
- _____ “The Big Idea” versus detail and implementation
- _____ Starting new projects, building things
- _____ Precise work with little margin for error
- _____ Recognition for loyalty, dedication, and dependability
- _____ Competition
- _____ Honesty, strong ethics
- _____ Public recognition for work well done
- _____ Stability and security
- _____ Prestige, status, and glamour
- _____ Working with ideas

- _____ Strong financial compensation and rewards
- _____ Creativity and innovation
- _____ Little supervision; personal control over schedule
- _____ Measurable criteria for success
- _____ Lots of opportunity for professional development
- _____ Routine, predictable work load and schedule
- _____ Working with numbers and systems
- _____ Balancing work and personal life
- _____ Pride in what I do
- _____ Friendship and warm working relationships
- _____ Clear career track, opportunities for advancement
- _____ Tranquility, comfort, and freedom from pressure
- _____ Using cutting-edge techniques and technology
- _____ Opportunities for supervision, leadership, and influence
- _____ Adventure and excitement
- _____ Time to make thoughtful decisions
- _____ Being known as an “expert” in my field
- _____ Doing the very best job I can do
- _____ Little distraction
- _____ _____
- _____ _____
- _____ _____
- _____ _____
- _____ _____

Looking over your results, identify up to ten motivators that are the most important to you at work.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Now narrow that list to five:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Looking over this list, ask yourself:

1. Does it truly represent who I am? _____
2. Is my current work providing me what I value? _____
3. If not, what is missing?

What could you do to ensure that all your needs/values are being met?

If you are job hunting, in addition to your ideal work environment and occupation you'll want to consider where you want to live and how much you need/want to make.

Location: What cities and towns would you like to, or be willing to, live in? Two popular websites for location information are www.BestPlaces.net and www.HomeFair.com.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Compensation: How much total income do you need/want? Total income consists of salary, incentives, commissions, equity, and benefits. Consider a range. The bottom of the range is the minimal amount of money you need to pay your bills. The upper part of the range is the amount you believe you need to pay your bills, live comfortably, and save for the future. Before you decide on your range, check out www.Salary.com.

_____ to _____

About Randy Siegel

Randy Siegel helps professionals work their careers and live their lives with more power, passion, and purpose. He is a nationally recognized specialist in professional development, self-branding, communications training, and executive positioning for corporate professional development programs and individual clients.

Randy offers a proprietary process that facilitates self-discovery and clarifies personal perspective, true purpose, and professional image. This engaging process transforms high-potential employees into highly motivated and effective leaders who are committed to their organizations and careers. Additionally, it helps presidents and CEOs become more charismatic leaders, spokespeople, and ambassadors for the organizations they serve.

Randy Siegel spent the first half of his career successfully promoting his clients' goods and services as an executive vice president and partner with Fleishman-Hillard International Communications, one of the most respected firms in the public relations industry. Now, as a communications trainer, public speaker, coach, and writer, Randy helps clients market themselves and fast-track their careers. His integration of psychology and sociology with fundamental marketing principles helps career-oriented men and women become corporate rock stars.

Since founding his company in 1999, Randy has conducted hundreds of consultations, presentations, workshops, and coaching sessions for corporations, professional associations, nonprofit organizations, and marketing firms. He has authored professional articles for *Integrated Marketing*, *PR Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, *bizlife*, *MarketingPro.com*, and other publications. He has been quoted in *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal online*, Southwest Airline's in-flight magazine *Spirit*, and other media outlets. His monthly eNewsletter is valued by thousands of readers worldwide, and his books *Engineer Your Career: Building a Blueprint for Your Best Self* and *PowerHouse Presenting: Become the Communicator You Were Born to Be* are available through Amazon.com.

Randy's clients include Coca-Cola Enterprises, EarthLink, The Recording Academy (The Grammy Awards), Cox Communications, the Dallas Museum of Art, Viking Range Company, the University of Georgia MBA Program, State Farm Insurance, The Giving Institute, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, and Fleishman-Hillard International Communications. One client summed up Randy's work this way:

"You teach far more than communication; your message is about life issues, growth, awareness, and openness. It's powerful stuff, and your ability to communicate it and share your life is inspiring."

Benefits

As a result of Randy's work, professionals can expect to:

- Package, present, and promote their best selves
- Forge stronger relationships both at work and at home
- Work their careers and live their lives with more power, passion, and purpose

For a detailed description of Randy's coaching services, please visit his website at BuildYourInfluence.com.