

Choosing a career of one's liking

CHOICE, V PRADEEP KUMAR explains how to decide between mainstream and offbeat careers

Were you one of those who always knew what you wanted to become like an engineer, doctor or pilot or an offbeat career like that of a musician or a cricketer and managed to pursue your childhood passion into a profession? If so, you are indeed lucky, as pursuing a passion is challenging, and depends not only on your strengths, but also on family support.

Thus, it wasn't surprising when the mother of an engineering student called recently to fix a meeting to discuss a complex issue.

Her son, a 2nd year student of B E was determined to discontinue the course and pursue his passion for music and she wanted me to dissuade him. This was indeed a paradox as my son is a professional musician and I had the task of dissuading a potential musician, into becoming an engineer, instead.

In the never-ending debate of prospects vs passion in our homes, it's the future of children, which is at stake. Lack of understanding, incomplete information, uncertainties and the risks, makes career decisions, indeed complex.

Invariably, it's the parents who push children into careers, which they assess have prospects, while overlooking children's passion and innate talent, like in the above example.

Chasing a lucrative mainstream career, they often see disappointment and despair. Taking a U-turn midway into an expensive course/career is a wasted effort, money and time, which can never be made up.

This brings up the crucial question, that's always top of the mind of students and their parents, about how one should pursue childhood dreams and choose between mainstream and offbeat careers.

Identify the choice early

Do parents identify natural talent of children and nurture it as well? We must identify passion, aptitude and strengths of a child and consciously work towards building a holistic personality. This implies emphasizing academic excellence as well as refining their passion into a focused endeavor such as music, dance, photography, swimming etc. In due course, competency levels in academic and extra-curricular activity can evolve into career options.

Explore offbeat careers

Carefully choose between mainstream and offbeat careers, considering the anxiety and apprehensions of parents, which could be valid. In general, offbeat careers into arts or sports, take longer time to settle down and many have a shorter career span too. Initial hiccups are common and test your true passion, patience and determination.

Additionally, a crucial ingredient in offbeat career is the extent of family support,



as anxious parents would want their children to settle down in life early in a well-paying profession and married.

Professional satisfaction

While making career decisions, one must be clear about individual benchmark for success.

Usually, the money that you make in the profession is the index of success in our society, which is unfortunately not true. Success is more internal and an outcome of satisfaction of pursuing a meaningful and a worthy profession. Individuals, who are unable to find satisfaction, realize that they are possibly in a wrong profession, and shift midway into something new.

Decision making process

■ **SWOT Analysis:** It's a fact that every profession demands certain skills and has some limitations too. Career decision revolves around identifying choices and choosing the best option. Such choices are an outcome of a SWOT analysis of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. [Refer an article titled, 'Confused? SWOT it out', published in these columns on 9th August 2012]. SWOT analysis is a critical thinking process that eliminates fears and apprehensions, boosts your confidence level through self-discovery.

■ **The right course:** Choose the right career and the right stream while taking up

a pre-university course. Choice of a mainstream or offbeat career, should lead you into a course to refine your natural talent and skills into a level of perfection, as required to be a professional.

■ **Don't ignore prospects:** Being over enthusiastic and passionate about a profession doesn't mean you ignore career prospects. The financial gains in any career must be able to sustain a decent standard of living and keep you self-motivated. This requires a critical evaluation of the long-term financial and other prospects of a chosen career.

■ **Consult a mentor:** The opinion of a mentor is of great importance and help in making the decision. Pursuing a course and getting productively into a profession can take around five to seven years after schooling, in which time, career or industry prospects can radically change. Choose a mentor who is knowledgeable, experienced and accessible. Mentors have academic, economic and industry overview from both a long-term and a short-term perspective. They can relate your career preference to the knowledge and skill sets required for achieving excellence in that field. Thus, they can assess and guide you in the right direction, unlocking the genius in you.

■ **Implementation is the key:** The key to success isn't just choosing the right career and an appropriate course; more importantly, you have to master the knowledge and skills, which are prerequisites for a

successful career. Gaining mastery in any field is an outcome of dedicated efforts and an unflinching commitment. This is immaterial of whether you are doing an MBA course in a top institute or mastering a form of music or dance.

Personal life

Modern living is beset with pressures of coping with day-to-day problems as well as professional and personal challenges. Increasingly, people are finding it difficult to find a work-life balance, due to job insecurity and compatibility issues at work and home. In such a situation, job dissatisfaction can make life miserable, which is avoidable by choosing the right profession. Life is one continuous process of making decisions and its implementation determine your true success. Everything starts with yourself-making decisions of what you are going to do with your life. Consider and deliberate with caution, the opinion of parents, teachers and mentors, but act decisively making the final choice.

As author and motivational speaker Anthony Robbins says, "It's in your moments of decision, that your destiny is shaped". It's your life and hence become the architect of your life, by making the right choices and taking responsibility for the choices you make. Success then, isn't a distant destination; it's an enjoyable and rewarding journey.

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