

“Now is the time to get yourself fit”



If you are like most people, it has been a while since you have had an opportunity to step back and assess where you are in life, to determine what is important to you and to make some decisions about the direction of your life and career. It may also have been a while since you examined the value of your career experience. For example:

- What skills and knowledge have you developed?
- What experiences have you had that would provide value to a new employer?

Since you are not the same person you were when you started your career, it is important to take the time to determine who you have become. This “Self-Assessment”, as it is called, will help you understand the implications for your career.

The amount of effort you should put into it will of course depend on your situation. Not many people know exactly what they want to do, have analysed their skills and competencies, have developed a clear understanding of what they need to be happy and fulfilled at work and have defined the work environment that matches their requirements.

If this is you then your need for self-assessment may be minimal.

This is of course only true if your career field and industry target remain fairly stable. Statistics show that in today’s rapidly changing world of work it is quite likely that you will need to re-examine your qualifications, motivation and/or fit for new opportunities up to 8 times in your working life. So there is good reason for you now to seriously consider this.

Looked at slightly differently, if you can genuinely agree with several of the following statements, then you should make the commitment to complete a thorough self-assessment, no matter how secure you feel in your present job.

- My career is changing rapidly
- My career field is not growing
- My industry is shrinking or changing rapidly
- I have not been particularly happy in my work in recent years
- My career interests have changed in recent years
- I am close to retiring and don't need the same things from work I needed a few years ago
- I am not sure what skills I have that could be transferred to a new career situation
- I am not clear about specific factors that bring satisfactions to my work
- There have been recent personal changes in my life that might affect my work choices
- My work has upset my health
- I am not confident that I can clearly summarise my skills and qualifications on my CV

The important thing about a self-assessment is that it will do more than help you crystallise your career direction it will help you articulate what you have to offer to potential employers. It is important to remember that every potential interviewer has in mind the following when evaluating a person for a job:

1. **Can (s)he do the work?** What competencies and specific skills does this person have and how do they match the requirements for success in this job?
2. **Will (s)he do the work?** What kinds of jobs motivate and satisfy this person and how does the pattern of motivation fit in with the work we need to have done?

3. **Will (s)he “fit into our culture?** Overall does the picture I get of this person’s motivation and style fit with the culture of our organisation?
4. **Can we afford him/her?** What will we have to pay this person to attract him/her without upsetting internal relativities?

As the self-assessment deals with the first three of these questions the surest way for you to clarify your best career opportunities in today’s changing world of work is to assess yourself along the same lines. Put plainly you should look at the **“Can do, Will do, and how fit”** factors.

Systematically analysing the self-assessment data you gather in this way will enable you to decide your “Ideal Work Preferences”. These preferences will provide the basis for:

- Researching potential employment targets
- Identifying your best work options later in the process
- Communicating your qualifications clearly and convincingly to potential employers.

Because the world of work is changing so rapidly, this kind of self-assessment must become an ongoing part of managing your career.

Having said this often the problem, found at all levels of management, is that we in Northern Ireland are not very good at assessing our competencies (i.e. those attributes, skills or characteristics that relate to successful performance).

Why is it important for you to be able to assess your competencies? Because most employers will be evaluating you with the following kinds of questions in mind:

- What are your broad-based competencies – such as priority setting, listening and “political sense” – which predict success in a wide range of assignments?
- What specific skills – technical, functional and managerial – have you demonstrated which predict successful performance in a particular assignment?

Dealing with the **Can Do** questions will identify both your broad based competencies and specific demonstrated skills. However, the issue for you right now is to determine if you are fit to face the challenges and opportunities of this New World of working?