

# Money or Passion... That is the Question

By Kaitlin Eckler and Barb Kofman

**Q: My parents think I should go into a career that is stable and where I can make a lot of money. I am interested in doing other things where there is less predictability and more adventure. What is your advice?**

**A:** Your question is truly about whether to “follow the Money” or your Passion. Figuring out whether you should choose between a stable, high-income career or one with adventure and excitement, but with less secure financial rewards, truly depends on your innate values and your lifestyle needs.



## What Are Your Needs? Motivators?

If you follow the money trail, you may not be aligned with the work, the people, and/or the environment, or be dissatisfied with the lack of work/life balance, but this may be offset by the opportunity to reap greater financial rewards. If you follow your passion, you will likely love the content of your work, be motivated by it and the people you work with and may or may not have great financial rewards. When we work with clients we often ask them to consider the question “Why do you work?” The objective of this question is to elicit an understanding about where the by-product of the individual’s labour registers on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Some people work to meet basic physical needs of food and shelter, while others work for self-fulfillment and self-actualization. However, even for people who work primarily to meet basic needs, their food and shelter dreams do not necessarily come in plain, brown packages—they often aspire to lifestyles of the rich and famous.

In our September column we probed to find out what is important to you and asked you to consider your values. Before proceeding we recommend you revisit that column and be very clear about your most important values. (If you don’t have the article, go to [www.jobpostings.net](http://www.jobpostings.net) and click on Career Zone to view our past articles) If money, security, and/or prestige are your top values, then most likely you should be looking at a career that offers stability and financial rewards.

## What Is Your Lifestyle? Now? Down the Road?

The next area to focus on is your own lifestyle aspirations. When it comes to lifestyle you need to think about where you want to live (geographic location, type of home), how you would like to spend your leisure time (hobbies, vacations),

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and what your family and social circumstances may be. For example, if you dream of living in New York City where rents are very high rather than in a modest dwelling in an affordable community or if your leisure activities include golf and skiing as opposed to bird-watching and walking, then you know that you need to have a stable, high-paying position in order to support your lifestyle aspirations. However, if you are satisfied with a modest way of life, then a less predictable and adventurous career is something that you have the freedom to try.

The other area to think about is your expectations regarding any present or future intimate relationships. Is there a significant other in your life today? Will you be in partnership with someone or be responsible for a spouse and possibly children? These are considerations to take into account when planning your future career choice, as a career should support and enhance your life

### Exercise: Goal-setting

Envision the future life you would like to live and project ten years, five years and one year from today. This will clarify for you how to pave the way to be able to support the future you envision, by indicating the career path to embark on in the short-term in preparation for landing at your desired long-term destination.

**LONG-TERM:** Think about your life ten years ahead to the year 2016.

1. Where are you living--location and type of home?
2. Who lives with you--spouse, children?
3. What activities are you involved in?
4. Where do you take your vacations?
5. What type of work are you doing?
6. What is your position?

**MID-TERM:** Envision where you may need to be in 2011--the halfway mark to your long-term goal. Repeat the above questions projecting your life five years from today.

**SHORT-TERM:** Consider the same questions thinking about the various aspects of your life after graduation. Take into account that this is the first step to getting started on the path to achieving your five-year career goal.

This goal setting exercise should give you a logical rather than an emotional approach to figuring out whether to pursue careers that offer potential financial reward and security or those that fulfill your passion. Keep in mind, there is always room in your future plan to consider a change in direction should the one you first choose turn out to not meet your primary needs.

## Q: I'd like to take some time off before I start work. Is this going to affect my ability to find a job when I return?

It's not uncommon, after many years at school, to want to take a break before starting a career. Many graduates decide they'd like to pursue another direction for a few years, such as traveling or working in an unskilled job in order to focus on an outside interest in more depth without having to advancing a career.

Whatever your reason for not wanting to start your career immediately, be sure that you have considered what you want to do and when the time to focus on that intention will arise. Depending on your personality, it's easy to get caught up in a laid-back lifestyle and forget about your longer-term goals. If this happens, it may become more difficult to market yourself effectively within the job market and can prove to be very discouraging.

To avoid this scenario, before you take your break, find the time to think about what it is you want to do in your career and confirm in writing when you are planning to start actively pursuing that goal. Follow the advice that was provided in our September column and the goal-setting exercises outlined in the response to the previous question. Then, when you do take your break, keep your eyes open to career possibilities that align with the key skills and values you have identified and that support the goals you have set. Also, maintain a record of your accomplishments, no matter what you are doing, as they may prove to be useful in marketing yourself to achieve your career objective.

If it turns out you are doing something that clarifies your area of interest, then this may in and of itself lead you into your career field of choice, sometimes in surprising ways. For example, one client took a year off to work and travel, having originally planned to return to school to do a Masters degree, and discovered that the travel industry was where his real passion lay. He came back, started to work for an adventure travel company and has been extremely happy travelling the globe researching and designing tour packages and leading trips, a career that he hadn't considered prior to his own travel experience.

There is nothing wrong with taking some time off before you start your career. In fact, for many it is the healthy thing to do and enables them, when they do start their work, to be much more focused on achieving their goals. But, if you are planning to do this, don't forget to consider your next step, the one that will enable you to fulfill your long-term career/life aspirations.

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*Barbara Kofman of CareerTrails & Kaitlin Eckler of KE&A Consulting are career management professionals with extensive experience in the youth and employment marketplace. Barbara can be contacted at [www.careertrails.com](http://www.careertrails.com) or 416 708-2880 & Kaitlin can be reached at [career@sympatico.ca](mailto:career@sympatico.ca) or 416 579-1508.*