

Turning Points

THE HIGHLANDS COMPANY NEWSLETTER

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This career would never have occurred to me!



Three years ago Laura Appleby, then 29, managed a Fortune 500 account for an international ad agency – and she was “miserable.” “Advertising agency work was interesting, fast paced and lucrative. But the more I moved up in the hierarchy, the less I liked it. The research and problem solving used my abilities, but I just couldn’t stand the politics.”

“People in my family were lawyers, doctors, accountants and a few musicians. My view of careers was very limited. I got into advertising because a few Chicago ad agencies recruited on our campus and it seemed more exciting than banking, which I had

been leaning towards. That’s about as much thought as I put into my first career decision.” Laura stayed in advertising 8 years, moving steadily up the ladder.

Then she took the Highlands Ability Battery and enrolled in a Highlands Program Personal Strategic Planning Seminar. “I entered the seminar because I knew I wanted something different but didn’t have a clue about how to get there. I was dead stuck.”

“The first thing Highlands did was give me incentive to think long and hard about what I really wanted to do. It took quite a few weeks of hard work in the seminar until I began to see a pattern emerging. I have always loved history and research. My true passion is genealogy – the study of a person’s origins. I had traced my family’s and other relatives’ roots for years. It had never crossed my mind that I could combine these interests and fascinations into a career.”

“The Highlands Program planted the seed within me. I nurtured that seed a little bit at a time, mainly by continuing to be open to opportunities and keeping my dream alive. I referred back to my Highlands notes regularly.”

Two and a half years passed. Diana left the agency and ultimately moved out of the city. “I volunteered to teach a weekend workshop on genealogy. A participant in the workshop came from the Disney Institute. She told me that Disney had been thinking of offering genealogy programs at its new resort. We set up a meeting and within a matter of weeks, Disney offered me a position as the Managing Instructor.”

“I cannot tell you what it is like to be here! Everyone here loves her work, whether the work is teaching culinary arts, rock climbing or storytelling. It is a very supportive and stimulating setting.”

“Without the Highlands experience I’m certain I would have never pursued my dream so purposefully. It would never have occurred to me that I could obtain a position that combined so many parts of what I do best and what I love.”

The Elements of Vision

A personal vision has the power to change a person’s life. Laura’s story illustrates this idea – the idea with which we started – the power of The Highlands Program. Laura held to her Vision – first conceived during her Highlands Program Seminar – and refined it over a significant period of time. As a result, she is in a job that was, literally, made for her.

What is a Personal Vision? Will any Vision do? How does a person get one?

When participants in The Highlands Program Seminars create a positive Personal Vision, two key elements are needed to make it useful and life-changing:

- It must be based on solid data; and
- It must be a creative integration.

Your Personal Vision must be based on real information about you. That is why we start with The Highlands Ability Battery. The Battery supplies objective information about what your natural, inborn talents are. In the Personal Strategic Planning Seminar which follows, you identify and articulate other factors, such as your personality, interests, values and goals. The more information about yourself you start with, and the more accurate that information is, the better you will be able to project yourself into a future that will make sense for you.

But your Personal Vision can’t be all objective and fact-based. Linking these factors together is above all a creative process. In the Personal Strategic Planning Seminar, participants regularly do exercises that help them “turn-on” the creative half of the brain to come up with ideas for their futures that they would never think of independently. Through one creative exercise during her Highlands Seminar, for example, Laura conceived the idea of combining her experience in the corporate world with her love of history and genealogy. It wasn’t ‘logical,’ but it was what she was looking for, and that became the central element of her Vision.

A Personal Vision is a way to see and plan your future. If you can start with objective information about yourself, and then integrate the important factors into a creative mix, you can design your Personal Vision. Researchers have found repeatedly that a Personal Vision based on real information is the one factor most predictive of a person’s success and happiness. The Highlands Program was created with the primary goal of helping people find their own Personal Vision.



Looking Out for No. 1

The Complete Guide To Managing Your Career

A 20-page article in Fortune described many of the issues individuals need to think about when managing their own careers. Here is a brief summary of some of the major topics covered in the article.

1. There is a great deal of anxiety in the workplace. Of more than 100,000 managers polled by International Survey Research:
 - 37% said they were “frequently concerned about being laid off” – the highest anxiety level in decades.
 - 40% of managers said they could not count on keeping their jobs even if they performed well.
 - Almost 50% of those surveyed were seriously worried about their employer’s future.
2. There is also a lot of indecision and confusion about **direction**. A recent **Gallup Organization** survey of employed, college educated adults found that 33% of those surveyed said they would, if given the chance to start all over again, opt for a different line of work.
3. A large part of the Fortune piece was focused on EQ – or Emotional Intelligence, which is the title of the best-selling book by Daniel Goleman. The thesis of this book is that there is much more to success than a high IQ. In fact, having a high EQ may be a much more critical benchmark of how well one does in the workplace. In a sentence, EQ is the power not only to understand and make use of one’s own emotions but also to understand and respond to them in others.
4. Gary Klein, a Ph. D. who does research in applied cognitive psychology for the military, describes how **intuitive decision making** works: “People with years of experience quickly recognize a pattern of information that might mean nothing to a novice. The novice would attack the problem by considering, analytically, many possible solutions. The experienced person, by contrast, sees a possible solution immediately – not the best solution, maybe, but one that works.” Shoshana Zuboff, a Harvard Business School professor, says that organizations that don’t trust intuition are making a mistake. “So many people go awry because they use sterile analytic tools.”

So, if the gut is the practical site of decision making, how does one make it smarter?

Dr. Klein responds: “There is not presently a strategy that teaches people how to be better decision-makers because what distinguishes the better ones is their body of experience.” Smartness, then, lies in gaining more experience – as much relevant experience as you can get your hands on.

For example, an employee who wants to sharpen her decision-making should ask to be rotated through a variety of jobs within her specialty. She should try to soak up as much second-hand experience as she can. The key to making this strategy work is having a goal or plan for one’s career. It is clear that a random set of experiences will not add appreciably to a person’s ability to make decisions. However, a focused set of experiences in a significant career area can be quite meaningful.

5. And finally, Ellen Hart of Gemini Consulting thinks one of the smartest things an employee can do is to assume full management of his or her own career. Keeping a job, any job, is not after all the test of smartness. Smartness lies in making sure your intellectual and emotional abilities are matched to a job that promotes their growth. If EQ and IQ are telling you your job no longer fits, it may be time to ask yourself: *Is your job smart enough to keep you?*

To complete the Highlands Ability Battery

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Where Are You In The Six Turning Points?

Laura (see other side) was at a Turning Point when she went through The Highlands Program. At 29, she was at the Turning Point we call the 30’s Assessment.

What are life’s Turning Points, and what issues do you face at each one of them?

We have identified six Turning Points in a person’s work life.

Turning Points

1. High School to College (17-18) The first Turning Point and the first career decision. It is important to start college with (a) knowledge of your natural abilities, and (b) 2 or 3 good career options to explore and work on.
2. College to the Work World (22-25) Your first job should be the first step in a larger vision. If you take ‘just anything’ you run the risk of having to start over at age 30.
3. Age 30 Assessment (28-33) Even if your first career choice was a good one, you will tend to modify it here, to enlarge it or expand it – start a family, get into the ‘fast track,’ or move geographically, for instance.
4. Mid-Life Transition (40-45). The end of the first Cycle in your life and the beginning of a new one. No matter how satisfied you have been in the first Cycle, you may want to develop different parts of yourself in the second Cycle. You may want to add something you have been missing or overlooking – a new interest, for example.
5. Age 50 Assessment (50-55) As in the Age 30 Assessment, you may want to modify the choices you made at age 40; or you may want to start on a new path all together.
6. Retirement Transition (65+) The end of the second Cycle; the beginning of a new one.

THE HIGHLANDS PROGRAM *for Students, Adults and Organizations*

THE HIGHLANDS ABILITY BATTERY
Discover your natural, inborn abilities - things that come naturally and easily to you.

PERSONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING SEMINAR
Look at your abilities, interests, skills, personal style, values, family and goals in order to create a career vision.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS WORKSHOP
Focus on all the factors you need to know to make sound decisions about College and Career