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Personal and Career Development: A personal vision predicts success and happiness

By Dr. Thomas N. Tavantzis

One of the most successful, personally and professionally rewarding accelerated evening classes I offer at Saint Joseph's University is Personal and Career Development. We focus on the student as a whole person by looking at the eight factors that create Personal and Career effectiveness. The students have the opportunity to learn experientially as they develop their own Personal and Career Vision. These are working, experienced, returning students –motivated to maximize their skills, learn new concepts and obtain their undergraduate or graduate degrees. What becomes clear for many students is that they spend more time planning their vacations than their careers!

Personal Vision

Why is a Personal Vision so important for both career and personal development? It can direct and galvanize practically every aspect of your life. As the Cheshire Cat said in *Alice in Wonderland*: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." The opposite could not be more true: If you know where you're going, you can overcome almost any obstacle to get there. Having a Personal Vision for your career is more predictive of success and happiness than intelligence, socioeconomic background or education.

A group of researchers led by David Myers spent more than a decade studying the factors that make people successful and happy, including income, education, employment, and family and marital stability. They discovered that the most important factor was actually having an articulated vision for one's life.

If you asked any group of fast trackers in corporate America, "Do you have a vision for your life?" the odds are pretty good that they would answer with a resounding, "Yes." But the reality is that most of them don't have anything close to a real vision

A personal vision is an articulated, detailed description of how you want to live your life - your whole life, not just your work life. It needs to contain real and realistic information about who you are; what you like to do, do and don't do well, think is worth doing, and want to accomplish. It needs to be written down and reviewed often. It should be based on eight factors: Your position in the Career Development Cycle; Abilities (assessed through the Highlands Ability Battery online, a timed collection of work samples); Skills; Interests; Personal Style; Family of Origin; Values; and Goals. Students complete

exercises that help them develop their own Personal and Career Vision. Every student does not leave with a finished Vision, but they're all well on their way. I hold a three-month follow-up class for graduates, and by then, everyone has a Personal Vision.

How do you get to a Personal Vision and what does one look like?

To get a vision, you have to step back and get a fresh perspective on work and life. Don't say, "Oh, I'll get around to that," because you won't. You have to set aside time, energy and focus to create an articulated description of yourself.

The vision has to be inclusive. Many different factors go into a vision. A vision must contain all eight factors listed above. Omit one, and it will come back to haunt you.

Try your vision out – live with it and refine it. You must not only define your vision – you must act on it. Return to it periodically and see if it still fits you. Your vision must constantly evolve.

Write your vision down. Tell it to everyone who's important to you. Nothing makes an idea so powerful as to write and recite it – again and again.

Saint Joseph's University has FREE Lunch and Learns delivered on site by Dr. Tavantzis at a company's location. The topics include not only career development but also leadership, coaching and emotional intelligence. Contact Amy Barth Learn at 610-660-1260 to schedule at Lunch and Learn.

Dr. Thomas N. Tavantzis is Director of Organizational Psychology and Leadership Programs at Saint Joseph's University.

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