

20 QUESTIONS TO BOOST YOUR CAREER

INTRODUCTION

This resource is intended to be read alongside the section “Your Future Career” on Page 123 of “The Self-Worth Safari”. In this book, you have already discovered Shift 4: From Self-evaluation to Usefulness. You therefore understand the significance of switching from self-preoccupation and instead focusing on the needs of others. You can do so with no loss of identity or self-care, because you are exploring with an established sense of self-worth, rather than proving yourself in any way (self-esteem)

REVIEWING WORK TO DATE

The following questions will help you with your exploration. Some are questions to ask yourself. Others are questions that you can ask other people: the latter are in speech marks.

Feel free to order them in any sequence that works for you: also, to customise the language to your unique situation. Notice how all of the questions are about usefulness – not self-evaluation!

1. **Looking back over the past few months, in what situations and settings have my talents been most useful?** Please be specific. Think of problems solved, new options created, people inspired, events promoted etc.
2. **What would have happened otherwise?** The value of our work is often most visible when we look at the alternative. If you had not been there, what issues would have resulted?
3. **Who are the people I have most enjoyed working with?** Why did I most enjoy working with these people? What impact does my work have with them (that perhaps is not so evident with others)? You can do the next few questions with them:
4. **“Of all the things we have done together (briefly mention c. 3 of them): what for you has been most useful?”** Notice what they say... which often throws fresh light on your own answer to question 3.
5. **“Why was that important?”** The full value of our work lies in the context other people’s challenges and perceptions: which we often miss by not asking this question.
6. **“What difference did that make?”** Like the previous question, this is about exploring their world, their context. Look for ripple effects: these are often the hidden value of our work.
7. **What does this tell me about my strengths?** When reviewing our strengths, the full value of these will be clearer when we approach the questions from the perspective of usefulness.

REVIEWING YOUR WORK RIGHT NOW

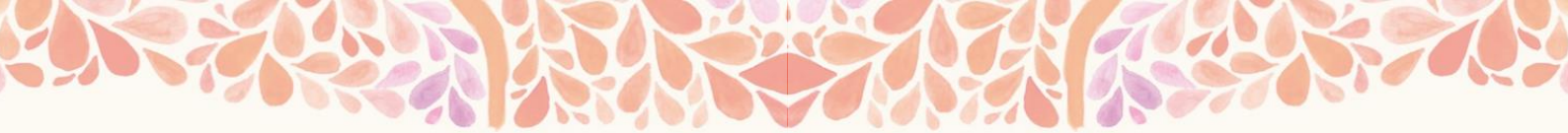
8. **Who are the people I most enjoy working with today?** While the answer may be similar to Q3 above, it may also have evolved.

9. **Which meetings / tasks this week do I look forward to?** And which do I not? That intuitive heart-sink feeling may be telling you something.
10. **How is my energy impacting me and my usefulness to others?** This flows naturally from the previous question.
11. **Who are the people (or problems) that I care about?** Please be as specific as possible. Try to avoid generic terms such as “SMEs, “people in transition” or “exhaustion”. Use the phrase “for example....” to help be more specific. The significance of this will become apparent in the next few questions.
12. **How might I be indulging in “sophisticated procrastination”?** For example, a) wasting time on introspection, b) not getting started on practicing on exploration meetings and c) slipping back into habitual stores about my work life?

LOOKING AHEAD

The following questions are focused on the future. Many are questions that you will have in conversation with others.

13. **How can I research the issues of these specific groups?** Who can I talk to? List at least five names. If you have difficulty, ask colleagues or friends. You can start with Google to help frame the questions (suggestions to follow), but the power to this exploration lies in *conversations*.
14. **“I’m reaching out to explore future career-options. Can you spare me 20mins in the coming weeks?”** This is perhaps the most powerful career question of all. If you struggle with it — as many people do — you may wish to read my book “The Courage to Ask” (co-authored with Kate Daly).
15. **“How will their future be different to the past/present?”** The word “their” refers to the specific group defined in Q11. For careers to thrive, it’s important to play to where the ball is going, not just where it already is.
16. **“What challenges will this create for them?”** The value of your work is directly proportional to your ability to be useful to the challenges of others.
17. **“How can my experience be useful, in that context?”** Now that you have explored the challenges of others, it’s much easier to talk about you!
18. **“Who else should I be having this conversation with? Would you be willing to introduce me?”** If each person you talk to introduces you to someone else, you will never run out of people to talk to! All the opportunities we will ever need are already in the hands of the people we know, or the people to whom they can introduce us.
19. **“What jobs already exist in this space?”** But please note that the best opportunities often come from the jobs that didn’t exist until you had a crucial conversation with the right person.
20. **“If I could help you with that, would you be interested?”** Notice how this is a question about usefulness, not just “pitching”.



21. **“If so, what’s the next step?”** If they answer this question, you have an opportunity.

OK, that was 21 questions. You will no doubt have some more to add. You can do so here:

“What’s perhaps important is how we are valuable – not how valuable we are” (Edgar Friedenberg)