

## Three Common Career Myths and Corresponding Truths

Beliefs drive behaviors, and ultimately determine your results. Consciously aligning your beliefs with key truths is critical in every aspect of our lives, and especially in our career lives.

Simply put, beliefs are the base foundation of your career health. As with the foundation of a house, if it is cracked or not fully set, everything built upon it will eventually fall. So, your path to career health and success begins with learning and adopting helpful career assumptions.

In our book *“Don’t Dread Monday: Your Guide to a Lifetime of Career Success,”* we highlight ten foundational career myths and corresponding truths. Three of the most pervasive of these myths are listed below. Reviewing and adopting the corresponding foundational truths is invaluable to establishing effective career behaviors and realizing career success.



### ***Myth – Find a career doing what you are good at***

This myth sets the premise for almost all traditional career counseling and promotional decision making. The simple idea is that if you do work that you are good at you will find greater prosperity and stability in your career. Additionally, companies benefit as you are adding maximum value to them.

Based on this, schools and companies administer standard aptitude tests, report cards and various evaluation processes focused on driving awareness and alignment with your measured strengths. And, when making career and promotional decisions, the level, function and role that a person is placed in is based upon how others in the organization assess their capabilities. Other factors such as a person’s interests are rarely considered. It is simply a given that we are to organize our passions and perspectives and lives around the needs of the organization.

To be clear, it is always a good idea to be aware of your areas of strength and weaknesses. However, when your areas of perceived aptitude are the primary reason for choosing and following a career direction, you run the risk of not taping into the real source of Career success– your passions.

In reality, techniques for evaluating your capabilities are faulty and often inaccurate. Time and again we know people who have been told not to pursue a career direction because they weren’t smart enough or “inclined” in a certain area. Years later they regained the confidence and awareness that they *did* have the capability.

Unfortunately, by the time they stopped listening to “experts” and their measures, they had spent years in less fulfilling careers doing what they were “good” at.

What’s clear is that people’s talents and abilities aren’t always the same as their passions. As authors, we have regularly received feedback that we are good at writing, managing, developing presentations, and leading conferences. In fact, we have constantly been given this kind of work because we are good at it, but we are not passionate about this work. Finding our own Career success and fulfillment began with stopping the grind (doing things we were talented in but hated) and embracing the work we loved to do.

We believe in the coming years will bring an emerging awareness of the need for passion in the workplace. People in companies will see that tapping into the passion, not necessarily the overt strengths, of people will spark higher levels of sustained effort and results.

### **Truth – Find a career doing what you love**

#### ***Myth - To get ahead you just need to do a good job.***

We all want this to be true. It would seem to make sense that the quality and integrity of a person’s work is all that should matter. Unfortunately, getting ahead in an organization often takes more than that. To be clear, maintaining a high level of performance is critical; however, doing a good job does not guarantee you will get ahead or find career success in your company. Ultimately, organizations are political, and personnel and promotion decisions are based upon rational performance criteria and non-rational subjective criteria. So, doing a good job is necessary but not sufficient. You also need to effectively navigate the social and political dimensions of your company.

Although politics are always present, they should not be the primary focus of your attention. Nor, should they solely shape your decisions and actions within an organization. The real power comes from navigating the politics but not being political. Your main focus should be on doing what you love, not on being accepted and included by all the “important” people. Being a political animal will ensure you are not bringing your loves to work, but instead relying on the transient affection of your co-workers.

### **Truth – Politics are inevitable, learn to navigate them**

***Myth - Someone will tell me if I am performing poorly or do not have a future***

Although it would be ideal if your manager was open and transparent with you, this rarely happens. Most managers feel very uncomfortable about providing open and honest feedback. As a result, you can spend years unaware of the opinions that your manager and other key stakeholders have of you.

At a basic level, learning and development cannot occur without feedback. Simply put, people can't learn and adjust without understanding how they impact others. Given the importance of feedback to your learning and development, you need to surmount any aversion you have toward soliciting open and transparent feedback and start asking for it.

Indeed, if you are not receiving regular feedback, do not assume you are in great standing. In fact, you may have some blind spots – negative perceptions that you are unaware of that, if they continue, will limit your career options. Story after story exists of employees who were invited to a meeting in which they expected a promotion or raise, only to be laid off.

To be clear, although feedback is critical to career and life development, you may not choose to adjust to please everyone, in fact in doing so, you would be managing your brand rather than aligning with your passions. Instead, achieving and sustaining success requires that you know what impact you are having on others, not necessarily to change what you are doing but to know how to progress in alignment with your passions.

**Truth – Feedback won't just happen, you've got to ask for it**

For a full list of foundational career myths and truths see *"Don't Dread Monday: Your Guide to a Lifetime of Career Success."*

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