

Problem-Solver Instinct (PSI)

Jobs are created to solve a problem. On the surface, these problems appear simple: to serve customers, build a product, manage a group, or provide support to others in their work. However, the fulfillment you may or may not experience employed at one of these jobs will depend on how well you match up to the specific problem that you are asked to solve.

Just as each job has a problem that it is made to solve, each person has a problem that he or she is particularly drawn to solve. This problem, what I call Your Problem-Solver Instinct, is the key to your ultimate happiness and fulfillment in any position. Your Problem-Solver Instinct will manifest whenever given even half a chance. In other words, if your position doesn't actively use this instinct, you will alter your work-load, or even create new work for yourself, in order to serve this instinct. And in the event that you cannot fit this into your job, you will feel incredibly unhappy, most likely to the point of leaving the job unexpectedly or getting fired.

So, understanding what your Problem-Solver Instinct is can go a long way to predicting your happiness within a particular position.

How you do find it? Since it is something that you have been doing all of your life, and in many areas of your life, the best place to look for the answer would be to take a look at your past.

This kind of process is nothing like therapy. We aren't going to be looking for deeply hidden painful memories. I can promise you that this isn't that kind of work! It should even be fun!

In this worksheet, you will take a look at three separate occupations that you have held in your life. From these three experiences, we will look for the commonalities among them in order to locate your Problem-Solver Instinct.

Clue 1:

What job did you enjoy the most? This is the one that you looked forward to going to more days than you dreaded.

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What tasks did you enjoy the most? Or what do you wish you could do more of? Describe the tasks as specifically as possible.

Clue 2:

In your life, have you done the same job, but in slightly different circumstances, enjoyed the one and not the other? Think in terms of jobs within the same category as well as within the same actual job itself. Some examples from my life: the difference between doing the same job at different Target stores, and the difference between working at a quilt shop on different days. Other examples could be holding the same position, like Executive Assistant, for different companies.

Describe job scenario #1:

Describe job scenario #2:

What makes #1 and #2 different? Focus on the job itself, not on the people you worked with.

Clue 3:

Since your Problem-Solver Instinct will manifest itself in all areas of your life, it is just as likely to show up outside of your paid work. For this clue, look at things that you have

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done that you wish you could do again. Areas such as your hobbies, volunteer activities, civic responsibilities, and childhood experiences are great areas to examine.

These kinds of experiences – the non-paid or outside-of-work kind – can be some of the most rewarding. However, we often ignore their significance because we don't see a way to turn the experience into a career. This is your opportunity to do that; not by re-creating the experience exactly, but by figuring out which elements were responsible for the pleasure and fulfillment you experienced.

Describe your most fulfilling experience that you didn't get paid for, but would like to do again (use as much detail as possible):

Why would you like to experience this again? What was rewarding about it?

Putting it All Together:

Your *Problem-Solver Instinct (PSI)* is drawn to solve a very specific kind of problem. When you are engaged in activities that are close in nature to your PSI, you will find some measure of satisfaction.

However, you will find the greatest satisfaction and joy in activities where you are *actively engaged* in solving the specific kind of problem that your PSI is most adapt at solving.

To help you figure out what that might be, we'll look your 3 Clues and the answers you provided.

The Who and What Questions

Take a look back at what you wrote and answer the following questions for each Clue:

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Clue 1 -- The job you enjoyed the most:

Question A: What problem were you solving?

Question B: Whom were you solving the problem *for*? Or who benefited most from your work?

Clue 2 – Comparing two similar positions:

Question A: What problem were you solving in the two jobs? Was it the same or different? If different, which did you enjoy most?

Question B: Whom were you solving the problem *for*? Or who benefited most from your work? Was it the same for both jobs, or different? If different, did you enjoy working with one group more than the other? Why?

Clue 3 – Experiences outside of work:

Question A: What problem were you solving?

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Question B: Whom were you solving the problem *for*? Or who benefited most from your work?

Now, we're going to look for the commonalities.

Read through all of your *Question A* answers in the section above. What is different about your answers for each clue? What is similar?

If you had to write one sentence that would answer the question – What problem were you solving? -- for all 3 clues, what would that be? (This is your *What*)

Read through all of your *Question B* answers in the section above. What characteristic(s) do the three groups you helped have in common, if anything? How are they different? (This is your *Who*)

Taking your *What* and *Who* above, write one sentence that describes the problem you solved and the group you solved it for.

This is your PSI.

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You will find the most satisfaction in jobs that utilize your PSI on a regular basis.

With this in mind, you can ask more pointed questions in a job interview to determine if the proposed position will be a good fit for you or not; things you wouldn't be able to know from the job description alone.

For example, if your PSI points you to enjoying jobs where you can inspire or empower others, you can ask about mentorship opportunities. Or if your PSI indicates that you love data and solving data-related problems, you can pursue positions where monitoring such information is required.

Or, if you are considering starting your own business, you can structure the services you offers to maximize your PSI, which will make all the hard work of starting and growing your business feel less like work (and help you to determine which tasks should be the first for you to hire someone else to do).

There's never any guarantee that you will love any job you start. But by understanding which types of problems you just naturally LOVE to solve, you can better structure your work so that it is more likely to provide you with a sense of fulfillment... and maybe even a little bit of joy.