

10 Job Success Tips for the Unfocused



by Wilma Fellman

The National Institute for Mental Health (NIHM) reports that more than 9 million US adults have difficulties focusing on the job. It also reports that while more than 4 percent of working adults are diagnosed with ADHD, vast numbers of undiagnosed adults struggle with being successful in the workplace. For all these people, choosing a fitting job, handling a job's essential tasks and modifying work habits for maximum effectiveness are major challenges.

If you find yourself having trouble focusing on your job or career, here are 10 steps to job success:

1. Assess Your Strengths

It's important to understand your skills and strengths when considering available job options. To do that, you need to identify your strengths and unique traits. These include: interests, aptitudes, accomplishments, personality type, work and leisure values, focus pattern, work habits and special challenges. In addition to books on the subject such as [Finding a Career That Works For You](#), a career counselor can assist in this process. Once you put your unique puzzle together, you can begin to see which career fields and jobs best match your needs and skills.

2. Note Patterns

When considering your options, make note of fields and jobs that seem to draw well on your skills and traits. If a career idea appears on more than one list, this would indicate an even stronger match between your package and the work environment, and it should be pursued further. For example, if your interest assessment shows that you work best with a wide variety of people and your personality profile shows the same, then you are on your way to exploring the grouping of appropriate job titles. If there is a discrepancy in the pattern, it's important to note it and adjust your exploration accordingly.

3. Read and Learn

Research the idea to know if you want to pursue the job further. Reading can be done online at such resources as the US government's [Occupational Outlook Handbook Web site](#) and our [Job & Industry Profiles](#). Here, you will clearly learn the essential tasks of a job, allowing you to measure the degree of match between those tasks and your ability to succeed at them.

4. Talk and Clarify

Talking with someone inside the field (often called an informational or working interview) is probably the most essential step for those who have difficulties focusing. By asking a series of targeted questions to someone inside the field, you can mentally try the job on for size, long before you actually make your career choice. This step clearly cuts down on decision-making mistakes and assures that you really know what a job involves and whether it is for you.

5. Observe and Fine-Tune

Actually being present in the job environment will add to your reassurance, whether it be a one-hour observation, a week of job shadowing, an internship or a volunteer position. Oftentimes, only by observing do you collect the nonverbal cues that will further match or mismatch you to the job. You will learn whether it feels comfortable to be in that environment (maybe due to factors such as lighting, job pace, sound levels and time-sensitive issues) or whether you will need to consider some modifications to add to your success on the job.

6. Factor in Challenges

If you have difficulties focusing on career issues, you may want to consider the gift of giving yourself a complete neuropsychological evaluation. This will help you pinpoint areas of challenge and offset potential pitfalls with effective strategies, accommodations and modifications. With that specific information in hand, your decision-making will be much easier and more secure.

7. Assess Needed Support Systems

Today, career coaches, life coaches, executive coaches, professional organizers, career counselors, therapists, mentors and tutors can aid in job success. From behind the scenes, these support providers put their knowledgeable heads together with yours in order to decide what initial and ongoing support will ensure your success on the job. Many people who have trouble focusing use such supports, and they can be a great help.

8. Prepare to Close the Deal

You are now armed with hard data that a job has an excellent chance of matching well with your strengths. For purposes of interviewing to get the job, you now will need to create proof of your unique career match. Prepare an answer to the question: "Why are you the best candidate for this position?" If you can't answer that, you need to return to step 7. If you are professionally ready and confidently match job tasks to your skills, you will demonstrate your knowledge and ability to do the job well!

9. Use the Honeymoon Period

Being new at a job is both exciting and frightening. Employers give you initial time to adjust and aren't as demanding from the start. Use these early weeks to work hard on learning the job requirements, establishing ideal work habits, developing and implementing organizational strategies and smoothing over any potential rough spots ahead.

10. Plan Periodic Support Sessions

As you grow within your job, it is a wise idea to take advantage of your support provider -- if you have one -- by scheduling regular appointments once a month or as you deem appropriate. This will enable you to continue to assess your strengths, work out any challenges that occur and even do some strategic career planning for your future.

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