

Creating a Career Vision and Statement

The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

Overview:

When thinking about careers, it is often difficult to truly understand what we earnestly want to do. Many think in terms of personal passion, and ask them selves, "What am I passionate about? What drives me?" to understand their desires. However, our own misconceptions and fears might prevent us from embracing our passions. Creating a vision for one's career can help.

This workshop, based on *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization* (Jossey Bass, 1994) is an inspiring and useful place to begin. It provides a simple framework to allow people to reflect on and consider their personal career visions. In addition, it can be modified in many creative ways (such as artistic, dramatic, etc.) for people who would like to "represent" their visions in forms other than written/spoken words.

Category:

Visioning; Career and Professional Skills

Level:

While suitable for all levels (introductory to advanced), this training is more appropriate for upper-class students. But it is helpful to repeat multiple times over a years (college and later), as personal career vision will continue to evolve.

Recommended

Bonner Sequence: This training is recommended for Bonner students as part of the Senior Retreat or during senior year. It could also be done for Sophomore Recommitment, then revisited again (two times). The activities can also be done in All-Bonner Meetings,



**especially
good for
upperclass**

perhaps involving some mixing of class groups and mentoring (Bonner Buddies or families) or in other class meetings. We build it into the sample Bonner training calendar for first semester of the fourth year.

Learning Outcomes:

- Provide a useful visioning tool that can be used through an individuals career development and reflection
- Provide a structure through which each person can reflect on and define a personal career vision: what you want to create from your life and the world around you
- Provide an opportunity for individuals to share elements of their personal career visions with each other, as a tool for building relationships, teamwork, and understanding

Materials:

- Questions for personal vision (see below)
- Writing tools (pens, pencils, markers) and something to write on (blank paper or poster paper)

How to Prepare:

Read the activity. Become familiar with how to present the exercise. Do some of your own vision as an example. Set aside the proper time and space. Prep materials.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

This activity needs a bit more time than an hour to work well; hence it is recommended for the Senior Retreat, Sophomore Recommitment, or All-Bonner Meeting. Or break it over a few meetings. This outline builds in 90 minutes.

1) Introduction	Suggested time 10 minutes
2) Vision One: Creating a Life's Work	Suggested time 15 minutes
3) Bonfire of the Insanities	Suggested time 10 minutes
4) Deepen and Broaden Your Vision	Suggested time 15 minutes
5) Clarification and Expansion in Pairs	Suggested time 10 minutes
6) Posters	Suggested time 10 minutes
7) Vision Gallery	Suggested time 20 minutes

Part 1) Introduction

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Framing quote:

Is that what they call a vocation, what you do with joy as if you had fire in your heart, the devil in your body?

~Josephine Baker

Explain that the success of this exercise relies on everyone's ability to relax and be honest with themselves. In order to help them do this, you are going to lead them in a brief relaxation exercise. Ask people to remove their watches, lie down on the floor (if appropriate) and close their eyes.

When everyone is situated, ask them to take four breaths; the first one should be short, and each succeeding breath should be about twice as long as the previous one. Ask them to continue breathing deeply at the same rate as their fourth breath. (As facilitator, you should lead this by example. Invite people to join your breathing, then breath loud enough that everyone can hear and follow you.) As they do this, tell them to concentrate on their breathing, on the slow, graceful rise and fall of their chests. Tell them to listen to the silence of the room around them. Tell them to notice the humming of the electric clock, the sound of traffic passing outside, etc.

Then ask them to listen carefully, as they continue breathing, for the sound of others breathing in unison with them. Tell them that their life, like all those in the room with them, survives on the same air and breathes in the same way, sometimes even at the same rate. Everybody shares this. What makes us unique is what we choose to do with that breath. The fundamental difference between all of us is thought. There are no boundaries on our thoughts.

Tell the group to recall a meaningful image, a place, or a memory that is personal to them, that they consider their own. Ask them to bask in it for a moment. After a pause, ask them to concentrate again on the breathing of everyone around them.

Then, ask them to think of a personal image, place or event in the future. It should be a place or activity or a person or group that, sometime in the future, they would like to become a reality. Ask them: Where are they? Who are they with? What are they doing? How does it feel? Ask whether this image is as perfect as they can possibly

make it for themselves, because there is no boundary to their thoughts. After you ask these questions, give them a minute for it to sink in.

Ask them to open their eyes and sit up. Then introduce the following:

Part 2) Vision One: CREATING A LIFE'S WORK

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Pass out paper and pens/pencils/markers as you introduce the following:

Imagine that you are looking at your life and that you have achieved what you most wanted and have the career of your dreams. Ignore how possible or impossible this vision seems. Imagine yourself accepting, into your life, the full manifestation of this result. Imagine that you can transport yourself, magically, into that vision, to make it present day reality. Describe on paper (writing or sketch) the experience you have imagined, using the present tense, as if it is happening now.

Ask them to jot down or draw or list:

- **What is your career?**
- **What does it feel like?**
- **What are you doing?**
- **What words or images would you use to describe it?**

Step 3: Bonfire of the Insanities

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Ask the group: Did you say what you really want to write? Who found themselves censoring their thoughts, saying things like “these things are impossible” or “this isn’t realistic”...?

Explain that it is normal to interrupt yourself with negative thoughts or feelings, especially as you start to think without boundaries:

I can't have what I want.

I want what someone else wants.

It doesn't matter what I want

I am afraid of what I want.

I don't know what I want.

I know what I want, but I can't have it at work.

I have what I want, so what?

These are normal thoughts, but not *necessary*!

Ask people to free their minds of these kinds of defeating thoughts, to not get stuck by negativity, to see themselves as powerful. Have them write down these thoughts on a sheet of paper, then crumple it up. Walk around with a trash can and have them literally throw their negative thoughts away.

Lead into the following set of questions.

Step 4: Deepen and Broaden Your Vision

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Tell people that they have successfully removed all barriers between them and success. They are now successful people. As successful people, others in the world are interested in what they have to say about their successful lives.

Ask them to fill out the following questionnaire as though they had achieved everything in life that they had hoped. They are now in the future. They should use the present tense. Tell them that if the questionnaire's categories don't fit, they can feel free to adjust them.

Also let them know that they should answer these questions in the IDEAL, VISIONARY state. The responses can be in prose, poetry, song, art, pictures, etc. If they would like to move around the room, they may.

- 1. What is your career?**
- 2. What kind of organization do you work for?**
- 3. What region of the country or part of the world is it in?**
- 4. What kind of special skills do you need in your career (i.e. languages, special education, leadership abilities, etc.)**
- 5. What issue(s) do you focus on in your career?**
- 6. How much do you make yearly?**
- 7. Is this a career you started immediately after college or did it take time to earn the position?**

8. How often do you work (i.e. 40 hrs/week, more, less?)

9. What do you wear to work?

10. Life purpose: Imagine that your life has a unique purpose fulfilled through what you do, your interrelationships, and the way you live. What is your calling? Describe that purpose.

Step 5: Clarification and Expansion in Pairs

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Bring the group together for this step.

Ask people to look at the visions they articulated. Ask them to think about what aspects of those visions are closest to their deepest desires. Tell them not to consider whether their choices seem selfish or selfless; they are probably a mix.

Before going on, ask people to consider each aspect of their vision: "If I could have it now, would I take it?" This question allows people to dig deeper, clarify what they think, and eliminate things they truly don't want or value.

Then have people ask themselves: "Assume I have it now. What does it bring me? This question also asks people to reflect on what they just said and confirm their own values and desires. For example, someone could have said, "I work in California." Then realized, "I want to work in California to be closer to my family." Then, the person may revise their vision, "Really, I want to have a family and have them be near me."

With a partner's help

Tell everyone to find a partner. Explain that the partner's role is to be a good listener, to help draw out what the person is thinking and feeling.

Partners should ask simple questions, such as:

- "If you could have this vision now, would you take it?"
- "If you had it, what would it bring you?"

Partners should also ask questions in the present tense, such as "What is your career?" "What do you wear to work?"

Be sure to instruct the group: **Partners are not therapists.** Partners should not substitute or lead people to a different vision, analyze the person's words, body language or anything else. Partners ask the same simple questions above, then answer them in turn.

Step 6: Sharing Personal Visions - POSTERS

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Give each person a sheet of flip chart paper. Tell them they will have ten minutes to create a poster that demonstrates their personal career visions. Provide markers, magazines and scissors and glue, pencils, and anything else that will help people demonstrate their visions creatively.

When they are done with their posters, hang them up around the room.

Step 7: Vision Gallery

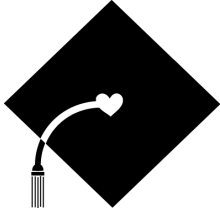
Suggested Time: 20 minutes, depending on size of group

As a large group, walk around to each poster, as if taking a tour of an art gallery. Give the "artist" the opportunity to share some aspect of his or her personal career visions with everyone. Reaffirm the importance of listening, speaking, and respectful silence as people present.

Depending on your personal style, skills as a facilitator, allotted time, etc., you can have them present these personal visions in a number of ways. Examples include asking each person the opportunity to speak, addressing specific questions or topics, or giving individuals total freedom over their presentation.

Providing the forum for the sharing of personal visions, regardless of the style, can be an effective way to bring out the personalities, concerns, and unique qualities of team members in a way that lays the groundwork for future collaboration and visioning together. As a facilitator, your job is simply to provide a safe space, ample time, and direction to allow people to share some aspect of their visions. You don't need to analyze or comment on those visions; rather, simply affirm that you (and others) hear them, note them, and value the sharing.

If time allows, have some people share their vision and also what they have learned. Thank people for sharing. Figure out ways that you can allow people to connect their personal visions to their work, team, or next steps in their lives.



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Questions to Consider

Take the time to consider each of these questions.

Just write, or draw, or scribble your thoughts.

Come back to them later, as the most salient and meaningful parts of your personal vision begin to form in your mind.

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- 1. What is your career?**

- 2. What kind of organization do you work for?**

- 3. What region of the country or part of the world is it in?**

- 4. What kind of special skills do you need in your career (i.e. languages, special education, leadership abilities, etc.)**

5. What issue(s) do you focus on in your career?

6. How much do you earn?

7. Is this a career you started immediately after college or did it take time to earn the position?

8. How often do you work (i.e. 40 hrs/week, more, less?)

9. What do you wear to work?

10. Life purpose: Imagine that your life has a unique purpose fulfilled through what you do, your interrelationships, and the way you live. What is your calling? Describe that purpose.