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The *Assessments* Issue

Dossier : *évaluation de carrière*

Collaborative edition between CERIC & NCDA

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CAREERING

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This is a collaborative issue with the **National Career Development Association (NCDA)**, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing services to career development professionals. NCDA provides professional development, publications, standards and advocacy to practitioners and educators who inspire and empower individuals to achieve their career and life goals.

NCDA is the recognized leader in developing standards for the career development profession, for the provision of career counselling programs and services, and for the evaluation of career information materials. NCDA works with licensing and credentialing bodies to support the preparation of career counsellors and career development service providers. Learn more at *ncda.org.*

Articles appearing in both publications are marked with this symbol.

Don't miss these online-exclusive articles at ceric.ca/careering

Case Study: Wearing many hats to help a young client find his path
Experiential career counselling: A holistic approach to working with clients in transition
Challenges and opportunities in qualitative career assessment
Credential assessment for displaced individuals
How career practitioners can assess themselves
The role of assessment in the development of employability skills
How a lightbulb moment became a powerful assessment practice

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR REVIEWERS

MADELAINE CURRELLY (COMMUNITY TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CENTRE)
CANDY HO (KWANTLEN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY)
CATHY KEATES (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY)
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Lindsay Purchase

In between watching *Office Space* and *Gladiator* in my Grade 10 Careers class (essential viewing for our career education), we took an online career aptitude test. Would I be a veterinarian? An author? No, the destiny that awaited me – a student who later quit school sports for human rights club – was to be a professional athlete.

I found this process confusing and unhelpful – hardly a unique first experience with career assessments. However, it illustrates a couple of important points: 1) Not all career assessments, formal or informal, are created equally, and 2) Results interpretation with a trained career professional is an important part of the assessment process.

CERIC is thrilled to share with you our second collaborative issue of *Careering* magazine with the US-based National Career Development Association (NCDA) on the theme of "Career Assessments." A robust overview of informal and formal assessments, the feature article by JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey from the NCDA's Summer *Career Developments* magazine, is included in *Careering*. Both magazines also contain an interview with assessment expert Dr Chris Wood of the University of Las Vegas and an infographic exploration of how career professionals can best use assessments. You can learn more about *Career Developments* at ncda.org.

Our print articles and robust offering of online-exclusives (ceric.ca/careering) approach the Career Assessments theme from a broad range of perspectives. This issue examines a variety of assessment tools and strategies, from widely used career tests to unique, homegrown approaches (try bringing music into your career conversations for surprisingly insightful results – p. 13). Learn tips for weaving assessment results into a meaningful whole, what happened when one career professional decided to test out five popular assessment tools on herself and much more.

A secondary theme of career transition emerged in this issue's recurring features. Principles in Action looks at the dynamic nature of career development, while our Client Side writer shares her experience with career counselling during a mid-life career pivot.

Happy reading!

Dans mes cours d'éducation au choix de carrière en 4e secondaire, entre deux séances de *La folie du travail* et de *Gladiateur* (absolument essentielle à notre éducation), nous avions faite un test d'aptitude en ligne. Devrais-je devenir vétérinaire ? Auteur ? Non, ce que le destin me réservait – moi qui ai plus tard abandonné les activités sportives de l'école pour un club de promotion des droits de la personne – était une carrière d'athlète professionnel.

J'avais trouvé ce processus déroutant et inutile, et cette première expérience avec les tests d'aptitude n'est pas vraiment unique. Cela illustre toutefois quelques éléments importants : 1) les tests d'aptitudes, formels ou informels, ne sont pas tous égaux, 2) l'interprétation des résultats faites par un professionnel du développement de carrière joue un rôle important dans le processus d'évaluation.

CERIC est très heureux de vous présenter son deuxième numéro du magazine *Careering* en collaboration avec la National Career Development Association (NCDA) aux États-Unis, sur le thème des « tests d'aptitudes ». L'article vedette de cette édition du *Careering*, écrit par JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey dans l'édition d'été du magazine *Career Developments* de la NCDA, comprend un survol exhaustif des tests d'aptitudes formels et informels. Les deux magazines publient aussi une entrevue du Dr Chris Wood, un expert de l'Université de Las Vegas, ainsi qu'une analyse infographique sur la meilleure façon d'utiliser les tests d'aptitudes pour les professionnels de la carrière. Pour en savoir plus à propos de *Career Developments*, rendez-vous au ncda.org.

Nos articles imprimés et notre contenu riche et exclusif en ligne (ceric.ca/careering) abordent le thème des tests d'aptitude selon des perspectives très diverses. Ce numéro se penche sur une gamme de stratégies et d'outils d'évaluation, des tests d'aptitudes les plus couramment utilisés aux approches uniques (parler de musique lors de vos prochaines discussions sur la carrière pourrait donner des résultats étonnamment judicieux – p. 13). Apprenez comment intégrer les résultats d'une évaluation pour en faire un ensemble cohérent, ce qui s'est passé lorsqu'une professionnelle du développement de carrière a décidé d'essayer cinq outils d'évaluation populaires sur elle-même, et plus encore.

Les chroniques de ce numéro abordent aussi le changement de carrière comme deuxième thème. La chronique intitulée « Principes en action » se penche sur la nature dynamique du développement de carrière, alors que l'auteur de la rubrique intitulée « Côté client » nous parle de son expérience en orientation professionnelle lors d'un changement de mi-carrière.

Bonne lecture!

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I took five popular career assessments and here's what I learned

Stephanie Warner

In turning the assessment lens on myself, I learned more about my own career journey, these tools and how I will use them with my clients

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As career practitioners, we work with a variety of tools and techniques to serve our clients, including assessments. I work primarily with graduate students, who tend to struggle when it comes to identifying future plans, despite their years spent pursuing a specialized field of study. Like all of us, students change over time; their values, interests, skills and ambitions evolve. I use assessments as a tool to help them dive into the exploration process and build self-knowledge.

Three years ago, I was considering my own strengths and priorities as I embarked on a significant career transition. After spending most of my adult life studying and working in scientific research (not always happily), I applied to a job at the University of Calgary's Career Services office.

In this time, I have learned how to use assessments to help clients in their career exploration. But, I wondered, what might I learn about these tools – and my own career journey – if I applied them to my own life? So, I recently turned the assessment lens on myself, trying out some new tools as well as revisiting my past assessment results with a more practiced eye. Here is what I learned.

CliftonStrengths ($19.99 USD)

This assessment is designed with positive psychology in mind and provides users with their top five talent themes, from a list of 34. It was the first assessment I did when starting as a career advisor, and some theme descriptions didn't immediately resonate with me (Input, Analytical – Is this test trying to tell me I'm boring and nerdy?). Chances are, I reacted this way because I had previously seen these talents as weaknesses.

Revisiting my results with a colleague reinforced for me the benefits of debriefing with a career practitioner whenever possible. This allows the client to describe the strength in their own words and identify action items they are motivated to address. Using the targeted language of the Strengths Insight Report often resonates more strongly.

> Like all of us, students change over time; their values, interests, skills and ambitions evolve. I use assessments as a tool to help them dive into the exploration process and build self-knowledge.

VIA Character Strengths (Free)

I breezed through this character strengths activity. VIA provides a rank-ordered list of all 24 character strengths, which I appreciated. Once again, I found that my first instinct was to read into the language literally, and had to urge myself to really read the description. For example, "judgment" may sound negative, but the description is "Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly." Although the descriptions were short, they aligned well with information gleaned from other assessments. I found this congruence satisfying.

Knowdell Card Sorts – Career Values
($19.95 CAD)

Values are the core principles that help us answer the question, "what is important to me?" For those who are more tactile, the Knowdell Card Sorts – Career Values cards may be a good option.

This tool evaluated elements that the other assessment tools didn't directly address: my needs, motivators and purpose. I organized the cards bearing values descriptions into five categories, from "Always Important" to "Never Important." Discussion around what each value means to me, how I would prioritize it and how it will shape my career decisions was satisfying and empowering. I found helping others and exercising competence make me feel satisfied, while competition is stressful. No wonder I enjoy working with students more than I did competing to publish.

Strong Interest Inventory
(approx. $40 CAD plus certified practitioner time)

This assessment seems to really get me and is always a hit with clients. It provides more tangible career options based on one's pattern of likes and dislikes. My own results fit extremely well with my recent career changes. Reviewing my results with a certified practitioner, I came out as an investigative, social, artistic mix – interests often associated with careers in teaching and university administration. It is important to note that students often find the results surprising if they don't know what a given career is, or if they have pre-conceived notions about the value or attractiveness of the given occupation.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
(approx. $50 CAD plus certified practitioner time)

MBTI can be a challenging assessment to interpret with an individual, due to its dichotomous choices. They may initially feel frustrated with what can seem like rigidity at a surface level. I balked at the different results that arose compared to when I had last taken it, at the age of 16. Luckily, this time around I used the MBTI Step II report, which breaks each preference into five facets, and debriefed with a certified career practitioner. My Step II results showed that, for example, my facets were equally distributed between the S and N type, which helped me to relax about which "bin" I was in overall and identify characteristics that resonated with me.

What has this experience taught me?

In taking these five assessments, I picked up some first-hand experience that will shape conversations with my clients and how I administer assessments to have the most benefit to them. Here are a few of my observations from this experience:

- It's important to define concrete questions before doing the assessment and revisit them at the end. When I checked in with myself after completing the assessments, I was then able to ask, "did this answer my questions?" and "what will I take forward?" Following this process with my clients allows us to address any unresolved concerns or discuss areas that still aren't clear from the results.

- First impressions can be hard to overcome. I found myself jumping to conclusions about the language or dismissing certain options based on my previously held beliefs. Having a career practitioner present to ask some key questions (eg, "Tell me more about what this means to you" and "Why do you think this option showed up in your assessment?") allowed me to move past my gut reaction and explore the possibilities.

- Assessments are a great starting point. They provide positive language, opportunities for reflection, even options for careers. Many clients use assessments for self-discovery, but many that I work with also find that the assessments simply validate and reinforce ideas that they already hold about themselves or their prospects. However, they should not be taken as a directive. While most assessments incorporate an opportunity for self-reflection prior to delivering the reported results, the objective, research-based nature of the formal assessment often seems to carry more weight with the client. It is important that the student critically evaluate their results and not just take them at face value.

My results were consistent overall. Together, they painted a more complete picture than any one assessment individually. Using this variety of assessments, I feel more confident about the value of some of my more practical and analytical traits, especially when I can apply them in a people-centred world. The results align better with my current role than my last; I only wish I had invested the time in doing this sooner. ∎

AUTHOR BIO

Stephanie Warner *holds a BSc in Biochemistry and a PhD in Experimental Medicine from the University of British Columbia. She is now the PhD Career Development Specialist in Career Services at the University of Calgary and also moonlights as a private career consultant and sessional instructor.*

Finding the pieces, focusing on the patterns and finishing the puzzle

Trouver les morceaux, se concentrer sur les profils de carrières et terminer le casse-tête

When using multiple assessment tools and strategies, these tips can help weave different elements into a meaningful whole

Au moment d'utiliser plusieurs outils et stratégies d'évaluation, les conseils suivants peuvent faciliter l'intégration des différents éléments dans un tout cohérent

When working with clients, career development practitioners (CDPs) are almost always engaged in some form of assessment. From the moment clients first seek services, and as their plans/goals evolve, CDPs assess and re-assess clients' needs.

CDPs assess work search documents (eg, resume, cover letter) to help maximize their effectiveness and evaluate interview skills to help clients communicate their value to employers. CDPs also assess for factors such as skills, values, interests and personality as they assist clients in identifying new and emerging career opportunities. They assess for employment barriers, learning styles, career beliefs and a host of other factors that might be important when helping clients achieve their goals.

A variety of formal (eg, psychometric "tests") and informal tools (eg, checklists, cards) along with custom/in-house procedures (eg, intake forms, structured interview questionnaires) are used to support assessment processes. Some CDPs make very strategic, well-informed decisions about what tools to use, at what point in their work with clients. Others are limited by whatever their agency uses, what the funder will pay for, what they were taught or they rely on their "favourites" (Life Strategies, 2009).

Lorsqu'ils travaillent avec des clients, les intervenants en développement de carrière exercent presque constamment une certaine forme d'évaluation. En effet, les intervenants en développement de carrière évaluent les besoins de leurs clients dès que ceux-ci recourent à leurs services et les réévaluent à mesure que leurs plans et leurs objectifs évoluent.

Les intervenants en développement de carrière évaluent les documents de recherche d'emploi (p. ex. curriculum vitæ, lettre de présentation) et les aptitudes en entrevue de leurs clients pour les aider à maximiser leur efficacité et à communiquer leur valeur aux employeurs. Les intervenants en développement de carrière évaluent également des facteurs, comme les compétences, les valeurs, les champs d'intérêt et la personnalité de leurs clients pour les aider à trouver de nouvelles perspectives de carrière. Ils évaluent les obstacles à l'emploi, les styles d'apprentissages, les convictions professionnelles et d'autres facteurs qui peuvent être importants pour aider leurs clients à atteindre leurs objectifs.

Divers outils formels (p. ex, tests psychométriques) et informels (p. ex. listes de vérification, fiches), de même que des procédures internes et personnalisées (p. ex. formulaires d'accueil, questionnaires d'entrevue structurés) sont utilisés pour encadrer les processus d'évaluation. Certains

Ethical and effective use of assessment models and tools is a specialized skill.
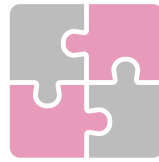
L'utilisation éthique et efficace des modèles et des outils d'évaluation nécessite des compétences spécialisées.

Regardless of the tool being used or what is being assessed, at some point, all these pieces must be brought together into a meaningful whole, helping clients create a vision of the future, set achievable goals and create an action plan. Unfortunately, assessment results can sometimes seem contradictory; either the specific tools don't align or the client's story seems disconnected from assessment results. This, in turn, can create confusion for the CDP and the client, making the vision of the future much harder to see.

Building on a series of assessment-related tips (see lifestrategies.ca/resources/tip-sheets.cfm) developed by the team at Life Strategies, the following may help CDPs focus on the patterns and themes that emerge during any assessment process.

1. **Work within a conceptual framework.** Tools such as the Wheel (Amundson & Poehnell, 1996) and the Hope-Centred Model (Niles, Amundson, & Neault, 2011) provide a lens through which to view each client's context and presenting issue, helping to select relevant assessments and in the interpretation and integration of results. As with theories and models, working within a conceptual framework "equip[s] us with effective starting places to begin to understand what has already happened, what is happening now, and what needs to happen next" (Neault, 2014, p. 144).

2. **Understand and interpret each tool.** To effectively interpret assessment tools, and integrate results across a battery of assessments, CDPs need to fully understand the theoretical foundation of each tool, including how each scale is defined (eg, the Six Factor Personality Questionnaire [SFPQ] defines extraversion differently from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator [MBTI]) and how scores are presented (eg, t-score, percentile). It is important to engage clients in the interpretation of each tool that is completed; their context and story are important components in understanding assessment results.

3. **Don't over-interpret.** Although CDPs must understand each tool and provide meaningful feedback on specific results, it is also important to avoid over-interpretation. Even norm-referenced tools (ie, where client results are compared against a norm group) are still self-assessments rather than objective measures. At this stage, be comfortable with gaps in information or with questions that might surface and remember that each individual assessment will contain far more information than you need. Be discerning; focus only on the information that is relevant for your specific purpose.

4. **Focus on the patterns.** As each tool is interpreted, patterns will begin to emerge. Use Post-it notes, highlighters or other strategies to group together similar concepts. As assessment tools may use different words for similar concepts, remember to focus on the underlying meanings – not just the words.

intervenants en développement de carrière prennent des décisions éclairées et très stratégiques sur les outils à utiliser et le moment de les utiliser pendant leur travail avec des clients. D'autres se limitent aux outils que leur agence communautaire utilise, à ceux autorisés par leur bailleur de fonds, ou à ceux qu'ils connaissent ou qu'ils préfèrent (Life Strategies, 2009).

Quels que soient les outils utilisés ou l'objet de l'évaluation, à un certain moment, tous ces éléments doivent être rassemblés en un tout cohérent pour aider les clients à visualiser leur avenir, à se fixer des objectifs réalisables et à bâtir un plan d'action. Malheureusement, les résultats d'une évaluation peuvent parfois sembler contradictoires et ne pas concorder avec les outils particuliers utilisés ou avec l'histoire du client. Ces contradictions peuvent à leur tour créer de la confusion chez l'intervenant en développement de carrière et le client, et compliquer grandement la visualisation de l'avenir de ce dernier.

Voici quelques conseils relatifs à l'évaluation (voir lifestrategies.ca/resources/tip-sheets.cfm) qui reposent sur une série de conseils rédigée par l'équipe de Life Strategies et qui sont susceptibles d'aider les intervenants en développement de carrière à se concentrer sur les profils et les thèmes qui émergent pendant un processus d'évaluation.

1. **Travailler au sein d'un cadre conceptuel.** Des outils comme la roue (Amundson & Poehnell, 1996) et le modèle axé sur l'espoir (Niles, Amundson, & Neault, 2011) offrent une perspective pour examiner le contexte et l'enjeu que présente chaque client, et aident à choisir les évaluations pertinentes, et contribuent à l'interprétation et à l'intégration des résultats. Comme pour les théories et les modèles, le fait de travailler au sein d'un cadre conceptuel « nous donne des points de départ efficaces pour comprendre ce qui s'est déjà passé, ce qui se passe actuellement et ce qui doit se passer à l'avenir » (Neault, 2014, p. 144).

2. **Comprendre et interpréter chaque outil.** Pour interpréter efficacement chaque outil d'évaluation et intégrer les résultats dans une série d'évaluations, les intervenants en développement de carrière doivent comprendre parfaitement le fondement théorique de chaque outil, y compris la façon dont chaque échelle est définie (p. ex., le questionnaire de la personnalité en six facteurs définit l'extraversion différemment de l'indicateur de types psychologiques Myers-Briggs [MBTI]) et la manière dont les notes sont présentées (p. ex., échelle de notes T, échelle centile). Il est important d'encourager la participation des clients dans l'interprétation de chaque outil réalisée; leur contexte et leur histoire sont des éléments importants pour comprendre les résultats de l'évaluation.

3. **Éviter l'interprétation abusive.** L'information que vous obtenez peut soulever des questions et nécessiter une exploration complète au moyen d'une évaluation approfondie. Assurez-vous toutefois de poser des limites, car une évaluation excessive ne vous éclairera pas nécessairement davantage. Gardez à l'esprit le but du client, afin que chaque évaluation supplémentaire reste pertinente dans l'atteinte de l'objectif général. Prêtez attention à l'état de fatigue du client, à son confort physique et à sa durée d'attention; les évaluations menées lorsque le client est fatigué peuvent être inutiles.

5. **Explore contradictions.** As you explore individual results and identify themes and patterns, some information may not fit together. To begin, consider whether the contradictions make sense based on the tools used; per Tip #2, as extraversion is defined differently on the SFPQ and the MBTI, it is possible for these two assessments to seem to contradict each other, but the underlying meanings may explain any confusing results.

6. **Consider other information.** Remember that your clients are more than the sum of their assessment results. Their individual context and story along with their hopes and dreams for the future are of critical importance to the final picture. Take a holistic approach, weaving in information from a variety of other sources, and engage the client in creating a vision of their future.

7. **Be prepared for further assessment.** As information is obtained, questions may surface that require additional assessment to explore them fully. However, be sure to recognize when enough is enough; over-assessing doesn't necessarily lead to additional information. Be mindful of the client's goal so that each additional assessment is still relevant to the broader purpose. Pay attention to client fatigue, physical comfort and attention span; assessments done while tired may be worthless.

8. **Be mindful when reporting results.** How you report results may depend on your purpose, the audience, and who may have access to assessment results and for how long. In some instances, a keep-it-simple approach may be best; in others, a more comprehensive report to support a training or return-to-work plan may be required. Keep jargon and technical language to a minimum, especially if readers aren't likely to be assessment experts. Always keep the purpose in mind so that reports are focused.

Ethical and effective use of assessment models and tools is a specialized skill. Specific and comprehensive training on individual tools is likely not going to include any meaningful information on how to focus on the patterns and themes across multiple tools or how to incorporate information from a wide variety of sources. As such, CDPs are encouraged to seek coaching, mentorship or other assessment training with a focus on assessment interpretation and integration. There is an "art" to seeing beyond the individual pieces to the story that is being told. ■

AUTHOR BIO

Dr Deirdre Pickerell, *CPHR, GCDF-i, is Dean of Academics at Yorkville University's British Columbia Campus and Vice-President of Life Strategies Ltd. She has been honoured with the 2014 Stu Conger Award for Leadership in Career Development and Career Counselling and the 2006 Human Resources Association Award of Excellence. She has authored/co-authored several articles, training guides and research reports on integrating assessment tools and models into effective career practice.*

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4. **Se concentrer sur les profils.** À mesure que chaque outil est interprété, des profils commenceront à émerger. À l'aide de papillons adhésifs, de surligneurs ou d'autres stratégies, regroupez les concepts semblables. Comme les outils d'évaluation peuvent utiliser différents termes pour des concepts semblables, rappelez-vous de vous concentrer sur la signification fondamentale du concept – pas seulement sur les termes.

5. **Explorer les contradictions.** Tandis que vous examinez les résultats individuels et que vous déterminez des thèmes et des profils, certaines informations peuvent ne pas concorder. Vérifiez d'abord que les contradictions sont logiques selon les outils utilisés. À la lumière du conseil no 2, comme l'extraversion est définie différemment selon le questionnaire de la personnalité en six facteurs ou le MBTI, il est possible que les évaluations réalisées au moyen de ces deux outils se contredisent, mais leur signification fondamentale peut expliquer tout résultat déroutant.

6. **Examiner d'autres informations.** Rappelez-vous que vos clients représentent plus que la somme des résultats de leur évaluation. Leur contexte et leur histoire individuelle, de même que leurs espoirs et leurs rêves par rapport à leur avenir sont d'une importance cruciale pour dresser le portrait définitif. Adoptez une approche globale en intégrant des informations provenant de diverses autres sources et encouragez le client à visualiser son avenir.

7. **Être prêt à approfondir l'évaluation.** Au fur et à mesure que vous obtenez des informations, des questions peuvent être soulevées et nécessitera une exploration au moyen d'une évaluation approfondie. En même temps, établissez des limites, une évaluation abusive peut être tout aussi nuisible qu'une évaluation insuffisante.

8. **Rendre compte des résultats de manière attentive.** La façon dont vous rendez compte des résultats peut dépendre de votre objectif, de l'audience, des personnes qui peuvent avoir accès aux résultats et de la période d'accessibilité du rapport. Dans certains cas, une approche simple peut être préférable, tandis que dans d'autres, un rapport plus détaillé pour encadrer un plan de formation ou de retour au travail peut être requis. Réduisez au minimum l'utilisation du jargon et de termes techniques, surtout si vous savez que les lecteurs ne seront probablement pas des spécialistes en évaluation. Assurez-vous que votre rapport reste toujours axé sur votre objectif.

L'utilisation éthique et efficace des modèles et des outils d'évaluation nécessite des compétences spécialisées. Les programmes de formation précise et complets sur les outils individuels ne comprendront probablement pas d'informations utiles sur la façon de mettre l'accent sur les profils et les thèmes liés aux multiples outils ou d'intégrer les informations provenant de nombreuses sources. Par conséquent, nous encourageons les intervenants en développement de carrière à suivre des séances d'encadrement ou de mentorat, ou autre programme de formation en évaluation axé sur l'interprétation et l'intégration des résultats. La capacité de voir plus loin que les éléments individuels de l'histoire qui nous est racontée est un art. ■

BIOGRAPHIE DE L'AUTEURE

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What's in your career assessments toolbox?

In a CERIC survey of Canadian career development professionals (CDPs), 61% of respondents said enhancing their competencies in career assessment tools was a high or essential priority. So, how can CDPs best use assessments? What types of assessments can they employ with clients?

This infographic also appears in the 2019 Summer issue of *Career Developments*, the National Career Development Association print magazine.

Assessments are not *magic bullets.*
They are useful for ...

- Gathering data
- Exploration
- Providing some pieces of the puzzle

Influences on testing choices

- Proposal requests (RFPs)
- Mandates and contracts
- Familiarity and habit
- Budget
- Qualifications
- Marketing

Types of assessment tools and tests

Informal

- Checklists
- Games
- Fantasies
- Forced-choice activities
- Card sorts
- Structured interviews

Formal

- Needs
- Interests
- Personal style
- Values
- Skills
- Aptitude/achievement

Life Strategies LTD.

Information courtesy of Life Strategies, an award-winning, project-based, career consulting firm supporting individuals and organizations across Canada and internationally.

A musical approach to career assessment

Engaging with a song that moves your client emotionally can reveal surprising insights about their interests, values and passions

Herky Cutler

©iStock/smartboy10

If I asked you to name something that crosses generational, cultural, political and spiritual boundaries, moves people emotionally, changes moods, inspires people to be better, creates community, brings light to social injustice and simply entertains, what would you say that thing was?

Literature? Perhaps. Chocolate? A definite possibility. Music? Of course! Music is a powerful medium that everyone can relate to, and everyone uses music in many ways in their life. So, why not use music in career development?

Driving engagement through song

A long time ago, I wrestled with how to bring my passion for music into my professional life as an organizational consultant, speaker and trainer. And then it hit me.

What are we, as career practitioners, really looking for when we use assessments with our clients? Yes, we need the basic information from a client in terms of demographics, work experience, education and current situation. But what we really want is to get to know them – what they want out of life, what excites them and what dreams they have.

To find the answers, we would probably turn to an assessment tool – usually one we paid for – that measures employability, personality or occupational compatibility. All of these tools have merit. For me though, they lack what I consider to be the key in any relationship where one of the primary goals is change: engagement. If we don't engage our clients deeply, how can we really help them change?

I'll never forget my experience teaching a career course as a high school guidance counsellor, using a computer-based career interest inventory with students. I would ask a student, "What question did you just answer?" "Huh?" was the usual response.

The students weren't engaged with this tool; they were just using it as a means to an end. Music, on the other hand, is highly engaging. I decided to put my theory to the test with some of the students who worked for me. I developed the following technique.

How to use music as a career development assessment tool

Step 1: Ask your client to bring in a song that moves them emotionally. It can't be just a song that they like. It has to move them deeply in some way. Instrumentals are fine, too.

Step 2: Find a video for the song and watch it together.

Step 3: Print a copy of the lyrics and have a conversation about them, asking a variety of questions. I have a list of general questions I ask in addition to others that pop into my head as we have the conversation. Some examples are:

➤ Why did you choose this song?
➤ What does this song mean to you?
➤ What do you think the writer is trying to say about him/herself or about the world?
➤ How does this song move you?

Step 4: While your client is answering the questions, make notes about their interests, values and passions.

Step 5: Once all the questions have been answered, go over your notes with the client. Ask them if what you wrote resonates with them. Ask them if there are any surprises and what those are. Once the discussion is over, hand the client your notes.

From theory to practice

The first person I tried this exercise with was a 16-year-old high school student I'll call Will. Will was struggling in school, did a lot of drugs and showed real interest only in music, skiing and spending time with his friends. He brought in the song "Needle and the Damage Done," by Neil Young.
Will felt that the song was about social justice, conformity and rebellion. Through our discussion, many of Will's characteristics, values and passions jumped out at me, including:

✓ **Non-conformist**
✓ **Risk-taker**
✓ **Leader**
✓ **Creative**

While this exercise didn't point Will toward a specific occupation, I suggested he reference the list I created when considering what types of work might make him happy.

Tips

➤ Make no judgment about the song the client brings in, even if it contains inappropriate images or language, unless you're working with a group of people and you feel the song may offend others. If that's the case, ask the client to choose another song.

➤ Don't share what you know about the song if it's familiar to you, especially if you think the client's interpretation of the song is "wrong." It doesn't matter. What matters is the impact the song has on the client.

➤ When you're making notes about the client's interests, values and passions, make sure you use their words, not yours. Accuracy is very important in assessment. If you're using your interpretation of what the client is saying, and not what the client is actually saying, it may not be accurate.

➤ When you hand the client your notes, emphasize that what you wrote down cannot then be translated into determining an occupational path for the client. However, it's fair to encourage the client to use those notes whenever they find themselves researching occupations or working. Does the occupation or job reflect the things that are important to the client, which he/she articulated from the analysis of the song?

➤ This technique is another tool to add to your collection. It may not be appropriate for all of your clients, but if you feel your client is willing to take a bit of a risk, ask if they want to give it a try.

Conclusion

If you try this technique and your experience is like mine, you'll be amazed at how engaged your client is in this process. Remember, this activity is client-driven; you will be talking about music that is important to the client, not evaluating answers to a career interest inventory they may have difficulty understanding the purpose of.

In my opinion, our goal as career practitioners is to help the client discover who they are and help them articulate their interests, values and passions. We should do so in a way that engages them and helps build a strong relationship between practitioner and client.

Music has the capacity to do this because of its universal appeal and its ability to trigger deep and meaningful emotions within us. Try using music as a career development assessment tool and discover just how powerful it really is. ■

AUTHOR BIO

Herky Cutler is a Certified Career Development Professional, a lifetime member of the Career Development Association of Alberta and has been training career practitioners for more than 12 years. He has developed a number of unique career development tools and is a popular keynote speaker and presenter at conferences all over North America.

The role of assessment in guided career intervention

JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey
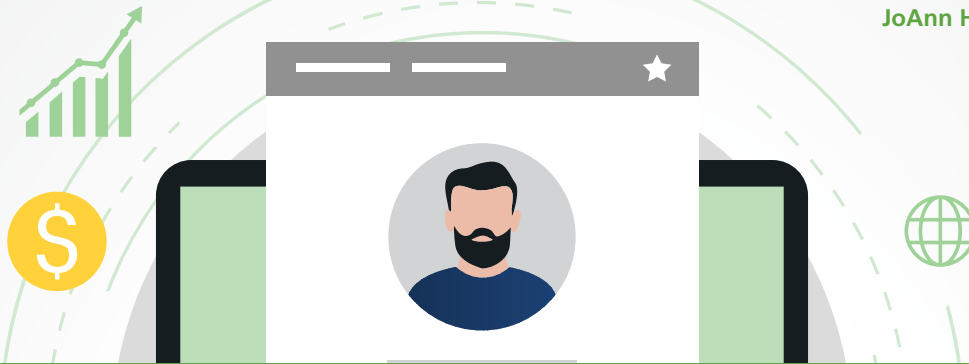
Exploring why career practitioners use assessments, as well as how they can select the appropriate tools and effectively interpret client results

A version of this article also appears in the 2019 Summer issue of *Career Developments*, the National Career Development Association print magazine.

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Assessment has played an important role in career guidance since its beginning in the early 20th century. According to the Joint Committee on the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing of the AERA, APA and NCME (Joint Committee on Testing Practices, 2004), the definition of assessment is "Any systematic method of obtaining information from tests and other sources, used to draw inferences about characteristics of people, objects, or programs." This article uses the term "career guidance" to refer to interventions with young people and adults related to educational and vocational choices. The purpose of the article is to review with career development facilitators and counsellors the purposes, options and guidelines for use of assessment in career guidance and counselling.

Purposes of assessment

It is possible to view the plethora of assessment instruments available in our field in three categories: a) those that support career exploration, b) those that identify career development needs, and c) those that measure accomplishment in areas related to educational or career development goals. Let's look at each of those separately.

The purpose of the first segment of assessments available in our field is to help individuals find focus for exploration. This segment includes inventories of interests, skills, work-related values and personality characteristics. The number of occupational options is vast, with 974 groups of occupations defined in O*NET (the National Occupational Classification [NOC] system categorizes jobs in Canada), each of which can be broken down into many more defined occupations. The National Career Cluster Framework (Advance CTE, 2019) defines 16 industry-related clusters, which can be divided into 79 groups called pathways.

To find focus for exploration

The Holland classification system (Holland, 1997) defines six work environments, under which hundreds of occupations are categorized by educational levels in the Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes (Goddfredson & Holland, 1996). It is impossible for individuals seeking to choose an occupation to learn about all of these options. Thus, one very valuable use of assessment inventories is to find focus for exploration.

ACT's World-of-Work Map (Prediger, 1981) arranges hundreds of occupations by Holland work environments and 26 Career Areas. There are assessments whose results direct individuals' focus to options in each of these four organizational schemes, allowing them to identify groups of occupations that align with their interests, skills, values and/or personality traits. Career explorers can then identify specific occupations they are interested in and "reality test" (using Donald Super's term) this manageable set by reading, job shadowing, course work, etc.

To identify career decision-making and development needs

Though it sounds easy to administer an interest inventory, interpret it and shepherd career decision-makers through exploratory interventions, a significant proportion of career explorers have intrapersonal challenges that need to be removed before they are able to follow a logical process to a well-informed choice. Theorists define these barriers differently. Super (1957) describes a poor self-concept or the lack of completing specific development tasks as barriers. Krumboltz (1991) focuses on negative career beliefs. Sampson and his colleagues (1996) refer to negative career thoughts. Dinklage (1968) emphasizes ineffective decision-making styles.

The assessment tools in this category measure such intrapersonal challenges. The results may be used to work with individuals on specific identified problems or, for example, to assign members of a career planning course to different levels and kinds of intervention.

To measure progress in desired learning or attitudes

Similarly, such assessments may be used for research or for program evaluation. For example, a measure of career decidedness may be administered to two matched groups: one that has not had a course in career planning and one that has had such a course. The hypothesis is that the group that has completed the career-planning course will have a higher mean score on career decidedness than the group that did not have the course. Such an assessment could also be used with one group prior to taking the career-planning course and again afterward. The goal in this case would be to measure change in specific career attitudes or behaviours triggered by the content of the course.

Assessments of this kind can also be used to measure the attainment of skills, such as behavioural skills or academic skills. After individuals receive training and retake such tests, an increase in these skills can be measured. Similarly, students' achievement toward mastering specific standards or goals can be measured by instruments in this category.

Types of assessment

Assessment tools in our field are typically divided into two categories: formal and informal. Formal assessments have these characteristics: a) their content, specific items, scoring algorithms and score reports are developed with scientific rigour; b) this fact results in the publisher being able to state their reliability and validity; and c) the combination of the first two makes it possible to compare the score of an individual to that of another or with those of a group with a high degree of scientific accuracy.

On the other hand, these characteristics — scientific rigour, known reliability and validity, and capability for comparison with others — are not central to informal assessments. They are tools such as card sorts, checklists, career fantasies, questionnaires and structured interviews. They own a legitimate space in our field and are used skillfully by many counsellors. They cost far less to develop and acquire, and they can be administered with far less advance planning.

Methods of administering assessments

Informal assessments are typically administered by a counsellor or career development facilitator face-to-face in an office or classroom setting. For example, students or clients are asked to sort a set of cards, each of which contains the description of a value, into three stacks: those that "highly appeal to me," those that are "somewhat appealing" and those that "I'd like to avoid." In a different setting, a counsellor or career development facilitator may ask students in a career planning class to relax, close their eyes and imagine an ideal day at work — its location, work tasks, co-workers, degree of independence, length, lifestyle, etc. In yet another approach, a counsellor who has detailed knowledge of Holland's theory may conduct a structured interview around the six work environments. In each of these cases, a trained counsellor is able to help a student or client draw inferences from the informal assessment that sheds light on potential career choices or changes.

Formal assessments are administered in print or digital forms. If they are standard tests in print form with right or wrong answers, they are administered under controlled conditions usually involving standard instructions, specified time limits, security of testing materials and test monitors. Such tests may also be administered in a computer lab, requiring that individuals prove their identity to access items that are delivered through a secure website. Some achievement or aptitude tests are adaptive, meaning that the computer selects items at increasing levels of difficulty until it finds the examinee's general level of knowledge and then presents items only at that level. This type of test varies both in items used and in length of testing for different students.

Technology has revolutionized assessment in many ways, offering capabilities such as: adaptive testing; the use of videos, graphics and audio; administration to large numbers of people nationwide at their selected time; immediate scoring; online personalized interpretation of results; electronic transfer of results to counsellors; and the ability to easily share results, where appropriate.

Guidelines for selecting assessments

Following are some guidelines that may be helpful when selecting assessments to use with clients or students:

■ **Define clearly what you want to measure and why.**

Possibilities for what you want to measure could include interests, skills, aptitudes, personality traits, values, academic achievement, learning style, decision-making style and self-efficacy, to name a few. Reasons for measuring these might include to design career guidance interventions for individuals or groups of individuals, to

define segments of your target population to receive different sets of interventions, to measure the effectiveness of your program, to determine whether students have achieved the goals set forth in a specific set of standards, etc.

■ **Develop a list of assessments designed to measure what you want to measure.**

Using a resource such as NCDA's publication, *A Counselor's Guide to Career Assessment* (Wood & Hays, 2019) will be invaluable. It describes assessments designed for various purposes and the 7th edition uniquely gives you online access to expert reviews in order to make an informed choice.

■ **Gather as much information as you can about the assessments you have identified.**

It is essential for you to determine whether each assessment has been developed and tested with individuals like those in your target population. For each, learn about its reliability, validity and theoretical base. Take the assessment yourself and administer it to a few students/clients. Study its score report to see if it is presented in a language and with graphics that will make it understandable to your population. Talk to or read reviews from counsellors who have used the assessment. Importantly, determine if the results of the assessment are compatible with other components of your program. For example, if your school's occupational information is organized by Holland work environments, use an interest inventory that provides results by Holland types. Last, but certainly not least, assess the quality of the publisher. This involves the credibility of the author, the professional reputation of the publisher, the training offered to assure that the assessment is administered and interpreted properly, and the quality of customer service provided.

■ **Determine its practicality for your setting.**

This criterion includes how the assessment is administered (print or electronic) and scored, how counsellors can get training, length and requirements of administration, and cost.

Guidelines for interpreting assessment

Here are some guidelines for providing interpretation:

■ **Provide interpretation as soon as possible after students or clients have taken an assessment.**

Begin interpretation by reviewing why the person took the assessment and what it was like (eg, "you responded to 60 items by selecting one of five answers – like very much, like, neutral, dislike, dislike very much"). If true, be sure to indicate that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

■ **Provide the score report to the examinee and explain each section simply and in detail.**

If you conduct interpretation in a group, use an attractive PowerPoint presentation with a sample score report that students/clients see while having their own report in front of them.

■ **Provide an opportunity to students/clients to ask questions, and try to make sure you answer all questions immediately or within a reasonable timeframe.**

Be sure that you apply the results on the score report to the specific career concerns that the student or client is facing at the moment.

This, of course, is the real reason for having taken the assessment. Its interpretation should be used to guide course selection, the tentative selection of an occupation or job, or whatever career concern the student or client has brought forward or your program of services is attempting to support.

Summary

This article has provided a general overview of the purposes of assessment, types of assessment, methods of administration, and guidelines for selecting and interpreting assessments. Understanding these concepts is just the beginning of preparation for informed use of assessments in career counselling and guidance. In-depth investigation of the effectiveness of specific assessments in various work settings and with members of various populations is essential. ■

A longer version of this article is available at *ceric.ca/careering*.

AUTHOR BIO

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CAREER BRIEFS

CERIC-funded project to examine role of career education on outcomes of young Canadians

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is undertaking a project, supported by CERIC, that will identify the impact of career interventions/education on high school students' post-secondary choices and workforce outcomes. The project will use data documenting 10 years in the lives of 7,000 young Canadians across 72 schools in British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick, including their occupational aspirations at age 14, their post-secondary education and their earnings. It aims to help equip the career counselling profession to respond authoritatively to increasingly urgent policy questions about how best to structure career education for young people.

Visit *ceric.ca* to learn more about the project.

Brookfield Institute report examines diverse drivers of change in Canadian labour market

Turn and Face the Strange: Changes impacting the future of employment in Canada illuminates the diverse and intersecting trends driving change in Canada's labour market. While technological trends will play a significant role in the future of work, many other trends could also influence future skills demand in positive and negative ways. *Turn and Face the Strange* paints a complex picture of the future, exploring 31 broad trends in the areas of:

- Demographic change
- Globalization
- Technological change
- Environmental sustainability
- Urbanization
- Increasing inequality
- Political uncertainty

Brookfield Institute is continuing research in this area and is planning to share an insights report in summer 2019 based on workshops held in six Canadian locations.

Head to *brookfieldinstitute.ca* to read the report.

Training for working Canadians is scarce, Public Policy Forum report finds

This report examines Canada's strengths and weaknesses in skills development as well as training models from around the world, and suggests improvements to lifelong learning systems. It suggests that while Canada's K-12 education system is a world leader in equipping children and young people with the skills they need, training opportunities for workers in the labour force are scarce and unevenly distributed. Among the findings:

- Less than one-third of Canadians receive job-related, non-formal education.
- Those who do get job-related training receive only 49 hours of instruction annually, below the OECD average of 58 hours.
- Less educated, Indigenous and older workers, as well as workers living in rural and remote communities, are less likely to receive workplace training.

Check out the full report at *ppforum.ca*.

Research report sheds light on Canada's settlement sector

The Competencies of Front-line Settlement Practitioners in Canada: A Background Research Report is part of a project funded by CERIC and led by ECaliber Group and Calience Research that aims to enhance understanding of capacity-building among settlement workers. This timely report examines the nature of front-line settlement work and the context in which it is carried out. It also reviews what research and work has been undertaken toward strengthening the competencies of front-line settlement practitioners.

A finalized set of competencies and career pathways as well as insights gained during the implementation of the project will be captured in a final report and an infographic.

Find out more about this project at *ceric.ca*.

Ontario inadequately preparing students for jobs, adulthood: report

Ontario schools are falling behind in preparing students for future jobs and adulthood, according to a Counselling Foundation of Canada-funded report by People for Education titled *Roadmaps and roadblocks: Career and life planning, guidance and streaming in Ontario's schools*. The province has a policy aimed at supporting students, from kindergarten to Grade 12, for career and life planning, but schools are struggling to implement it, the report says. These challenges come at a time when there is growing pressure to prepare students for a rapidly changing, increasingly complex future, the report suggests.

Read the report at *peopleforeducation.ca*.

The power of play
Le pouvoir du jeu

Marisa Brown

Brock University's integration of gamification and assessment has helped students discover new insights about themselves

L'intégration de la ludification et des évaluations à l'Université Brock aide les étudiants à mieux se connaître

We didn't start out with a comprehensive plan to gamify assessments with our students at Brock University. It just sort of happened. We knew we wanted to increase student engagement in their career planning. We also wanted students to critically assess their own strengths, skills, competencies, work values, interests and other key elements in the career development process. Providing students with alternatives to traditional, formal assessments as part of their career journey was also a priority – we wanted them to have fun.

Around the same time, we invested in training a staff member in LEGO® Serious Play® – Methods & Materials facilitation. We were also considering how to incorporate images, mind maps and systems to support design thinking in our work with students.

What does it mean to 'gamify' assessments?

CERIC's Glossary of Career Development defines self-assessment as the process of evaluating one's own abilities, skills, values, interests and characteristics (CERIC and the Canadian Council for Career Development, n.d.). In the post-secondary context, this can be extended to students and the process of self-reflection in career discovery, career decision-making and career readiness.

Gamification in assessments means applying principles of game theory. According to Kapp and Coné (2012) – leaders in applying gamification within a learning context – a well-designed game involves abstract thinking, interactivity and is defined by a structure or set of rules. Players work toward a tangible outcome and the process may also elicit an emotional response as they strive to attain the goal. At Brock, we have aligned gamification principles to self-assessment by using a variety of tools to encourage abstract thinking and interactivity with the end goal of students discovering new insights about themselves and their career path.

Nous n'avions pas planifié en détail la ludification des évaluations de nos étudiants à l'Université Brock. C'est arrivé tout bonnement. Nous savions que nous voulions augmenter la participation des étudiants dans leur planification de carrière. Nous voulions également que nos étudiants évaluent d'un œil critique leurs propres forces, aptitudes, compétences, valeurs professionnelles, champs d'intérêt et autres éléments clés dans leur processus de développement de carrière. Offrir à nos étudiants d'autres options que les évaluations officielles conventionnelles dans le cadre de leur parcours de carrière était également une priorité – nous voulions qu'ils s'amusent.

Vers la même période, nous avons investi pour offrir à l'un de nos employés une formation en animation avec les méthodes et le matériel LEGOMD Serious PlayMD. Nous envisagions également à cette période une façon d'intégrer des images, des systèmes et des cartes d'organisation d'idées pour encourager la réflexion conceptuelle dans notre travail avec les étudiants.

Que signifie la ludification des évaluations?

Le Lexique du développement de carrière du CERIC définit l'autoé-valuation comme le processus d'évaluation de ses propres aptitudes, compétences, valeurs, champs d'intérêt et caractéristiques (CERIC and the Canadian Council for Career Development, n.d.). Dans un contexte postsecondaire, cette évaluation peut également servir à aider les étudiants dans leur processus d'autoréflexion en matière d'exploration et de choix de carrière et de préparation au marché du travail.

La ludification des évaluations signifie d'appliquer les principes de la théorie des jeux. Selon Kapp et Coné (2012), chefs de file dans l'utilisation de la ludification dans un contexte d'apprentissage – un jeu bien conçu est interactif, exige l'utilisation de la pensée abstraite et est défini par une structure ou un ensemble de règles. Il demande aux joueurs de

concourir à un résultat tangible et peut également susciter une réaction émotionnelle tandis que ces derniers s'efforcent d'atteindre le but du jeu. À l'Université Brock, nous avons harmonisé les principes de la ludification avec l'autoévaluation à l'aide de divers outils pour encourager la pensée abstraite et l'interactivité, et ce, dans l'objectif ultime que les étudiants améliorent leur connaissance d'eux-mêmes et de leur parcours de carrière.

La ludification à l'Université Brock

L'Université Brock a intégré LEGO® Serious Play®, les cartes d'organisation d'idées et les cartes défis SparkPath dans sa trousse d'outils de développement de carrière.

LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP)

Nous utilisons LSP avec nos étudiants comme outil pour les aider à réaliser l'auto-évaluation de leurs forces, de leurs valeurs et de leurs compétences. Nos conseillers en carrières facilitent ce processus d'une manière structurée, tout en offrant également aux étudiants des occasions d'utiliser la pensée abstraite (comme dans la définition du jeu de Kapp et de Coné).

LSP est une technique structurée qui repose sur quatre phases principales : la présentation du défi, la construction d'un modèle qui illustre le défi (p. ex. ajout d'un sens aux blocs LEGO®), la communication et la réflexion. Ce processus est répété plusieurs fois pendant une séance LSP, ce qui entraîne une discussion approfondie du principal sujet ou défi et une meilleure compréhension de celui-ci. À l'Université Brock, nous animons des séances LSP liées à la détermination des compétences, à la préparation à l'entrevue, à la formation en professionnalisme et à la réflexion.

Par exemple, dans un récent atelier de préparation à l'entrevue, nous avons utilisé LSP comme outil d'auto-évaluation reposant sur les forces de l'étudiant. Nous avons demandé aux étudiants de construire un modèle illustrant leurs forces, leurs compétences ou leurs « super pouvoirs ». Cette activité a permis aux étudiants d'analyser leurs propres aptitudes et de mieux comprendre la façon dont leurs forces peuvent se traduire dans un milieu universitaire ou un cadre de travail. Le fait de réfléchir à leurs forces au moyen de LSP aide les étudiants à formuler des réponses à certaines questions d'entrevue, comme « parlez-moi de vous » ou « quelle est votre plus grande force ? »

Les étudiants sont souvent surpris de la façon dont le processus LSP les amène à mieux connaître leurs propres forces, tout en s'amusant à « jouer » aux blocs LEGO®. Ils sont vraiment enthousiastes à l'idée de présenter leur modèle aux autres étudiants et expriment leurs forces avec plus d'assurance (que s'ils l'avaient fait avant de construire leur modèle).

Les étudiants nous ont aussi dit qu'ils ne pensaient pas être aussi créatifs avant de participer à la séance LSP. En fait, ils ont commencé à se voir comme un penseur créatif pendant la construction avec les blocs. Les étudiants ont aussi exprimé le fait qu'ils étaient contents d'avoir l'occasion d'évaluer leurs forces actuelles par rapport à une carrière, plutôt qu'à des compétences utilisées dans le passé ou qu'ils pourraient utiliser un jour.

Grâce à LSP, les étudiants prennent part à un processus de réflexion continu et se sentent plus étroitement liés au résultat – une métaphore physique en blocs LEGO® qu'ils ont personnellement créée. Ce processus complexe peut donner de meilleurs résultats que de se fier à une liste de forces ou de compétences souvent créée dans le cadre d'une évaluation plus conventionnelle.

> **Reflecting on their strengths through LSP helps students develop answers to interview questions ...**

> **Le fait de réfléchir à leurs forces au moyen de LSP aide les étudiants à formuler des réponses à certaines questions d'entrevue ...**

Gamification at Brock University

Brock University has integrated LEGO® Serious Play®, mind mapping and SparkPath Challenge Cards into its career development toolkit.

LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP)

We use LSP with students as a tool for self-assessing strengths, values and skills. Our career consultants facilitate this process in a structured manner while also offering opportunities for abstract thinking (as in Kapp and Coné's definition of gaming).

LSP is a facilitated technique that is grounded in four main phases: present the challenge, build a model reflecting the challenge (ie, add meaning to the LEGO® bricks), share and reflect. This process is repeated several times through a LSP session, resulting in deeper discussion and connection to the main topic or challenge. At Brock, we have facilitated LSP sessions in relation to skills identification, interview preparation, professionalism training and reflection.

For example, in a recent interview-preparation workshop, we used LSP as a strength-based self-assessment tool. We asked students to construct a model of their strengths, skills or "superpowers." In doing so, students analyzed their own abilities and made connections to how their strength translated in a work or academic setting. Reflecting on their strengths through LSP helps students develop answers to interview questions such as "tell me about yourself" and "what is your greatest strength?"

Students are often surprised at how the LSP process leads to generating new insights about their own strengths while also having fun "playing" with LEGO® bricks. They get genuinely excited about sharing their models with other students and feel more confident in expressing their strengths (than if they were to have done so without building their models first).

Students have also commented that they did not see themselves as creative until participating in LSP. They began to see themselves as

creative thinkers through the process of building with the bricks. Students also expressed that they appreciated the opportunity to assess their current strengths in relation to career, rather than skills that they may use someday or have used in the past.

Through LSP, students engage in a continual reflection process and are more connected to the outcome – a physical LEGO® metaphor that they personally created. This complex, involved process can be more impactful than relying on a generated list of strengths or skills that is often a result of completing a more traditional assessment.

Mind maps

We also use mind maps as a way for students to identify and self-assess skills and competencies. Through a guided process, students create mind maps of skills they have developed through experiential learning activities (including co-curricular and curricular learning experiences) related to specific courses, program areas or career pathways. They engage in abstract thinking by literally drawing connections from experiences to skills in new ways.

This process of skill self-assessment also offers an opportunity for students to identify potential gaps and areas for further growth (if they are unable to identify experiences related to specific skills in their discipline or career focus). Students have commented on how the mind-map exercise offers "a-ha" moments for them when sharing their maps with colleagues and telling the stories of how they have developed certain skills.

Tangible outcomes include the mind map, answers to interview questions, ideas for career decision-making and goal-setting.

SparkPath Challenge Cards

Another informal self-assessment tool we have been using to engage students in career discovery is SparkPath Challenge Cards. Each Challenge Card set contains 30 visually appealing cards representing challenges in the future of work in health care, technology, society, environment and the economy.

Our career consultants use the Challenge Cards in one-on-one coaching sessions to engage students in conversations about career options, areas of interest, likes/dislikes and values. This approach focuses on students identifying challenges, problems and opportunities (shifting away from a focus on specific jobs). Through the guided process, students prioritize areas of interest and are encouraged to self-assess and reflect on personal and professional values. By interacting in the process and "playing" with the cards, students develop an action plan for next steps in their career planning.

These tools align with our philosophy of career development at Brock. We provide students with the tools to be successful in a self-directed process. Our career development model is grounded in John Krumboltz's (2008) planned happenstance theory and Jim Bright and Robert Pryor's (2003) chaos theory of career development. We encourage students to be flexible and take manageable risks while also asking for help and staying organized through the process. By inviting students to actively participate

Cartes d'organisation d'idées

Nous utilisons également des cartes d'organisation d'idées pour aider les étudiants à déterminer et à évaluer leurs forces et leurs compétences. Dans le cadre d'un processus guidé, les étudiants créent des cartes d'organisation d'idées qui présentent les compétences qu'ils ont acquises dans le cadre d'activités d'apprentissage par l'expérience (y compris les activités d'apprentissage par l'expérience scolaires et parascolaires) liées à des cours, à des activités de programme ou à des parcours de carrière en particulier. Grâce à cette nouvelle méthode, les étudiants utilisent la pensée abstraite en dessinant littéralement des liens entre leurs expériences et leurs compétences.

Ce processus d'auto-évaluation des compétences offre également aux étudiants l'occasion de déterminer des lacunes potentielles et les domaines à exploiter davantage (s'ils ne sont pas capables de trouver des expériences liées à des compétences particulières dans leur discipline ou leur choix de carrière). Les étudiants nous ont fait part de tout le plaisir qu'ils ont eu à présenter leur carte d'organisation d'idées à leurs camarades et à leur raconter le récit de l'acquisition de certaines de leurs compétences.

Les résultats tangibles comprennent la carte d'organisation d'idées, des réponses aux questions d'entrevue et des idées de choix et d'objectifs de carrière.

Cartes défis SparkPath

Les cartes défis SparkPath sont un autre outil informel d'auto-évaluation que nous utilisons pour encourager la participation active des étudiants dans leur exploration de carrière. Chaque jeu de cartes défis comprend 30 cartes attrayantes visuellement qui présentent des défis professionnels à venir dans les domaines des soins de santé, de la technologie, de la société, de l'environnement et de l'économie.

Nos conseillers en carrières utilisent les cartes défis dans leurs séances d'encadrement individuelles pour discuter avec les étudiants de leurs choix de carrière, de leurs champs d'intérêt, de leurs préférences et de leurs valeurs. Cette approche vise essentiellement à encourager les étudiants à déterminer des défis, des problèmes et des possibilités liées à leur choix de carrière (elle s'éloigne d'une approche axée sur des emplois précis). Le processus guidé permet aux étudiants d'accorder la priorité à leurs champs d'intérêt et les encourage à réfléchir à leurs valeurs personnelles et professionnelles à partir de leur auto-évaluation. Lorsqu'ils discutent avec les autres participants au cours du processus et qu'ils « jouent » avec les cartes, les étudiants élaborent un plan d'action concernant les prochaines étapes de leur planification de carrière.

Ces outils concordent avec notre philosophie en matière de développement de carrière à l'Université Brock. Nous offrons aux étudiants les outils nécessaires pour réussir dans un processus autonome. Notre modèle de développement de carrière repose sur la théorie du hasard planifié de John Krumboltz's (2009) et sur la théorie du chaos du développement de carrière de Jim Bright et de Robert Pryor's (2003). Nous encourageons les étudiants à faire preuve de souplesse et à prendre des risques raisonnables, tout en demandant de l'aide et en restant organisés au cours du processus. Lorsqu'ils participent activement aux autoé-valuations qui suivent la création des cartes d'organisation d'idées, la construction de leur métaphore au moyen de LEGO® Serious Play® et l'utilisation des cartes défis, les étudiants se consacrent plus entièrement à déterminer leur propre choix de carrière.

in the self-assessments of mind-mapping, building metaphors through LEGO® Serious Play® and Challenge Cards, they engage more fully in their own career decision-making. Students are engaged in the process of learning and developing their own narrative, which, according to Kapp and Coné, are critical elements of gamification.

Where we go from here

Our next steps include evaluating how impactful these activities are three months out and also in the longer term. We will be investigating how students are applying these concepts in future career and professional decision-making and how the tools have supported their career journey and self-exploration. ◼

Les étudiants participent activement au processus d'apprentissage et de création de leur propre histoire, ce qui est essentiel aux éléments de la ludification, selon Kapp et Coné.

Prochaines étapes

Les prochaines étapes consisteront entre autres à évaluer les résultats de ces activités dans trois mois ainsi qu'à plus long terme. Nous examinerons la façon dont les étudiants appliquent les concepts donnés dans leur carrière et leurs choix professionnels à venir et la manière dont ces outils les aideront dans leur parcours de carrière et leur auto-révélation. ◼

AUTHOR BIO

Marisa Brown *is a Career Curriculum Specialist with Co-op, Career & Experiential Education at Brock University. She is a LEGO® Serious Play® – Methods & Materials facilitator, career development practitioner and holds a Master of Education – Teaching, Learning & Development.*

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Marisa Brown *est une spécialiste en programmes de choix de carrière au sein du programme d'enseignement coopératif, d'éducation au choix de carrière et d'apprentissage par l'expérience de l'Université Brock. Elle est également animatrice avec les méthodes et le matériel LEGOMD Serious PlayMD, intervenante en développement de carrière et détentrice d'une maîtrise en éducation – enseignement, apprentissage et perfectionnement.*

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CLIENT SIDE

In this *Careering* feature, jobseekers reflect on successes and struggles in their career development.

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It's a small world after all – reflections on a career coaching journey

When a series of life changes left **Debra Thompson** at a fork in the road, she turned to a former client for guidance – and became the client herself

Our business relationship started several years ago, when she was the client and I was an account executive for a global training company. We met a couple of times while working on a project and I immediately felt a kinship and a professional connection that is rare in such a short time. Afterward, we remained in touch professionally over LinkedIn. Fast forward a couple years later and I noticed some of her social media posts focused on career coaching. Barbara Wilson was launching a new venture: Thrive Career Consulting.

Over a year ago, I reached out and suggested we connect. I had no plan, but I was curious about what she was doing and how it might help me. This time, I would be the client and she would be the coach.

I shared with her that I had reached a stalemate in my career journey, a fork in the road and that I was unsure about where to go next or how to get there. My work environment and my job were changing dramatically, I had lost my father to suicide, my mom was going through cancer treatments for a second time and my only daughter was finishing university. Meanwhile, I was trying to make sense of what the next 10-15 years of my career were going to look like as I approached retirement. I didn't know if I had the strength to start another sales career to build my brand and I had no idea what I wanted to do. I was also tired, unbalanced and desperately in need of self-care. I knew one thing – that I needed help to navigate or I would continue to flounder.

I had no idea what this call for help would mean to me in the coming months and how it would lead me down a path I could have never envisioned for myself. The journey had pivots and pitfalls and helped me learn the world is much smaller than I thought.

Assessing values and weighing possibilities

Our work started with a short phone meeting and Barb giving an overview of how she could help. I remember her telling me I had a lot on my plate, which was true. During my rare moments of spare time, we continued with the coaching sessions.

We spent time talking about my career goals and what I liked and didn't like about my current job, where I was facing organizational and industry changes. I often felt relieved after each session, when I unloaded all of my "life updates" on Barb. She was a patient listener and she kept me on track.

We did questionnaires and a Wheel of Life assessment, where I was asked to assess my focus on various aspects of my life and do a values exercise. This last exercise yielded three values – resilience, initiative and life balance. I was then asked to reflect on these values in a number of ways to find my own career values.

Additionally, we spent time reflecting on homework and actions I was taking during the process. One of the pieces of homework was to "hire a financial planner." This might be unexpected advice from a career coach, but this was what I needed to assess what kind of career I could pursue and what retirement would look like for me. I did values and skills card sorts and I involved my family in assessing my skills and values – they were along for the ride whether they wanted to be or not. I reminded them that my happiness was their happiness.

Big network, small world

After a few weeks, we determined the not-for-profit sector as an area of interest. I have been a lifelong volunteer and wanted to spend time in my next career giving back. I also enjoyed the creative pursuits of writing, communicating and building relationships.

While I spent time researching roles, Barb connected me with her network and encouraged me to contact people in the NFP sector to conduct informational interviews. Having honed my cold calling and prospecting skills in my sales work, I was ready for this, but my "interviewees" made it that much easier and the NFP sector was particularly welcoming. Even those who were complete strangers to me openly shared their advice and career journeys, and even introduced me to others in their own network. Many have become valued mentors.

I developed an amazing network and the small world stories started piling up. One of the first informational interviews I had was with a recruitment professional who had posted a role I was interested in on LinkedIn. We discovered we had many connections and had likely crossed paths a few times without even knowing it.

Finding fit with career values

A few months into the coaching process, while I was still figuring out the role I wanted and had not yet applied to other positions, I was restructured out of my job. After the initial shock wore off, I was relieved because I had already started the journey. After a short break, I kicked things into high gear. With Barb's help, I remained connected with my network, built an amazing resume and cover letter, and upped my interview game. Looking for a job became my job.

After three months, I found an amazing job with a local education council that checked all my boxes and aligned with my career values. I realized in the first interview that it was a fit for me and my new employer.

On my first day, I realized I had a connection with most of my new co-workers from either volunteering, my previous career or my personal life. The recruitment pro I mentioned? Turns out she's one of my employer's greatest community supporters and was thrilled to learn I'd joined them. Small world indeed.

We don't hesitate to hire a professional to help us with our physical or mental health, but many are reluctant to reach out to an expert for career development assistance. I say, do it! Without going on this journey, I would not have found the role I now know is a great fit for me. ∎

AUTHOR BIO

Debra Thompson *is Communications and Community Outreach Manager for the Halton Industry Education Council (HIEC) and resides in Burlington, ON. She's also a girlfriend, mom, daughter, reader, photographer, volunteer, self-professed foodie and tweeter of randomness.*

Principles in Action

Change is inevitable in career development. Fear of it shouldn't be

Chris Callanan

Photo courtesy of Chris Callanan

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With a goal of bringing greater clarity and consistency to our national conversations about career development, CERIC developed a set of **"Guiding Principles of Career Development"** that have been enthusiastically embraced across Canada. These eight Guiding Principles are intended as a starting point to inform discussions with clients, employers, funders, policymakers and families.

Each issue of *Careering* features a Guiding Principle "in action," exploring how a career professional is applying a Principle in practice.

As career development practitioners (CDPs), we work with individuals primarily at key transition points in their lives. This can include job loss and relocation as well as the desire for a change. Our role is to empower clients to make sustainable choices, aspire to goals, and identify their strengths and weaknesses. This process is unique to each client and can produce many varying results. As CDPs, we work with our clients to guide them down this path and the twists and turns that go along with it to reach the end goal of sustainable employment. I help clients learn to embrace opportunities by recognizing that personal growth comes from change.

Embrace change

People are affected by and interpret change in different ways. As a CDP, I often meet individuals whose resumes state that they "love change" and "enjoy new challenges." However, a new dynamic in their previous or current employment is often what led them to my office in the first place. When this is the case, I find it helpful to have the client define what

> ## Guiding Principle
>
> Career development is dynamic, evolving and requires continuous adaption and resilience through multiple transitions.
>
> **ceric.ca/principles**

they like and don't like about change. I also explain to clients that this self-knowledge helps them better understand what is happening around them. This allows them to identify any barriers that may get in the way of embracing change. Clients can then apply this objective self-knowledge to examining and strengthening their resume.

When clients are struggling with transition, whether it be job loss or having to move into a completely new sector, I also respond to them with empathy. I tell them that I understand change and uncertainty can be scary and unnerving, but it can also create opportunities for personal growth and development. I share that embracing change is what led me to my current career; had I not embraced it, I would have been on a very different path. After spending the bulk of my career within the retail sector, the company for which I worked was facing a complete closure of all stores. During my job search, an opportunity to work within the career development sector presented itself. I embraced this change and this transition has been key to my career. Sharing my story allows the client sitting across from me to see that I have also faced change and used it to move forward.

> **I tell them that I understand change and uncertainty can be scary and unnerving, but it can also create opportunities for personal growth and development.**

Learn from experiences

The skill of learning from one's own successes and failures is also a key component of thriving amid transition. Sometimes, a shift in mindset can be what's needed to have a clear understanding of the situation. This shift can be seen in the client building upon their self-knowledge to better understand what caused them to arrive at this new turn in their career path.

I guide clients through a reflection of their entire work history. Working in a resource-based community, I often meet with clients who are being laid off after holding a long-term position due to changes in labour market conditions. Clients share that their work is their life and it is who they are. This can be a difficult process for clients to face.

I can recall one client who was displaced by a workplace injury after 30 years of working for a forestry company. After many conversations, it became clear that this client had a passion to teach his trade to others. We worked on having this client apply to a local college as a part-time trades instructor. Allowing the client to share his journey helped me determine how to best offer support and assistance.

Be resilient and adaptable

As this Guiding Principle of Career Development asserts, change is inevitable in career development. The ability to embrace it exemplifies a resiliency that many employers look for in potential hires. Adaptability and flexibility are integral to this.

Adapting to a change at a workplace could include gaining new skills, using a previous skill set in a new way or learning to appreciate constructive criticism. More significant events such as a major health incident, workplace injury or job loss can require more intensive adaptations such as physical, mental and financial shifts. It's at this point that the ability to become resilient and learn from the process comes into play. We cannot control everything in our lives, but we can control how we react to it. Being open-minded when they are pushed out of their comfort zone helps with clients' personal growth.

To help clients build resiliency, I encourage them to adopt a growth mindset, wherein they learn from their mistakes and take the necessary actions to correct them. To do so, I guide them through a reflection on these questions:

1. What employment goal are you working toward?
2. How are you going to achieve it?
3. What do you need to do next to move forward?

As CDPs, if we take time to ask clients these questions, we will see greater engagement and a willingness to strive further. This critical-thinking exercise will better equip clients to face future challenges with perseverance and resiliency.

Facing the future

Career development is dynamic, evolving and requires continuous adaption and resilience through multiple transitions. It is my experience that the jobseekers' path from job loss to gaining employment can be ever-changing, and learning to embrace challenges, evolve and be ready to face what comes next are skills that should be encouraged and developed. A growth mindset is one of the most valuable things a client can bring to the process. ■

AUTHOR BIO

Chris Callanan *is the Regional Manager for Employment Services at North Island Employment (NIEFS), a BC-based, award-winning not-for-profit workforce development organization. He brings a diverse background in leadership and human resources roles to NIEFS, allowing him to foster meaningful and valuable relationships in his community with clients and employers alike.*

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10 QUESTIONS

Dr Chris Wood is an Associate Professor and Department Chair in the Counselor Education, School Psychology and Human Services Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He has previous experience as a high school counsellor, a counselling/guidance department chair, a counsellor/ group leader at a residential youth facility for troubled teens and a career counsellor at an alternative school serving grades 7-12. Dr Wood was co-editor of the 5th and 6th editions of the National Career Development Association (NCDA) publication *A Counselor's Guide to Career Assessment Instruments*.

Dr Wood was also interviewed for the 2019 Summer issue of *Career Developments,* the National Career Development Association print magazine.

In a sentence or two, describe why career development matters.

Career development matters because it helps individuals actualize their dreams and it gives society a chance to ameliorate inequities created by sociopolitical oppression. When individuals don't experience adequate career development interventions, they are susceptible to socializing forces that minimize their career opportunities and society misses out on the many benefits such individuals could have provided.

Which book are you reading right now and why did you choose it?

I'm trying to finish *The Truths We Hold* by Kamala Harris. I heard her speak on my campus several months ago and was immensely impressed. Her children's book is good, too – my daughters and I enjoyed reading it.

What was your first-ever job and what did you learn from it?

My first real paying job was as a kennel person at a veterinary clinic. My job was to clean cages and clean up after animals. It was a dirty job but I enjoyed it. They made a special award for me after I had been there a year because no one had lasted in the position more than a few months. One of the veterinarians was going to night school to study/learn to be an engineer. He hated being a vet but was visibly animated when discussing vectors and related math. So, I think from that job I learned lessons both about the value of hard work and the importance of matching intellectual interests to a career.

What do you do to relax and how does it help you?

Relaxing is definitely a weakness of mine, but I love to read and I enjoy playing the game Words with Friends on my phone. Both of these activities help me unwind before bed.

What is the one thing you wouldn't be able to work without? Why?

A good desk. I like to work in the library – it feels like a special treat, to have a large table and be surrounded by books. I try to get work done on airplanes but it's a physically and mentally taxing process.

What is the most unusual interview question you've ever been asked and how did you respond?

I was asked, "What kind of plant would you be?" I think I said, "I don't know." Such questions make me wish I would say something like "Venus flytrap, for obvious reasons," and then just wring my hands like a villain.

What's something you want to do in the next year that you've never done before?

I would like to be on time more often than I am late!

Who would you like to work with most and why?

I'd like to work with Ruth Bader Ginsburg (RBG). I think I would learn a lot from her. I found the documentary on her life and career to be very inspirational. A colleague of mine gave me an action figure of RBG and I keep it on the shelf in my office.

Which talent or superpower would you like to have and how would you use it?

I wish I could pause time – if I had that superpower I would never be late. Maybe eventually I would also figure out ways to use it to help people and for the greater good of society, but the initial appeal is just being on time for appointments and finishing tasks on time.

What do you consider your greatest achievement and why?

Being a father to my 4-year-old and 6-year-old daughters (as author and therapist Virginia Satir pointed out, 'peoplemaking' is probably the most important thing we can do). Like their mother, they are very smart, funny, beautiful, multi-talented and seem to like hanging out with me (despite the fact that I lack most of the aforementioned qualities!). ■

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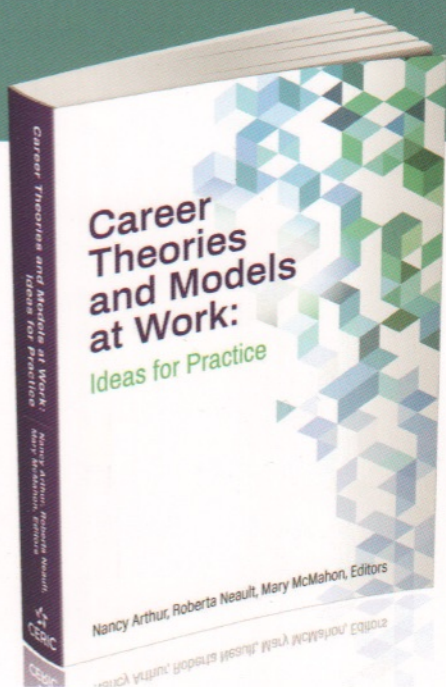
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MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI)

Work with resistance rather than against it.

Become skilled at recognizing and eliciting change behaviour to achieve positive outcomes. With our MI training, you will discover how a shoulder-to-shoulder approach makes your job easier by removing the pressure to fix things. Identify where resistance comes from, and how behaviours, responses, and interactions can be formulated to engage clients at a deeper level, helping them realize and move towards change.

18 modules   flexible   online

BRINGING ETHICS TO LIFE

Give ethics the attention it deserves.

In the rush to reach outcomes and satisfy competing priorities, there is often little time to consider what's happening around us. Yet, our commitment to ethical behaviour requires us to stop and reflect on situations and decisions. Discuss how we make ethical decisions and the biases that can affect them.

📅 1 day   ⏱ 2 hours   📶 webinar

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

Through knowledge, care, and compassion, many suicides are preventable.

Develop your own knowledge through awareness and learn practical tools and techniques to support suicide prevention. You will learn how to spot the warning signs, identify the risk level, and become confident using the suicide intervention model.

📅 2 days   ⏱ 4 hours   📶 webinar

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS AT WORK

Drive personal success with this unique professional development tool.

Based on over 15 years of worldwide use and research, this tool helps individuals to understand why they behave the way they do and sets a framework that improves occupational performance.

Using a range of EBW assessments and reports, individuals can instantly increase self-awareness and see which emotions and behaviours are inhibitors and activators to performance.

👤 individualized   ⏱ 1.5 hours   💻 online

" WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT OUR TRAINING

"In all honesty, this was the best presented course that I have ever been to! The activities were amazing and really brought out a lot in the learning as well as the presentation."

"Loved every minute of it, and you never lost me! I usually get distracted during training, but you held my attention the entire time."

"The flow and pace was great. Wonderful participation and great group discussion. Agilec provided an atmosphere that made it easy to share."

"I've rarely participated in a workshop that engaged me fully for two solid days and made me feel energized and excited to bring what I'd learned back to my co-workers."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at
www.agilec.ca/PD
or call us at
1-800-361-4642
to learn more.

You might also be interested in

Leadership Training

Today's diverse workforce demands excellent leaders. Our training is designed to build on key elements that arms leaders with new strategies for improved leadership skills.

www.agilec.ca/leaders

Team Development

Our courses will help you strengthen your organization as participants learn to fully know themselves and their coworkers. Each course is customized to meet the unique needs of our customers.

www.agilec.ca/teams