

WHAT ARE CAREER MOTIVATORS?

Your career motivators are what energize you when you think about what you'd like to work towards in your career. They are concrete descriptions of what you feel would make your work fulfilling.

Career motivators are not job titles, like “lawyer” or “writer” (although they can be descriptions of activities or skills). They are not general phrases like “fulfillment,” “financial security,” “happiness” or “work/life balance” (you probably want these things in your work, so they can be assumed!) Your career motivators are what your work would need to be like for you to have these things.

Spend a bit of time to consider what motivates you—this will help you find your career direction and manage your career along the way.

Types of career motivators

Career motivators can be divided into three types:

CONTRIBUTION MOTIVATORS

- + Contribution motivators are how you want to contribute to the world through your work.
- + Usually, they describe competencies (skills, knowledge and attributes), specific things you want to create, your passions and causes and how you like to work with people and information.

WORK ENVIRONMENT MOTIVATORS

- + Work environment motivators are elements of your workplace that are important for you.
- + These can include the physical environment of the workplace, the work culture and your role on the work team (as a leader, support person, subject matter expert, etc.).

LIFESTYLE MOTIVATORS

- + Lifestyle motivators are how your career supports other areas of your life.
- + These motivators often include salary, where you want to live, the amount of time you devote to work, the schedule of your work day, flexibility in taking time off, etc.

All three types are important, but your contribution motivators and work environment motivators will be most helpful in pointing you in specific career directions.

It takes time to uncover your own motivators, and sometimes it can be tricky to separate what you really want from what you feel you “should” want. Your motivators may also shift and develop over time, so it's a good idea to revisit them once in a while.

Sample career motivators

Sample set of career motivators for person #1:

- + I want to use my research and writing skills to produce content targeted at a youth audience ([contribution motivator](#))
- + I want to work with knowledge about the environment and urban development ([contribution motivator](#))
- + I value a professional environment that has a corporate feel but is vibrant and exciting ([work environment motivator](#))
- + I like the idea of being connected with a small, fast-moving, entrepreneurial organization where I will have the chance to take on different roles ([work environment motivator](#))

- + Right now, I am willing to work as much as necessary to get started, although down the road, I want to work a more standard work week ([lifestyle motivator](#))

Sample set of career motivators for person #2:

- + I see myself helping people who are disadvantaged, though in a behind-the-scenes rather than in a front-line function ([contribution motivator](#))
- + I want to design and manage service-oriented processes and procedures to make systems run more effectively and efficiently while still considering the individual needs of people ([contribution motivator](#))
- + I want to be recognized for making others' work more streamlined while not impeding their effectiveness ([contribution motivator](#))
- + I value a service-oriented culture that is compassionate but also challenges people—both staff and clients—to work hard and do their best ([work environment motivator](#))
- + I thrive in an organization that is connected in a grassroots way to community ([work environment motivator](#))
- + I'm happiest in a structured work environment where everyone's role is clearly defined and I know what the scope of my responsibility is ([work environment motivator](#))
- + I'm willing to earn whatever salary I have to in the short term to get started, but I want to see my earning power increase as my career develops ([lifestyle motivator](#))

Activity

Use the [IDENTIFY YOUR CAREER MOTIVATORS WORKSHEET](#) on the next page to brainstorm your career motivators and clarify your next steps.