



Talents and Skills – A Winning Combination

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During a job search you list or describe your skills on your resumes, applications or during an interview. You have worked hard to develop your skills and they have made you lots of money. Those skills are an important part to your career in the 2nd half of your life.

So have you thought about your talents? Have you capitalized on your talents to enhance your skills during your career or in the 2nd half of your life? Can you name a talent that you regularly used during your career? Or are you like most people: you developed skills that are not connected to our talents?

Identifying your talents is a little harder to do. We can rattle off our skills without any problem but to describe your talents, well that is another story. Our talents, or those things that come easy to us and we naturally like to do, complement our skills. These two items create a winning combination for us in our career and for us in our 2nd half of our life.

Let's take a look at the difference between talents and skills. Then we look at how you can combine them to be a winner, if you are looking for your next career or if you are in your 2nd half of your life.

Talents versus Skills – Do you know the difference?

Can you differentiate between your talents versus skills? Do you know what talents you have? Do you know what skills you have?

Skills

Let's look at the definition of Skill. According to Dictionary.com:

skill¹ [skil] noun

1. the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well: *Carpentry was one of his many skills.*

A skill is something that we learn. Skills are developed. You might attend training to learn a skill. You will practice that skill. You can master a skill such that it appears to be a talent.

This might be a hard skill like programming, hardware design, technical writing, web design, content marketing, etc. You get the picture.

This might be a soft skill like negotiating, project management, people management, etc.



Any more you want to add?

Make a list of all of the skills you have. This will take a while. I'll wait...

The Crux of the Skill Problem

If you have been working for thirty plus years like me, you have developed a lot of skills. I have been paid a lot of money to produce products and services using those skills.

The crux of the problem is many of us are now saying we are sick and tired of using those skills.

Why did we develop some of those skills? Many times it was because our employer paid us to develop those skills? Did we like using those skills? Many times using those skills was **okay!** When were required to use those skills over and over and over and over..... **it got old real fast.**

When we say, we have had enough you may hear:

- You are so good at it, why would you want to quit?
- They pay you a lot of money, why would you want to quit?

Sound familiar?

The problem is the over use of those skills that were developed because someone else wanted you to learn those skills.

Over the last twenty five years, I have inhaled many complex technologies and spit them back out in culturally neutral stories, analogies, pictures, animations and other adult learning formats. I am really good at it. I enjoy the design and creation of the materials **but if I have to inhale one more complex technology that has no real social value well**

I am really good at the inhalation process, but that is a skill that I have developed. **I do not want to do it anymore!**

Talents

We have lots to say something about our skills but talents.... well....

Most of us have forgotten what talents we have. They have been blurred into building our career, making money, paying the mortgage, putting our kids through college, saving for retirement,.....

Let's move on to the definition of Talent. According to Dictionary.com:

tal-ent [tal-uhnt] noun

1. a special natural ability or aptitude: *a talent for drawing.*

A talent is something we do naturally. It is something that we do not think about we just **do it**.

Think back to your childhood. What did you just love to do? What did you do that required little thought? What did you do that left you energized? Think back to when you entered adulthood. Ask yourself the same questions.

What Are Your God-Given Talents?

Many of us who have been working for over twenty years have lost sight of our talents.

We are paid to exercise our skills, which may or may not be built on top of our natural talents. I have been taking myself through a few exercises. I have found it quite interesting and thought provoking.

What did you love to do as a kid?

It took me a while but the one thing I could do for hours and hours as a child were jigsaw puzzles. My mother did not buy them very often. When she did they were very addictive.



Dig out a piece of paper and ruminate on this for a while.

I developed a method for solving jigsaw puzzles. I would work the borders first. I would then find distinctive patterns in different sections of the puzzle to work on. Slowly but surely the sections would start to flow together or attach to the edges. I am a natural with patterns.

I now can see that whenever I had manageable puzzles to solve in my career I was successful.

By the way, I wanted to solve the entire puzzle and not just one piece!

What did you love to do as a kid?

What do love to do as an adult?

You may have to go back to when you first became an adult. Look for a common theme in your career when you have been really happy. What was really enjoyable?

Dig out that piece of paper and ruminate again. This might even take you longer!

The common theme for me is helping people. Whether it was running a help desk for mechanical engineers, developing and delivering technology training, presenting product plans to customers, teaching Algebra to high school students or providing career direction to baby boomers, it has always been around teaching, training or coaching.

You may have to gather friends and family to help you find that common theme.

What are you natural talents?

What skills have you acquired to complement your talents?

For many us, we acquired a lot of skills that did not complement our natural talents. I know how to program in a lot of different programming languages. All of those skills, although valuable, I have not exercised in years and really do not want to use. I was paid very well early in my career for those skills but I quickly became burned out.

I have acquired a lot of skills in the area of training development and delivery that I love to use. I love them because they are complementing my talents.

Skills Talents Disconnect Disorder?

I'm sure you are wondering, what that the heck is Skills Talents Disconnect Disorder (STDD)?

This is a serious problem that afflicts most of us in the 2nd half of life. Skills Talents Disconnect Disorder occurs when we develop skills that are not connected to our natural talents.

Skills Talents Disconnect

When the market shifts, we often develop new skills that follow that change. When we see job postings that require the most current and trendy skills, we often pursue training that helps us acquire those.

The most common of the Skills Talents Disconnect Disorder is learning to behave like an extrovert.

I am guilty of this. I am a closet introvert!

Example

I grew up a pretty shy kid. To get attention as a teenager, I learned to act goofy. I was goofy looking guy. When I graduated from high school, I was 6'4" tall and about 145 pounds with a huge head of red hair. I looked like a giant carrot.

To get the attention of girls, I had to learn to act like an extrovert. It did not work, but I tried!

After college, I went to work at IBM. Eventually, I developed the skill to give technical presentations, and I became pretty good at it. After working there for about 15 years, presenting became my full time job. In the last 10 years of working for IBM, I probably gave 1000 to 1500 presentations to audiences of up to 1000 people.



In my 30s and 40s, I could present every single day. I had to monitor my diet throughout the day to make sure I had energy for the next presentation.

I recently turned 60, so I do not have the energy I had in my 20s, 30s, or even 40s.

The issue? I am not a talented presenter. It does not come naturally. I have learned to become a great presenter. This is a classic example of Skills Talents Disconnect.

I know A LOT of sales people who are closet introverts and have Skills Talents Disconnect.

Burn Out

Burn out occurs when you overuse a skill that is disconnected from your talents. I learned how to be a strong public speaker.

You might think giving presentations comes naturally for me, but it does not. My knees now buckle when I walk off stage. I am exhausted. It consumes a lot of energy!

Last year, I made the decision to back away from pursuing paid speaking gigs. I thought I wanted to belong to the National Speakers Association, but in order to qualify for membership; I would need to speak several times a month. This probably meant traveling several times a month. I know myself—I would have burned out quickly.

I have experienced burn out several times in my career due to Skills Talents Disconnect Disorder. Similarly, I have watched this happen to friends, colleagues, and clients when they have over-used a skill that is not directly related to innate talent.

Next Steps

Spend some time reviewing the list of talents that you created. This will not come quickly or easily if you are in the 2nd half of life. Just because you are good at something or even like doing something does not mean it is a talent.

What are your skills? Take out that piece of paper again. Once you have completed the list answer the following question: ***Which of those skills complement your natural talents? Which skills do not connect?***

Talents and Skills – A Winning Combination

I was looking for a quote about talents and skills and I found the following quote from Hall of Fame Basketball player Larry Bird:

A winner is someone who recognizes his God-given talents, works his tail off to develop them into skills, and uses these skills to accomplish his goals

I am only a few months older than Larry Bird. We were in college at the same time. I was at basketball dud Northwestern University while he took little known Indiana State to the National Championship game his junior year.

Anyone who saw Larry standing on the sideline would say he was just an average player. In college, he was tall and some would say did not look like an athlete.

Talents

He had some real natural talents. My guess they were great vision and hands. He could see the court and teammates out of the corner of his eye. He could make the basketball twirl and spin in his subtle hands.



Skills

Larry Bird developed into a tremendous shooter and passer. Did this come naturally? No, he worked hard at it. His talents made it seem easy. He could see things on the court that allowed him to leverage the natural skills in his hands to make great passes.

Would you call Larry Bird a winner? HECK YES!

What are your talents?

I was talking with my friend, the other day and asked her what she loved to do.

She loved to ride horses. It was the challenge of working with the horse. A horse that was big and powerful. She thoroughly enjoyed it.

Childhood was a time of innocence. We did not have work, society, and other factors telling us what we wanted or loved to do.

What were your talents in your youth?

Did you build skills to complement your talents?

If you had identified your natural talents did you build skills that complement them. For myself, the answer was no. I quickly got on the path of doing what my parents told me to do.

There is enough time in your life to develop new skills. ***Target them to complement your unique and individualistic talents.***

Are you ready to discover your talents?

I said goodbye to corporate America in 2011. During that time, I have been discovering my ***talents*** and focusing on developing ***new skills*** that complement my ***talents***.

How about you? Are you ready to focus on your talents and skills to become a WINNER?