



## **Four Keys to Discovering Your Career “Sweet Spot”**

**Written by**

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One of my favorite quotes is by Confucius: “Find work that you love and you'll never work another day in your life.” This is about working at the intersection of what you love and what you're good at. I call this working in your career “sweet spot.” When you're in this zone, your job doesn't feel like work. Rather, it feels like the right fit and as a result success comes naturally.

If you are a golfer, you may be familiar with the concept of the sweet spot. In golf, the sweet spot is the very center of the golf club head. When the ball is hit from this place, you get the most power, distance and control in your swing.

Isn't that what you want in your career as well? When you work in your sweet spot, you are well positioned with the power and control to take your career as far as you wish.

Working in your sweet spot allows you to be in a job that comes easily to you, rather than a position in which you have to try way too hard. I've certainly worked in jobs in which I had to struggle, and it was no fun at all. I've also seen many of the women I work with toil under similar circumstances. Life is way too short to be in a job you dislike. Or even worse, as one of my clients put it, in a job that “feels like doing time.”

Instead of feeling like heaving a huge boulder up a mountain, working in your sweet spot feels like rolling a rock down a hill with momentum – the joy for what you do and the rewards it brings you - easing you along.

On a typical workday, if you feel like a square peg being pounded into a round hole, you owe it to yourself to explore other career options either within or outside your current profession.

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Everyone can have the job of their dreams if they're willing to take the time to discover their greatest aptitudes and what truly makes them happy. It's all about identifying the best use of your gifts and talents as well as your greatest professional passions.

This article guides you through a four-part process of discovering your career sweet spot. I suggest you use a folder or notebook that appeals to you to jot down your ideas as we move forward. This will serve as your designated career development book.

## KEY ONE

### IDENTIFY YOUR LIFE VALUES

Identifying what's most important to you – your life values – is the first step in designing a fulfilling life and career. Once you know what's most important to you overall, you can design your career around those things. That way, your career will fit in with your life. This is much more effective than the usual approach most women take which is to attempt to force their life to fit around their career.

Values are unique to each individual. And of course, there are no right or wrong value choices. For example, the following are the top values for three different women I've coached.

#### Annie

- Family
- Security
- Community Service

#### Karen

- Independence
- Adventure
- Fun

#### Samantha

- Professional Success
- Monetary Success
- Status

As you can see, each woman has a different set of core values. Again, there is no judgment; each woman's individual choices are respected.

Now it's your turn. Let's get you on the road to discovering your core values. The following exercise will launch the process.

Brainstorm and write down the things that are most important to you in life. Below are several idea sparkers to get you started. This brainstorm is for your eyes only so there is no risk of judgment. This is all about you and your preferences.

Take as much time as you need to create your list. Many women find it helpful to work on it for a few minutes a day, for several days in a row. Ideas often surface over the course of a few days.

### **Idea Sparker #1**

What are the highlights of your days? Identify the things that you enjoy most throughout a typical day, both on-the-job and off duty. They could be certain types of interactions you have, activities you engage in, contributions you make, etc.

### **Idea Sparker #2**

Imagine you are independently wealthy – you never have to work again in your life. How do you choose to spend your days? What do you do with your time? Who do you choose to be with? What’s most important to you now that you don’t have to worry about earning a paycheck?

### **Idea Sparker #3**

Imagine yourself at 100 years old and surrounded by your descendants and/or the descendants of your friends. You are in a warm and relaxed atmosphere (such as around a fireplace). What would you say to them is important in life?

Once you have completed your initial brainstorm, identify your top three or four values. Narrowing your list down allows you to get very clear on what is most essential to you.

How does it feel to be clear about *the* most important things to you in your life? Empowering? Sweet Satisfaction? Nerve Wracking? Perhaps you said “Yes!” to all three!

Whatever you feel, it’s ok. Finding your career sweet spot is a process and all kinds of emotions may be along for the ride. Don’t hold onto any of them tightly. Now let’s move on to the second key.

## KEY TWO

### IDENTIFY YOUR WORK VALUES

The next step to discovering your career sweet spot is to identify your work values - what's most important to you overall in your work life.

We all want a job that fits with who we are and allows us to truly be ourselves. When we have a position like this, we are happier, more fulfilled and have a greater chance of success.

Here's a brief exercise that will help you identify and clarify your personal set of work values. Read the following list of main values people have in work. Then, identify your top three.

#### WORK VALUES

- **Social Affiliation**
  - This means you need a social atmosphere in which you have a lot of interaction with others, be it co-workers, colleagues at other organizations, or the public.
  
- **Autonomy**
  - This is a desire for self-determination. For example, control over how you carry out your assignments and how you schedule your time.
  
- **Mission**
  - A desire to make a difference and "do good" for your community and the world as a whole.
  
- **Money**
  - This can mean a desire for stability and security, or it may mean a desire for status, keeping up with your peers, etc.

- **Recognition**
  - A position that allows your efforts to be acknowledged by others on a regular basis.
  
- **Power**
  - This is a desire for large-scale influence over others and formal power. For example, you want to be the Director, President or CEO.
  
- **Creativity**
  - Having creative outlets to express yourself is very important to you.
  
- **Intellectual Stimulation**
  - You thrive in an intellectually stimulating environment, however you personally define such an environment.
  
- **Balance**
  - You value free time to spend with your friends, family, hobbies, etc.
  
- **Fun**
  - Having fun and being in a lively atmosphere is very important to you.

Now that you have identified your top three work values, rank them in order of importance. Write a paragraph on each value and why it is important to you.

Writing this descriptive paragraph is guaranteed to give you unexpected clarity. Being clear on your most deeply held values is a critical step in defining your ideal career fit. Such awareness greatly increases your chances of working in a truly fulfilling position that's just right for you.

## KEY THREE

### IDENTIFY YOUR PASSIONS

Now it's time for the third key to your career sweet spot which is to identify your passions. Your passions are the topics, issues and ideas that most stir your interest and grab your attention.

For example:

- Do you love everything about fashion or the entertainment industry?
- Do you get energized by conceptualizing and designing new software?
- Are you passionate about environmental conservation?
- Do you get joy out of advocating on behalf of children?
- Are you greatly interested in films and want to write your own screenplay?

**The following exercise will help clarify your passions:**

Think about your favorite magazine or online blog. This is the inspirational read you look forward to. It sparks creative ideas you can't wait to put into action.

Now, put yourself on the cover of your fav publication. That's right, your smiling face will be smack dab on the cover or homepage. This edition, the featured topic is you!

Let your creativity flow. Do not put any restrictions on this imaginative exercise. For example, say *O Magazine* is your favorite publication. It's true that Oprah is the only person ever featured on the cover. However, for the purposes of this exercise, *you* are on the cover this month. Or, if you're favorite magazine is *PC World* which typically doesn't put people on the cover, that's okay. Let your imagination take over and forget the rules.

Envision yourself being interviewed by the magazine's top features reporter. The topic is: "The greatest achievement of your career." This is the achievement you feel completely excited about. It gives you goose bumps just to think about it. The goose bump factor is *very* important here. That's when you know you're on to something big.

Visualize yourself throughout the interview. What questions are asked? How do you respond? Remember, the title of the article is "The greatest achievement of your career." Respond as though you've already achieved this big goal. Have fun with it!

The following are some sample questions to get you started.

- Tell us about the greatest achievement of your career.
- How does it feel to have achieved this accomplishment?
- Once you determined your goal, how did you create your success plan?
- What obstacles did you face along the way?
- How did you overcome these challenges?
- What advice would you give to other women who want to pursue a similar career path?
- What's next for you?

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**A key step in successfully reaching a goal is visualizing yourself achieving it.**

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A key step in successfully reaching a goal is visualizing yourself achieving it. You want to create a vivid mental picture of success and allow yourself to experience the positive feelings - pride, happiness, satisfaction, etc. - that go along with your accomplishment. The more you can “see” your success in your mind's eye, the more likely you'll be to make it a reality.

Now it's time for a little editorial review. After your visualization is complete, reflect on your experience. Ask yourself:

- What did you discover about yourself?
- What success strategies were revealed?
- What tactics for overcoming obstacles were uncovered?
- What surprised you?

Tapping into your passion is essential to discovering your career sweet spot. By fully participating in this fun exercise, you'll identify your professional passions, those things that really get your energy going.

Next, I'll guide you through the final key to discovering your career sweet spot - identifying your strengths and talents.

## KEY FOUR

### IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS AND TALENTS

The final step to discovering your career sweet spot is to identify your top professional skills. A big part of working in your sweet spot is doing what you're good at. We all have talents that come naturally to us and feel as easy as "falling off a log." For example, some people are gifted public speakers, some are talented writers and others have a flair for making the sale or cooking gourmet cuisine.

I'm in awe of women who can do things I find challenging or cannot do at all (like cook!). And, many of my clients are in awe of how I can so naturally help them clarify and articulate their career sweet spot. What I know to be true is we all have talents and gifts to share with the world.

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as "falling off a log."**

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The following exercise will help you identify your top skills:

Review all of the jobs you've held, including your current position. Go all the way back to your first job - maybe it was in high school. Take out a separate sheet of paper for each position and write the job title at the top of the page. Then, brainstorm what you liked about each job.

Ask yourself questions such as:

- What did I enjoy about this position?
- What assignments did I like working on?
- What elements of this position gave me the most satisfaction?
- What tasks were easy for me to accomplish?
- What types of projects elicited the most compliments from managers and clients?

Again, there are no right or wrong answers and there is no risk of judgment. Let your brainstorm flow and do not censor yourself. I recommend you work on it a few days in a row for about 15 minutes each day. Give yourself enough time for all ideas and observations to surface.

Once you have completed the brainstorm, review your notes and identify the top skills that have emerged. Make a list of all the professional competencies you identified. Even if they seem unimpressive to you – write them down anyway. This is all vital information to discovering what you're naturally good at.

After you've completed your list, organize it into categories. You'll find that certain skills go together and can be combined under similar headings. Arrange your skills list into these groupings and distill them down to your top five professional competencies. Narrowing it down to your top five is very important because this will tell you the type of work you enjoy most.

## HOW SWEET IT IS!

Congratulations! You've just completed the work of discovering your own career sweet spot! Or have you?

If you haven't finished the exercises, schedule time in your calendar to complete them in the next seven days. That way, you'll be sure to get them done and not let them linger on that never-ending to do list.

Working in your career sweet spot is about having a profession in which you can truly be yourself. When you have a position that fits with your life values, work values, passions and skills - you have the makings of a phenomenal career!

Life is way too short to work in a job that doesn't fit with who you are. As you know, when you're miserable in your career, it darkens your entire world. Whereas, when you work in your sweet spot – you can truly shine!

I wish you much continued professional success as you move towards discovering and working in your career sweet spot!

## LET ME HELP YOU GO FURTHER

Need help synthesizing your results and putting them into action? I'm happy to help!

A lot of the professional women I work with need assistance interpreting and harnessing the power of the results they obtain from my career exploration exercises. This is part of the service I provide in my [Discover Your Authentic Career Fit](#) professional success program.

Designed specifically for professional women, this program will get you on the path to true career fulfillment. Through a series of twelve private telephone coaching sessions we identify your greatest skills and talents, work preferences and other the elements of career satisfaction essential to you.

Together, we define a career direction that plays to your strengths and passions and meets your personal needs. You will obtain the clarity, focus, direction and support to discover your ideal career fit.

### To Get Started

Contact me to schedule a complimentary introductory consultation. During this 20-minute telephone call we'll discuss your current needs and I'll answer any questions you may have about the program.

[Click here](#) to schedule your complimentary consultation.

### To Learn More

To learn more about me and to access other professional development articles and resources for women, visit [www.MaretMcCoy.com](http://www.MaretMcCoy.com).

**MARET MCCOY**  
**EXECUTIVE COACH FOR WOMEN**



As an experienced executive coach, Maret helps professional women discover their authentic career fit - a job that offers fulfillment and is a match with their greatest skills and interests. She knows all too well the struggles of working in the wrong job, having experienced it firsthand. Now, after a decade of working in the corporate world and over seven years of owning her own coaching firm, she works in her dream job and helps other women achieve that same level of career fulfillment and satisfaction for themselves.

Maret has coached hundreds of professional women from a wide variety of backgrounds including technology, communications, finance, law, education and health care. She has worked with women from corporations such as Accenture, Fidelity and BAE Systems; major philanthropic organizations such as the Red Cross and the World Wildlife Federation; and federal agencies such as the Justice and Treasury Departments.

Maret has also coached women attorneys at ten of the top 100 law firms in the nation. She has coached an attorney at The White House who said: “Maret is a cut-above in the coaching profession. I highly recommend her services to others who want to achieve results now!”

Maret’s diverse professional background – having worked in the private, government and nonprofit sectors – provides her with a depth and breadth of career experience that she freely shares with her coaching clients. Her education includes a Master’s degree in Public Policy and a Bachelor’s degree in Economics as well as coach training credentials. She lives on the gorgeous island of Maui in Hawaii.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Complimentary Career Advice Ezine**

Receive a free monthly professional development article with powerful and practical tips to advance your career.

[Subscribe here](#)

### **Maret's Comprehensive Career Planning Book**

#### **Discover Your Authentic Career Fit - The Professional Woman's Guide to Career Fulfillment**

Written specifically for professional women, this 200-page guide takes you through a step-by-step process to define your authentic career fit.

[Download the Book Here](#)

[Download a Free Chapter Here](#)

### **Career Success Resource Guides**

[A Woman's Guide to Salary Negotiation: How to Develop Negotiation Skills that Fit Your Communication Style](#)

[A Woman's Guide to Job Interview Success](#)

[A Woman's Guide to Strategic Power Networking](#)

[Executive-Style Resume Template](#)

[Monthly Budget Spreadsheet Template](#)

## **One-on-One Personalized Career Success Coaching Programs**

[Discover Your Authentic Career Fit Program for Women](#)

[Land Your Dream Job](#)

[Communication Skills Enhancement Program](#)

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