

Career Development Intervention Paper

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### Introduction

Self-assessments can be helpful for a person who is trying to develop a career path that is most suitable for them. A self-assessment evaluates an individual's personality, work values, and culture through a series of responses to questions that can be in the form of a workbook, questions, or diagram ([monster.com](http://monster.com)). In this paper, we will look at Richard N. Bolles' self-assessment tool, the Flower Exercise. The Flower Exercise is a diagram made up of seven petals (including the center) explained in great detail in his book called *What Color is Your Parachute?*, which originally published in 1970. The reason behind the number seven is because there are seven ways of thinking about yourself, or seven ways of describing who you are in using the language of the workplace (Bolles, 2017). In this paper, I will discuss each of the seven petals and how they can help a person develop a career path that is most suitable for them. After reviewing the seven petals, I will acknowledge a few concerns that I have concluded from researching this self-assessment.

### Petal One: You and People

The first petal is focused on you and people which is to help the individual picture the kind of people that they need to be surrounded by in order to work at their highest level. This step also asks the participant to think of the characteristics of the people that they want to serve through their occupation. This first petal compliments Dr. John L. Holland's Hexagon theory that originated in 1959. Holland's theory describes the nature of an individual using six basic

personality-interest types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Brown, 2002). In other words, this petal affects our decision in what field we apply to so that we can impact a specific group.

### **Petal Two: You and a Workplace**

The second petal helps the individual determine what type of workplace environment is most suitable for them. This is to help describe the physical surroundings of a perfect office space with the hopes that this ideal space will make the participant happy, therefore more effective at the workplace. In Bolles' book, *What Color is Your Parachute?*, he advises his readers to create and fill out a chart about their work experiences in regards to workplace conditions. This step allows the reader to understand what has affected their work environment in a negative way and in a positive way. This step will help the individual to start thinking about their next job and what they value most about their workplace in order to be productive and satisfied. This is one way to make sure their morale as an employee is cared for in an environmental sense.

### **Petal Three: You and Skills**

The purpose of the third petal, you and your skills, is to help the individual realize what skills they particularly enjoy using and how they can adapt them to their field of interests. In other words, these are functional skills and traits that they already know how to use. An example of a functional skill is the ability to organize a warehouse of products. An example of a trait is the ability to be supportive of others in difficult times. These skills need to be acknowledged when the individual is in the process of searching for their next step or an end goal in their

current career plan. A way to recognize these skills is to think back to a time when someone complimented you for using a skill or trait.

### **Petal Four: You and Your Purpose in Life**

The fourth petal asks to define your mission in life. The purpose of this petal is to make it easy for the individual to find organizations that they can connect with because their mission aligns with an organization. Bolles challenges his readers in *What Color is Your Parachute?* to write a statement about “what you want to lend your brain, your energies, your skills and gifts, your life, to serve, while you are here on this Earth” (2017). This is to help participants articulate their philosophy of life and understand their purpose. This can be the most challenging petal of the seven as it is asking the individual to think big picture of why they think they are here. In other words, this petal can be summarized by one question: “Who am I?”. In the diagram provided in Bolles book the reader will see this petal in the middle as it plays a role in all of the other petals. I believe he puts this petal as fourth in line because he hopes that by the time the participant gets to it they will already know their purpose in life from discussing their skills, traits, relationships, and self-identity.

### **Petal Five: You and the Knowledge You Already Have**

The fifth petal requires the individual to list their favorite knowledge or interests. This is to allow them to see what they enjoy doing as a hobby or discussing with others on a regular basis. It is implied that they would write about things that they picked up outside of work that interest them in hopes that one day they can incorporate these interests into their career. Another purpose of this petal is to keep us accountable in pursuing a career that makes us happy.

**Petal Six: You and Responsibility**

The sixth asks the individual to write down their preferred range of salary and level of responsibility. This helps them understand what level they should be satisfied with from a financial perspective and what power they hope to have once they meet their range. Petal six ultimately is an opportunity for the individual to note not only monetary rewards but also authoritative dignity and power. This petal allows the individual to write down and assess their goals that they hope to achieve throughout their career path.

**Petal Seven: You and Geography**

The seventh and last petal asks the individual to write down their preferred geographical location. This is important to their career so that they can define what part of the world, or country, that they would like to live in. This is similar to petal two, you and the workplace, as geographical location can affect an individual's attitude. It is suggested to list multiple locations and descriptions as there is a chance that preferences might change over time. This petal is a great time to think about not only geographical location, but also distance from family and friends.

**Considerations for use**

In my opinion, Bolles' Flower Exercise is an effective exercise for individuals who are just now starting out in the professional career world and for individuals who are considering a career change. This exercise will help both groups of people understand why they are here, how they are going to use their skills, and what their end goal is for their career. This exercise should

also be periodically reviewed by its users to see if they are following their desired plan or if they have gotten off track from their ideal career path.

### **Cautions**

The main concern about Bolles' Flower Exercise is its length. The time required to carefully consider each petal can present itself as a challenge, which can prevent individuals from completing the whole diagram in a thorough manner or completing it at all. Another concern would be completing the petals with enough clarity and specific responses. It is suggested to purchase Bolles' book, *What Color is Your Parachute?*, so that the Flower Exercise is completed in its desired manner. A final concern is the diagram can make individuals feel restricted and not feel like they are allowed to change their interests.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, self-assessment tests can provide valuable insight that can further assist a person in developing a career path (Werner & DeSimone, 2012). Bolles' self-assessment diagram, the Flower Exercise, helps the participant complete an assessment that provides clarity in who they are and what their purpose is.

## Resources

Bolles, R. N. (2017). *What color is your parachute?: 2017 edition*. New York: Ten Speed Press.

Brown, D., & Associates. (2002). *Career choice and development*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Werner, J.M. & DeSimone, R.L. (2012). *Human resource development* (6th edition). Mason, OH: South-Western.

Knox, D. (n.a.). The role of self-assessment. *Monster*. Retrieved from <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/the-role-of-self-assessment>