

To find right niche don't just dabble,

• I'm 42 years old, well-educated and have had more careers than just about anyone I know. For example, I've led several small businesses, including a motorcycle shop I bought after going in to look at motorcycles!

I've dabbled in just about every multi-product that's come out and even had my hand at buying and working a choice. Somehow, whatever I get into doesn't go anywhere.

I'm frustrated because it seems I'm always on a new learning curve. My college degree is in a specialized area of zoology, the truth is I feel like a wandering drifter. Any idea how I can get on to the kind of stable career path?

You do have a real problem and diagnosed it yourself with the word dabble. Successful careers aren't dabbles anything. They aren't "Let's try this and what it feels like. Now let's go on to something else for a week and see how it goes."

Successful careers require commitment, something I don't think you gave to any of your endeavors. Also, it sounds like



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you've taken on careering impulsively, giving little thought to the consequences of going in any single direction.

Your biggest nemesis, however, is going to be getting rid of your dabbles and in their place putting a grown-up's, get-with-the-program focus.

Q: I'm a financial planner and know that to be really successful with my business I must be more outgoing. I should be showing up at various networking groups, talking to small audiences and generally getting myself in front of more people.

My problem is I get scared every time I even think about meeting someone new. I always wind up wondering why anyone would want to buy from me when there

are so many other experts out there to choose from.

I guess it's fair to say I just hate selling myself. I hide my fear so most people don't know how I feel but it really gets in my way.

Sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't become a computer nerd and hide in my basement sending signals to customers via modem. What do you think?

A: I think that in addition to seeking career advice, you may want to check with a professional who can help you ferret out what demolished your confidence factor. Sounds like you got hit with a Sherman tank-size negative experience along the way.

Any career you seriously pursue will, in one way or another require a degree of personal sales. It sounds to me as if YOU are the resistant buyer. Obviously if you don't believe in you, you can't expect anyone else to.

In addition to checking out the source(s) of your self-doubt, you need to get your feet wet with those "get to meet" new people kinds of situations.

make commitment

Plan to bite off small, safe chunks of these kinds of meetings. Identify at least one new situation a week in which you can participate. Then, plan to get others to talk about themselves. Ask people you meet about themselves, about their families, about things they do, about their opinions, about their goals and other basic pieces of their lives.

You'll see how fast people smile and open up when you encourage them to talk about themselves. The savvy person will soon turn the table and ask you similar questions. This is the time for you to begin sharing what you do for a living.

You are not going to try to sell your product then and there. You have taken the first step, however. You have established a personal relationship with another human being.

Q: I work for a large public agency that has been targeted for extinction. In a way, this is probably the best thing that has ever happened to me because I've been wanting to start my own business for a long time. Now that the opportunity is almost here, I'm find-

ing myself more concerned about getting a secure job where someone else writes me the check than risking doing my own thing. Am I crazy to pass up this opportunity?

A: You are definitely not crazy. But you are getting some things confused.

When you went to work with that public agency, probably that was the most secure job in the world. After all, who ever heard of a public sector job disappearing, short of some grossly immoral or criminal act? As the saying goes, times change fast!

If you're really seeking security, be assured it doesn't come from working for someone else. Security comes from inside YOU. If you have always wanted to have your own business, I suggest you get started now refining the kind of niche that will turn your dream into a successful reality. GoForIt!

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