

Finding Your Career Path With The Five Whys!

Many high school students have no idea which career path they want to pursue, but with College approaching they will soon have to soon decide which major(s) they want to study and map out a possible career path. Resume now has put together a summary of the five whys method your students can use to determine what areas might interest to them.

The Five Whys Explained

The five whys method was created by Sakichi Toyoda, founder of Toyota Motors, to help streamline the production process. The premise of this method is to start with a problem and ask “why?” five times until the root cause is determined.

While at first glance this technique may seem simple, it is actually an extremely powerful tool for understanding cause-and-effect relationships. The brilliance in this method comes from the bare-bones framework that allows it to be applied to all kinds of problems — including understanding your career path.

1. What Are You Good At? Why?

Although it may seem obvious, the first step to discover a career path is to look inwards and analyze. By starting from square one, your students will be able to dig down to the root of their strengths, motivations and skills to determine the career path that is right for them.

To get their self-evaluation started, they should try answering these questions:

- What are your interests?
- What are your skills?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What comes easily to you?
- What time of day do you work most efficiently?

By answering these questions (and then asking why), they will be able to reflect on their strengths and skills to understand the types of positions where they would succeed.

2. What Are Your Career Goals? Why?

Figuring out their career goals starts by defining what they want in terms of career development. Clearly defining their career goals is crucial to creating a plan to get there.

A great way to foster this process is by creating a problem statement. The importance of crafting a problem statement cannot be overstated — a problem statement for determining their career path is just as important as a hypothesis when writing a research paper.

For example:

*I am uncertain of my current career path as a realtor because I worry that I may not be able to sustain a healthy **work-life balance** long term due to the **uncertain hours** of this position. I want a job where I can **balance my career development with my passions**, and having dedicated time off from work is crucial to do that.*

In this problem statement, the issues are clearly established and both short- and long-term goals are considered. To apply the five whys to the problem statement, try asking questions like:

- Where do I want to be in one, five, 10 or even 20 years?
- Do I want to live to work, or work to live?
- What exactly are my outside passions, and how much do they intersect with the career paths I'm considering?
- Why do I care about those passions?

The answers to these questions should give them an idea of what they value most: money, time or fulfillment.

3. What Do They Value the Most? Why?

The ideal career for them is one that encompasses what they need from each of these three pillars: **money**, **time** and **fulfillment**. However, it's important to remember that these three pillars are not a zero-sum game. It's possible to find a career that achieves all three, or sacrifices in areas where they are willing to change while still meeting their needs.

To help them determine what they value most in their career, it's important to take a look at the boundaries they want to set. Some things to consider are:

- Do you want to work 9-to-5 or are you willing to work nontraditional hours?
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- How much weight do you place on work-life balance?

Work-life balance is a scale where the gain of one requires the loss of another. Try to instead view this as work-life fulfillment, which allows them to ask, "how should I spend my time to lead a fulfilling and productive life while meeting my goals?"

4. What Areas Are They Willing to Compromise On? Why?

Although it's possible to find a career where they can balance money, time and fulfillment, it's important to take a pragmatic approach to finding their career path. Think of their minimum, ideal and dream requirements, and use this framework to find an intersection that meets their needs. Some questions to get this process started include:

- Have you considered the industry standard for the field you want to enter?
- How much do you *want* to earn? How much do you *need* to earn?
- Are you willing to take a step backward to move forward in a new path?

5. What Are They Willing to Do to Get There? Why?

Lastly, it's important to take into consideration the sacrifices they are willing to make to get where they want to be. They should answer the following:

- Would you pursue more schooling or certifications?
- What about moving to a new city for a career?

Regardless of the professional path they choose, it's important to stand out from the crowd. Investing in their personal branding can open the door for new opportunities and pave the way for an upwards trajectory in their career.