



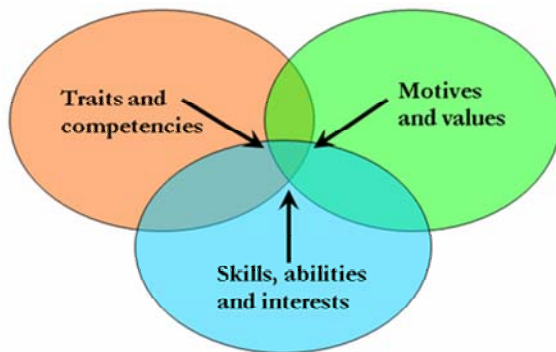
## The Gift

Darrell Beck, Ph.D., CMC  
Aspen Family Business Group

---

The gift that many families of wealth or families in business would love most to give to their children is the gift of self knowledge. This knowledge of one's traits, competencies, values and reasoning processes allows a person to make the best choice for the best fit with a career direction, and there is great value in this. Research in Martin Seligman's *Authentic Happiness* shows that the most satisfied and successful people are those whose lives and work fit best with their traits and values. Many people flounder through life trying to learn this by trial and error, and many never learn it. It's possible to give that gift to your children, whether they're at the beginning of a career just starting out, or stuck mid-career, not sure what to do next.

**Determining who you are at the core is key to determining what you should do as a career, either in the family business or outside it.**



The ideal best fit would be a career that meets all three criteria, fitting in the area of the overlap of the three circles. Having the opportunity for a career where one's traits and competencies are supported by one's values and abilities would result in the greatest satisfaction. Even if the individual finds something less than the perfect fit career, knowing what the traits, competencies and values are is still important information to have about oneself. It helps one make career choices aimed at achieving the optimum fit while understanding what concessions and/or compromises might have to be made in order to fulfill unmet needs another way in one's life.

### Traits and competencies

Today we know information about personality that we didn't know fifteen or twenty years ago. First, it is more hard-wired, inherited, than acquired through life experience. The science can best be summed up by saying that who we are is a dance between the two partners Nature (heredity) and Nurture (experiences), but Nature is the lead partner. Second, by adulthood (25 or so on) our core personality traits are remarkably stable and change little throughout life, more stable than even interests, politics or some beliefs.

What does change and should change about us is the self-knowledge, self-mastery, self-regulation that can tell us how to best use our traits. So knowing and coming to terms with the core traits of one's personality is key, foundational information, in choosing a career direction. Our personality is the one aspect of ourselves that we'll have for life. It makes us who we are.

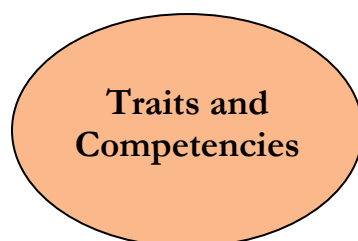
## How to Give that Gift

Here's how my process works—for your son, daughter, or even perhaps for you. I first get to know the person what their situation is, and what he or she would like to learn from the process. Such as:

1. I just got my MBA and I want to join the family business, but I'm not sure in what capacity or in which direction.
2. I'm twenty four and not sure whether I want to join the family business, or, for that matter what I want to do at all. I get advice from all sides but can't seem to find my own voice to know what's best for me.
3. I'm forty-five, mid career, and not very happy doing what I'm doing. Truth be told, I'm not very effective at my job either. I'd like to break out of this cycle but I don't know what to do or which way to go.

Based on what I learn from the person, I then choose from a wide variety of assessment tools to select the most appropriate for the individual situation. After the person has completed all the assessments the two of us have a long meeting to go over the results, and choose a tentative direction for further exploration. My goal in working with people is to have them feel helped, honored, and supported by me and the process. I want them to feel that they have been given the gift of understanding the complex architecture of their makeup, allowing them to make more intelligent choices than they could before going through the assessments. With this self knowledge and my support they are ready to examine the possibilities ahead.

Our traits are the key elements of our personality, and as a foundation supports a superstructure, certain traits support certain competencies, or the acquisition of them. This kind of information gives the individual seek/avoid career information.



1. What are the key traits I have and what competencies do they support?
2. What characteristics of a career or job would be a good match for these? (What should I seek, what avoid?)
3. What compensatory skills or abilities do I need to develop in order for my competencies to work fully for me?

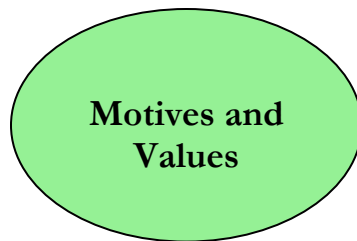
The stories of Carl and Anne will let you know the kinds of things people learn about themselves, and what they can do with that information.

Carl had been through several false starts, and seemed very low in emotional affect, perhaps even depressed when I first met with him. He was in his late twenties, no degree, fresh out of the Military and couldn't seem to get traction doing anything. He was running with a bad crowd, and his father, who referred him to me, was gripped with fear and worry. Carl had gone through several jobs and had several false starts at school. I had him complete a group of assessments to gather more information.. This is what they showed.

He was very curious and loved learning, but the nature of that learning was active, experiential, and hands on. So the traditional, structured method of education was a poor fit for him. He was moody, often in a funk or ill-tempered. He was easily irritated by others, preferred solo work, and

had a hard time taking direction—all of which contributed to the job-hopping, either by his choice or the employer's. So, with the information learned from the assessments he and I determined the most satisfying career direction for him would be some kind of an individual contributor with as much independence and autonomy as he could get. He needed to develop some compensatory methods for his moodiness, bluntness and curtness or no one would want to keep him. But that's a skill set he could work on now that he had a better direction of where he wanted to go. Carl's motives and values confirmed the emotionally low-key loner profile but his interests in technology and science were high, and his interest in aesthetics (art, for him) were very high.

Our motives and values are who we are at the core, the underlying why behind our actions. They tell us the kind of work and organizational culture in which we'd fit best, as well as the one we'd try to create in our own sphere of influence.



1. What key motives and values give meaning and satisfaction to me?
2. What career/job and corporate culture would fit with these? (seek and avoid behavior)
3. Are there competing or contradictory implications in my motives or values? How can I best handle these?
4. Which can I meet and satisfy off-line, away from work, if not in my job?

Anne was the very opposite of Carl. She was warm, outgoing, calm and even tempered. She was ambitious, liked people, teams and groups. She set goals and followed through. She was curious and a good student. She had an almost textbook leadership profile. She had considered entering the family business, with mixed feelings, and was very much wanted in the family business by her parents.

Anne's motives and values furthered the warm, engaging picture of her traits. But her motives were not in business—she had no interest in commerce, business or in making money. Her values were in relationships and helping others, especially the less fortunate. So a traditional leadership position in the family business wouldn't have been a good fit. Her values indicated a better fit with helping, mentoring, and developing relationships.



Our skills are things we're good at or can get good at—public presentations, for instance. Our interests are things we are drawn to and enjoy. They are distinguished from motives/values in that M/V are deeper, more at the core. For instance, I deeply care for my close friends (Value). I enjoy woodworking in my shop (Interest). Our abilities are things we learn by way of life, intellect and education. These areas are best discovered as part of the assessment process customized to fit the individual situation.



### Putting it all together and finding YOUR True North

1. What's core from your traits and competencies?
2. What's core from your motives and values?
3. What's core from your interests, skills and abilities?
4. The more core elements you can incorporate into your career/job, the happier you will be.

### Putting it all together for Carl and Anne

Carl entered commercial graphic arts training, with a strong emphasis on computer assisted drawing. The training was very hands-on and experiential, and he immediately began to see the results of his efforts. He took to it with a passion, and his father soon began to send me samples of the work he'd done. I could hear the pride and happiness in his father's voice and I liked the pride and happiness much more than the fear and worry. Carl is now embarking on a good career and finding his way, His emotional demeanor is quite changed, because happiness does that to a person.

Anne is now involved in her family's charitable giving foundation. She likes seeing the end results , and has been able to recommend some changes. The involvement still leaves her time to be active in the family council and her main interest which is guiding and mentoring younger family members. She realizes now that entering the family business would have been a mistake. She would have tried to pull the business off its best path to meet her needs, and the business would have been doing the opposite tug with her. This way she is involved in the family enterprise, but doing what fits her best.

*"Whether we are naturally levelheaded, spontaneously enthusiastic, artlessly charming, or born to persevere, we take our behaviors with us into everything we do. If what you do is at the core of who you are, your stress level will go down."* — Harry Levinson

*"And your satisfaction will go up, and over time, your success will go up too because your work will be in essence being paid to be who you are. You will have abundant energy to focus on the right things for job success. Unfortunately, the converse of all of this is true also."* — Darrell Beck

For twenty years the Aspen Family Business Group has been known and recognized for the superiority of its family assessment methods. We now have the ability to extend this assessment expertise to the individual.

[www.darrellbeckandassociates.com](http://www.darrellbeckandassociates.com)

[www.aspenfamilybusiness.com](http://www.aspenfamilybusiness.com)