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FINDING YOUR PATH IN LIFE

By Jeff Skoll¹

With recruiting season upon us, the tension around the GSB has become palpable and disturbing. I've seen the concerns exhibited amongst my friends and classmates in a manner that until now has been foreign to my experience at the GSB - insecurity and self-doubt. These traits have become shockingly evident as people herd to the consulting and investment banking cocktail receptions for fear of being "left behind" in the pursuit of a career. Is this really what we are about?

Nothing saddens me more than to see ideals smothered by the seduction of riches. The other day in Bishop Auditorium, the CEO of Proctor & Gamble spoke glowingly about the merits of "advanced technologies in toilet tissue production." This speech followed on the heels of a consulting firm presentation where a company representative gloried in his six month experience researching the domestic market for socks. Is the essence of our lives really to hawk toilet paper or toil endlessly on subjects of dubious interest? I think not.

We are rapidly approaching the crossroads in our lives where our most significant career path begins. We all have dreams, we all have ideals, and it is crucial that we remember to be true to ourselves. This is not to say that a career in consulting or investment banking is a bad thing - on the contrary, for some it is a harmonious fit. What worries me, however, is that there are those amongst us who are subjugating their true dreams to the allure of status, peer acceptance, and the mighty dollar.

Be secure in yourself. We are all competent, successful people, and there is no reason why we cannot succeed in our desired course. Don't wait for a better time to live your dream, the time may never come. Ayn Rand illustrates this well in "The Fountainhead," a story of two young architects who early in their careers choose diverging paths. While one architect pursues lucrative, conventional

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¹ Skoll is a noted philanthropist. He gave the eponymous Skoll Foundation \$250 million of eBay stock. The Foundation supports social entrepreneurship. He has also funded the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, at Said Business School, Oxford University. This article was written while studying the MBA at Stanford Graduate School of Business. www.skollfoundation.org

work, the other is scorned for his eccentric, unconventional approach. Gradually, over their careers, the unconventional architect is hailed as a genius, and the commercial architect is ignored and rapidly forgotten. In a poignant moment at the end of their careers, the commercial architect, nearing death, recognizes the emptiness of his life contribution and he tries to redeem himself by turning to painting, his true love. The unconventional architect, upon seeing the work, recognizes the budding talent that will never come to fruition and sadly shakes his head as if to say "it's too late."

Fortunately, it is not too late for us. The opportunities and possibilities available to us at this time are staggering. The worst possible reason to choose a career course is because everyone else is doing it. Use your imagination. What would you rather have written on your tombstone - "Here lies someone who sold a lot of toilet paper" or "This person lived his/her dream." I'm sure that the answer is self-evident.

Life is too short to let those things that are most important to us slip away. Time is a precious commodity and days passed will never come again. Believe in yourself, enjoy the road on which you travel, and success will be sure to follow. After all, only you can live your dream

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