

The Washington Post

Color Me Successful

By Jennifer Barger

A new book helps choose ideal careers by personality 'color'

Anyone who's ever laughed at Dilbert or cringed during "The Office" knows that many people seem stuck in jobs that fit as poorly as a Men's Wearhouse suit.

Are these people lazy or dumb? Nah, they've just fallen into careers that don't suit their personalities, claims career coach Shoya Zichy's new book, "Career Match: Connecting Who You Are with What You'll Love to Do" (\$15, AMACOM Books, written with Ann Bidou).

Using Zichy's easy-to-use personality assessment system (a 10-minute either-or quiz), wannabe path switchers classify themselves as one of four colors (e.g., creative, team-working Greens, adventurous, risk-taking Reds) and two socialization types (introvert or extrovert).

The fun-to-use tome simplifies Myers-Briggs methodology, giving career changers or hunters new insights on how they might do something both more fulfilling and better suited to their personalities and skills.

Express' Jennifer Barger chatted with Zichy about how determining the color of your personality might help you more than some old book about parachutes.

Who benefits most from reading this book?

I think people just graduating from college or second-career changers in their 30s, people who tried one job and it didn't work out.

Do you think people often go against type when career hunting – say, an artsy type trying to be a corporate lawyer?

We have a hard time comparing ourselves to other people. This book says that it's OK for us to put ourselves into categories. I'm not diminishing the genius of a Renoir by putting it into an Impressionist category. "Career Match" shows that, biologically, there are different ways people think. And if you understand your style and personality, you'll understand how to flex it to your circumstances.

So what happens if you've made a bad career match?

If you're in the wrong place, you'll feel tired. But if you find your passion, you become outstanding and obsessed.

So tell me a little about these personality types. Golds are the largest percentage, about 46 percent of the population. They're grounded, accountable and organized, like Barbara Walters and Colin Powell. You'll find them in positions of responsibility.

Reds, who make up 27 percent, are adaptable, highly adventurous and resourceful. They need action, freedom and change – like Bill Clinton or Donald Trump. Blues are the smallest part of the populace – about 10 percent. They're out to create a better mousetrap.

Think Bill Gates or Hillary Clinton, people whose job it is to criticize everything. And then you have the Greens, who are humanistic, persuasive and creative. Examples would be Diane Sawyer or Oprah Winfrey.

So can any of these types be entrepreneurs, or just the sort of bossy types like Reds or Golds?

Well, every type has a different entrepreneurial style. But if they have a mix of personality types in their business, it brings everything to the table and they'll probably do better. The problem is, it's easier to clone yourself when you hire. But it's very important to have different points of view on a team, even when they are irritating.

It seems that for some of these personality types, there were entire career fields that weren't mentioned as good career choices.

For instance, I'm a Green, and there's nothing in the book that suggests I should be a banker.

You could probably do it well, but you'll get burnt out faster. But the key in a case like that is to find something you like about the field.

Say someone reads this book and finds out they are in the wrong field. What should the person do, short of quitting his/her job and doing nothing?

Find initiatives in the job you have that better use your talents, or try to switch functions. Let's say you're working at IBM and you're not a big company person, but you love your boss and want to keep working there. Maybe you should become a spokesperson. And if you want to change fields, start networking. And in some cases, you'll need to go back to school to do it.

Which Hue Are You? Our Cheat Sheet

Forget about determining the color of your parachute when seeking a new field. If you really want to get to the corner office, you'll need to figure out which field fits your personality, according to Shoya Zichy's book "Career Match: Connecting Who You Are with What You'll Love to Do" (\$15, AMACOM Books, written with Ann Bidou).

Here's our cheat sheet for determining where you fall in this career color wheel.

Do you mentor others well? Do you love to communicate with colorful words or graphics? Do you enjoy teamwork? You might be a Green. Good positions for you include guidance counselor, art director, pediatrician and public relations person.

Does the external world – cars, architecture, tools – appeal to you? Is your desk covered with piles of papers? Do you yearn for adventure? You're probably a Red, and might seek work as a stockbroker, computer engineer, air traffic control or FBI agent.

Are you witty, curious, competitive and obsessed with the future? It's likely that you're a Blue, and would thrive in fields like politics, urban planning, aerospace engineering and cultural criticism.

You're organized, responsible and linear-thinking, and like to be recognized for your accomplishments. These things probably make you a Gold, and ideally suited to a gig as an actuary, a plumber, a geologist or an IRS agent.