

# BUILDING YOUR **I.T. CAREER** Discussion Questions

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# Part I: An Introduction to Career Building

# Chapter 1 – The Toolkit Approach to Career Development

- Most of the ideas covered in *The Toolkit* are simple but often overlooked. Many professionals look for secret strategies to help them grow their careers? How does the knowledge that well-executed planning, not secret strategies, encourage you?
- While we cannot control luck, we can control preparedness. What “lucky” situations might arise during a career that proper preparation allows you take advantage of?
- IT as an industry is maturing. How does this affect your career planning?
- What does a “career toolkit” look like to you? What tools do you currently have? Which ones are missing or need maintenance?

## Chapter 2 – Career Building Defined

- Read the definition of a career (page 11): Does that broaden your understanding or idea of a career? How does this understanding help you build your career?
- How does the builder analogy (pages 11–12) help you understand the idea of a career toolkit?
- What is your idea of a career plan or career planning?
- Why do the highly specialized areas of IT (pages 13–14) help create a “tool-driven mindset?”
- Why is it important to *not* be defined by the title you hold or your current role/position? (page 14)
- Careers are non-linear (page 15). Discuss what this means and why it is important to career development?
- A working plan makes tedious and unrewarding jobs bearable (pages 15-16). What does this mean and how does it help you grow your career?

## Chapter 3 – Information Technology: A Great Career

- How did past industry excesses (pages 19-20) lead to a more negative perspective on IT careers?
- Of the options listed that make IT a great career, which is most appealing to you? (page 22)
- What additional factors make IT a great career choice for you?
- How critical a factor is outsourcing for those pursuing an IT career? (page 27)

## Chapter 4 – Defining Yourself: Aptitudes and Desires

- How important are personal satisfaction and interest to you when selecting IT as a career choice?
- As you look at the factors for selecting a particular job, which is most important to you? Which is least important? Are there others you have or would consider important?
- *The Toolkit* warns against *analysis paralysis*—the inability to make a choice between two competing jobs—how can you avoid this situation? (page 43)



## Part II: Filling Your Toolkit

## Chapter 5 – Self-Assessment

- Review the four self-assessment questions (pages 50–51). If you are a full-time student, apply them to your studies and your instructors.
- Do you feel your answers reflect a positive self-assessment? If not, what can you do to change that?
- Are the questions valuable as a self-assessment tool? What might you add to your self-assessment?

## Chapter 6 – Attitude

- How important do you view a positive and proactive attitude in long-term career development?
- How do you maintain a positive attitude?
- Have you ever held an “us versus them” attitude toward management where you worked? Do you believe that it is warranted? Have you met other employees with such an attitude? How does it hinder career advancement? (page 58)
- What is an attitude of “personal value?” (page 60) What is your current strongest value? What do you think will be your strongest value in 5 years? In 10 years?
- What does career “ownership” mean? (pages 61-62)

# Chapter 7 – Communication Skills

- How strong do you rank your combined (written and verbal) communication skills? What about written alone? Verbal?
- Why are communication skills so critical for career success? (page 68)
- Discuss the “well-crafted paragraph”—how does this idea simplify the written communication process? (page 71)
- Of the rules listed in conversation, which do you find most critical? Are there others you could add to this list? (pages 73-74)
- If you had to give an important presentation to management, would you feel comfortable? If not, what might you do over the next two years to make you feel more comfortable?

## Chapter 8 – Technical Skills

- Prior to this chapter did you believe recognizing the “next hot technology” was critical for career success? How did that change after reading the chapter?
- What is meant by *transcendent skills*? Why are they important? (page 81)
- What are some important ideas you can use to help reduce the time and anxiety in learning new technical skills? (pages 82-85)

## Chapter 9 – The Cover Letter

- Does your cover letter include a significant accomplishment? (page 91) If not, what can you add so that it does?
- Is your cover letter clear and to the point?
- Review a peer's cover letter and provide feedback based on the previous two questions.
- Tell them one thing you like about his or her cover letter. Tell them one thing you would change about his or her cover letter.

# Chapter 10 – The Résumé

- Does your résumé demonstrate how you provide value with your skills?
- How long is your résumé? How long do you believe it should be?
- Review a peer's résumé and provide feedback based on the previous two questions.
- Tell them one thing you like about their résumé. Tell them one thing you would change about their résumé.
- How important do you feel your résumé is in your overall career development plan? (pages 95-97)



## **Part III:** Putting Your Toolkit to Use

# Chapter 11 – Breaking into IT

- Have you ever run into the “need experience to get experience dilemma?” Did you overcome it? If so, how? If not, how might this chapter’s strategies on seeking “opportunity over position” change that? (page 109)
- What are some ways to build your IT career outside of a “traditional” IT department or role? (pages 110–113)
- How do the non-traditional avenues into IT open possibilities you were not aware of before? (pages 113-115)

# Chapter 12 – Building an Active Contact List

- How important do you view your professional network?
- How strong is your professional network?
- Are your professional contacts spread between IT and in other industries?
- What are some techniques you need to master to strengthen your professional network?
- How do you currently track your contacts?
- How does sharing opportunity help build your professional network?
- Discuss how you might use the “Networking and Opportunity Tracking Form” you’ve printed out (from the companion website). How will this form help you build your network of contacts?

# Chapter 13 – The Job Search

- Prior to reading this chapter, what were your primary or planned sources for finding available jobs or opportunities?
- What affect does a directed and proactive career search have on your attitude? (page 136)
- Discuss the differences between the standard “passive” job search and the proactive job search? (page 142)

## Chapter 14 – The Interview

- What are your biggest fears or challenges with the interview process? How do the Toolkit ideas alleviate those fears or challenges?
- Of the interviewer styles listed, which do you feel is most difficult? Which do you prefer? (page 151)
- Questions about self-assessment and weaknesses pose serious problems for interviewees; how can you best answer these? What other difficult questions might you face?
- Why should you follow up before you are selected? Why should you follow up if you are not selected? (pages 157-158)

# Chapter 15 – Salary Negotiations and Employment Agreements

- When should pay/salary negotiations start? (page 161)
- What are *your* minimum requirements or considerations (refer to the list in Chapter 4 – page 35, for ideas) when you start negotiating with a potential employer?

## Chapter 16 – On-the-Job Promotion

- What do you consider the most important factor(s) for on-the-job promotion?
- What is your first step when dealing with a difficult boss? (page 175)
- Of the types of bosses discussed which is the most desirable? The least desirable? (pages 175-176)
- How does *The Toolkit* recommend dealing with difficult coworkers or managers? (pages 177–180)

## Chapter 17 – Your Career and Social Media

- Do you currently use social media professionally, personally, or both?
- What are your thoughts on employers researching candidates by viewing their social media profiles?
- Discuss “The Seven People You Cannot Be Online” (pages 186-189). Do you recognize these personalities? Have you been one of them?
- What are ways you currently (or could in the future) share knowledge and opportunity across your social networks? (pages 189-190) How does this help your career?



## **Part IV:** More Options to Build Your Career

# Chapter 18 – Telecommuting

- Is working at home something you would enjoy? Have you done any telecommuting in the past?
- What do you consider the single biggest drawback to working from home? The single biggest benefit?

## Chapter 19 – Consulting

- Have you ever considered consulting? If so, what about consulting interests you? If not, explain why?
- After reading the chapter, do you consider consulting a more viable career option? Less viable? Explain.
- Understanding that sales and marketing is critical, discuss the “Tips on Winning Your Client” document (found on the companion website.) What do you consider the three most important tips for winning clients?

# Chapter 20 – Management

- Would you like to have a career in management?
- What would you consider to be the most important management idea or skill presented in this chapter?



## **Part V: The Value-Added Technologist**

## Chapter 21 – Make Yourself Indispensable

- *The Toolkit* places a premium on the value you bring the organization(s) you serve; how do you define value?
- Where can you better apply standards in your computing practices, in your studies, in your career—and how will they enhance your career development?
- What is a peer knowledge network? How do they help your career? (page 235)

## Chapter 22 – Concept Over Process

- Explain the difference between process-driven and concept-driven? Are there strengths in each? (page 246)
- Do you agree with the stated role of technology? If not, what additional roles would you add? (pages 247-248)
- What is the most valuable idea in “Concept Over Process”? How will it help your career?

## Chapter 23 – The Role of Mentoring

- Do you have mentors who are not IT professionals? (page 262)  
How often do you correspond with them? Why are these “cross-industry” mentors important?
- Do you mentor anyone? What advice or insight do you have to offer?
- Describe the ideal mentor? (page 262)

## Chapter 24 – Career Coaching

- If you had a personal career coach, what are the 1 or 2 most pressing concerns or questions you would like them to answer?
- Of the listed career coaching topics, which areas are you strong in and which areas could use some improvement? (page 267)
- Have you ever coached a peer at a job you've held? What made you effective in that role? (page 267)
- Could you see coaching as a part of your job or a future career goal? Why? Why not?

## Chapter 25 – Financial Control

- Do you have a budget that allows you flexibility in your career choices?
- Have you identified salary objectives?
- Review the “Budget and the Income Planning Worksheet” on the companion website. How can their use help your career?

## Chapter 26 – A Professional Blog

- Do you follow any blogs? If so, what makes them appealing to you?
- Do you have a blog or would you consider starting one? What topics would you blog about?
- Which of the concepts in the section, “Why You Should Blog,” appeals to you? (pages 293-295)
- Have you ever used Wordpress?
- Discuss the differences between service-hosted or self-hosted Wordpress installs? (pages 298-299)

# Chapter 27 – 12 Weeks to Profitable Consulting

- Profitable Consulting: What does the phrase mean to you? Do you have an income goals for your career?
- What type of content would you put into your first newsletter as a consultant? Why? (page 313)
- Outline a case-study as suggested in the chapter? Select a technical solution you've worked on as a student or one you've read about? (pages 317-318)
- How important is an established routine? Do you have a weekly routine? (page 321)

# Chapter 28 – Be Positive! Be Proactive! Add Value! Share Opportunity!

- No Job Makes a Career, No Job Breaks a Career. What does this phrase mean to you? (page 332)
- “Staying Engaged With Your Career” lists several ideas to help you stay focused and motivated. Which of the items listed is most interesting to you? (pages 334-335)

## General Questions

- What is the single-most valuable idea or strategy you discovered in *The Toolkit*? How will it change your career for the better?
- What additional information might help you reach your professional/career goals?
- Where are you in your career development plans? Are you entry-level or a seasoned pro? Do you have a demarcation point—a time when you switched from one to the other?
- What does the term *career ownership* mean to you? Do you feel as though you own your career? If not, how can you change that?
- The Introduction presents the idea of you as the primary commodity of your career. What does that mean to you? How can this perspective help you in your career development efforts?

## ***Additional Resources***

### Career/Job Sites

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

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

[www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)

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

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

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

## ***Additional Resources***

### More Career/Job Sites

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

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

[www.jobsdb.com.ph](http://www.jobsdb.com.ph)

[www.jobsearch.org](http://www.jobsearch.org)

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

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

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

## ***Additional Resources***

### Training/Community

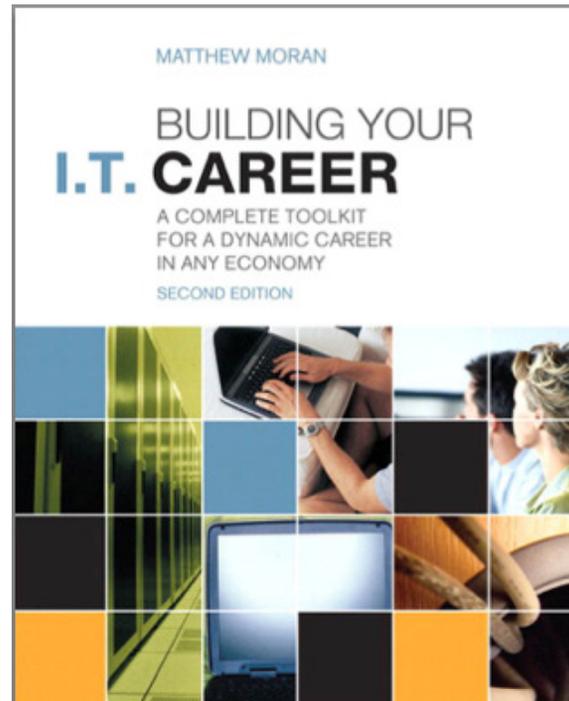
[www.cbtoolkit.com/forums](http://www.cbtoolkit.com/forums)

[www.tek-tips.com](http://www.tek-tips.com)

[www.experts-exchange.com](http://www.experts-exchange.com)

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

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



***from Building Your I.T. Career:  
A Complete Toolkit for a Dynamic Career in Any Economy***

**Classroom Discussion Guide**

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