

What else do you do?

Written by Julie Desmond
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Maybe the penultimate career planning question we should all be asking ourselves is, "What else do you do?" You've heard the saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." No kidding. But I was surprised recently to discover that, when forced to think about it, most people do have something going on the side.

This came to light when one of my networking friends got our group into a rowdy and enlightening conversation by asking two questions: "What do you do?" and, "What do you do when you're not doing that?" Virtually everyone in the group has a fire in the belly for something that has nothing to do with their profession. We found out who is moonlighting to bring in some extra cash, and who has a consulting business to complement their day-job. Our group also includes a gardener, a bingo fanatic, a painter, a volunteer junkie and a runner.

The value of having a little something on the side is huge. A second income has its benefits, obviously. And unpaid hobbies have their benefits, too. A hobby can balance you out. It can provide a safe, creative outlet. It can provide the changed perspective you need to brainstorm a problem. A hobby can even help you develop the confidence to go after other goals, to take on different challenges. Success in one area, even a casual, side thing, is like a jumping off point, leading a person to believe he or she can tackle other things, because they can.

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If you find you have some talent after spending countless evening and weekend hours pursuing your passion, that passion could become a second career for you down the road, or a decent fallback if your day-job ends unexpectedly.

Most importantly, if you have anything going on the side, you will have something new and unique to bring to the table in every situation. You will have more interesting conversations, you will draw parallels between seemingly disparate challenges and you will be the person at the table who has something interesting to add.

A few days after the networking event, The "What Else" conversation came up again. We were with clients in a somewhat informal setting; it was all about small talk. Someone tossed it out there, "What do you do outside of work?" The responses led to conversations about photography, wedding proposals, and more. After the meeting, Adrielle shared her Facebook page, [AdrielleRoyale Nature in Photography](#) with our team. People box people in by their titles, when they actually have rich, interesting lives outside the spreadsheets and emails of their professional lives.

Allow yourself to diversify; pursue that thing that's calling out to you. Why not? Find the money, make the time, see what happens. You have nothing to lose, and plenty to gain. After all, no one likes a dull boy.

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