

Epilogue for the Afterburner Lectures

As we close, let's take some time for a little career perspective. I now have more years behind me than I have ahead of me – but you are just about to get started. So, I want to leave you with some things to think about for your life.

Just imagine... wouldn't it be great if some 40 years from now, you could look back on your career as I now do mine and say to yourself: "it has been interesting and it has been challenging... I think that I've had a pretty good run."

Wouldn't it be great to be satisfied with who you have become and what you have accomplished? Please understand – that's not the norm for most people. You can prove this to yourself – just as an exercise, when you go home over Christmas, find someone nearing retirement age (a friend, a neighbor, a relative) and ask them two questions:

- 1) Question #1: How much longer until you will retire? The standard answer that you will get will be something like this: "I've got to more years of this stuff -- and then I'm out of here."
- 2) Question #2: "what are you going to do after you retire?" The standard answer you will probably hear is... "I don't know".

That seems to be the default for everyone – unless we are proactive. So how do you avoid ending up like everyone else, just waiting until it is time to leave your career?

The first take-home message is: **be willing to try new things**. Be willing to grow with your work. Many people just get comfortable in their work and plod along through the years. If you do this, you will end up like everyone else. Then at some point, you will find yourself saying "just two more years of this stuff and then I'm done..." So, the bottom line is: **be willing to try new things**.

Second take-home message is: **have a backup plan**. Life is unpredictable; your circumstances will change – and so will you. With that said, before you get started in your career, begin to formulate some ideas as to what you will turn to if you are faced with a career change. Question: how do you start the process of forming a backup plan? Begin this with some personality testing – go to the career center at PSU or you can do this online: here's the link to one such site...

<https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>.

Use this information to find other areas of your life that are of interest – and where you could excel. For me, this has been teaching – I knew based on career testing almost 50 years ago that I would love to teach. For many years, this has been a tremendous addition to the satisfaction I have gained from engineering. Teaching undergraduates has been my life passion.

So right now, begin preparing for the time when you can look back on your career after 40 years, such that you will be satisfied with your life. Be open to changes and find other areas of your life that you are passionate about.

It takes just a few minutes to do this free personality test and get started planning a backup path. *The potential benefit of time spent here far outweighs the time spent gaining the insight.*

Glen Coates, December 2018