



Peg Hendershot and Kevin Field, of CareerVision

Civic Caucus, 8301 Creekside Circle #920, Bloomington, MN 55437

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Present : Verne Johnson (chairman), David Broden (phone), Janise Clay, Brittany Gilje (phone), Paul Gilje, Ted Kolderie, Dan Loritz, Tim McDonald

A. Welcome and introductions.

Peg Hendershot is director of CareerVision, an Illinois-based organization that promotes a theory of *Career Literacy* and provides consulting services for clients of varied ages by providing assessments and guidance on career and educational decisions. CareerVision is a division of the not for profit Ball Foundation, established in 1975 to research and develop aptitudes as they relate to human potential. Peg has a 20-year track record in workforce issues and community involvement. These responsibilities included board positions with DuPage County Workforce Development, the Illinois School Counselors Academy, and Education-to-Careers. Her prior work experience includes program development and management, training, and career development for educational districts, consortiums and graduate student education. She has a Masters degree in Adult Education with a concentration in Career Development from National-Louis University and a BA from Northern Illinois University.

Kevin Field is the assessment systems manager for Career Vision. Kevin has had a leadership role in the development of the computerized version of the Ball Aptitude Battery and Career Vision's other online assessments. Kevin contributes to the organization's research efforts, presenting results at national conferences and a co-author of several professional publications. His professional experience prior to obtaining his doctorate included 6 years in commercial banking. He obtained his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Minnesota, his MBA from DePaul University, and his BS in Business at Indiana University.

Both speakers are connected to the Ball foundation, which drives work on aptitude, a participant said. And if there's anything the capitol in St. Paul stands for, it's human capital. We're concerned about the investment in human capital. Today we are interested in an idea that has come to our attention—an organization that has been working very much on human capital, and how to help people make good choices about how we develop human capital.

Peg Hendershot and Kevin Field are in town for a couple of days for a series of meetings, including legislators, a former president of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers appearance Mid Morning program of Minnesota Public Radio has been scheduled for May 31st.

Help people understand their strengths in order to realize their potential

PH: You said at the beginning that the Civic Caucus is interested in Minnesota being a leading state like you used to be. I'd say you still are. Things like the forums you're hosting, that we have been invited to over the past two days-forums that enable you to share ideas without saying you are either right or wrong. We aren't here to say what's right, but to share what we're interested in and what we believe.

The Ball Foundation is an operating foundation interested in helping people define which environments people are comfortable in, and what they operate well in where they can experience both success and satisfaction.

The origins of the foundation go back to 1972. When I got involved in 1992 we were primarily a research organization. It was a giant think tank. When I came in I asked, *So what are we going to do with this?*

Right now our model is to work with families to help them make good decisions about the student's next step for post-secondary. There is a pervasive misconception that we're supposed to be good at everything. Many parents are unaware about how to help their students with post secondary planning. Career Literacy model by tapping in to their inherent talents and interests.

At the Ball Foundation we are dealing with high school aged people and up-my oldest client is 72. We identified that about the beginning of high school is when the differences in aptitude begin to mature.

What is aptitude?

Aptitudes are our talents and natural abilities. If you have a talent for music but don't play and instrument, you only have potential. An aptitude is a predictor of potential. If I have potential in something and I hide it under the bush, nothing happens. So we want to help students to identify it, and then enable them to pursue it.

We usually see them beginning to show up in young adults around grade 8-this is when differentiation begins to appear in ways that are instructive for providing a sense about future interests and abilities.

How do you test for aptitudes?

Aptitude tests are constructed as work samples-simple tests that everyone is familiar with or that are somewhat novel. People perform tasks, and they are timed. The test assesses how quickly the person can learn the basic task. How we learn, perform, and respond are indicators of aptitude. They are predictors of potential.

Unlike in school, when we perform aptitude tests we don't look at a '61' to be a bad grade-but to be mid-way. If something registers mid-way for a person, it suggests that it will take them about the same

amount of time and energy as most people to learn to perform tasks that use those aptitudes it may not be their strongest aptitude-but they do have potential there to be good.

We will give the students a range of 10 occupations that fit at least aptitude and interests, often including personality and values. There is a range from associate's degree to PhD if that's appropriate. We don't care if you pick one of those, but we say that these fit. The goal is self-knowledge and informed decisions about time and effort to succeed and enjoy the path chosen.

Assessments like these are more utilitarian. They inform choice. In this case - education and career fit. We also engage in an explanatory and validating discussion that teaches how and why different careers/ performance environments work. If we just gave a list of jobs that says this is what you are supposed to be, the students won't do anything with it-nor will families see it. What you want to look at when you do an aptitude assessment is what are the best performance environments, not to limit, but to understand how to make choices and adapt.

The problem is that most people do not have a clear self-perception

Q: What is the problem? Legislators are going to ask first, what's the problem? Then, what's the goal? And if we know that we can work on 'How' to get it done.

PH: There are many, many students that do not fit in into the traditional model-particularly poor students and highly, highly gifted students, but there are people in the middle that say "I'm nobody, I'm not good at anything." We try to fit everyone into a production system. The starting point is understanding potential and fit- for students and staff.

Many students don't know what they should do. In a large school they may not have had the chance to be in leadership roles. Or in small schools, they may not have had full exposure to other talented students- so their self-perception is influenced by the school they attend and its environment.

KF: Key psychological traits to cultivate are resilience, and the ability to make informed choices.

Today's workplace has changed more than many people see

Today's workplace is invisible. We are in an age of "knowledge" work, and when you do knowledge work students don't realize what's all going on-it all looks the same to them. Things look boring. They say, "I don't want to work at a desk all day." But careers that may indeed fascinate them are subject to this perception.

If people know better who they are, they can develop awareness of their aptitudes through lifelong learning.

Q: How do you get "access" to work with students?

We arrived at working with students because we started working with adults. But we found that many folks were in poor fit situations, it was hard for someone with a family and mortgage to do a career shift or start over, even if they wanted to. They all claimed a desire to have had this aptitude information earlier. Now we are starting to work with families, to in turn work with young people.

Plumbers use more math than accountants

Plumbers in fact use more math than do accountants. Accountants use arithmetic, and use formulas. More and more those formulas are built into computer programs.

Plumbers come upon unexpected situations. They have to solve problems. Some of these involve distinct, some angles, some flow-capacity. So plumbers have to be both resourceful and creative in their application. It would be interesting to see the kind of test required for a journeyman to become a plumber.

Testing is used as a predictor, not development

KF: Prior to the 1980 the idea of preparing for the ACT and SAT tests was foreign. As those tests became more important a billion dollar industry developed. Test prep used to be individualized and expensive, but has been scaled in such a way that it's now low-cost.

PH: The testing we use today is designed to predict or measure performance-not to develop potential. These are two fundamentally different-but related objectives. Both important. In fact, we'd say that testing without using the information to inform development doesn't make sense.

When surveys or tests are conducted to tell a student what career they should pursue, there is no context, no process to discuss or individually explain, no commitment, no understanding-and so students see a disconnect.

There are structural difficulties with a testing-as-development approach-mostly time, staff capacity and experience. Back in the mid to late 1990's we underwrote testing of many high schools in our community. I brought high school counselors up to speed on how to do it. We didn't execute it to the depth that we do on an individual basis, but the essence was there.

I was skeptical the counselors would be able to do it-but they really stepped up. They did a fantastic job. And they liked it. But they came to me at the end of the year they said they couldn't do it the following year because they don't have the capacity-they have 15 minutes per student per year to work out the student's schedules, and that's it. With all the other personal issues, that's the scope of their duties.

The structure of education often suppresses intrinsic motivation

PH: Some students are programmed to do just enough to get into college, then they go off to college believing that all they need is a college degree to succeed, so they pursue the easiest college degree. We have lots of students graduating from college without the skills in technology or science math.

Also, there has been something called credential inflation. We have in our employer mentality the ability to put in so many requirements for credentials just to be able to screen people out.

Identifying aptitudes enables planning-is not tracking

Q: Seems the problem is a serious misallocation of human capital. There would be both a personal dimension and a professional one.

PH: Right on. Someone brought up last night concern for tracking. But a study found 50-60 percent of students had a very misaligned perception of their position or trajectory in the world. Goals are misaligned with their aptitudes, and even if they're aligned they lack knowledge of the steps required to get there.

KF: There's no conception of backward planning like a business would do. They are not acquiring the self-management skills to understand how they should act and work, and where to allocate their time, energy, and interest.

The test needs context to be effective

Q: Would it be possible to put the test online and have it self-administered?

PH: We have a test that is online, but we won't issue a report that has to be read without assistance. If it is read without someone to provide context, the general public doesn't have the knowledge or skills to understand it and apply it to career exploration. The taker and provider need to spend the time talking about the results. It's the process and the understanding; talking it through; and mentoring in combination with excellent assessments that can really improve the opportunity for informed choice.

Q: What about the Myers Briggs test?

PH: I love any of those tests that start conversation and encourage thinking about differences in people and environments. But if they are administered and not given context, it's not seriously considered by the test taker. To do the Myers Briggs correctly they require sitting down and walking through it and asking, "does this make sense to you?" No- this is who you are.

KF: The goal is to get them to consider the information so that they can pursue additional information on their own.

Systems measure the wrong things

PH: Systems measure the wrong things.

They measure the systems performance. Ultimately the question is not whether someone graduates from college (or in how many years or with what debt). Instead what we need to measure is how successfully our students have transitioned through the "bigger system" into an independent life. Ask different questions and you change the process and what is focused on.

Including colleges

Our society places such importance on college-there are many paths. We need to look at what type of knowledge and skills prepare for jobs. Clearly science and math are strong. I have had clients spend over \$100K on college education-spending sometimes 6 years-and not have a clue or be realistically suited for a career. Partly because they did little realistic career exploration and partly because we mistakenly see college as a career goal.

KF: These tremendous inefficiencies have an outlet-student debt. We have a problem with no advocate, and a solution that has been subsidized by the government. If you see a chart of student

loans you will see a chart that looks like a classic bubble. This whole thing is built up over 10, 15, 20 years with everyone saying there is no problem, the family of these kids will take care of it.

PG : Any leadership from the college admissions officers?

PH: We started out with conversations with high school counselors and college admissions-they resist because it takes time and is not scalable, but also because they think they're already doing it well. There really is a science and art to career exploration and planning. It requires learning and effort. People put more time into planning family vacations than their career aspirations.

KF: If your only measurement as a college is whether students are employed, which is principal for many colleges, then you won't spend much attention on whether the jobs fit the students' aptitudes.

Ways to apply an aptitude-perspective in policy

Q: Stipulate that need to spend more time working on aptitudes. How are we going to bring that to scale? One example could be to put incentives into the system, so that people do it. Another could be to tell them to do it, and pay them to do it. If the aptitudes start showing up around 8th grade, would you say we stay on the standards up to grade 8, then move to aptitudes?

PH: You're asking the heart of the question that is at why Ted asked us to come up to Minnesota. At the foundation we're advocating a highly individualized process, while the school system is often highly standardized.

What I'm advocating for is that schools need to see itself as part of a bigger process. Our schools at present are isolated, as are boards and policy makers. We need to take a look at what the purpose is for education, and if the purpose is to develop ourselves as people, then we need to take time to develop our potential and who we are as people.

In the way the system is presently structured there isn't room to do the ideal. Schools need to be structured in a way so that they're more personalized.

C. Closing - We are working at present with families that are proactive, use their money wisely and want their kids to be successful and happy. That includes private and home school, and referrals from other organizations that work with families-and will work increasingly with schools in the open sector that encourage self-management. We are convinced that if you can tap the individual it is more efficient.

Thanks to everyone for a great meeting.