

The Unobvious Path

My name is Tom Coyne and I graduated from UConn in 2013 with my bachelor's in Business Administration. Before I graduated I was afforded the opportunity to immerse myself in an internship experience my Junior year which ultimately landed me a full-time offer after graduation. Over the past few years, I have found myself asking the question of how did I end up on the path I am on, and is it one I want to continue on? The more experience I have gained the more self-aware I have become of my individual passion and the skills I used to uncover it. Whether you are still trying to uncover your career path or looking to make a change I hope the retrospect on my personal journey will help others see similar situations through a different lens.

What innate passions are important to me and why?

Over the past few years as I have been talking to peers and making new acquaintances, I have attempted to learn the interests of each person and what makes them unique. These interests have varied from person to person like leading their teams through complex problems, to building out excel models, or volunteering at the local animal shelter on the weekends. Short of learning a little bit more about other people, I always ask myself, "why is this important to this person"?

Have you ever asked yourself the question of what am I really good at? What am I passionate about? What gets me out of bed every morning? Well, I'm sure at some point every day whether you know it or not, you are answering these questions with the various choices that you make. As individuals, we make choices that inherently coincide with who we are as people, which dictates our interests and passions. Some of these choices could be to wake up and go on a run or call a friend to check in on them. While everyone's choices will be different, they all provide motivation to do more and further that inherent passion.

How do I differentiate myself amongst others?

During college, while I was searching to find my career path, I felt that my elevator pitch was a little unpolished. However, I have learned that with time and experience my story has become more refined and personal. We've all been in the awkward situation where we are trying to influence someone's perspective on us in 5-minute conversations, at either career fairs or during interviews. These situations, especially early on in a professional's career can feel unnatural and awkward at times. My own experiences with these situations lead me to ask the question, "how does one become comfortable with being uncomfortable"?

Over the past 7 years since I graduated from UConn, I have had many experiences in different professional roles. Every so often I ask myself "am I bringing my authentic self to work every day and in turn, channeling my different passions". The answer to this question was both yes and no. I inherently love talking to people, which has led me to sales roles thus far in my career. However, my experiences in sales has helped me to realize that my real passion is my ability to impact and help people. By answering this question, I completely changed how I thought about the advancement of my career, as well as my personal story.

I know who I am but how do I become brave enough to be myself in front of others?

When a person is able to connect their passion with their academic or professional career, they are able to uniquely portray their abilities to others, while continually reminding themselves of what drives them. Next time you have a conversation with someone where you are talking about a situation you are proud of, stop and think of the how and why. What unique skills did you bring to this situation, and what gave you the motivation to make a difference? You will probably find that some innate qualities you have self-identified will come through in that conversation. It is only natural that when a person is comfortable with a topic, they are able to portray enthusiasm, passion, and speak as though they are a subject matter expert in that area.

When I finally came to the realization that I wanted to shift my career, I had to call on prior experiences and answer that why and how. I realized that at the root of every action I took it was to give back and to help others advance their skills and find meaning in their career. Like many of us during these unprecedented times, a lot of people have been thrown many curveballs due to the global pandemic. Trying to transition or start a career is no easy task and involves lots of hard work, it is even more challenging due to the current situation we are finding ourselves in globally.

What are some ways to begin crafting and practicing my story?

While we are all facing difficulties in one way or another, during these times we need to stay determined. Finding creative ways to chase our passion's or further our career's is still available. Utilizing tools like LinkedIn or Handshake can assist in connecting with employers and individuals that can help provide information about different industries and roles. Along with further educating oneself, learning what makes others unique can help to curate one's own story.

How do I stay true to my story?

If you find yourself looking to make a change or if you are trying to navigate the waters of starting a career, I will leave you with a small piece of personal advice. Focus on who you are and what makes you unique and chase your passion. Find other like-minded companies or individuals but stay open to other ideas to continue to craft your story while encompassing different perspectives. Don't be afraid to be yourself and let others see what makes you unique. At the end of the day, when trying to answer the question of how I stand out from others it can only be achieved by showcasing your authentic self.

-Tom Coyne