



Helping clients figure out what to be when they 'grow up'

Terry L. Wynne is a licensed professional counselor, national certified counselor, national certified career counselor and the founder of The Professional Edge (*TheProfessionalEdgeAtlanta.com*), an organization that specializes in career counseling, coaching, training, writing and voice-overs.

Danielle Irving-Johnson: What influenced your decision to pursue a career as a career counselor? What were the steps you took to achieve that goal?

Terry L. Wynne: Just before starting graduate school in counseling, an immediate family member died unexpectedly. My intense emotional reaction made me realize I did not want the responsibility of providing mental health counseling, but I was unsure of what type of counseling I did want to provide. Meanwhile, while pursuing my graduate degrees, I worked full time and, because I continually sought successively fulfilling jobs, I became skilled in searching for jobs and in interviewing. At one point, I even became a technical writer, which helped prepare me to write organized, professional résumés as well as informative handouts.

Ultimately, I was selected for a full-time job as the first career counselor for the employees of Emory University and Emory Healthcare in Atlanta. I had found the perfect niche for me. I gained experience that helped prepare me for multiple career counseling opportunities with the federal government [and] helped prepare me for starting my private practice. In many ways, my many noncounseling jobs helped prepare me for

becoming a career counselor — the job which was ultimately the most fulfilling for me.

DIJ: Can you tell us a bit about your practice, the services you provide and your current role as a career counselor?

TW: As a licensed professional counselor and as a board certified coach through the Center for Credentialing & Education, I specialize in career counseling and career coaching for adults, including writing résumés and cover letters that get results. The services I offer include helping clients identify their

interests through the administration and interpretation of interest inventories, explaining job search strategies, [and] describing and role-playing how to answer interview questions and negotiate salary and benefits. I provide clients with detailed handouts that I wrote for most of the sessions I offer to ensure they understand and review how to make themselves the most competitive candidate for a job.

DIJ: What advice can you give to other aspiring counselors who are looking to break into the career counseling specialty?

TW: My advice to aspiring career counselors is that unless you plan to work full time for a college career center or some other entity, you may not be able to support yourself financially as a career counselor in private practice. Many of the clients who need your help — such as those who have been laid off or terminated — don't have the funds to pay for services, and because career counseling is not considered mental health therapy, insurance will not cover it. In addition to

providing career counseling, you would be wise to plan additional methods of income for yourself.

DIJ: That is valuable advice. What accomplishment do you consider to be the most significant in your career?

TW: The most satisfying accomplishment in my career is any time a client contacts me to let me know that career counseling or career coaching played a part in helping them attain a job they love.

DIJ: What would you identify as the main purpose or role of a career counselor?

TW: I believe that the main role of a career counselor is to help clients obtain the information they need to make informed decisions about their career rather than clients trying to make decisions based on insufficient information.

DIJ: Why is career counseling important? What are the benefits to seeking this type of assistance?

TW: Career counseling is important because many clients don't know what they want to be when they grow up — and they're already grown. Career counseling offers clients the opportunity to obtain the information and skills they need to get the job they want. Also, when I write a résumé with quantified accomplishments, many clients state that seeing it helps their self-confidence and that the résumé and the information from our sessions helps them obtain a job they want.

DIJ: What skills or qualifications does it take to be a successful and effective career counselor?

TW: One of the most significant skills for being a successful career counselor is maintaining a current knowledge of realistic, professional, competitive techniques regarding the current job market — not just knowledge of theories.



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Moreover, clients repeatedly share that the factor they consider motivating to them is that they feel I sincerely care about each them, which I do.

DIJ: You've already been very successful, with more than 30 years in the profession. Do you have any exciting goals for the future?

TW: I want to continue to provide career counseling and career coaching as long as I can, as I love doing so. I'm expanding my coaching practice to include not only career coaching but also my subspecialties in health, life and executive coaching.

I am also a professional writer and write websites and brochures for other counselors. I am in the process of publishing a series of short children's stories that provide lessons about life for therapists to use with children who are clients. Additionally, I'm a trainer and am preparing a training course called "Effective Presentation Skills for Therapists" to help therapists be more effective in providing training classes to other counselors or clients. Moreover, I continue to teach a variety of different training topics, including my favorites [on] assertiveness and coping with stress.

DIJ: What would you like to see in the future for career counseling?

TW: I would like to see career counseling covered by insurance just as mental health services are covered since career counseling is a service so many clients need. ❖

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