

had no answer, I treated this puzzle as if it were an assignment in economics. I walked to the student library and, using the old classic Dewey Decimal System, searched for books that would give me statistics on careers. Which stats was I looking for? Only one. I wanted to know which career paid the most.

I grabbed a worn grey book off the shelf. Bound between its covers were spreadsheet after spreadsheet of career information. The book looked old. There was no way to know if its contents were accurate. But I chose to take it as gospel, since it was in the student library.

I flipped through and stopped at a page titled *Income*. On the very top line of that page, with an annual income higher than all the rest, was the answer I was looking for. The letters spelled *S-A-L-E-S*. Voila. Just like that, I knew! To have a fun, rewarding life I needed to sell something. What would I sell? I had no idea. Who would I sell to? I had no clue. Was I prepared? Absolutely not. I was going to wing it. And that was perfectly fine because this is what I'd always done.

The next day I opened *The Daily Tar Heel* newspaper to look for jobs in sales. One ad extolled the virtues of steak knives. No thanks. Another job elucidated the virtue of selling copiers. Pass. But then a particular ad caught my eye. This one said people were needed to sell environmentally friendly health products. Hmmm, a company with a cause. That sounded interesting.

I called the number listed, and a friendly woman answered the phone. She scheduled me for an interview. I came in that Saturday afternoon and listened to a group orientation. Their presentation was enjoyable, so I stuck around for a more formal meeting. Everyone in the office was in a good mood, and, more importantly, they actually seemed to like me. I agreed to begin work the following week.

Once I started, I realized one thing quickly. Selling products was *not* going to be my long term career. It wasn't the company's fault. Their training was good. It wasn't that I couldn't learn the techniques or apply a little charm because I sold a decent amount in my first few weeks. But my heart wasn't into it. Deep inside, nothing about peddling a water filter or an all-natural remedy excited me. Of course, with hindsight, this is no surprise. I was only promoting all-natural shampoo because I had spent no time considering what I really wanted to do with my life.

There was something at the company that did catch my interest, though. While most reps were out selling products in people's homes, some reps got to stay in the office and do group orientations like the one I'd seen my first day. These reps got to tell jokes and make people laugh. They got to perform. This seemed a lot more fun.

So one day, I walked up to my manager Brian and asked how someone got the green light to give an orientation. "Are you good in front of people?" Brian asked me. "I play in a college acoustic rock band. We have decent crowds sometimes. Does that count?" I chuckled, amused at myself.

Brian looked at me expressionless for a moment. "Maybe," Brian said. Then, he put his hand on my shoulder. "Let's find out. You can do the group presentation tonight." I had underestimated that Brian was such a casual dude.