

Launch—or Refine—Your Early Career with the Highlands Ability Battery

You've put in the hard work. Studied. Contributed to group projects. Written countless essays. And now it's time to reap the rewards as you launch your career. It's an exciting time—or so it would seem.

In reality, many young adults, from recent college grads to those in the process of launching their career, often find it to be a prolonged transition fraught with challenges—especially in an economy marked by uncertainty and rapid change.

- *How will my degree translate into a job/career? What if I chose the wrong college major?*
- *Do I really want to be an x, y or z after all? Am I pigeon-holed in this career?*
- *What if I chose a career in a financially stressed or shrinking industry?*
- *Why am I bored, frustrated or drained by my job—already?*

The truth is, some college majors—e.g., Mechanical Engineering or Elementary Education—have a more direct and predictable path to a job. Others require a bit more creativity and reverse job sculpting (combining your talents, interests, values into a position that may or may not yet exist).

Furthermore, a degree in any given field can be applied in (what can feel like) an overwhelming number of directions, leading to “analysis paralysis.”



The ensuing struggle to find their professional footing can trigger a spiral of anxiety, regret and self-doubt during these critical early career turning points.

Can you relate? If so, addressing these mindset challenges is the first step. With a healthy attitude and outlook, you'll be able to position yourself to successfully launch—or refine—your career in a way that feels right *for you*, making the most of your natural talents.

Harness the Power of Self-Awareness

While you might think you're already pretty self-aware, chances are, there's a lot more you can learn about yourself, including factors that can significantly impact how you perform at work—and the way you feel about your job and career.

The Highlands Ability Battery (HAB) is a research-backed aptitude assessment tool that objectively measures natural abilities. The results won't tell you what you can or can't do, but rather, what things come relatively easily to you versus those that require more time, effort and energy.

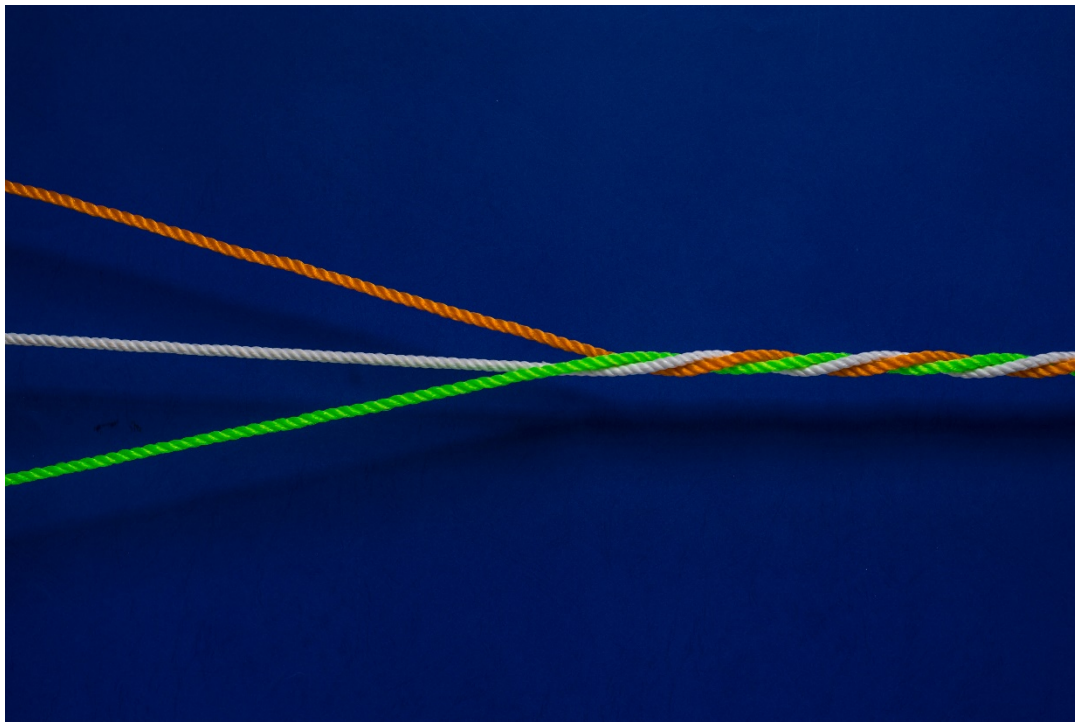
Understanding your natural abilities can:

- Validate what you thought you knew about yourself
"I gravitate toward activities that require teamwork and enjoy working with others to achieve a shared goal." (strong Generalist)
- Help you articulate what you do and why you do it that way
"It's like I can't help myself ... I take a logical, linear approach when solving problems or following procedures. It's almost impossible for me to skip any steps along the way." (high Concept Organization)
- Reveal hidden talents

“So that’s why it’s easy for me to sift through lots of ideas and discern which are worthy of further exploration or implementation.” (low Idea Productivity)

- Give yourself grace
“Now I understand why I struggled in classes that required heavy textbook reading and did much better when I could hear the information in lectures or by listening to audiobooks.” (high Tonal Memory/ low Verbal Memory)

With an appreciation for your natural abilities on their own, you can then begin to weave them together in even more meaningful ways.



Tying It All Together: Highlands “Four Key Dimensions” of Work Life

The Highlands Four Key Dimensions are designed to help you consolidate the application and implications of your natural abilities in four specific areas of work life: **Work Environment/Personal Style; Learning, Problem-Solving/Decision-Making; and Communication.**

While it’s helpful to know that you’re a Generalist, preferring to work with and through a team to achieve a shared goal, the value of this “data” becomes even greater when you understand how it intersects with your other natural abilities in each of these key areas. As you launch or refine your career, this awareness can help you make minor (or major) adjustments to create greater alignment between you and your work.

(Click on this link to see a sample Highlands Ability Battery Four Key Dimensions Report.)

Beyond What You Do ... Where You Do It Counts, Too

Jordana thought she had landed her dream (first) job as an assistant curator of a well-established art museum. Eager to make an impact, she immediately saw opportunities to make improvements to enhance the visitor experience.

But she soon learned that she was hired to do her job—exactly and exclusively according to a rigid protocol. Color within the lines. Do things the way we taught you.

Within two months, she was blindsided by her first warning: “You’re not following the guidelines for arranging new installations,” the Director of the museum told her. “We can’t make any changes before discussing them with the Board.”

Within three months, she felt frustrated and discouraged. Considering the intersection of her natural abilities in the Four Key Dimensions report helped her understand why.

- As a Specialist, Jordana brought a unique perspective, envisioning things in a way none of her predecessors had.
- As someone with high Classification, she was able to quickly and easily identify why something wasn’t having the desired impact.
- And because of her high Idea Productivity, Jordana could almost effortlessly generate multiple, innovative solutions to address the museum’s challenges.

These abilities are all gifts—*given the right work environment*. Unfortunately, her employer didn’t value or appreciate them. In fact, she was encouraged *not* to use her natural talents on the job.

Nothing was wrong with Jordana; nothing was wrong with the museum. But the **lack of alignment** between her natural abilities and the expectations for her role became problematic.



Here is an excerpt from Jordana’s Four Key Dimensions report that describes the impact of high Idea Productivity, one of five driving abilities. When in the high range, ignoring them can lead to boredom and frustration.

“Your Idea Productivity is extremely strong. This means you have a constant stream of new ideas, which can be a valuable resource for you and your company. You must exercise care, however, that this stream of ideas does not unduly interrupt your work or become a source of friction between you and the people you work with You are working against this ability if you are in work situations in which you have to do tasks the same way every time.”

With this insight, Jordana was able to consider her next steps. For example, she might choose to:

- a) Stay in her current position and learn to conform to the expectations of the job (often referred to as “skill-building” up or down the continuum of an individual ability). In Jordana’s case, that might mean flexing her mental muscles to try to find ways to implement and work with others’ ideas.
- b) Find an outlet for her abilities that can’t be expressed on the job. While it might be difficult or impossible to apply her high Idea Productivity at work, Jordana could express this ability in an extracurricular activity or hobby (e.g., writing, fundraising for a non-profit organization, etc.).
- c) Begin to look for other opportunities with greater alignment. A similar role at a smaller, newer museum that welcomes innovation might be a much better fit for Jordana.

How Do You Learn, Problem-Solve and Communicate Best?

Starting a new job usually requires “learning the ropes.” When you understand your stronger learning channels, whether reading, listening, seeing diagrams or a combination of these, you can determine the most effective—and least frustrating—way to take in and remember new information.

By taking the Highlands Ability Battery, Mitchell learned that he has high Verbal Memory, reflecting a strong ability to take in information from the written word and recall what he has read. While in the early phases of launching his career—and beyond—he would do well to get as much information or as many requests as possible in writing, including via email.

And because there is a significant drop in memory after 24 hours and again after two weeks, taking good notes and organizing them in a way that he can easily reference will help Mitchell use the information he learns in his early days on the job throughout the duration of his employment.

Considering his high Verbal Memory in conjunction with his mid-range Concept Organization, Mitchell will likely find it helpful to transfer what he reads into lists, planners, etc. to catalog any new information.



Learning doesn't end when you leave your last classroom. As you launch your career (and throughout your lifetime), there will be unlimited opportunities to earn a certification, acquire a new skill, stay on top of industry trends, and more.

The same holds true for problem-solving/decision-making and communicating; everyone brings their own problem-solving/decision-making style and preferred communication approach with them to work. While there is no “right” or “wrong” way to solve problems and communicate, being aware of your natural style preferences will help you discern when, where and how to effectively use them on the job.

Self-knowledge is key to career success. And the earlier you understand your natural abilities and style preferences, the better equipped you'll be to launch your career—and to make adjustments to achieve alignment between you and your work.

Ready to empower yourself to make proactive, intentional decisions as you chart your professional course—and throughout the turning points and transitions throughout your career? Start by achieving a deeper level of self-awareness through the Highlands Ability Battery.



***The Highlands Ability Battery is offered through our Highlands
Certified Consultant - Debra D King, at
www.DebraKingConsulting.com***