

Praise for *Careers By the People*

“*Careers By the People* should be on every guidance counselor’s desk—and in every student’s backpack. It’s crisp, honest, informed, and wonderfully entertaining. At last, a practical, accessible guide for anyone seriously committed to finding that ‘perfect’ job!” —**Coit D. Blacker, professor emeritus, Stanford University**

“Don’t have time to test-drive 101 career paths to uncover what each one is really like? Thanks to Mike Wysocki, you won’t have to. Packed with thought-provoking and snackable wisdom, *Careers By the People* is like eavesdropping on others’ coffee chats, 101 times over.” —**Gorick Ng, Harvard University career and first-gen student adviser; *Wall Street Journal*—bestselling author of *The Unspoken Rules***

“*Careers By the People* is an invaluable resource for anyone pursuing the skills and educational credentials necessary for a rewarding career. Capitalizing on the wisdom and experience of professionals in a wide range of disciplines, this engaging and accessible guide is a must for students and graduates seeking a pathway toward professional fulfillment.” —**John Kennedy, vice chancellor for University Relations, University of Massachusetts Amherst**

“I love this book! If you’re exploring career paths or hoping to manage or start a business, here’s the road map of how real people think and feel about what they do all day. *Careers By the People* goes beyond facts and statistics and reveals with scintillating candor: How does this job feel? How can my work create meaning and value? How can I have a good life?” —**John Bowe, co-editor of *Gig: Americans Talk About Their Jobs***

“While many books are interesting, and others make you think about your life, Mike Wysocki has written something that combines both these traits but also adds a helpful message about what

one should do in life. Every young person should read this book before they decide on their career choice; older people, like myself, should read this book before they change jobs. One could also read *Careers By the People* just to get a sense of what people are doing in America today.” —**Carl Rogers Ackerman, PhD, author of *A Success Story in Public Education: The Clarence T. C. Ching PUEO Program at Punahou and its Partnership-Marriage Methodology***

“This is an outstanding book on navigating your way through job transitions. Wysocki and the plethora of professionals who provide their stories really help the reader understand the difference between jobs and careers and how to navigate this space. I wish I had read this book several years ago when I exited from the military into corporate America.” —**Jay Garcia, senior manager, Fortinet Veterans Program & Community Engagement**

“*Careers By The People* is a must-read for anyone entering the workforce or someone looking to challenge themselves and their career. This book is about that life-changing journey that can help anyone become successful in their career and lead a happy work/life balance.” —**Roy G. Burr, MBA, career services, Alcorn State University**

“*Careers By the People* provides students with perspective into a vast array of career paths that cannot be learned in a classroom. As a college senior, this insight by professionals from various fields provides students with crucial insight to explore different careers that may be suitable for them.” —**Kyle Murphy, Suffolk University, class of 2022**

“*Careers By the People* catalogs 101 careers and lets the reader explore them through the voices and experiences of the folks who live them. Author Mike Wysocki uses a personal and authentic tone to help the next generation avoid getting stuck in a career they dislike; or worse, potentially missing out on the perfect career because they never even know about it. I can’t wait to use this

resource with my own students as they explore their own post–high school paths and opportunities.” —**Tara Lindsey, high school academic dean and junior advisor and internship coordinator, Kihei Charter School, Hawaii**

“*Careers By the People* helps to bring clarity to the messiness of career development by personalizing stories that offer unique perspective and valuable insight.” —**JAKE Small, assistant director, Boston University College of Communication Career Services**

“This book is the perfect starting point for anyone seeking to explore new professional opportunities. As a career counselor with interest in hearing others’ career stories, this is a collection of mini biographies written in a conversational way that makes it easy and enjoyable to read. As someone who works with job seekers who want to learn about different roles, organizations and industries, this book makes this step much easier. Each person’s story provides candid answers to questions job seekers would be asking in informational interviews. This is an incredibly valuable resource that offers job seekers a glimpse of so many different jobs and careers while also providing them with both information and context that they can use as a starting point for further research.” —**Anne Grieves, associate director, Career Design, Northeastern University**

“Students thrive when provided with straightforward, honest advice, and *Careers By the People* is like having candid conversations with dozens of experienced professionals about what works (and doesn’t) when making important career decisions. An excellent resource for anyone getting started in the workforce or diving deeper into their goals.” —**Julie Morikawa, president, ClimbHI**

“*Careers By the People* is a must-have for high school and college students unsure what to do with their careers. It should also be a must-read for those in their early careers who want to find more meaningful options to consider.” —**Byron C. Scott, MD, MBA, adjunct faculty, Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst**

“*Careers By the People* offers interesting answers to questions about career choices from a variety of different professions. When it comes to the details of day-to-day work life, this book holds jobs from customer service to CEOs in the same esteem. This is an essential resource of honest input to guide any young person’s career path.” —**Juli Patao, associate professor of cooperative education and CareerLink director, University of Hawaii Maui College**

“Reading *Careers By the People* is like speed-networking with 101 different careers at a time. You’ll come away from this book with a strong understanding of the entire landscape of careers available to you, as well as the peaks and pitfalls hidden within each and every field.” —**Montgomery Thomas, associate director for alumni and graduate career strategy, Suffolk University**

“*Careers By The People: Candid Career Advice from 101 Experienced Professionals* is exactly the kind of book I wish I had when I was first thinking about what to do with my life a few decades ago. It would have saved me a lot of time and effort in sorting out the various options available to me—many of which I had no idea even existed. Mike Wysocki has assembled an invaluable resource that anyone at any point in their work life can consult when considering pursuing a particular line of work—or moving into a completely new occupational arena. Finally, we get to hear sound advice and recommendations from those who are actually in the careers they are describing. This kind of first-hand insights are hard to come by these days as most of the books written in this genre involve second-hand perspectives and interpretations. But Wysocki takes you directly to the source. In fact, I plan to use *Careers By the People* in my graduate class on career development. I highly recommend this exquisite little primer for anyone who has ever wondered if they are in the ‘right’ field for them—and what alternatives might be possible.” —**Aaron Hughey, university distinguished professor in the department of counseling and student affairs at Western Kentucky University**

“At CareerSpring, we recognize that information and advice from real-world professionals are critical components of career access and success. *Careers By the People* presents an array of first-person accounts of career experiences grouped by personality type, making it easy for the reader to navigate toward the careers they’re interested in—as well as ones they’d never before considered.” —**Paul Posoli, founder, CareerSpring**

“While profoundly unveiling the curtain, *Careers By the People* does more than exemplify what it means to join the workforce but furthermore introduces scenarios and ideologies of which prove to be conducive to understanding realities and fiction within differentiating industries.” —**Rainier Gracial, senior at California Baptist University**

“The world of work is changing fast. Information about work in the digital age is plentiful yet hard to assess for accuracy. *Careers By the People* is a guidebook through some of the obstacles workers face as they navigate the twenty-first-century world of work. The information comes straight from the source via interviews with 101 workers representing 101 different career experiences. The types of work represented span all social classes and geographies. The questions asked, and answered, are the kinds career-seekers wish they could ask employers outside the job interview setting. This book is an essential resource for teachers, counselors, academic advisors, coaches, and more. It is also an excellent tool to put in the hands of career-seekers young and mature as they embark on a journey of exploration and success.” —**Dr. Brian Hutchison, a.k.a. Global Career Guy, core faculty, Walden University**

“We all have our own strengths and challenges, and finding a ‘good fit’ career takes exploration, experimentation, and sometimes time to find our way. Wysocki’s collection of interviews can provide a good step to expanding one’s view of potential careers through the voices of others.” —**Cathy Kim, PhD, National Board–certified teacher, technology integration & learning sciences, math & science education, Pacific Lutheran University**

“*Careers By the People* is a valuable resource for job-seekers of all ages that uses relatable language and diverse perspectives to explore the realities of a wide range of career fields. As a nonprofit focused on ensuring K–12 students are prepared to succeed in the careers of their dreams, HawaiiKidsCAN believes this book is a great complementary piece to efforts like Hawaii Career Pathways, where students can take assessments, view compensation data, and see the specific credentials needed to enter the field. We hope this book will be widely available to students as they consider their post–high school opportunities.” —**David Sun-Miyashiro, founding executive director, HawaiiKidsCAN**

“*Careers By the People* is a valuable resource for people who are considering their career options and want to get a glimpse into a wide range of occupations. Before you commit to a particular path, gain insight and save time by learning from people who have come before you.” —**Erica Mattison, certified career coach, founder and CEO, Erica Mattison Coaching & Consulting, LLC**

“I really enjoy the personal insights from varying careers in this book. All too often, people over-glorify and under-stress certain aspects of their career transition, and this serves as a good resource to dispel that.” —**Peter M. Cline, founder and director of Boots to Books, Army Infantry veteran**

“In *Careers By the People*, Mike Wysocki does a wonderful job of showing all the possibilities out there to create a great life for yourself! I highly recommend this book to anyone who is charting a new path for their future.” —**Ken Rusk, construction entrepreneur and author of the bestselling book *Blue Collar Cash***

“*Careers By the People* provides an accessible way for job seekers, new and returning, to gain valuable insight on 101 careers. Wysocki’s collection of interviews will change the way universities advise students on career planning, by allowing students to match their level of education with possible career paths. This text will allow job seekers to see the best and the worst of job options, so they can

make informed decisions regarding their career planning.” —**Jared W. Miller, MA, student support advisor, DeVry University; adjunct instructor, Bellevue University**

“Having hope for the future is a key characteristic a young person can have to help them persevere through adversity. *Careers By the People* is a practical, insightful tool that can help teens and young adults create a vision for the future and believe they can achieve it. This book should be required reading in high schools, career centers, and college orientations.” —**Ashley King Nittle, director of communications, PRO Youth & Families**

“For some of us, a job is just a means to an end; for others, a job is the crux of our lives. No matter which one you are, *Careers By the People* is a valuable resource for anyone questioning where to place their professional skill and worth. As author Mike Wysocki reminds us, our careers fill up at least forty years of our lives—this book will help you determine how to spend that time wisely so you don’t look back on it with regret.” —**Philip Wilkerson, host of the *Positive Philter* podcast and Positive Philter LLC; higher education and career development professional**

“This is a fun book because you get to hear what real people think about their jobs and what it took to get there.” —**Dr. Janet Wall, founder, Career Planning Academy**

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The best way to approach *Careers By the People* is to read the introduction, then the occupations that most interest you, and then the conclusion. Also, make sure to review the “Talking Points” section. You can review the professions that are less compelling to you at your leisure.

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE BALLERS	
President and Chairman of the Board	16
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	21
Independent Investor	26
Mortgage Banker	32
Vice President of Administration	36
Vice President of Information Technology	43
Vice President of Sales	48
Industrial Chemical Sales	53
Sporting Goods Manufacturer Representative	59
Real Estate Agent	64
Retail Manager	69
Program Manager	75
Manager of Residential Rental Properties	80
Project Manager	85
Account Executive	91
Marketing Manager	97

CHAPTER TWO: THE HUSTLERS

Automotive and Farm Mechanic	104
Commercial Fisherman	108
Vehicle Assembly Technician	112
Beekeeper	116
Veterinary Technician	120
Pizza Delivery Driver	125
Federal Civil Service	129
Farmer	133
Police Officer (Sergeant)	138
Tile Setter	144
Truck Driver	148
Transportation Civil Engineer	153
Mammographer	158
Office Manager	163
Fitness Educator	169
Director of Catering	174
Post Office Manager	181

CHAPTER THREE: THE EINSTEINS

Psychologist	186
Software Engineer	192
Consultant for Nonprofits	197
MS Access Database Developer/Administrator	201
Communications Liaison	207

Associate Environmental Planner–Archaeologist	212
Credit Risk Manager–Statistical Modeler	218
Software Tester	224
Industrial Hygienist	229
Process Engineer	234
Electrical Engineer	239
Computer Analyst	245
Senior Scientist	250
Application Developer	257
Dependency Attorney	263
Senior Technical Accountant	268
Insurance Adjuster Investigator	272
Tax Accountant	277

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ROCK STARS

Architecture Designer	284
Editor, Educational Publishing	288
Copy Editor and Proofreader	293
Journalist	296
Professional Musician	301
Cosmetologist	306
Television Producer	310
K–12 Art Teacher	315
English Professor	321
Piano Teacher	327

Professional Body Piercer	332
Writer	336
Graphic Designer	340
Art Model	346
Actor	351
Technical Writer	357

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GOOD KIDS

Educational Consultant	364
Registered Nurse	369
High School English Teacher	374
High School Guidance Counselor	379
Public Education Teacher	385
Teacher of English as a Second Language	390
Social Worker and Rehabilitation Counselor	395
Recreation Coordinator	400
Military Career Counselor	404
Alumni Career Services	409
Pastoral Minister	413
Human Resources Manager	419
Principal Recruiter and Owner of Recruiting Firm	424
Contract Trainer	430
Social Studies Teacher	435
Assistant with Adult Living	441

CHAPTER SIX: THE PERFECTIONISTS

Actuary	448
Regulatory Affairs, Biotech Industry	453
Account Clerk	460
Revenue Manager	464
Secretary/Administrative Assistant	469
Medical Transcriptionist	473
Information Security Consultant	478
Merchant Marine	482
Certified Pharmacy Technician	487
Technology Sales	492
Client Service Officer	496
Mortgage Broker	501
Flight Attendant	506
Network Security	511
Life Insurance Specialist	516
Data Operator	520
Paralegal	524
Network Security Channel Sales Manager	529
<i>Conclusion</i>	535
<i>Talking Points</i>	549

INTRODUCTION

“I’ll Figure It Out”

I’ve been selling technology solutions for years, and I’m decent at it. But that’s all: just decent. After all this time, I’m still not stellar at it because, ultimately, it doesn’t interest me. Sure, I’ve met nice people and made some lifelong friends along the way, but I never look forward to Mondays or have any passion for what I do. Working in sales in the technology field is considered a solid and stable profession because the media and employment guides emphasize how lucrative it can be. This assumes that money leads to happiness, success, and/or career satisfaction. Sure, money helps, but there’s more to a profession than a fat commission check. After thirty-plus years in the trenches, I don’t know many in sales who actually enjoy it. It’s a daily grind.

I’m not alone. According to recent research, almost half of all Americans are dissatisfied with their jobs. With a workforce of 157 million people, that is an astronomical statistic. It also offers a compelling motivating factor for the current rise in both graduate school applications and prescription drug sales.

So, why are so many people unhappy? A significant reason for many workers’ discontent is the fact that most did not actively choose their careers. Instead, they allowed the market to dictate their decisions. This may have been based on factors like population trends, economic bubbles, and even marketing hype. There should

be little surprise, then, that people feel alienated and disgruntled with something that takes up so much of their waking life.

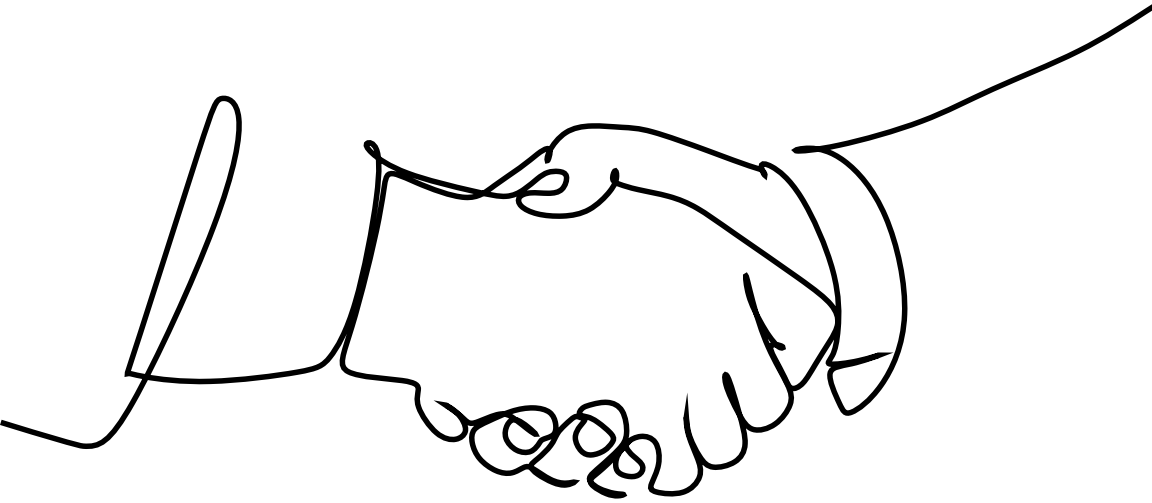
I compiled this book to help you make a wise, informed choice when choosing a profession. The 101 interviews assembled in this book are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to your options in the job market, but rarely do you ever find such candid insights about how real-world workers feel about their jobs. *Careers By the People* exists as an antidote to the haphazard approach to crucial career decisions that is sadly so widely accepted and perpetuated in our society. Choosing a career may be one of the most difficult and important decisions in life, but its importance is very often neglected.

One reason people approach their job hunt like they're playing a game of darts is that the search is time consuming and filled with frustration. With time constraints and limited resources, many people find it impossible to adequately research careers and/or industries to determine the best fit for their interests, aspirations, and talents. With no career focus or foundation in place, in time the search for money, happiness, or stability prompts them to drift from one job to the next without any professional game plan beyond leaving their current position for another. They only know they have to make a change. What's more—and unfortunately for the job seeker—professional headhunters tend to have the employer's best interests in mind rather than the employee's. In my day, career counseling was usually delegated to the teacher who drew the short straw in the principal's office. Most career offices have stepped up their game since then, so the advancement of opportunity has shifted in your favor, increasing the chances of you acquiring the profession you truly desire.

But sometimes that gets you only so far. Once you've landed in the right place, it isn't always clear how to ascend in your chosen profession. Some jobs, like sales, have similar responsibilities across industries, while others, like electrical engineering, are highly

CHAPTER ONE

The Ballers



PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Name

Eric F.

Location

Portland, Oregon

Education

Master of Business Administration

Total years in profession

28

Brief occupation description/goal of occupation

Managing high-tech businesses in Europe and North America. Building businesses; restructuring business start-ups and large Fortune 500 companies.

Why did you choose this career path?

In 1983, I decided to become the top boss and got an MBA (master of business administration), as I felt I had been passed over in a reorganization due to changes in management. Ever since then, I have been the managing director, CEO (chief executive officer), or chairman of the ventures I have been in.

What do you like about your occupation?

I like building businesses, defining customer needs and delivering on them, and managing people. It is very exciting to see the fruit of a lot of planning and work. The speed of innovation in high tech is addicting.

What do you dislike about your occupation?

I hate down cycles when the whole industry contracts and you have to lay off people to cope with the downturn. I hate dealing with people who are dishonest—and there are a lot of them around.

What are the misconceptions about your profession?

The biggest misconception is that a business trip is a vacation. The second one is that TV has made the general public believe that business leaders live a sweet life with lots of parties and lots of assistants to do the work while they play golf. I do not know of any high-tech start-ups that were built by people playing golf—on the contrary, it is a lot of hard work with many periods of fourteen-plus working hours, seven days a week.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being great), how would you rate your occupation and why?

I would say 10. Being a president, CEO, and/or chairman is high on the self-realization pyramid and gives good reinforcement to one's ego on a daily basis. Being the top dog for more than twenty years now, it would be difficult for me to do anything else.

What factors or former positions led to this occupation?

Product development, followed by a sales job in the period of 1978–1983, with an MBA completed in 1984 that led to becoming a business leader.

What career choices were most helpful?

During high school and college, I already knew that I wanted to become a business leader, but I didn't know how to get there. My first job as a product developer was handed to me the day I graduated from engineering school, but I was not the typical lab-oriented person, so I looked for a job in sales just two years after graduation. After four very successful years in sales, I quit my job, sold my house, and went to business school, where I got my MBA. That was the move that put me on the shelf I wanted to be on. Everyone I knew thought I was crazy, because they wanted me to stay in the job I had—no one supported this, so I had to make the decision against all odds.

What career choices were least helpful/detrimental?

I can't point to any one detrimental decision, as I have gotten out on the other end in a better career situation every time. However, there are some: biting off larger challenges than I was really ready for. It is very, very risky—and looking back, I am not sure I would have given myself the same job opportunities had I been the one hiring. Acquiring the wrong companies at the wrong time. During a few of my jobs I have been in charge of acquisitions that went up to \$2 billion in size and prices; some of these have not worked out, and when you are using other people's money in such large amounts, they get a bit upset when the payback does not happen.

Did you have a mentor? If so, how did you find them? Did they help?

I did not have a mentor. Through business school, I picked up one very close friend, and we have supported each other along the way. But no, I have not been able to have or use a mentor. I am actually a

mentor for a number of younger people today and wish I'd had the wisdom to listen to experience when I was younger.

What type of education was needed for your position?

Engineering plus MBA.

Was your formal education necessary for this position?

In the beginning, yes, but now it is based on track record and experience.

Do you have to update your career with ongoing training and certificates?

Yes, I go to some brush-up business courses once every second or third year, which is more to get inspired and maintain a network.

Is your work environment “hectic,” “all work and no play,” “serene,” “laid back,” or other? Briefly explain.

Hectic. A few years back, I played golf once a week; last year, I played one round. I do get to do other things—like go on vacations with the family, etc. Right now we are in a build-up phase, and that requires a lot of overtime.

What types of conflicts do you deal with?

Mainly business related in terms of what people expect to get out of using our product. Some human resource issues; they come and go.

Do you interface with coworkers, groups, or vendors, or do you work alone?

Yes, I interface with thousands of people.

What is management like?

My BOD (board of directors) is very, very competent and one of the best I have ever worked with, an extremely good working climate—a chemistry among all of us.

Is input accepted, or do you fare better as a “yes man”?

Input is accepted; that is how we build the enterprise.

Is your position secure, or are you frequently looking for the next opportunity?

It is secure at this time—the company is doing very well. If we start not to do so well, my job will be on the line.

How important is/was networking or connections in finding your current or other positions? Is it a factor in advancement once you’re on the job?

It was my network that put me in this job.

What would be your next career move?

A similar CEO, president job.

Do you relocate often? Are there travel requirements?

I relocated a lot in my early career; today we stay put where we are.

If you could choose again, how much would money be a factor?

Money is a big factor when you don’t make a lot of it. As you start making more money, it becomes less of a factor, but I would not take a job today for a lower salary than what I have today.

Would you choose the same career path?

Yes, but in a more controlled manner.

Any comments or words of advice for someone entering your field?

Yes: Be patient, be realistic, and use your tools to map out the strategy. Don’t believe in other individuals until they have proven they are worth believing in.

CONCLUSION

The Keys to the Corporate Kingdom

“Go West, young man.” —Horace Greeley

Career choice is not something to take frivolously. It will affect half of your life, or around forty years. With early preparation, maybe those forty years can be enjoyable. They don't have to be a daily grind—if you do the groundwork and determine what is best for you. And it doesn't even have to be forty years. Maybe you'll open your own business and sell it when you're fifty and make enough money to retire to an island. My hope is that from reading about the 101 different jobs and what people in those occupations have to say about them, you have gleaned some information about yourself and what may be the right occupation for you. What inspires you? What motivates you? What challenges you?

To help you in your pursuit of the best career for you, let's look at a few tools that will help any job hunter find success.

“The quality, not the longevity, of one's life is what is important.” —Martin Luther King Jr.

Silence, Simplicity, and Sincerity

1. Listen more than you talk. Remember the old saying, “You have two ears and one mouth.” I once interviewed with an obnoxious, verbose, stereotypical sales manager. During the interview, he babbled excessively, like society's jackass, for an hour. He was exceptionally proud of the “twelve selling traits” that all of his sales team had to know and learn verbatim. To him, these were the keys

TALKING POINTS

Here are a few questions you can ask people that are in an occupation that interest you.

1. Mr. Murphy, might you have a few minutes to talk about your occupation?

2. How long have you been in your line of work?