

Ethical Careers

It may seem like a long way away right now. But one day, most of you will look back on something like 100,000 hours spent at work. And that's potentially a massive chunk of your life to spend doing something you don't like.

So the question is: how can you find a career that's both rewarding and meaningful – something you'll enjoy today and look back on with pride tomorrow?

There are plenty of opportunities out there. And here's how you can start making sense of them.

1. Ponder your passion

The best way to kick off your ethical career hunt is with a spot of soul-searching. Don't worry, this isn't about shedding all worldly possessions and emigrating to an ashram. You just need to make some simple, practical decisions to narrow down your options – and understand where to focus your energies.

So, as a first step, let's forget about **how** you're going to help and simply think about your passions – the areas that interest you. For some of us, this is a no-brainer. Whether through family connections or personal experience, there's only one thing we've ever wanted to do. But for most of us, it's not that straightforward.

From climate change to international development projects, from education to energy, there are lots of worthwhile goals you could support – and it's worth considering which causes you care most about. After all, if you're motivated by the change you're working towards, you'll be far more likely to love your job.

Recommended resource: career advice site [80,000 hours](#)

2. Pick your priorities

Next, think about the different ways that you could be working. In part, this involves weighing up personal preferences like work-life balance, family commitments and so on.

But it also means thinking about what sort of role you'll find most rewarding. For example, some jobs are on the front-line – with a localised but immediate impact on a particular community. Others are further away from action (and may take much longer to deliver results) but could deliver a far greater difference to a larger number of people.

Do you need to have your hands on the wheel, or are you happier in the back seat providing directions? Do you like working in small teams or are you content being a small cog in a big machine?

Once you know your ideal work environment, it's time to start looking.

Recommended reading: Daniel Gilbert's excellent book [Stumbling on Happiness](#)

3. Pursue your path

Once upon a time, charities just did 'good' and businesses just made money. Now the lines have blurred.

On the one hand, you have huge charity brands that feel more like multinationals and, on the other, there are socially and environmentally conscious businesses motivated by principles as well as profits. Then there are social enterprises, like The Big Issue and the Co-op, somewhere in the middle.

It sounds confusing – but it actually means you have more options than ever for a rewarding ethical career, and many of them could be in the private sector.

In recent years, a powerful movement has been gathering momentum across the world, driven by extraordinary employees within perfectly ordinary companies. Some call them ‘cubicle warriors’, but they’re more commonly known as ‘Intrapreneurs.’

This inspiring bunch has decided that they can individually make an even bigger impact from the inside, harnessing the brand and brawn of a large corporation for social and environmental good.

That’s exactly what Arumza Rashid did. After quitting a promising graduate programme with a management consultancy, she helped run a sustainable technology programme for the London 2012 Games before joining BP to increase its global diversity and inclusion. Here she’s helped oversee a 3% increase in female representation in senior level positions in just two years.

A global energy giant like BP isn’t everyone’s idea of an ethical employer, but Arumza says: “I think you have to look at the bigger picture – what are they trying to do to help communities. I’ve stayed at BP because they didn’t just talk the talk – they’ve invested in sustainability projects.”

Recommended resource: [The League of Intrapreneurs](#).

4. Find your fit

The truth is that very few people enter the world of work with a concrete plan of precisely what they want to do, where they want to do it and why. They have rough ideas about the sort of cause they want to support and the type of role that will flick their switch. But ultimately they don’t know for sure until they try a few things on for size.

So if you’ve got a hunch but aren’t 100% sure, don’t worry. This isn’t the end of a journey, it’s just the beginning. And the chances are that yours will take you to places you never imagined.

Paul Allen is the author of [The Ethical Careers Guide](#) (out now, £12.99) and the co-founder of [Lark Agency](#).