

FEATURE ARTICLE

Turning "Too Many Interests" Into A Great Life: Secrets of the 21st Century Renaissance Soul

By Margaret Lobenstine, M.A.

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Are you still looking for that one thing that will make you happy, trying to finally identify the right career path for you? Are you jealous when someone tells you "I've known what I want to be since I was twelve!"?

Do your friends and family say to you, in slightly anxious tones, "I just hope you find whatever it is that makes you happy and do it!" Does it upset you how many times you've started in on something only to get bored and drop it? Do you feel like a dilettante? A "jack of all trades, master of none?", flawed in some basic way?

Don't worry: As someone who has struggled with such feelings myself and whose work history gives resume writers heart attacks, I can assure you that you are not alone and all is not hopeless. For over a decade now I have coached people who feel this way and can tell you, you are not flawed or a failure, you are a Renaissance Soul!

What is a Renaissance Soul? In a nutshell, Renaissance Souls are people whose number one career choice is "Please don't make me choose!" and whose underlying passion is to constantly redefine their passions. They are people who pick up one thing and drop something else as frequently as they need to. Lucky people, who, if left to their own devices, can never be bored for long.

Yet at first glance they don't feel so lucky. In fact, they seem to be folks with a problem, an inability to pick one specific career path and happily stick with it. This "problem" can wear seemingly contradictory faces.

Some Renaissance Souls, for example, may stay with waitressing, temping, or other entry-level positions to avoid choosing that one path to the top. They tend to work at positions far below their abilities, struggling with the resultant low pay and security. Others jump from one interest/job to another so frequently they hardly trust their own choices anymore. And still others have successfully climbed one particular career ladder only to be inexplicably miserable at the top. Why? Because they have not accepted their true Renaissance nature.

This Renaissance nature is easy to describe. Renaissance Souls much prefer variety and combination over focusing all their energies on one thing. They prefer widening options by opening more and more doors, to narrowing choices by specializing and sub-specializing.

And then, when Renaissance Souls finally get something figured out, when they are finally successful at running a restaurant, writing government grants, doing post and beam construction, and/or mystery writing, what happens? Do they want to go on, be promoted, do more of whatever it is they are doing? Not on your life! When Renaissance Souls get something

all figured out, they are done! Ready to move on! Try something new!  
"Been there, done that!" could be the Renaissance Soul theme song!

If you are a Renaissance Soul, here are five things to keep in mind as you search for your true callings:

1) Did you ever wonder why you find those career and personality tests that ask you to pick one answer to be often far more frustrating than informative? You hate being limited to just one choice! Standard questions like "What do you see yourself doing in five years?" or "What do you want to be?" are likely to either shut you right up or bring forth a hundred different answers that can change every five minutes.

2) Know that you'll never be happy doing just one thing for the rest of your life, although you may pursue your interests either sequentially or simultaneously. The key is not to try to open too many doors at once or you won't get far enough inside any of them to feel satisfied. Instead think in terms of identifying a maximum of three to five what I call Renaissance Focal Points to give your main energy to for at least two to six months. During that time, keep a notebook of other exciting ideas you may want to pursue in the future, but not right now!

3) Know that process may well be more important to you than product. For example, if what excites/feeds you about quilting is the process of working through all the challenges of color, fabric, and pattern, once you have a design that pleases you, you have successfully done what you set out to do - even if the quilt is not a "finished" product, or the finishing is done by someone else!

4) Be aware that you may be motivated by different "carrots" than other folks. What looks like a big promotion to some - being given responsibility in your division for a larger geographic area, for example, - may not hold as many new challenges for you as a supposedly more horizontal move into a division you know less about.

5) Recognize when you are done with one passion and give yourself permission to move on. For example, I used to run my own highly successful bed and breakfast. When I sold my inn, most people assumed I'd want to ride that success by going on to run an even bigger one. Did I? Of course not. My Renaissance Soul was ready for a change!

Are you are Renaissance Soul? If so, I'd love your input as I create a Top Ten Things That Drive Renaissance Souls Crazy About Traditional Career Advice. The final list will be posted on my web site. To contribute, drop me a line at [margloben@togetunstuck.com](mailto:margloben@togetunstuck.com)

Margaret Lobenstine, M.A., whose book about Renaissance Souls is being published by Penguin/Putnam's Gotham imprint, works by phone and in person with people trying to design a life that truly fits for them. Often referred to as "The Unstuck Lady", Margaret coaches, speaks and gives workshops about the Renaissance Soul throughout the U.S., England, and Canada. To learn more about Renaissance Souls, see the SECRETS OF THE RENAISSANCE SOUL section at <http://www.togetunstuck.com>