

## TESTS JUST ONE SPOKE ON CAREER WHEEL

By Joyce Lain Kennedy

Tribune Media Services

DEAR JOYCE: After losing my job last fall, I decided to get into a new line of work. A career coach gave me a career test based on colors. The test results made me laugh. I am going to change coaches. Are these so-called career tests legit? - K.J.

Career tests are but one factor in deciding what to do in life - a single spoke on your wheel of decision. Never, never, never base your life's direction solely on a test. Moreover, if a test has not been scientifically validated, testing authorities consider it to be no more accurate than astrology.

As Lawrence K. Jones, Ph.D., explains on his Web site, Career Key ([careerkey.org](http://careerkey.org)), "Valid career measures are the result of years of scientific study. The results of these studies are reported in scientific journals and in a professional manual for the test. This takes time and money. But all of this is ignored in the rush to profit (by makers of non-validated tests). Dr. Jones is a professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University and a recognized expert in career counseling.

So why would a career coach use a test that lacks validity? Your coach may have used it merely to jumpstart your focus on choices. Or didn't know any better.

DEAR JOYCE: My wife and I believe our family would be better off in a smaller city or even a town in a rural area. But we're not interested in becoming alpaca ranchers so how can I search for employment without actually moving there and taking a chance on finding nothing? - B.B.

Another reader, Sarah Fuller, had the same problem, couldn't find a relevant book on the topic and so she wrote one, "Job Searches Beyond the Big Cities: Finding Employment in Medium to Small-Sized Markets" (144 pages) and sent me a copy. Fuller's book presents a giant list of online and offline resources that she and friends on the same mission found helpful and also offers advice in spotting work opportunities in smaller markets. Getting-to-know-you is a key strategy:

"People naturally look to hire people that they know well or friends and acquaintances of those individuals. This principal is especially true in the smaller markets where people pride themselves on being 'in the know' about others."

The author points to several advantages in smaller-market living, including a sense of connectedness:

"One reason is that paths tend to cross with others more often because there are less people to interact with and fewer businesses to patronize. As a child growing up in a small city, it seemed like Mom would always run into about five people she knew at the grocery store every time we shopped."

More job search tips and links to Fuller's blog, All Things Job Search, can be found at [jobsearchright.com](http://jobsearchright.com). You can buy her book there or on Amazon.com.

DEAR JOYCE: The word came down last week - seven of us are getting the ax because of slow sales or because the dealership is being sold (the story changes). Strangely enough, all seven of us are over 60. Is it worth it to talk to a lawyer about age discrimination? - S.G.

You should consult a lawyer immediately, if not sooner. Seek referrals to an employment or labor

attorney with plaintiff experience, preferably in age discrimination cases. Ask for a free initial evaluation meeting.

The odds may be on your side. In a recent ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court (finally) put the burden on employers to prove they aren't age discriminating. Of 31 workers in a federal naval laboratory in upstate New York, 30 were over the age of 40. The employer claimed that the selection was based on factors other than age, a defense the law allows. But the court ruled, 7 to 1, that employers, not employees, must prove that reasonable nonage-related factors existed. The name of the case, which is based on Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) disparate impact claims, is *Meacham v. Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory*, No. 06-1505. Google the case for details.

While this ruling is good news for anyone over age 40, as a New York Times editorial said, "The Roberts court has hardly become a bastion of workers' rights . (recently) it also ruled against older workers in a pension case." A seasoned lawyer can tell you what's in your best interests.

(E-mail career questions for possible use in this column to Joyce Lain Kennedy at [jlk@sunfeatures.com](mailto:jlk@sunfeatures.com); use "Reader Question" for subject line. Or mail her at Box 368, Cardiff, CA 92007.)

(C) 2008 Tribune Media Services, Inc.