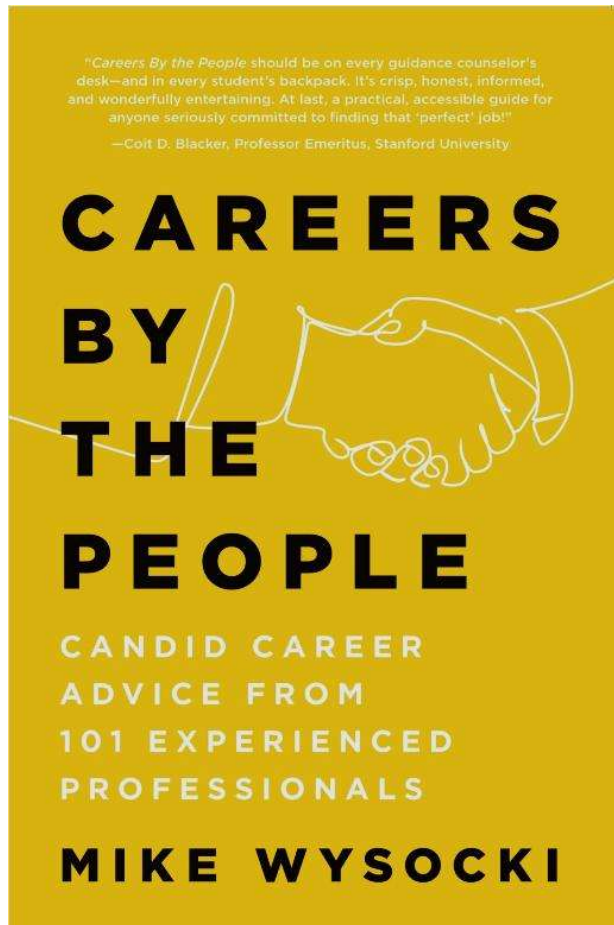


A helpful tool for finding the right job

“Careers By The People: Candid Career Advice from 101 Experienced Professionals” by Mike Wysocki. Minneapolis, MN: Wise Ink Creative Publishing, 2023, 568 pages, \$24.68 (paperback).

Posted: Sunday, April 9, 2023



“Careers By The People: Candid Career Advice from 101 Experienced Professionals” by Mike Wysocki 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. The author 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.

Thorough realistic and enlightening interviews with professionals currently employed in their chosen fields, the reader is exposed to sound advice and recommendations from those who are actually in the jobs they are describing. These kinds of first-hand insights are hard to come by these days as most of the books written in this genre involve second-hand narratives and interpretations. But Wysocki takes you directly to the source. For example, have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a Director of Catering? As is the case with each entry, you get to meet someone with intimate knowledge of the

occupation under consideration and hear their firsthand ‘take’ on what it’s like to work in that field on a daily basis. In this case, it’s Carole B. from Baltimore who has 14 years’ experience in the business. After a brief description of the position she occupies, she tells you both the pros and the cons of this particular opportunity for gainful employment:

“What do you like about your occupation? The different people that I get to meet every day, and the sense of pride I feel once I make a person’s event what they had envisioned it would be. What do you dislike about your occupation? The hours are grueling and there is very little time for a social life.” Carole B. gives a rather comprehensive overview of what it’s like to do her job, and as is the case with all of those profiled in the book, she pulls no punches and provides a balanced assessment of what her life is like on a regular basis. Consider her response to the following prompt:

“Is your work environment ‘hectic,’ ‘all work and no play,’ ‘serene,’ ‘laid back,’ or other? Briefly explain. Our environment is sometimes a combination of all these things. There are moments when

you can joke around with fellow employees; there are hectic times when you and your staff are in what we call ‘the weeds’; there are quiet times here and there; and then there are crunch times when we need to be ‘on point’ and makes things happen. That’s what keeps us all on our toes and keeps things interesting. Oh, the stories I could tell you!”

Whereas most books in this category tend to stick to “just the facts” (how much can you make, what is the job market projected to be over the coming years, are there opportunities for advancement, etc.), Wysocki digs deeper and gives the reader a realistic impression of what it would be like actually doing the work associated with each career. From my perspective, this is invaluable information for those who are trying to make informed decisions about vocations they might want to pursue.

Structurally, the book consists of an introduction, six chapters arranged by job groupings, and a conclusion. The six chapters include “The Ballers” (presidents and CEOs, vice presidents, project managers, etc.), “The Hustlers” (technicians, truck drivers, fitness educators, etc.), “The Einsteins” (psychologists, engineers, scientists, etc.), “The Rock Stars” (professional musicians, actors, journalists, etc.), “The Good Kids” (registered nurses, public education teachers, recreation coordinators, etc.), and “The Perfectionists” (mortgage brokers, medical transcriptionists, paralegals, etc.). Of course this is just a summary; there are many more positions described in each category – 101 to be exact.

I also found the conclusion to be especially astute. Here, Wysocki ties everything together and gives the reader solid advice that anyone who is contemplating an initial career choice – or those thinking about making a career change - should take to heart:

“Career choice is not something to take frivolously. It will affect half of your life, or around 40 years. With early preparation, maybe those 40 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.”

Maybe. Certainly, I like his take on the Rule of Three: “1. Pursue your passion. Discovering your passion is a difficult process. You will have to dig for it, but once you find it, it’ll be your gold. 2. Be nice. People will be more willing to help you if you ask for their time pleasantly. 3. Don’t fear failure. Oddly, I embrace it. One can learn a great deal from failure.”

Wysocki, who is based in Hawaii, is a Business Development Manager with VPLS Solutions, a premier technology solutions provider and systems integrator founded in 1994. By his own admission, he “entered the workforce after college expecting to find that perfect career. For years it was obstacle after obstacle until he settled and chose sales. The good news is, he did learn something on the way.” For additional insight into who Wysocki is, what he’s accomplished, and what motivates him, you’ll want to check out his episode of the “Hawaii Boss” podcast in which he is interviewed by David Pettijohn: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKwM3ubx5UE.

By-the-way, 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.

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