

Ikigai Exercise

Japanese culture has long been revered for the way they hold the whole person in high regard. Their ancient arts often include practices which incorporate mental, physical and spiritual elements. There must be something to it – Japanese life expectancies are about 20 years longer than Americans.

One of these concepts which directly applies to career mindset, is *ikigai*, roughly translated to “life value” or “life worth.” While it is a deeply nuanced concept and has much more to it than what this exercise provides, this is a great introduction to it.

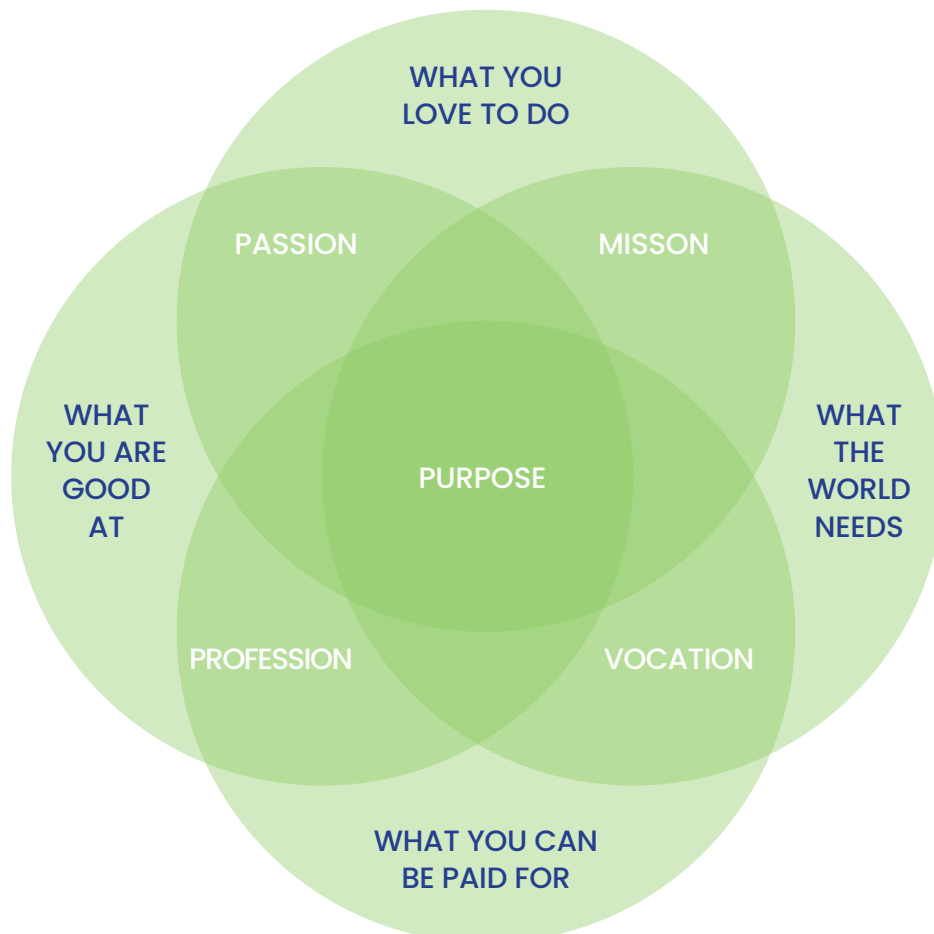
The core idea is that our life’s value, our reason for getting up in the morning, can be found in the intersection of four big areas:

What you love
to do

What the world
needs

What you can
be paid for

What you are
good at

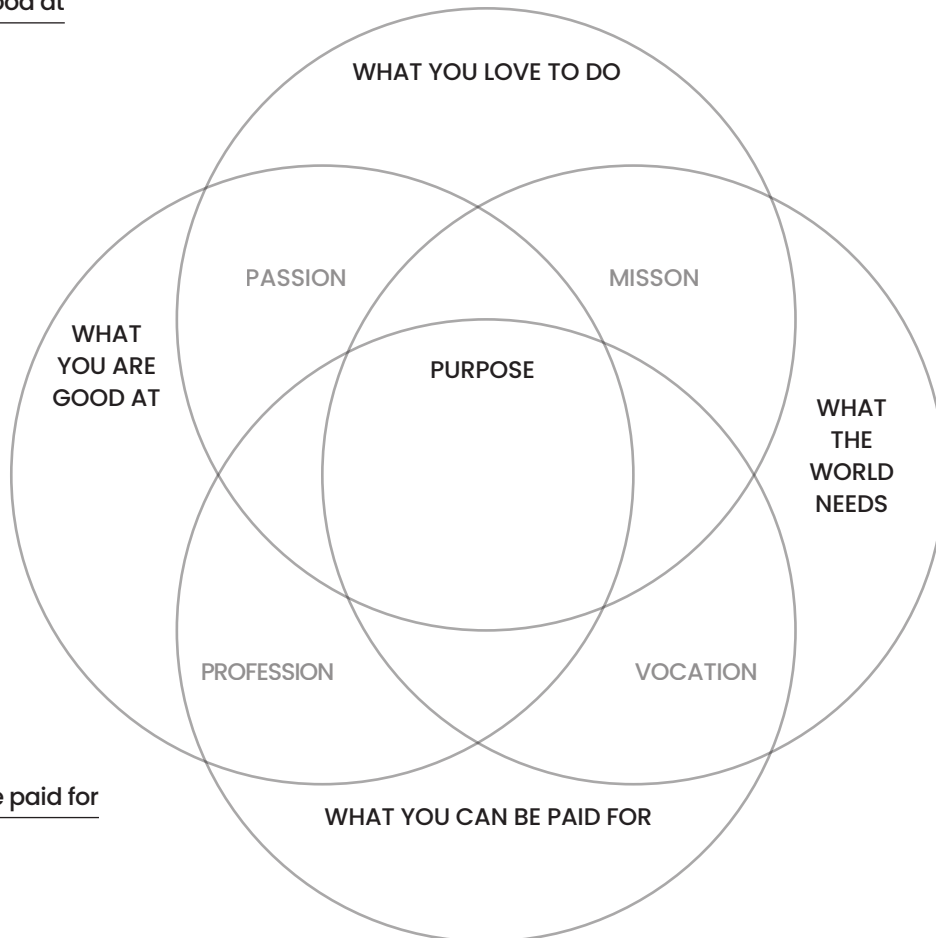


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To explore your ikigai, start by listing your answers to each of the four areas, then transferring your favorite answers into the corresponding circle section in the diagram.

What you are good at

What you love to do



What you can be paid for

What the world needs

Now that you've given thought to each main area, even selected a few favorites for each, think about ways to combine each of the areas into one statement of purpose. You'll need one item from each area for it to be a true purpose statement - your reason for getting up in the morning - otherwise you'll end up with one of the other categories. For instance if you just combine what you can be paid for with what you're good at, then you'll be describing a profession. If you just combine what you are good at with what you love to do, then you'll be describing a passion. Look for one statement which pulls from each area and you'll discover your ikigai!