

A RECENT SURVEY SHOWS THAT SEVEN OUT OF 10 PEOPLE ARE UNHAPPY IN THEIR

Making a wise career

Third-level education has become the norm in Ireland. But do 18 year-olds really know what career they want to pursue when they fill in the CAO form? *Journal 2* meets a man who has introduced a system to help students select the right career before they leave school.

STATISTICS show that four out of every 10 students drop out of college to find an alternative career. Even worse, a recent survey shows that seven out of 10 people are unhappy in their careers. This leads to economic waste and unfulfilled lives.

Imagine spending three years in university only to realise that you're doing the wrong course. You drop out or start again. Worse still, you qualify and work in a career that does not excite you. Mondays are bleak and you look forward to Friday. Pretty depressing!

It needn't be like that. Dubliner Greg Dalton has set up a new service to help people, especially students, get a clear idea of their talents, interests and skills. "The Talent Discovery and Development Programme ensures they have the opportunity to select the right career at a

very early stage of their lives," he says.

His own career mirrors that of countless workers and students. At school, the extent of his career guidance was, 'Think about what you want to do; then come back and talk to me!' Greg recalls that he didn't know what career he wanted, except that it had to involve people.

He tried advertising first, but quickly moved to sales, attracted by higher income and a company car. "After three months, I realised I didn't like it, but the money was good." Greg stuck at it for 20 years, changing jobs several times, and ended up as head of sales and marketing.

Then, at 38, he was made redundant! "I took a deep look at my career and asked myself what I really wanted to do. I went to a career management consultant, who suggested counselling,

REPORT

By
Con Hurley
Journalist



training or mentoring. I didn't like the first two and then the idea of coaching came up. I met a number of coaches and liked it. I found that I wanted to make a difference to people's lives."

Greg qualified as a life coach and, two and a half years ago, set up a coaching practice specialising in career management. "The only people who are successful in life are those who enjoy what they do," he says. As well as working with people already in jobs, he specialises in bridging the gap between education and employment — secondary and third-level school students.

"My aim is to help students know with a high degree of certainty what they want to do when they walk out of school," says Greg.

"I met a career psychologist in the UK and he helped me develop a set of exercises. Out of that came the Talent

Discovery and Development Programme."

Dalton maintains that students who complete the programme will find out what makes them happy, how to set and achieve goals and clarify their personality traits, capabilities and behavioural traits — and, importantly, they will discover the career they are most suited to."

Once the career choice is established, students can be placed with a suitable company to confirm their choice. This is especially suitable for transition-year students. Instead of working in a shop or garage, they spend time with a company that their career choice is suited to.

What about cost? Greg told me there is a range of prices, from €360 to €1,560, depending on the service used. The most expensive one is the 12- to 14-week transition-year programme, which includes all the exercises, interviews and coaching, as well as four to six week's placement in a suitable work situation.

It's not cheap — especially when you factor in the other costs parents have to meet during transition year. "The cost should be measured against the annual university cost of about €10,000 — and the cost of ending up in the wrong course and career," says Greg.

Dalton says that there is a huge demand for his career coaching service. So much so that his company, Q1etc,

Greg Dalton has set up a new service to help people, especially students, get a

has expanded to eight workers, including six coaches, with offices in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.

As well as developing a successful business, he wants to see the concepts of career coaching introduced more widely into the education system. He is having discussions with politicians, civil servants and educational establishments to further this aim.

● **For further information, ring 01-678-7852 or check out the website at www.q1etc.com.**

WORKER

Changing direction after 7 years

THANK GOD it's Friday! Ronan Collins is one of the majority of Irish workers who are unhappy in their jobs. "Sunday was ruined with the thought of going to work on Monday. And Monday was dreadful," he told me.

Ronan from Letterkenny, Co Donegal, is a trainee accountant in an accountancy firm in Dublin. "I have become less and less interested in the work," he told me. "I look forward to Friday evening, with the week out of the way. The thought of staying there three and a half years was getting me down. I just wasn't enjoying it."

Last November he saw an article about career coaching and went on a four-week course with Greg Dalton. The cost was €600 for four one and a half hour sessions. "He didn't tell me what to do," says Ronan. "He guided me through the exercises to find the answers for myself. It was very motivational."

When it came to personality traits and suitable careers, it turned out that Ronan was very good at communication, counselling and people skills. Computers



Ronan Collins: "He guided me through the exercises to find the answers for myself. It was very motivational."

and accounts came out as most unsuitable. The coaching showed that Ronan was in the wrong job!

"I discovered that I have a huge interest in how the mind works and I want to help people. So I have decided to go back to college and study psychology."

"But are you not just a little peeved that you have wasted seven years of your life pursuing the wrong career?" I ask.

"Not at all," Ronan replies positively. "I had a great time in college and made many friends. However, if I was in Leaving Cert again, I would definitely do the career coaching package. By spending €600 I'd have saved at least €30,000 in college expenses."

"I think I'm lucky to be on the right career track while many out there are in the wrong job. I think proper career coaching is vital in secondary school. When I was at Raphoe, I didn't really find out what I was suited to. There was no depth in career guidance. I was just asked what I wanted to do and then told how to do it."

RECENTLY QUALIFIED

Exploring alternative career options

ENDA SEERY, (20) from Kilbeggan, Westmeath, had finished his degree in arts at Maynooth and was taking a year out, when he decided to get some career coaching. "I had a few ideas, but I was unsure what to do. I had got some career guidance at the Mercy School in Kilbeggan.

"Journalism came up as an option, but it was not definite. So I did an Arts degree in Irish and English. I think it's a good degree to do when you are unsure. It keeps your options open."

For his year out, Enda was considering work in the civil service, teaching and the bank. Then he spent €600 on a four-week, six-hour course with Greg Dalton. Secondary-school teaching came out very strongly early in the process.

"We then concentrated on putting a good CV together and I wrote to four schools. I got a job subbing in Mullingar and I'm now teaching Irish at the Salesian College, Celbridge."

Although journalism didn't feature strongly in the career report, Enda is doing some sports reports for *The Westmeath Topic*. "So, I'm getting valuable experience in both teaching and journalism."

Was it worth the €600 for the course? "It's not expensive in terms of narrowing down your career choices. I like the process of focussing on my personal characteristics — the person — and the career follows naturally."

"After the course, I had subbed in a school, had four sports reports published and now I'm in a six-month teaching job. I've got a lot more confidence and achieved a lot in a short space of time. I've applied for the HDip and I'm fairly sure I'm doing the right thing."