

Know Thyself, Sell Thyself

A good way to speed up your professional prospects is to learn more about yourself. What comes easier for you than most people? What problems that nag others are you pretty good at solving? What don't you absolutely hate (you don't have to love it) that others find valuable?

It takes a lot of work to discover these things about yourself, and it's never really done. You can't do it just with books or thinking either. You've gotta try stuff and put yourself in contexts that provide feedback. You keep trying anything that you don't absolutely hate, and then seeing how much it pays in knowledge, growth, fun, or money. Adjust for those with more returns, and repeat as your field of "stuff I should spend time on" narrows more and more.

It's not enough to know what stuff you're good at/don't hate/others value if no one else knows it. You've got to sell it. You've got to show the relevant audiences (showing is always better than telling, the relevant audience is better than "the world") the value you can create for them.

The nice thing is, these don't go in sequential order. You don't need to know thyself before you can sell thyself. You'd spend all your time preparing and thinking, and never really know yourself anyway because you'd have no experiences from which to learn. You have to sell yourself to win those experiences. They feed each other. The more you know, the better you can sell. The more you try selling, whether you succeed or fail, the more self-knowledge you gain.

Don't wait. Sell your skills, even if you're roughly guessing at first or your skills are little more than grunt work labor. Reflect and pay attention to where you create the most value for people and what you don't hate. Focus on those and sell them to move into the next round and over and over again.