

## Your Ideal Work Environment

Your work environment needs to be one in which you not only feel comfortable but in which you can thrive. We use the term "environment" here because your ideal *where* includes more than just the location (office, laboratory, farm) where you do your work. The environment also includes, among many other things, your work space (desk, cubicle, lab space, five-hundred-acre ranch, machine shop), physical conditions (windows or no windows, natural or fluorescent lighting, noisy or quiet), atmosphere (formal, casual, amount of contact with people, working style), company size (small, large, local, national, international), and clothing (uniform, suit, jeans).

Another way to approach this is to think about where you like to study-in a quiet library or in your bedroom with the CD player on, alone or with a group, and so on. Where do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? Where would you like to spend more time? Because the same job (or very similar jobs) can happen in many different environments-some you would love; some you would hate! -let's start exploring what's just right for you.

For each category, answer each question by deleting the work condition you are not interested in. Then, select the five factors that are most important to you. Put these in the "My Ideal Work Environment" section of your Parachute.

### LOCATION

Where would you most like to work ...

- Indoors or outdoors?
- In an office building? a machine shop? on a ranch? at your home? somewhere else?
- In an urban, suburban, or rural area?
- In many locations or one spot (travel or no travel)?

### WORK SPACE

What kind of space would you most enjoy ...

- A cubicle in a large room with lots of other people in their own cubicles?
- Your own desk in a private office?
- Lots of variety-at a desk, in your car, at clients' locations, on airplanes, in hotels?
- A classroom, laboratory, hospital?
- Garage or workshop?
- Outdoors-golf course? ranch? barn?
- A place with everything you need-all the latest tools or technology and necessary supplies-or a place where you need to be creative with limited resources, supplies, and equipment?

## **PHYSICAL CONDITIONS**

Do you prefer ...

- Fancy and upscale, moderately nice, or doesn't it matter?
- Windows that open and close or a climate-controlled building?
- Natural or artificial light?
- A light or dark environment?
- Comfortable temperature or varied temperatures?
- Safe or risky?

## **ATMOSPHERE**

Do you prefer ...

- Noisy or quiet?
- Calm or bustling?
- Formal or casual-for example, do you want to call your coworkers "Ms. Smith" and "Mr. Jones," or do you prefer that everyone goes by his or her first name?
- Lots of contact with coworkers or very little?
- Lots of contact with the public (clients, patients, customers) or very little?
- Would you rather work by yourself with minimal contact with others or work frequently or constantly with others?
- A hierarchical setting (where the boss tells everyone what to do) or a collaborative setting (where the staff works together to determine goals, priorities, and workload)?

## **SIZE/TYPE OF BUSINESS**

Do you prefer . . .

- Large or small? (Think about what "large" and "small" mean to you.)
- Locally owned, national chain, or multinational?
- Do you want to know all your colleagues and customers, or would you rather always have a chance to meet someone new?
- For-profit or nonprofit organization?
- Would you like to own your own business?

## **CLOTHING**

What would you like to wear at work ...

- A suit?
- Trendy clothes?
- Casual, comfortable clothes?
- Jeans and a casual shirt?
- A uniform (for example, military, firefighter, police officer, waiter/waitress)?
- A lab coat?

- Different clothes for different aspects of your job (for example, a suit when meeting an important client and casual clothes for regular days in the office)?
- Whatever you want to wear?
- Something else?

## **Your Ideal Community**

Everyone has different ideas of what makes a great place to live. If you love to ski, you'll want to be within reasonable distance of the mountains. If you love to surf, you'll want to live near the coast. Another person may want to live near a lake or river, or in the desert. You may want to live near good friends or family. Or, if you have excellent foreign language skills (or because you don't have those skills and want to develop them), you may want to live in a foreign country. And, more directly related to their jobs, some people want to work within a few blocks of a mass-transit stop. Others want to drive to work and therefore want lots of parking. Some people might want their gym or favorite coffee bar nearby, a grocery store located on the route home from work, or a park close enough for eating lunch or taking a walk. What characteristics do you want in the community where you'll live and work?

For each category, answer each question by deleting the community you are not interested in. Then, select the five community factors that are most important to you. Put these in the "My Ideal Community" section of your Parachute.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES**

Do you want to live ...

- In or near the mountains? near the coast? in the desert? on the plains?
- In a small town (less than 5,000 people), a medium-sized city (5,000-20,000), a large city (20,000-500,000), a major metropolitan area (500,000 or larger)?
- In a rural area with a town or city within a reasonable distance or in an isolated area, far from "civilization"?

### **PEOPLE**

What do you prefer ...

- A good mix of age, ethnic, economic, and religious groups?
- Mostly people your own age or in your own ethnic, economic, or religious

- group?
- Living where you already have friends or family or in a place where everyone is new?

## **NEIGHBORHOOD/HOUSING**

Do you prefer living ...

- In a duplex?
- In an apartment or condominium?
- In a house

## **CULTURE**

What is important to you ...

- Good bookstores, art galleries, libraries, and museums?
- Movie theaters
- Music, dance, and theater
- A local semipro or pro sports team?

## **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

What is important to you ...

- Personal enrichment classes?
- Professional development classes?
- A college or university?

## **RECREATION**

What would you like your community to have ...

- Good parks?
- Bike paths, walking/hiking trails?
- Community sports leagues and facilities?

## **COMMUTING**

What is important to you ...

- Commute by car?
- Ability to take mass transit to work?
- Being able to walk or bike to work?