

Where are you on your ladder of identity...?

How long would it take you to have the answer to the question "What is it you value most?" Would your answer immediately be 'family!' or is it money that holds the most value to you? Your house? Your car? Work? Time? What would be the order of the three things you value most? Would these things change position at different stages of your life, would they change completely? If you were asked to bring five objects to a table which represent your life, what would they be and how would you explain them? Do you perceive yourself in the same way as others perceive you?

Charles Handy has been described as 'the UK's Top Business Guru' and is widely considered Europe's best known and most influential management thinker. Now in his 70s, Handy's latest book 'Myself and Other More Important Matters' moves away from his usual, and highly successful (over one million copies of his books have been sold around the world) management works and onto something more personal. 'Myself and Other

More Important Matters' is a witty, autobiographical account of self-discovery.

Handy asks us to take a look at who we are and what we believe in. As we position ourselves on life's stage, we will all play a variety of roles during our lifetime. Different aspects of our persona will be more evident in each of these different roles; there may be places where we get confused. Perhaps you 'manage your family' or 'mother your colleagues'. As Handy says "the truth is that we all behave differently, in a way are different people, in different circumstances."

Handy introduces his book by discussing how over time there have been many different versions of Charles Handy, not all of which he is proud. It took Handy until his sixties to discover the Charles Handy he wanted to be. "Only by acting, experimenting, questioning and acting again do you find out who and what you are...our identity is partly inherited, partly shaped by early experiences, but it is not fully formed until we have explored more of the possibilities."

It was Handy's questioning of his own life and his values that prompted him to ask the question to his audiences and readers. He asks "What is the role of work in our lives? What do we find fulfilling? Do you like the person you become when you dress in your work attire and cross the threshold of your organisation? Are you 'doing your best with what you are best at?" As the guest speaker at several lectures, Handy tells his audience "You should have a horizontal fast track in your twenties just to find out what you're good at and take advantage of this flexible, loosely structured world, then from 30 to 45 you'll need to bed yourself down in something, unless you want to go independent straight away, and then from 50 onwards you'll probably be preparing for a more independent life, which is bound to come in your sixties. And then hopefully in your eighties you'll still be chuntering away...only slower!"

..."Life, I now think, is really a search for our own identity....As we move through life we climb a sort of ladder of identity, gradually proving and discovering ourselves."

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