

Analyzing and Choosing a Job Offer

At some point in the job search process, usually in March or April for business school candidates, you will receive some offers for employment. You are then faced with the task of assessing these offers.

To assess job offers rationally, a job hunter needs a considerable amount of information. Although some people would argue that you can't know much about a company or job until you have actually worked in it for six months, evidence from our students suggests otherwise. Clearly, there is a limit to what you can "know" about a job without directly experiencing it, but many people stop far short of that limit during job hunting. Often, because they are so worried about being rejected by potential employers or so flattered by all the attention and offers they are getting, some job hunters neglect to assess their job offers and potential offers seriously and rationally. By neglecting to use all available sources of information, by failing to understand how to utilize their sources properly, and by relying on inappropriate methods to analyze the data they obtain, they consistently make poorly informed decisions on which potential offers to pursue, which to eliminate, and finally which offer to accept.

Job-offer decision making can usefully be thought of as made up of two parts: (1) analysis and (2) choice. To understand this type of decision making, one needs to understand both of these very different parts of the overall process. By avoiding or doing a poor job in either part, job hunters can create serious problems for themselves.

Analysis

The analytical part of decision-making processes is characterized by words such as *cognitive*, *conscious*, *rational*, and *objective*. With regard to job selection, it involves the systematic assessment of an individual, the systematic assessment of a number of job options, and the deduction of a set of most probable future events for each option if that option were selected by that individual. Virtually the entire book, up to this point, has been directed at helping you become more aware of this process and more skilled at using it.

Engaging effectively in analysis helps a job hunter more accurately predict the future consequences of accepting each of the available options. It provides a more realistic understanding of the rewards one might receive, and the problems one might encounter, with different options.

For a number of reasons, job hunters sometimes engage in analysis in a superficial and ineffective manner. Many people simply do not have the information, the expertise, or the training to analyze job offers effectively. Others are just not analytically oriented; they neglect serious analysis in almost all their decision making. Still others avoid analysis in this particular case because, at some level, they don't want to have to face the objective reality of their own personal limitations, or the limited future possibilities their current options offer them.

The person who fails to engage effectively in the

analysis of a job decision may end up in a situation where he or she simply cannot do what is being demanded and expected, and is constantly and unpleasantly surprised by obstacles and problems. Typically, the individual who does a poor job of analysis while selecting a job offer will either quit or be asked to leave the job in four to twelve months. The employer will often be disappointed in the person's performance, and the employee will often be disappointed in his or her lack of satisfaction in the job.

Most job hunters we have observed do a fair or good job of analysis before selecting a job offer. A small number do an excellent job of analysis, and an equally small number do a very poor job.

Using the Self-Assessment

We have been developing the means for a job choice analysis all along. You now have a set of life themes and their implications for work. Since these are the criteria that will determine your satisfaction at work, they should also be the criteria that govern your choice of that work. We have been surprised on occasion by students who have diligently and enthusiastically developed a careful self-assessment, but who in the throes of choosing a job have ignored their themes and implications. In those cases, we ask the students to bring their self-assessments to our next meeting. There, we go through each theme and implication one by one to see how each option measures up. That discussion often makes it clear that one or maybe two of the offers they are considering are better than the rest.

Sometimes a student will say, "Yeah, but that theme is not what is *really* important. This [other criterion] is." If you feel this way during your decision-making process, you need to ask yourself two questions. First, ask yourself again (see "Writing Your Self-Assessment") if your self-assessment is accurate. It is intended to be systematic *and* accurate. If your thinking about choosing tells you that something else needs to be added to your self-assessment, do it.

But before you do, ask yourself another question: What forces are influencing you to think the way you are thinking now? Your self-assessment was generated systematically over two or three months of time and utilized a wide variety of tools in the data generation. Are you sure that your desire to change that assessment now is based on something more than impulse or peer pressure or some other transient phenomenon? Only when you have thought about it carefully and convinced yourself that the

potential change to your self-assessment is an enduring part of you would we recommend that you go ahead and make the change.

The important, central point is that insofar as your self-assessment is complete and accurate, it reflects the criteria on which you will judge your life and your career. As such, your self-assessment should be used explicitly—theme by theme and implication by implication—in your job offer analysis.

This careful approach will do two things for you. First, it will help to clarify how well each opportunity matches up with the things that are most important to you. Second, it will clarify those dimensions on which the fit is not so good. Rarely does one find a job that is perfect in every way. Almost always there are aspects of a job that one finds less than ideal or even downright irritating. Your themes and implications can help you identify these areas in advance and, in so doing, help you think about how you will manage those aspects of the job so as to reduce the negative impact on you or your work. This will reduce the number of shattered expectations you will experience on the job after the "honeymoon" period is over.

Utilizing Other Information Sources

In addition to using your self-assessment as the basis for assessing the information you have about an opportunity, you may wish to consider the questions in Exhibit 30-1 as a means of stimulating your thinking about the job and the organization and the ways they will affect you.

To recap the previous chapters on written sources, interviewing, and company visits, there are a variety of ways of collecting data that will be useful to you. These are summarized in Exhibit 30-2.

People we have known who have been very successful at job hunting tend to rely extensively on all the information sources we've mentioned. Their less successful peers, on the other hand, do not. And if asked why they do not, they will often complain that they just didn't have the time. The *management of one's time is a very real problem for the job hunter*. In the case of assessing job offers, the dimensions of the problem can be understood if we consider how much time a professional—a consultant or a financial analyst—will typically spend just assessing a single company (not including an assessment of a specific job in it). Forty to 100 hours is typical. If job hunters tried to do a thorough, professional job of assessing each job and organization they were interested in, it would require literally thousands of hours.

Exhibit 30-1

Information Often Useful in Assessing Job Offer or Potential Offer

Regarding the Job Itself

1. What major tasks are involved, and what are their key characteristics?
2. What skills are needed to perform each task?
3. Approximately what percent of the time will the job holder spend on each task? How does this vary (if at all) over time?
4. What time and resource constraints does the job holder have to work within?
5. How many hours per week do people holding similar jobs work?
6. What percent of the time will the job holder be working alone?
7. Who else will the job holder interact with? What are these people like? What percent of the time will the job holder be with them?
8. How much discretion will the job holder have in deciding how to perform the job?
9. How many people and how much money or equipment will the job holder be responsible for?
10. How many people will report to the job holder?
11. Who will be the job holder's boss? What is this person like? How good a coach is he or she?
12. How is performance measured in this job?
13. What type of salary and other rewards are available given what level of performance?
14. Specifically what type of advancement opportunities are available to the job holder?
15. Who makes decisions and how regarding promotions?

Regarding the Organization

16. How large is the organization's industry (employment, number of competitors), and what are its prospects for future growth?
17. Specifically what parts of the industry will probably grow (or decline) at what rates over the next few decades?
18. What are the industry's most important characteristics? (Is business seasonal? What type of organizations do well or poorly?)
19. How is the industry changing now?
20. How old is the organization? What are the big events in its history?
21. How large is the organization (people, assets, sales volume, net income)?
22. What goods and services does it produce?
23. How does it produce these goods and services?
24. Where does it have plants or offices?
25. Does the organization have any particularly important suppliers, customers, or regulators? If yes, who are they, what are they like, and what is their relationship to the organization?
26. What important technologies does the organization use?
27. What are the major parts of the organization, and how are they structured?
28. What are the organization's compensation policies? Performance appraisal practices? Training and development practices? Other important personnel policies?
29. What type of people work for the organization?
30. What do they generally like about the organization? Dislike about it?
31. Does the organization have any important traditions?
32. How are the people and the way in which they interact different from people in other organizations you have known?
33. What are the company's plans for the future?

Since that is impractical, many job hunters simply give up and do a very random and superficial job.

The keys to an effective strategy to assess potential job offers are: (1) *utilizing all information sources*, but systematically emphasizing different ones at different times, depending upon how many organizations and jobs are under examination at the time; (2) *accurate self-knowledge*.

Choice

The process of choice is often much more non-rational, emotional, subjective, and unconscious than the analytic job assessment process. We don't know a great deal about the actual dynamics of job choice, but we do know the function it seems to serve and the consequences of not engaging in it.

Exhibit 30-2

Information Sources and Their Uses

	Library	Informed Nonemployees	Potential Boss and Superiors	Potential Peers and Others	Direct Observation
Industry Characteristics	***	**	*	*	
Major organizational characteristics (what it does, where, etc.)	***	**	*	*	
How the organization functions		***	**	*	**
What it's like to work for the organization		**	*	***	***
Job characteristics			*	***	*
Career possibilities	*	*	***	*	

*** Best source.

** Good source.

* A source.

In the only systematic examination of the job-offer decision-making process we are aware of, Peer Soelberg studied 32 graduate students at the Sloan School of Management (MIT) while they were job hunting.¹ He was surprised to find that the process these students engaged in, especially near the end, was much less rational and analytic than he expected. Among other things, he found that:

1. The students tended to reduce their options to two (precisely two in almost every case) using a pragmatic, although not very elegant, analytical process.
2. They would then often agonize while deciding which of the two options to take.
3. Significantly, before the average student would announce that he had reached a decision, Soelberg found he could predict which option would eventually be chosen.
4. Upon announcing a decision, the average student could then provide an elaborate "justification" for his choice, the details of which sometimes clashed with what he had said earlier.

These findings are entirely consistent with what we have observed less systematically over the past few years. Even people who have done an excellent

¹See Peer Soelberg, "A Study of Decision Making: Job Choice" (dissertation, Sloan School, 1967), and "Conclusion from a Study of Decision Making" (MIT Working Paper 173-66).

job at analytically assessing themselves and their options typically go through an emotional phase of varying lengths and intensity during which they seem unconsciously to: (1) create a situation of choice (usually between two options); (2) try to come to grips emotionally with the implications of each option; (3) choose one of the options; and (4) find some rationale for rejecting the option not chosen.

The Importance of Choosing

No matter what the exact dynamic of this process is, it seems to be important, or needed, because it serves two important functions. It helps the decision maker develop an emotional commitment to one of the options. It also helps the decision maker cope with feelings of loss associated with cutting off the other option.

To follow through on a major life decision with the energy and vigor needed to ensure its successful implementation, people seem to need some emotional commitment to the direction the decision will take them. Among other things, that commitment seems to help them overcome obstacles when they encounter them. But the very process of choosing, and emotionally committing oneself to one option, means that another must be cut off. The feeling of loss associated with such cutting off can be very powerful and troublesome to people. To help cope

with these feelings, people tend to find some “rational” reason that minimizes the loss.

People sometimes avoid choosing, or engage in it only minimally. They allow others, or “fate,” to choose for them. Or they simply deny that they have a choice. (How often have you heard someone say, “I had no choice?”) Some people always behave this way in their decision making, just as some others always avoid serious analysis. Sometimes it seems they just can’t accept the responsibility of cutting off what might be a “good” option. The loss of what “could be” is too painful for them.

The Consequences of Not Choosing

The consequences of not engaging in choice can be as serious as the consequences of not engaging in analysis. Without the emotional commitment to a particular direction, it is often very difficult to mobilize one’s energies and overcome the inevitable obstacles. Without effectively dismissing the other options, and suffering the loss, one can often be plagued by thoughts of their continuing availability. These thoughts can paralyze a person.

One student we observed, a very bright and highly analytic young man, devised an elaborate mathematical formula to help him select one among four job offers. He announced that he did so to help him make a rational decision, “not an emotional one like so many people seem to.” The formula gave option one 110 points; option two 85 points; option three 118 points; and option four 96 points. He aggressively defended his formula against occasional jokes from friends. (“What does an eight-point difference

mean, Larry? One less ulcer every 8.0 years?”) He accepted option three, even though he didn’t feel entirely sure it was right.

After eight months on the job, a downturn in company sales and layoff of personnel put everyone in Larry’s division under some pressure. He thought there must be better opportunities elsewhere and quit. Five months later, he started to work in another job. When his boss was promoted six months after that and the person who replaced his boss was not “as easy to work with,” Larry quit again. He was also to get still another job within three months. When we talked to him last, he expressed concern that his career did not seem to be progressing as well as those of some of his less able classmates. We are left wondering whether his seeming inability to really choose an option, and to commit himself to it, might not underlie his lack of career progress.

Assignment

The Mike Downer case which follows raises several of the issues introduced in this chapter. Read the case and prepare your answers to the following questions.

1. What tools did Mike Downer use to evaluate and analyze his choices? Do you think they were useful or effective? Why or why not?
2. As Mr. Reese, what, if anything, would you say to Mike?
3. As Mike Downer, what would you do? Why?
4. How would *you* go about making the decision between two job offers?

MIKE DOWNER

I feel lousy. I can’t sleep. I can’t eat. I can’t concentrate on my classes. My whole life is being affected. This is the fourth and last semester of business school and I have two good, firm offers. Most people would welcome either offer. I should be enjoying myself, but I still feel lousy.

Mike Downer, a second-year MBA student, sat and stared out the window. He was tired and

emotionally drained. His job search had been a long and exhausting process, especially when considering his efforts were in addition to normal classroom work. In an attempt to sort out his thoughts, Mike had sought the advice of his organizational behavior professor, Mr. Reese.

Mr. Reese was attentive as he listened. Mike appeared to be confused and bewildered as he

This case was prepared by Kent Guichard under the direction of Associate Professor James G. Clawson. All names have been disguised. © 1982 by the Sponsors of the Colgate Darden Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. UVA case OB-227.

searched for words to express himself. Mr. Reese watched and waited. Still gazing out the window, Mike began to speak again.

I've got to make a decision. I promised Mammoth Foods a decision by Friday. That gives me just four days to make up my mind.

What infuriates me is that this should be the easy part. The hard part is all done. The preparation, the interviews, and the waiting for offers is all behind me. All I have to do is choose one of two offers. Both offers are good opportunities with excellent firms. Both offers have advantages, both have disadvantages. It's so hard to choose.

I'm in trouble. I haven't smiled in four days. I'm in the deepest depression I have ever experienced during two years of business school. At this point, I'm not very popular with too many people. Even my friends tell me that I'm a mess. I feel lousy. Is this normal? What should I do?

Background

In preparation for his job search, Mike Downer had enrolled in the fall elective on career management. Mike felt that he came out of the course with a good view of himself and with a solid plan of action for his job search. While he knew that the job search would be strenuous, Mike felt that he was well prepared for the challenge.

As a course requirement, Mike made a list of life themes (see Exhibit 30-3). He felt the themes were a strong and accurate assessment of what he considered important. Mike expanded the themes into twenty-one career implications (see Exhibit 30-4). These implications described the characteristics of the type of job he wanted. It was from these implications that he developed his action plan. Mike briefly outlined his plan as follows:

The main focus of my job campaign was people oriented (selling/persuading) positions within the financial services industry. At one time, I believe that my choice would have been very segmentable along the lines of investment Banks, Commercial Banks, Insurance Companies, and Real Estate Firms. However, the distinctions between these industries are diminishing, creating the opportunities I was seeking among all four.

One of my toughest assignments in my job search was to determine whether I wanted to be on the selling side (Institutional Sales, Loan Officer) or client side (Investment Management) of the financial services industry. However, I viewed the job hunt as a unique opportunity to gain valuable insight into the industry.

In determining which companies I contacted, I used two main vehicles as the focus of my efforts: the

Exhibit 30-3

Mike Downer's Life Themes

Most Important

1. Meeting people is important/people-oriented
 2. High value placed on variety/diversity/change
 3. Enjoy leadership/controlling positions
 4. Want to be in on what's going on/dislike isolation
 5. Motivated by money as a reward for work
 6. Place a high value on self-reliance/independence
 7. Achievement-oriented
 8. High value on learning new things
 9. High value on being recognized for efforts
-

Very Important

10. Dislike of detailed work/repetitive tasks
 11. Action-oriented/like to be doing a lot
 12. High value on receiving guidance and support
 13. Emphasis on the practical
 14. Enjoy politics
 15. Enjoy persuading/selling
 16. High value on tackling a challenge
 17. Like physically demanding activities/keeping in shape
-

Important

18. Self-starter/entrepreneurial
 19. Want to have time for my own benefit
 20. Desire to be close to people
 21. Strong sense of likes/dislikes/priorities
 22. Enjoy traveling
 23. Active/passive involvement with sports activities
-

Important Minor Theme

24. Underlying sense of ethics/fairness
-

placement office and firms which I contacted on my own initiative. The following is the method I used to select companies through the placement office:

1. Read the placement job descriptions for each position that was interviewed for on campus.
2. Check each position against my themes and implications for suitable fit.
3. Rank each position on a scale of 0 (no interest) to 5 (high interest). Allocate my interviewing time to firms ranked 5 to 1 in descending order.

By using this method, I felt that I would be focused, but at the same time would have a sufficient number of interviews to satisfy my job search goals.

Outside contacts were the other source of my interview prospects. Whenever possible, I contacted an alumnus or key contact in a firm by telephone to introduce myself and express my interest in a company. When I was unable to make contact by telephone, I contacted the company in writing. I developed my letters along the following format:

Exhibit 30-4
Implications of Life Themes

<i>Implications</i>	<i>Theme Support</i>
1. A job that offers a high degree of people interaction	1,4,12,20
2. A job that offers an opportunity to experience a changing environment with a minimum of detailed and repetitive tasks.	2,8,10,16,22
3. A job that offers some flexibility as far as being able to leave the office when desired (not chained to a desk from 9 to 5).	6,17,18,21
4. A job that offers the independence to take an idea, design its implementation, and implement it.	3,6,15,18
5. A job that offers a tangible feeling of accomplishment.	5,7,9,13,15,16
6. A job that offers visibility, quick feedback on and support for efforts.	4,9,12
7. A job that keeps me busy—where I don't have to wait for work.	11,16
8. A job that relies on some understanding and interest in the political process.	13
9. A job that offers the opportunity to persuade others to my viewpoint.	3,15
10. A job that offers enough free time for me to pursue outside interests like keeping fit.	17,23
11. A job that offers the opportunity to become financially independent.	5,6,18
12. A job that deals with a subject matter I truly enjoy (i.e. investments, politics, real estate).	21
13. A job that offers the opportunity for travel within the work setting and time to travel on my own during leisure hours.	2,8,19,22
14. A firm that keeps its promises to its employees and also requires employees to practice high ethical standards.	24
15. A firm that places a high value on employees' physical well being.	17,23
16. A firm that rewards performance with good monetary increases.	5
17. A firm that has the resources available for me to draw on in order to constantly improve my professional abilities.	6,8,12,13,16,18
18. A city that offers a lot to do.	2,8,11,23
19. A place that offers facilities so that the opportunity to keep in shape is available.	17,23
20. A place where the local political scene is active.	14
21. A place that has an open social system to get to know people.	1,20

1. Who I was, why I was writing
2. What I wanted
3. What I could offer
4. Asked for a specific action

I enclosed in each letter a copy of my résumé (see Exhibit 30-5).

My planned approach to interviewing was simple. I was prepared. I looked at company reports, talked to classmates, explored alumni contacts, and scanned the business press. I also planned to be ready for some standard questions.

To assist me in my final choice, I developed an evaluation form (see Exhibit 30-6). The evaluation went into a notebook that I kept on each company. The notebook contained all the pertinent information about the company.

I realize my choice is not all rational. Therefore, after all is analyzed, I am also trying to choose a job I can build the most emotional commitment to.

The Job Search

Mike went through the interviewing process almost exactly according to his action plan. He saw every firm he wanted to see. Most of his inter-

views were in three areas: banking, institutional sales of stocks and bonds, and investment management. In addition, Mike also interviewed for product management positions with three large consumer goods packaging companies. Mike explained the reasoning behind the product management interviews to Mr. Reese:

The three interviews with consumer goods packaging companies were out of my original plan. I had made a change in my job focus sometime during the fall semester. Originally, my job objective was for a position in marketing in consumer goods and/or financial services.

The first brief contacts with the investment banks caused me to do some thinking about my objective. They reacted very negatively to the consumer goods part of my résumé. In fact, the inclusion of consumer goods would probably have eliminated me in the first round weeding-out process. So, I decided to narrow my focus in the plan to just financial services.

But I still wanted to talk to some consumer goods companies. I received excellent grades in marketing courses and wanted to find out what it was really like outside the classroom environment. I tried to select three companies that had a reputation of being good teaching firms. One company, Mammoth Foods, I picked out because of a good fall presentation at school.

Exhibit 30-5

Mike Downer's Résumé

Michael Downer P.O. Box 000 Central States, USA Phone: (100)234-5678	
Employment Objective	Seek position in marketing of financial services leading to general management responsibilities.
Education	Candidate for MBA degree in May 1982, The Graduate School of Business. Bachelor Degree Magna Cum Laude, East Coast College. Outstanding Young Men of America, Dean's List, President of the local chapter of the National Business Society, Vice President of Sigma Chow Fraternity.
Experience	NEW YORK BANK Summer 1981. Full-time summer intern responsible for a project in the marketing department on how to serve small business customers better. MIDATLANTIC BANK 1979 to 1980. Marketing Representative responsible for marketing checking and savings accounts, cash management services, investments, and loans to businesses and individuals. NATIONAL SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION 1978 to 1979. Business Development Representative marketing a pilot program for investment and retirement plans to both individuals and businesses. U.S. STOCK BROKERS, INC. 1978. Account Executive involved in the marketing of financial instruments. Successfully completed the New York Stock Exchange examination.

Mike experienced a very high success rate in his first-round interviews. All his interviews went smoothly. In fact, Mike almost had too many callbacks. There wasn't enough time to get back to all the firms that had invited him for a second interview. The commercial banks were all very impressed with Mike and felt even more comfortable with him because of his previous banking experience. The investment banks were equally impressed; Mike received four callbacks out of five companies. In the product management area, he received one callback, from Mammoth Foods.

Mike had a total of nine job offers. Five offers

were in commercial banking. These positions were mostly in business development and credit management. One offer was in commercial banking product management. Two more offers were in sales and trading with two investment banks. And finally, Mike received an offer from Mammoth Foods.

From Nine Down to Two

After the offers started coming in, Mike continued to follow his plan. With each company

Exhibit 30-6
Company Evaluation Form

Company Name _____	Interviewer _____	
Address _____	Date _____	
Phone _____		
<u>Implication</u>	<u>Rank (1 to 5)</u>	<u>Comments</u>
People-oriented		
Changing environment		
Detail/repetition		
Office flexibility		
Tangible accomplishment		
Visibility		
Feedback/support		
Workload		
Politics		
Selling/persuading		
Free time		
Financial independence		
Subject matter		
Travel		
Fairness/ethics		
Physical well-being		
Monetary incentives		
Training		
City attributes		
Recreational facilities		
Political scene		
Open social system		
Total _____		
<u>Overall impressions:</u>		
<u>Office appearance (visual data):</u>		
<u>Things to remember:</u>		

visit, he wrote down his impressions and compared them to the criteria listed in his life themes and job implications. Then he compared and rated the companies against each other.

Mike managed to eliminate six of the nine offers fairly quickly. He narrowed it down to three choices from three different areas: First Commercial Bank in business development; Madison and

Monroe, an investment bank, in stock and bond sales; and Mammoth Foods in product management. Two of the offers, First Commercial Bank and Madison and Monroe, were in areas of Mike's original plan. The Mammoth Foods offer was not in the plan, but Mike considered the company unique and wanted to pursue the opportunity.

First Commercial eventually began to drop out

of the picture. Part of the reason was that Mike had left commercial banking to get his MBA. Returning to basically the same type of position and doing much of the same type of work would, in a way, be almost like saying that his MBA was not worth the effort it took to get it. Mike gave some additional reasons to Mr. Reese for eliminating First Commercial:

The job content itself looked questionable. The office was great. The perks associated with the position were fine. But the work looked terrible. I would go through company after company after company doing the same thing over and over again. After a while, they would all look the same.

I also began to wonder about my fit with the "banking" mentality. The people I met were cynical people. They were also very, very risk adverse. If a company was highly successful, they were always trying to find out how it was going to fail and fall. I just didn't like that atmosphere.

Mike eliminated First Commercial in his selection process. Now there were only two left: Mammoth Foods, and Madison and Monroe.

Mammoth Foods

Mammoth Foods is one of the largest consumer goods packaging companies in the world. The company is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. Mike and Mr. Reese discussed the recruiting trips to Kansas City:

My first visit is what really made me start to seriously consider joining the company. I had pretty much ruled out product management because of the amount of detailed work involved and because of my dislikes for the electives that I had taken in the MBA program. The visit changed my view.

I liked what I saw. I had six interviews in all levels of the organization. I liked the people. They were truly professionals. It seemed like a healthy work atmosphere.

There were some negatives. The company places people in product areas almost at random. You have very little to say as to where your first job assignments are. Where they need you is where you go. Also, the management style of the company is to provide a limited number of positive strokes for a job well done. Finally, I talked to several "East Coast" people who said that they went through a tough adjustment period living in the Midwest.

Thinking back, the positives of my first visit outweighed the negatives. They made me an offer on the spot and that was good. I knew where I stood.

My second trip to Kansas City continued to increase my evaluation of the Mammoth Foods opportunity. My reservations about the city, the people, and the job content were all effectively reduced.

I really like the city. I am surprised at how much there is to do. The city has sports and culture. The entire area has a positive feeling.

I was also reassured about the people. I was especially impressed with many of my peers. There is a lot of positioning and image building during the first six months. The organization is so large that you want the management to notice you right from the start. My peers are competitive as a result, but not cut-throat. There is a mentality that everyone is working through the system together. It is like an extension of the business school environment.

The job content is still a stumbling block. There is detail upon detail. The initial year is full of detailed work, but it does get less and less as time goes on.

After two visits to Kansas City and Mammoth Foods, I had two overall impressions. First, I had a good feeling that said I would fit in. Second, it seemed like a very nice place to live and work.

Madison and Monroe

Madison and Monroe is one of the leading investment banking firms on Wall Street. The firm is engaged in a wide variety of financial services for a broad range of clients. Mike had a very different experience at Madison and Monroe than he had at Mammoth Foods.

The first round visit at Madison and Monroe was a little on the impersonal side. Impersonal in the sense that the process dictated events. They set aside eight Fridays for the partners to interview MBAs who had received callbacks. Each Friday they had six or seven people come in. We all went through six one-on-one interviews on the Friday we visited.

The interviews were not typical investment banking interviews. There was not as much stress and I considered most of the questions to be better than average. I enjoyed the interviews.

I also enjoyed the people. They were serious, but fun. They were competitive, but not cutthroat. The firm had an air of competence about it. The people were top-notch and their personalities blended together well.

After the first visit to Madison and Monroe, I felt that it would be a good fit if I decided to go into investment banking. At this point, I felt Madison was convinced that I could handle the job content. The remaining question was one of fit.

My second visit to Madison and Monroe gave me a real flavor of investment banking. I spent most of the day with three people. The first was a Graduate School of Business alumnus from last year. I don't know how well he was doing, but I don't think that he was very happy. He answered my questions for over an hour and I think I got some valuable insights.

The second guy was an equity sales trader who had an MBA. I didn't like his attitude. It was like, "I'm here and you're not" and "I'm bigger on this block than

you are." He sat back and made me force the conversation. The exposure to him was marginally helpful.

The third guy was in equity research sales and had been with Madison for about three years. He was extremely helpful and I was lucky enough to spend two hours with him. We discussed what he did, how he felt about the firm, and the pros and cons of the whole investment banking situation.

After visiting Madison and Monroe twice, I continued to be impressed. The whole operation is first class. They are a top firm, and I believe I would fit in.

Which One?

At this point, Mike had managed to narrow down his choice between two strong opportunities. He had visited each company twice and had spoken to several people in each firm. Mike set out systematically to evaluate the two alternatives.

Both offers were firm. Madison and Monroe had offered Mike \$33,000 a year plus unspecified, but negotiable, extras. Mammoth Foods was offering \$31,000 and a nice, neat package of attractive benefits. Neither firm had put a time restriction on Mike, but he had promised Mammoth Foods a decision by the coming Friday.

Mike explained his process up to this point in evaluating the offers:

I started by listing the pros and cons of each offer. I went through different career paths, flexibility, job content, people and the rest of the criteria that I had set up in the beginning. I ended up with a whole set of reasons for and against each offer (see Exhibit 30-7).

I looked at the lists and found that they weren't much help. The idea was good and the list looked good, but it really wasn't much help.

I went back and reread my original plan. I had pretty much executed it exactly, with the exception being that one of my final two choices was in product management. My original negative feelings about product management weren't that strong now that I think about it.

After my first attempt to evaluate the offers, I was leaning towards Mammoth Foods. It was a nice situation. I already had the selling experience that was the primary function in the Madison position.

Mammoth Foods would give me the planning and policy side of marketing. Put that together with my selling, and in five years you've got a full marketing executive.

My second attempt to evaluate the offers was also on a pro and con basis. But this time, I positioned Mammoth Foods against Madison and Monroe. This time Madison came out on top, but the two were still so close (see Exhibit 30-8). As far as I was concerned, I had gotten absolutely nowhere.

Yesterday morning I sat myself down and said, "Look Mike, this is ridiculous. Look at both offers. Evaluate

Exhibit 30-7

First Evaluation of the Alternatives

<i>Pros:</i>	<i>Mammoth Foods</i>	<i>Cons:</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good fit with people 2. Exposure to the other side of marketing 3. Career flexibility 4. Flexible start time 5. Pleasant city to live in 6. Fair amount of variety 7. Some travel 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Structured work atmosphere 2. Time-oriented promotions and raises 3. Less financial independence 4. Team play (I'm a doer) 5. Grunt work 6. City is out of the way 7. Slow-moving organization 8. Confined to desk 9. Past work experience with this type of work was less than satisfactory 	
<i>Pros:</i>	<i>Madison and Monroe</i>	<i>Cons:</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Money potential 2. Capitalize on existing selling skills 3. Job variety 4. Relies on doer skills 5. Would lead to a career in financial planning 6. Immediate satisfaction from work 7. East Coast location 8. Some travel 9. Working with investments 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited management support 2. Nontransferable skills 3. Heavy rejection factor 4. Will be doing the same thing for at least 5 years 5. Everyone is fairly cynical 6. Alcoholism is an occupational hazard 7. Confined to desk 8. Past experience in this atmosphere was not enjoyable 9. Limited chances to be a consultant to clients 	

Exhibit 30-8

Second Evaluation of the Alternatives

<i>Mammoth Foods</i>		vs.		<i>Madison and Monroe</i>
Promotion on time		vs	**	Promotion on merit
Strengthen weaker skills	**	vs		Use existing skills
Skills to run my own business	**	vs		Money to start my own business
Structured atmosphere	**	vs		Little management support
Less interesting work		vs	**	Work in investments
Delayed feedback		vs	**	Immediate feedback
Midwest location		vs	**	New York location
Career flexibility	**	vs		Specialization
Good fit with people	**	vs		Intimidated by people
Group work		vs	**	Doer role
Number crunching at first		vs	**	Verbal skills
Minimum control of destiny		vs	**	Major control of destiny

Note: ** indicates the stronger offer.

Scorecard: Mammoth Foods: 5
Madison and Monroe: 7

them. Make a decision." Simple as that. So I read over all my notes. I read "Confessions of a Brand Manager" again. And I rescored the two jobs. This time I used my evaluation sheet. Madison won again, barely. Well, call it even (see Exhibit 30-9).

I feel that there is a war raging inside me. When I sit down and analyze the situation, Madison seems to come out ahead "on points." Yet emotionally I am still drawn to Mammoth Foods. I like the people. I enjoy Kansas City. My salary would go further.

Product management is new and unknown. But then, I didn't know much about sales and I loved it once I tried it.
I feel lousy.

Mike needed to make up his mind. He felt that his whole life was being consumed by the decision. It almost haunted him. Mike recognized that he was tired and confused, that he needed new

Exhibit 30-9

Third Evaluation of the Alternatives (RANKED 1 = WORST TO 5 = BEST.)

<i>Implication</i>	<i>Mammoth Foods</i>	<i>Madison and Monroe</i>
People orientation	4	4
Environment	3	4
Detail/repetition	2	3
Flexibility	2	2
Tangible accomplishment	3	4
Visibility	3	3
Feedback	3	2
Workload	2	3
Selling	3	4
Free time	3	3
Financial independence	2	4
Nature of work	2	4
Travel	3	3
Ethics	4	2
Monetary incentive	2	4
Training	4	2
Social system	4	2
City attributes	3	4
Recreational facilities	3	3
Physical well-being	4	2
Total	59	62

information. Information from a different perspective. It was for this reason that Mike sought out Mr. Reese.

What Now?

Mike Downer sat and stared out the window. Mr. Reese had been listening for over an hour now. Mike was almost through.

What is wrong with me? This is simple. I've got this nice, neat package from Mammoth Foods and I can get to be a marketing director or I can go with Madison and Monroe and cash in on a competent sales skill, make a lot of money, and go from there.

It should be simple, but I just can't decide. Both offers are equal. What should I do?