

Mary Roach

Unique Niche Writer

Taboo health and medical topics with underlying humor are the specialty of author Mary Roach. When asked for advice for aspiring writers during a recent three-hour call-in appearance on C-SPAN, she replied in part, "I would tell them be your own quirky unique self..."

Fascinating interview, but not for the queasy.

References

Mary Roach

In Depth

<http://www.booktv.org/Program/14714/In+Depth+Mary+Roach.aspx>

Mary Roach Website

<http://www.maryroach.net/books.html>

Q&A: Why Aptitude Testing Isn't More Popular



Q: Why is it that many people still don't know about aptitude

testing?

A. A simple answer would be to point out that organizations that specialize in the field, such as Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation, Inc., or Career Vision.org are nonprofit entities and they don't advertise. Word of mouth is a primary method used to create public awareness and articles in the *Wall Street Journal* or the *Atlantic Monthly* or mention in a book help to educate the public.

But if you look at the history of aptitude testing, the answer is more complex.

In the 1920s, General Electric hired Johnson O'Connor, then a Harvard philosophy graduate with a background in mathematical research, as a factory worker because he wanted to learn engineering. He later headed their engineering department.

Discovering Aptitude Testing

O'Connor and a supervisor decided they could increase worker efficiency by assigning workers to the jobs that they seemed naturally compatible with and wanted to do. At the time, the primary method of personality evaluation was intelligence test scores, but after long study, it was decided that a new way to evaluate people was needed because the current assessment tools were often open to faulty interpretation.

Since physics and chemistry had played an historic major role in influencing industrial progress, O'Connor believed that using research techniques from physics and chemistry to measure many people in various occupations would document the characteristics of the most successful people, writes Margaret Broadley in *Your Natural Gifts*.

Almost 3000 workers participated in the first work trials. Tests were known as work samples and didn't involve oral or written tests, but scored how a worker performed while actually performing specific tasks.

This method of testing was new and reversed traditional

thinking: instead of putting the requirement of each job first, the individual and his or her natural ability to do a specific job was the primary consideration.

Popular with employees, who began asking that their children be tested, and other business firms and colleges asked for the tests. Accurate and nondiscriminatory, O'Conner's new approach had filled a need in the marketplace.

By World War II, mass-market methods of testing job applicants were developed and favored by the infrastructure. Cheap to administer, the standardized tests provided a quick way to categorize people on a mass level. That they're often not an efficient or reliable evaluation tool for everyone is beside the point. Today, the public often mistakes scientific aptitude tests with IQ and standardized testing.

Using two highly regarded search tools, I entered the word aptitude in the search box and got zero results. When I keyed in the word skill, I received a list of math and science notations. So it's no small wonder that many continue to remain in the dark on the topic.

References

Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation Inc.

www.jjocrf.org

Career Vision.org

<http://www.careervision.org/About/History.htm>

Your Natural Gifts

<http://tinyurl.com/lf8fno6>

Start-Up Trouble

The Industry That Disappeared Overnight

During a recent appearance on Book TV, author Ben Mezerich promoted his latest book *Straight Flush*. It's a story about a home-based venture started by poor college students who made a fortune, then crashed and burned when a political power play put not only put them out of business but running from the law.

Mezerich has carved out a niche with books that examines what happens when the fast life and questionable values collide in the entrepreneurial world.

He asked viewers a number of questions.

- Why is it illegal to play a certain game of skill online but the lottery is legal?
- Would you spend a year in a federal prison in exchange for millions of dollars?
- An investor gives you \$1,000 to start your company in exchange for a percentage of the profits but walks away leaving you to do all the work. After you build a successful venture, the backer reappears years later to demand a large share of the profits based on the original agreement. What would you do?

References

Ben Mezrich Book TV

YouTube Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8wnhCXI66c>

Ben Mezrich.com

<http://www.benmezrich.com/>

Stevie Wonder's Values

Music Boycott

In light of the verdict in the Trayvon Martin case, music icon Stevie Wonder has put his values and principles on the line against Stand Your Ground laws around the country. Wonder has vowed not to perform in any state in which the law is recognized.

The circumstances, which moved the Grammy award winner to make the announcement, is an illustration of how creative and business decisions are influenced by many seemingly unrelated but important elements, such as values, ethics, culture, socioeconomic, and government policies.

References

Slate.com

Stevie Wonder's Florida Boycott

<http://tinyurl.com/nxwb4xa>

Trayvon Martin Foundation

<http://trayvonmartinfoundation.org/>

Washington Post.com

Everything You Need to

Knowabout Stand Your Ground Laws

<http://tinyurl.com/os4usn7>

Frontline References Business Start-Up

Two American Families Profiled on Frontline

This is not a program about entrepreneurship but an illustration of many of the financial realities in today's world and why some Americans turn to self-employment

Charlie Rose interviewed Bill Moyers about his upcoming *Frontline* program, which airs tonight at 10 P.M., discusses the lives of two families of different ethnic backgrounds and their financial struggle over a twenty year. A struggle that many others have experienced. At one point, Moyers points out how the son in one family starts up a family business mowing lawns.

References

Charlie Rose

<http://www.charlierose.com/history.html>

Frontline PBS

Two American Families

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/two-american-families/>