

## How to Plan your Career

Some people are lucky enough to fall straight into a fulfilling career that allows them to develop and achieve their goals with ease. However, the majority of people are not so lucky. Some spend a lifetime shifting between careers, searching for something more and often failing to find it. And some choose to stay in a career even though it is not their ideal, often because they haven't contemplated how they can move on. If you are not one of the lucky ones, then having a career plan will help you avoid falling into the other two categories mentioned above.

### So, how do you plan your career?

The first step is to look at your strengths and qualities, both personally and academically. There may be certain skills or interests that you have, that automatically direct you to a type of career; whether it be working with animals or working in sales, some people are naturally drawn down certain career paths. However, you should not be limited by the interest and skills you already possess, as there is always an option to train and learn other skills and to pursue other interests if you wish. Having considered both of these points you should then be able to draw up a short list of careers that may interest you. There are a vast number of options available, so research via the internet and talking to others about their career choices, companies they have experienced etc. can be extremely valuable.

Once you have drawn up this shortlist, the second step is to consider what skills, experience and qualifications you will need to enter into such a career. Would you have to work your way up to the position you really want, and are you prepared to do this? Could you go straight into the job you want, without any further study? Is there a training scheme that you could access? Do you need to gain relevant experience through voluntary work, before you will be considered?

Answering all of these questions should help you realise exactly how committed you are to each of the career options on your shortlist. You can then narrow your options down further based on these answers and the sacrifices and choices that you are prepared to take.

Having chosen a career option, the final step is to work out the best way to achieve your career goal and then develop a short term and a long term plan to help you on your way. Short term is generally considered to cover the next five years. You should include on this plan, qualifications you wish to gain, companies you wish to work within and skills you wish to develop in this period. The long term plan should be realistic but ambitious, always consider that if your short term plan falls into place, your long term goals will stretch you to jobs and careers that at this moment in time would not be realisable. Your career plans can, and often do change, depending on your personal situation and any new found dreams that you have; this should be reflected by regularly updating your plans and reviewing your progress against them.

Following all of these steps should lead you to a satisfying career that you want to have and not one that you have fallen into by accident and that you are tolerating. Your career should inspire and fulfil you, and if planned correctly, this can certainly be achieved.

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