

Assess

Career Planning and Assessment



25 Tips for Career Planning

Before you begin your career search, ask yourself a few questions. What do you want to do? What are you trying to do? What kind of job do you want? By answer-

ing these questions at the outset, you create a career plan that focuses your search. Review the following 25 tips organized to help you in your career planning process.

1. Know what skills you enjoy using

Job-hunting requires going back to “square one.” Make an inventory of your abilities and acquired knowledge; this will assist in making career decisions. You should develop an understanding of yourself including values, interests, aptitudes, abilities, personal traits, and desired lifestyle, and become aware of the inter-relationship between you and your occupational choice.

2. Match your interests to career-related skills

To make a successful career choice, you must match your interests with the skills you want to offer a prospective employer. Try using a self-assessment test to help identify your aptitudes, personality, and interests. These tests allow you to determine your strengths and match them to career-building skills.

3. Identify a career direction

Career planning is a lifelong process, requiring continuous effort to meet changing employment conditions. To achieve and manage a satisfying career, it is crucial to identify a preferred career direction and to implement effective career-enhancing strategies.

4. Maximize your resources

There are many resources available to help in planning a career. Use these resources for career assessment, exploration, and planning to help you identify potential careers, gather information about those careers, and match the career to your own assessment of skills. Resources include career-planning software, career workshops, school career service centers, Internet resources, libraries, employment service departments, career fairs, and career days.

“Career planning is a lifelong process...”

5. Research occupations

Find out more about the nature of the jobs that interest you, such as educational requirements, salary, working conditions, future outlook, and anything else that can help you determine the best career for you.

6. Gain practical experience

Evaluate your occupational choices and gain practical experience through internships, cooperative education, relevant summer employment, volunteer work, and campus activities.

Employers are demanding more skills and accomplishments from their candidates, not just job titles.

7. Interview people whose occupations interest you

You can always find someone who has done something that at least approximates what you want to do. If possible, set up personal meetings or phone calls with these people to discuss the nature of their work. You will learn a great deal about your new career and will be better informed when choosing a career direction.

8. Prepare a career portfolio

Prepare a collection of work samples, a resume, recommendations, a list of references, transcripts, copies of applications, and other pertinent job search tools.

9. Plan your personal job search campaign

Once you are aware of your career values, interests, and skills and are ready to launch yourself into a new career, you need to plan your personal job campaign. This entails establishing your career goals, planning and organizing your job search campaign, preparing materials, and achieving your job search campaign objectives within the timeframe you have set.

10. Begin preparation for a job search

Before embarking on a new career search, it is crucial to learn how to prepare resumes and cover letters specifically designed for a career change. Additionally, since you will need to practice identifying and communicating your transferable skills, you will need more time to prepare for interviews.

11. Anticipate and prepare for problems

Planning for potential problems will help ensure your career change goes smoothly. You may not be able to predict exactly what problems

might arise, but make a list of potential concerns that may be likely in your case. If you take the time to plan for potentially difficult situations beforehand, you may be able to turn an obstacle into a solvable problem when the need arises.

12. Determine the best way to market yourself

Think of your job search as a campaign; you are promoting your skills, training, and experience to potential employers. Your career change strategy includes repositioning your resume to highlight your relevant accomplishments, using your network of friends, relatives, and professional contacts to generate job leads, and developing effective interview skills.

13. Determine what skills employers want

Employers are demanding more skills and accomplishments from their candidates, not just job titles. Find out what skills today's employers are looking for in your career field by reading the requirements of job advertisements for your occupation.

"...know which skills employers value most in your target career field."

14. Expand your horizons

Do not limit yourself to looking for new careers in growing industries. What is hot today is not always hot tomorrow, and there is usually strong competition in these areas. Let your research carry you into unexpected and unanticipated areas. You may be surprised at what you discover.

15. Learn new skills

From your research, you will know which skills employers value most in your target career field. If you do not possess these skills, you will need training. There is a variety of training options that will help you prepare for a new job: self-learning, workshops, conferences, Internet,

16. Decide which employers to contact

Once you have completely researched the companies you are interested in working for, determine which companies offer the best potential for career advancement and which companies have positions open in your field. These are the best employers to contact during your initial search and offer the best chance for success.

17. Probe the marketing trends of the workforce

The better understanding you have about how global events affect the workplace, the more prepared you'll be to meet the challenges. To learn where the job market is going, it is necessary for you to probe the current trends. Which industries are spurring new jobs and opportunities? What skills will be needed to compete in the future?

18. Develop a daily plan

Once you have narrowed your career choices, create a workable plan with a schedule for each of the strategies and steps you will take. Map out which activities you will do each day, e.g., Monday and Wednesday will be devoted to networking, Tuesday and Saturday for online job search strategies, etc. and stick with your plan. Your job search needs to be treated as a new job and it is far easier to manage when you give it a structure and have a routine.

19. Start planning now

If you are unhappy with your present career, and do not start planning a career change now, your attitude may continue to deteriorate and begin affecting your job performance. Begin your job search before your attitude affects your performance and you put your job in jeopardy. This will give you control over the time you can spend on your search and your ability to find the right job to launch a new career transition to. Additionally, you will maintain your reputation as a quality employee.

20. Assess your career choices

Compare the facts you have collected about yourself and facts you have collected about jobs and decide questions such as: Can you see

yourself carrying out all the different duties of the job? Would you be happy doing those tasks? Can you use your abilities in that job? Does this career satisfy your needs? Based on these and other questions, decide which job is best for you.

21. Discuss career choices with people you know

Talk to friends, parents, teachers, and career counselors. Brainstorm with them; let them know what your interests and skills are and they may be able to think of possible career choices that you were not able to identify.

22. Maximize your online resources

There are many sites on the Internet, which discuss the thousands of career options available. Discover a variety of these sites by typing "career planning" or "career" into your favorite Internet search engine.

23. Narrow your focus

After all of the researching, interviewing, exploring, and assessing you have completed, you should have a general idea of your likes and dislikes and a general idea of what you are good at. Now it is time to focus on the specific careers that maximize all of these areas.

24. Look for new career ideas in all areas of your life

New careers can be built on ideas from anywhere. Look for, or create environments in which they can flourish. Foster creativity in all areas of your life: at work, in traffic, or while shopping. Make brainstorming a part of your career search. Encourage others to help you generate new ideas. Use outside sources for new thoughts. Break your routines. Go to a library, museum, or city hall. Read a different newspaper or magazine. See a different kind of movie. You want new ideas and they can come from anywhere.

25. Be Patient

Be patient and be realistic. Do not expect a glamorous career to appear immediately. Use your common sense, listen to other people's advice, be yourself in interviews, and do the necessary work it will take to find the right job in a new career.

*"New careers
can be
built on
ideas from
anywhere."*
