

# Succeed

Career Coaching and Advice



## Developing a Career Plan

### Introduction

Are you planning on how you are going to make a living after graduation? Have you been floating for one job to another without

any clear direction? Are you evaluating college majors and degree programs and need to research potential careers? Have you reached the highest point in your current career and need to change careers to advance further? Are you considering alternate job offers and need to evaluate each in terms of your ultimate career goals? Are you planning to enhance your education and need to identify future career opportunities that you might encounter? Have you been offered a promotion and need to consider the effects of your decision to accept the offer?

The career decisions that underlie these questions are best considered in the light of a career plan. Your career plan is a multi-year outline of where you would like to take your professional career.

### Purpose of a Career Plan

Your career plan serves a variety of purposes based on your industry, your profession, and your experience. The career plan for someone in the retail services industry may outline steps from sales staff positions up

through store management. The career plan for a dentist may involve starting and growing a practice and perhaps leading a team of dental professionals. A welder's career plan may identify advancement through acquisition of additional skills. The career plan for a middle manager may outline a path to upper management. The career plan for a mother of adolescent children may lead to her return to traditional full-time employment through series of part-time positions. The career plan for a retiring military police officer may define a target civilian security position and list the steps to move from the military occupation to a new career as a civilian.

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*“Your career plan is a multi-year outline of where you would like to take your professional career.”*

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As shown in the previous examples, one role of a career plan is to identify any education, skill, or experience needs that your career goals may require. This information helps you choose courses, majors, and degree programs. Your career plan can also identify licenses or certifications that your career will require. By planning ahead, you can enhance your education and skills in anticipation of career advancement so that your qualifications for a promotion are well supported. Your plan can help you seek and obtain oppor-

tunities to gain appropriate experience for your future career. For example, while in school, you may enhance your experience in a teaching career by working or volunteering in a local pre-school or after-school program.

# You can use your plan to evaluate career opportunities as you encounter them.

A career plan isn't solely directed to identifying goals in your distant future. You can use your plan to evaluate career opportunities as you encounter them. You cannot accurately forecast all of the opportunities that you will meet in your career. However, if you have a well-crafted plan, you can analyze unexpected opportunities by comparing them with goals identified in your plan. Your plan can become a litmus test for professional career decisions that you need to make. For example, suppose your manager approaches you with the following offer: "There is an opening for a manager in the warehouse. The vice president asked me if you'd be interested in a promotion." If you have a predefined career plan, you can evaluate this offer based on your ultimate career objectives. Will the warehouse manager position bring you closer to your career goal or will it divert you from the path that you have identified? You can then base your answer on more than a spur-of-the-moment response.

In developing your career plan, you will be directing your energy to longer term goals instead of less important, but more immediate, tasks. In this way, your career plan helps you focus and devote your energy to the most important steps for your career development. For instance, in your job you may be asked to prepare two reports – one identifying an immediate response to a competing product and another that outlines a development strategy for a new product line. In your career plan, you've identified your goal to become a high-level product development manager. While the immediate response report is critical in the short term, the longer range strategy will support your career goals and benefit the company far into the future. While you should develop two quality reports, your career plan will be better advanced by putting extra energy and time into the long term strategy.

You can also think of your career plan as a road map. The journey you are on is your professional career and your map is your plan. The cities you are visiting are the jobs that you have identified. The roads are the steps you have listed that lead you from one job to the next. On your plan, you can track your professional progress just like you would your location on a map. The plan helps you evaluate alternate routes and shows you when you have reached your destination.

Your career plan doesn't necessarily identify a vertical path through your chosen profession. Instead, your plan could illustrate how to move from your current profession into a new one. As you consider, research, evaluate, and explore opportunities in other careers, your plan can help keep you on course and guide your career transition. Among the elements in a career transition plan are assessments of your transferable skills, your strengths and weaknesses, and your interests. You should also identify the requirements of your new career. What additional educational requirements are there for your new career? What new skills will you need? What is your target entry point into your new career? Once you enter your new career what is your career path to your ultimate goal?

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## Types of Career Plans

The most common career plans are time-based, covering a 3-, 5-, or even 10-year span of time. Planning within a predetermined time span allows you to plan your activities and gauge your progress more readily. In a 3-year plan, you can identify steps to take on a monthly basis; while, in a 10-year plan, your planning frame might be in terms of years.

Other career plan types address specific career events, such as a transition between careers, a return to the traditional workplace, or even a plan for gradual retirement. While these plans might also be time-based, they could also be based on milestone events, such as meeting an educational goal, sending your kids to college, or reaching early retirement age. The type of plan that you choose for your career depends upon your specific needs. If your life is too hectic to consider more than three years at a time, then focus on developing the best 3-year plan that you can.

### Timeline for Updating Your Career Plan

If the circumstances of your life don't change, then your career plan doesn't need to be updated very often. However, a stable, unchanging life seems to be a rare find in the increasingly hectic work environment. Professional events can affect your career plan, such as economic downturns, layoffs, relocations, technological advances, and corporate mergers. Personal events, such as illness, divorce, death of a spouse, and natural catastrophes, can also affect your career plan. Typically, a career plan should be updated on an annual basis to account for progress in the past year and anticipate new future developments. If you experience professional or personal events that affect your career plan, then you should update your plan to account for the life occurrences that you've encountered. As you update your career plan, save the previous versions of your plan so that you can continue to map your progress back through your past plans. If you annually update your plan and plan out the same number of years, you will always be on Year 1 of your plan, which seems like you are never making progress. Try creating a summary of the previous years' goals and accomplishments to help remind yourself of the career progress you've made.

### 3-year Career Plan Template

Focus on career growth within your current work setting.

#### Career Goal

*Strategy:*

Consider the career outlook in your current position, and then set a short-term career goal, identifying the setting and location for your career path.

*Example:*

Within 2-3 years, acquire the necessary skills and experience to move from frontline sales staff to a supervisory position within Acme Fashion Outlets at a location in the greater Bay Area.

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#### Current Situation

*Strategy:*

Describe your current work setting and the responsibilities of your position.

*Example:*

Worked six months as junior sales associate in Women's Fashions department of Pleasantville store. Provide customer service, manage inventory, handle sales and returns, maintain attractive shopping atmosphere.

#### Education/Skill/Experience Assessment

*Strategy:*

Identify any courses, degrees, specialties, licenses, certificates, volunteer activity, and memberships/affiliations that you have attained. List the skills that you typically use in your current position. ■

**The type of plan that you choose for your career depends upon your specific needs. ■**

# List the education, skills, and experience necessary to achieve your goal.

*Example:*

Hold AA degree in business. Have attended Acme orientation and training programs on sales effectiveness, POS operation, and customer service. Have volunteered for community charity fashion shows and staffed local hospice store during weekends. Punctual, organized, accurate with receipts and records, flexible with scheduling, friendly with customers and co-workers, eager to learn new skills, and suggest ways to improve sales.

## Target Job Requirements

*Strategy:*

List the education, skills, and experience necessary to achieve your goal.

*Example:*

Acme Supervisor training, experience tracking inventory and controlling slippage, basic accounting skills, merchandise marketing training and experience, lead sales person and assistant supervisor experience.

## Education Goals

*Strategy:*

Identify steps to attain the education goals required for the target job.

*Example:*

Enroll in an online accounting course for retail sales professionals. Request to attend Supervisor and merchandise marketing training.

## Skill Goals

*Strategy:*

Identify steps to attain the skill goals required for the target job.

*Example:*

Meet with store merchandise manager to learn more about merchandise marketing and assist with promotional displays. Practice accounting skills learned online by assisting with end-of-day and end-of-week sales records.

## Experience Goals

*Strategy:*

Identify steps to attain the experience goals required for the target job.

*Example:*

Volunteer for supervisor backup role. Provide leadership/mentorship to new associates. Arrange schedule to serve as senior sales person during less popular working hours.

## Career Action Plan

*Strategy:*

List specific action steps within your target timeframe that will lead to your career goal.

*Example:*

Month 1	Plan for skills/education enhancement
Month 2	Enroll/attend accounting, merchandising, and supervisory training
Month 3	Continue training
Months 4-6	Obtain training completion certificate
Months 6-12	Volunteer for position involving professional practice
Year 2	Pursue promotion within current department based on new skills
Year 3	Begin participating in tasks beyond department

“Identify steps to attain the education goals required...”

## 5-year Career Plan Template

Focus on career growth within your current company.

### Career Goal

#### Strategy:

Consider the career outlook in your current position, and then set a medium-term career goal, identifying the setting and location for your career path.

#### Example:

Within 3-5 years, complete a master's degree in Computer Security to support advancement from Computer Technician to Network Security Officer within PNA Inc.

### Current Situation

#### Strategy:

Describe your current work setting and the responsibilities of your position.

#### Example:

Worked two years as computer technician for PNA Inc, a third tier Internet services provider. Maintain computer hardware and operating systems, perform routine maintenance, troubleshoot system performance issues, handle level 2 trouble reports.

### Education/Skill/Experience Assessment

#### Strategy:

Identify any courses, degrees, specialties, licenses, certificates, volunteer activity, and memberships/affiliations that you have attained. List the skills that you typically use in your current position.

#### Example:

Hold BS degree in computer science and CNE certification. Volunteer at local school to set up and troubleshoot computers and networks. Member of local ACM chapter. Proven competence in computer troubleshooting and repair, excellent attention to detail, develop and perform complex procedures for computer maintenance,

careful analysis, self-directed, motivated to understand complex systems, keep detailed and accurate records and logs.

### Target Job Requirements

#### Strategy:

List the education, skills, and experience necessary to achieve your goal.

#### Example:

MS in Computer Networking with Network Security Specialist certificate, Level 3 company security clearance, network operations experience, network troubleshoot skills, thorough knowledge of corporate security policies and procedures, server/router/firewall operations and tuning skills.

### Education Goals

#### Strategy:

Identify steps to attain the education goals required for the target job.

#### Example:

Enroll in master's degree program and complete courses leading to an MS with specialization in network security. Complete training and obtain Network Security Specialist certificate. Obtain Level 3 security clearance after careful review of company security policies.

### Skill Goals

#### Strategy:

Identify steps to attain the skill goals required for the target job.

#### Example:

Set up home network including server, router, and firewall to practice and refine network tuning and troubleshooting skills.

### Experience Goals

#### Strategy:

Identify steps to attain the experience goals required for the target job.

#### Example:

Volunteer to assist in school network maintenance and troubleshooting. Assist network-ing staff with security analysis and testing.

*“List the education, skills, and experience necessary to achieve your goal.”*

# Focus on career growth within your profession but beyond your current company.

## Career Action Plan

### Strategy:

List specific action steps within your target timeframe that will lead to your career goal.

### Example:

Quarter 1	Enroll in masters program.
Quarter 2	Continue education, set up home network.
Quarters 3-4	Continue education, volunteer with school network.
Year 2	Complete education, obtain degree and certificate, study company security policies, assist network staff as possible, continue volunteer work.
Year 3	Obtain Level 3 clearance, pursue opportunities with networking group.
Years 4-5	Pursue promotion to Network Security Officer and begin developing relationships with technical personnel in other departments.

## 10-year Career Plan Template

Focus on career growth within your profession but beyond your current company.

### Career Goal

#### Strategy:

Consider the career outlook in your current position, and then set a long-term career goal, identifying the setting and location for your career path.

#### Example:

Within the next 10 years, attain the position of the leading critical care nurse in a major teaching hospital.

## Current Situation

### Strategy:

Describe your current work setting and the responsibilities of your position.

### Example:

Worked for five years as a nursing assistant for the Pleasantville Clinic. Schedule patients and prepare them to meet the medical staff. Assist in routine procedures. Maintain medical equipment and tools. Monitor and order clinic's medical supplies. Oversee safe disposal of hazardous materials.

## Education/Skill/Experience Assessment

### Strategy:

Identify any courses, degrees, specialties, licenses, certificates, volunteer activity, and memberships/affiliations that you have attained. List the skills that you typically use in your current position.

### Example:

Hold AA degree in healthcare services. Volunteer at local preschool to perform rudimentary health screening. Excellent bedside manner with patients, especially children. Highly organized and efficient. Maintain extreme cleanliness. Developed professional rapport with nurses and doctors in clinical setting. Eager to assist in medical services under the close supervision of trained medical staff.

## Target Job Requirements

### Strategy:

List the education, skills, and experience necessary to achieve your goal.

### Example:

BS/MS in Nursing with specialization in Critical Care Nursing. Licensure in Emergency Room Nursing, Critical Care Nursing, and Operating Room Nursing. Experience in all areas of nursing within a major hospital.



## Education Goals

### Strategy:

Identify steps to attain the education goals required for the target job.

### Example:

Complete a BS in Nursing, focusing on nursing in a hospital setting. Complete an MS in Nursing with concentration in Critical Care Nursing.

## Skill Goals

### Strategy:

Identify steps to attain the skill goals required for the target job.

### Example:

Complete clinical practice required as part of BS and MS degree programs. Focus on emergency care, critical care, and operating room nursing skills whenever possible.

## Experience Goals

### Strategy:

Identify steps to attain the experience goals required for the target job.

### Example:

In addition to experience obtained in clinical practice outlined above, pursue volunteer opportunities in local clinics and other sites as skills allow. Participate in summer programs where nursing skills can be practiced under the direction of trained medical staff.

## Career Action Plan

### Strategy:

List specific action steps within your target timeframe that will lead to your career goal.

### Example:

Years 1-3	Enroll in and complete BS program, participating in clinicals and nursing opportunities during the school year and during breaks
Years 4-5	Complete MS program, continue volunteer nursing activity during breaks
Year 6	Complete licensure as Regis-

tered Nurse, obtain hospital-based nursing position

Year 7 Complete licensure as Operating Room Nurse

Year 8 Complete training for Emergency Care Nurse, transfer to major hospital

Year 9-10 Pursue training and licensure for Critical Care Nurse, obtain Critical Care Nurse position, pursue leadership opportunities in the field

## Career Transition Plan Template

Manage the transition from your current career into another career.

### Career Goal

#### Strategy:

Consider your interests and the general outlook for different careers, and then set a goal to enter a new career.

#### Example:

Move from a career in structural engineering into a career in teaching at the postsecondary level.

### Transferable Skills Assessment

#### Strategy:

Analyze and list the transferable skills that you have obtained in your current career.

#### Example:

Thorough understanding of the principles and application of physics. Adapt in mathematical routines and models for physical systems. Highly developed technology skills, especially with mathematical tools and visualization programs. Experience leading teams and managing complex projects. Excellent organizational skills. Wealth of experience presenting highly technical information to both technical and non-technical audiences.

### Target Job Requirements

#### Strategy:

List the education, skills, and experience necessary to achieve your goal.

*Example:*

Community College Teaching Credential, knowledge and experience to teach mathematics, physics, and engineering courses, teaching experience at the postsecondary level.

### Education Goals

*Strategy:*

Identify steps to attain the education goals required for the target job.

*Example:*

Research requirements for teaching credential and complete refresher courses as needed. Obtain credential.

### Skill Goals

*Strategy:*

Identify steps to attain the skill goals required for the target job.

*Example:*

Translate presentation, organizational, and management skills developed in former engineering career to the skills needed for a successful community college instructor.

### Experience Goals

*Strategy:*

Identify steps to attain the experience goals required for the target job.

*Example:*

Volunteer as a tutor for mathematics, physics, and engineering students. Teach part-time in adult school settings. Assist with scientific programs in the college computer lab.

### Career Action Plan

*Strategy:*

List specific action steps that will lead to your career goal.

*Example:*

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Step 1 | Obtain teaching credential, pursue volunteer activities                        |
| Step 2 | Teach in a part-time capacity, tutor students, volunteer with science programs |
| Step 3 | Pursue full-time teaching position   |

tions – develop sample lectures, assignments, and assessments for interviewing

### Career Re-entry Plan Template

Outline a strategy to re-enter the traditional workplace into a career of your choice.

#### Career Goal

*Strategy:*

Consider your experience, skills, and interests and the general outlook for different careers, and then set a goal to re-enter the workforce.

*Example:*

Return to a general management position after recovering from a debilitating injury that involved a three-year rehabilitation process.

#### Education/Skill/Experience Assessment

*Strategy:*

Identify any courses, degrees, specialties, licenses, certificates, volunteer activity, and memberships/affiliations that you have attained. List the skills that you have developed in your past work experience.

*Example:*

BA in Business Management with a background in warehouse and operations management. Part-time volunteer coordinator for local charity during last year of physical therapy rehabilitation. Manage employees including hiring, scheduling, mentoring, disciplining, and firing. Set clear expectations and performance standards. Give consistent and timely feedback on job performance. Highly organized. Analyze processes and procedures to improve quality and efficiency. Adapt at supervising complex operations with multiple personnel in a variety of roles.

#### Target Job Requirements

*Strategy:*

List the education, skills, and experience necessary to achieve your goal.

*Example:*

Business degree, management skills, supervisory skills, financial management experience, inventory control experience.