



Career Direction Guide

Seven Steps to the Career-Life You Want!

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Career Direction and Advancement Program

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Preface

This career direction program is designed to clarify and strengthen that dream and work out the career that will enable it. If you are finding it difficult to discover your dream one of the steps will give the opportunity to actively create it.

The seven-step program in this guide is profoundly life changing but is also very practical. It provides powerful strategies, tips and resources for clients requiring help assistance with their career direction and life design.

Benefits

If you consistently apply the skills, attitudes and knowledge introduced by this program you can achieve:

- Clearer career direction and improved career satisfaction
- Enhanced career management and job search skills you can use throughout your career
- Improved life balance with the associated health and relationship benefits
- Better long-term financial rewards
- Confidence, personal development, and success – as *you* define it!

It is now normal to change jobs every 3 to 5 years. What this means to you is that you need to become an expert in managing your own career - knowing where you are going and how to get there. Many people spend more time researching and planning their next vacation than their career. This is in spite of the fact that we spend on average about 86,400 hours of our lives working and this work forms the basis of our sense of identity, wealth, and many of our relationships.

This program contains skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are vital to your success and happiness. These skills have both broad long-term rewards and immediate practical benefits.

Your career is a journey... a voyage of discovery into your own potential and an uncharted future. In today's rapidly changing world of work it is not possible to see the final destination with certainty but this program gives you a compass to guide you as your future unfolds. By working through this program you will build a sturdy foundation in the essentials of career navigation. This will give you a major life-long advantage in your career. It may seem like a lot to learn at first but it will get easier as you go.

If at times the process recommended within this program seems challenging remember this: the hard way is the easy way. Making the effort now will bring great rewards later.

Client – Coach Partnership

If you decide to get help from a career coach or counsellor this is what to expect!

To get the very best result for yourself it is important to approach your career situation as a partnership between yourself and the coach. The nature of this working alliance is highlighted in the table below.

It is important that you agree with this “Partnership” approach before proceeding.

Your coach will NOT be simply giving you “THE ANSWER.”

Career Coach’s Responsibility

- Create a safe, supportive, and enjoyable atmosphere
- Provide a comprehensive career development and/or job search process
- Ask questions which stimulate self-awareness and listen carefully
- Provide observations, ideas, strategies, and resources
- Provide appropriate career assessments and computer-based tools, and provide information to help you interpret the results

YOUR Responsibility

- Enjoy the process!
- Be committed to work through the process & **take responsibility to make your ultimate career choices**
- Reflect deeply before, during and after coaching or workshop sessions and say what you really think and feel
- Do the personal work before and after sessions, be open to consider new ideas, an
- Thoughtfully explore new information – you are the final authority on yourself, not a test. You choose your life.

People often find it stressful to make important decisions. Hence many **try to avoid the anxiety of their responsibility for choosing their own career path**. Some do this by letting parents, teachers, friends, or employers decide for them. Others try to pay a career coach to tell them what to do. This doesn’t work. It results in a career that may suit these other people but is not ideal for you. A career coach can open up new possibilities and help you choose more wisely but they can not make your choices for you.

It is important for you to listen and learn from others but to make your own career decisions in the end. Likewise, formal written career assessment tests are useful for increasing self-awareness and suggesting a list of possible options to consider but **there is no test that can tell you exactly what you should do!** There are too many factors that only you can identify and weigh up.

Hence, career coaches help you find your own answers! The resources and unique Seven Step process we utilise not only enable you to choose your next career step but also empower you to make better career decisions throughout your life. We would rather teach you to fish than just give you one fish for today. **You will need to make career direction choices many times throughout your career.** We provide the resources, strategies and support to enable YOU to discover and create your ideal career-life!

It is the ability to choose which makes us human.

Madeleine L’Engle

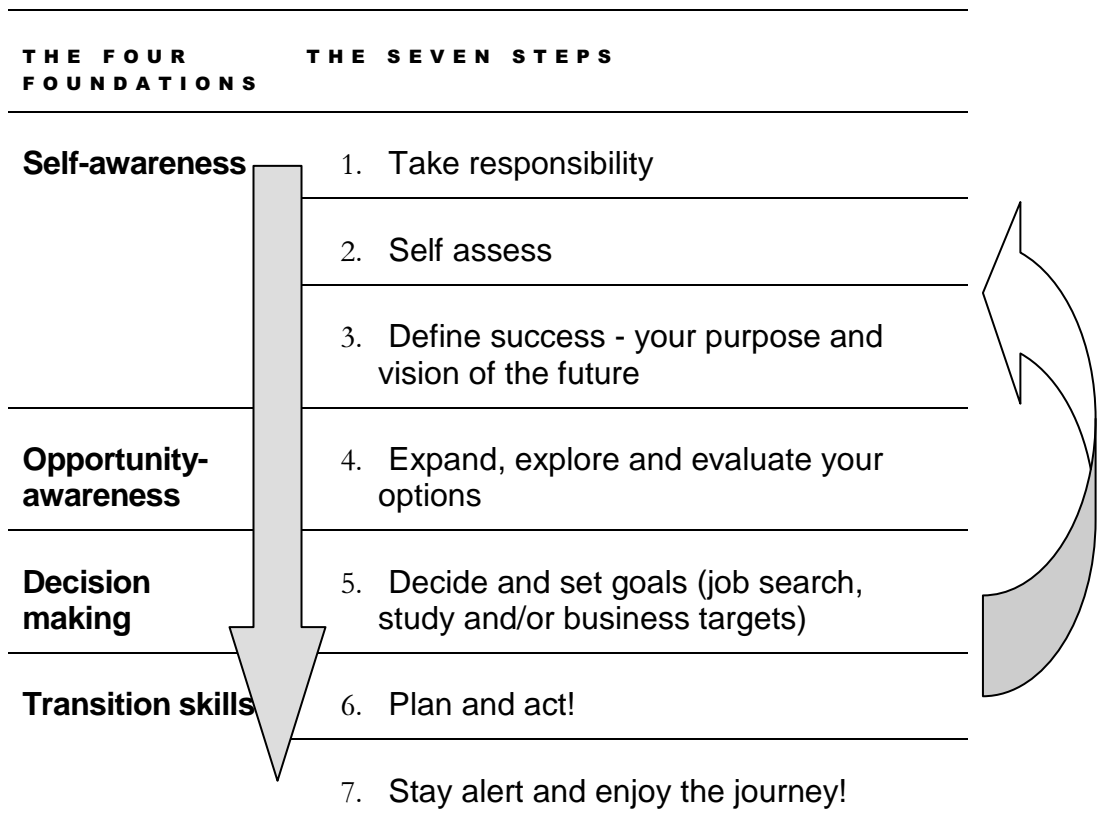
Introduction to the Seven Steps

This career direction program is based on seven steps you need to work through to find your next career move and some likely moves after that.

The Seven Steps incorporate the four foundation areas of traditional career development best practice, which are:

- **Self-awareness** – learning about yourself in relation to work
- **Opportunity-awareness** – learning about the world of work and your options
- **Decision making** – learning to make career decisions and goals
- **Transition skills** – implementing career decisions and managing work transitions (The Job Search Guide has much more on this topic.)

Here is an overview of the Seven Steps:



The circling arrow on the right indicates that at each step of the process you may need to refer back to earlier steps and even reconsider some of your conclusions.

This process and the skills involved can be the core of your life-long career management. Most career programs and books recommend what is primarily a rational planning approach. The table on the next page indicates two other approaches to determining your career direction that this program also includes.

Approach	Metaphor and Emphasis	Explanation
Rational Planning (Plan)	Head <i>Think it through</i>	This is the traditional career development approach based on a logical process of self-assessment (often written), research, goal setting, and action planning.
Real-World Testing (Act)	Hand <i>Do something!</i>	This is a counterbalance to the traditional rational approach to career development. It emphasises that there are limits to what we can learn by written tests, exercises and research. Hence, in deciding on career directions it is important to set up realistic career experiments to test out promising options. We learn more through a combination of <i>thinking</i> and <i>doing</i> .
Whole-Self Reflection (Reflect)	Heart <i>Listen to your heart</i>	This approach encourages us to reflect broadly (holistically) and deeply (spiritually) about what we are doing with so much of our lives in our careers. To use our heart and head, right brain and left brain. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the different life roles we want to balance? (eg. worker, partner, friend, family member, etc.) • What will bring us most happiness in the long-term course of our lives? • How can we fulfil our need for meaningful contribution to others?

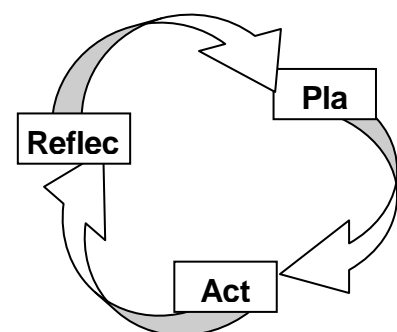
As you apply the Seven Steps you will see that you need to plan, act and reflect in an ongoing cycle in career-life management.

Experiential Learning Model

Plan = rational career planning

Act = real-world testing

Reflect = holistic and spiritual



So when your initial self-assessment and research of your options (rational planning) is suggesting a few promising options don't rush into making a large commitment to one. See if you can find a way to experience a little of what it is really like, e.g. do some volunteer work or short term contract work. If you are considering many years study to be a hospital surgeon get a job in a hospital as a cleaner for a few months. Often the reality of an option is not what we first think. Sometimes it is better, sometimes it is worse. It may also give you unique insights and preparation for your career target role. For example, you might become a doctor who is more understanding of the hospital staff and patients.



Step 1- Take Responsibility

Being willing to take responsibility for your career and life is the foundation for all success.

Specifically you need to take responsibility for:

- Your career (others can help but no one, including a career counsellor, can tell you what is right for you – it’s your life!)
- Your employability (the only real job security is the career security that comes from offering up-to-date skills that are still in demand)
- Your “programming” (parental influences and social conditioning)

A few simple ideas, if understood and practiced deeply, can make a huge difference in your life. This step – Take Responsibility - is one of those ideas. Without it you cannot effectively apply the other six steps to discovering and creating the career and life that you truly want.

It is now widely recognised that your career is your responsibility, not your employers.

Successful people accept responsibility to improve themselves, their career, and their situation in life. Unsuccessful people blame everything and everyone else: the government, their parents, the schools, the economy, the weather, or the lack of jobs. Successful people focus on what they CAN do given the circumstances they find themselves in. Simple? *Yes*. Powerful? *Absolutely*. Easy? *No!* It takes dedication, time, and effort.

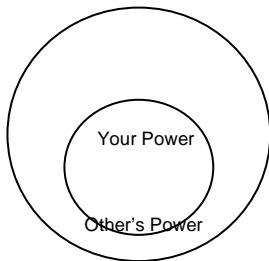
If you find yourself thinking “So what!? I’ve heard this before!” then you may have heard the words, but you haven’t quite grasped what a huge impact this has on life. Just about everything you say, do and think in life is different if you see yourself as the active creator of your life and circumstances or you see yourself as just the passive object being acted upon. . . merely a victim to life’s ups and downs.

Key points

Play the hand you’ve been given

We are all dealt a hand of cards in the game of life: personal strengths and weaknesses as well as barriers, limitations, and problems in our life situation. The cards we receive are the cards we receive – they have little or nothing to do with fairness or justice. What makes the biggest difference is how we play the hand

we've been given. In other words, it's not what happens to you, but what you do about it that matters most in the end.



Focus in your circle of power... and then watch it grow!

Your circle of power is anything that you can influence. Most of us can't change the government, our parents, the schools, the economy, the weather, or even some of our own traits. So what can you influence? Your attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are where it all starts. The more you learn and improve yourself, the more you earn people's respect and trust, the more you rise to positions of influence and eventually experience the rewards of career-life success! If you want to change the world, start by changing yourself. The Seven Steps will get you working firmly in your circle of power.

One way to tell if you are focused on your circle of power is by the words you use.

Outside the circle of power

"I have to..."

"The boss won't let me..."

"She makes me mad..."

In the circle of power

"I choose to..." (because I want or don't want the consequences)

"I haven't yet convinced him of the benefits of..."

"I get myself mad when she..."

Everyone has issues (self-sabotages). Are you prepared to look at yours?

Many people are their own worse enemies. Their thinking, their own minds undermine and sabotage their lives. To some degree all of us must deal with self-sabotaging tendencies. Five key self-sabotages are:

- Fear – Often of failure... and of success!
- Doubt – I'm not good enough, smart enough, etc.
- Blame – It's someone else's fault (so I don't have to do anything about it)
- Self-criticism – Being overly hard on yourself
- Cynicism – Protective reaction to avoid being disappointed or hurt

These self-sabotages can result in premature quitting in your career journey, poor career targeting or even stop you from getting started. The willingness to take a compassionate but honest look at yourself is crucial. Taking responsibility does not mean beating yourself over the head with your self-blame and guilt. The idea is to focus on what is productive and helpful.

You can always blame the parents if you want to play the blaming game and make the parents responsible for all your problems. Until you are willing to let go of your parents, you continue to conceive of yourself as a child.

Fritz Perls
Founder of Gestalt
therapy

Begin by making your mind your friend - disarm your self-sabotages

Self-sabotages take the form of your inner dialogue with yourself. How you "talk" to yourself determines your experience of life. External events or circumstances

are only triggers for your feelings. If, for example, you go to a job interview but don't get the job you could say to yourself two very different things:

1. **Unhelpful thinking** - "I'm not skilled/educated/young/old enough. This is terrible that I failed." **Result:** you feel bad, stop job searching for a week or longer and miss a great opportunity.
2. **Helpful thinking** - "They thought someone else was more suited for the position. This may be a good thing... there is probably a better opportunity out there waiting for me." **Result:** you feel okay, continue job searching and get a position to which you are better suited.

*The mind is its own
place, and in itself can
make a heaven of hell,
and a hell of heaven.*

John Milton

You can see how the same external event or trigger can create two very different results. Whether you feel good or bad stems from how your mind interprets situations. Your mind is very powerful. It will either sabotage your career efforts or allow you to create the career and life path you most deeply desire.

So what can you do about it? Pay attention to your thinking. Get to know and recognize your patterns. Say to yourself "Oh, that's just my "doubter" working over-time" or "That's just my inner critic giving me a hard time." Don't worry about it, just step back, observe yourself and then look for an alternative view which is more helpful. To be able to laugh at yourself and your self-sabotages is incredibly empowering... and a lot more enjoyable than getting stuck in them!

We are not responsible for the programming we received as children, but as adults we are the only ones who can be responsible for correcting it.

Find people, books, workshops and other resources to help

This is just a brief discussion of how to take responsibility to get your mind on your side. There are many ways you can take this much further. The important thing is to be alert and open to people and things that can help you learn the art of taking responsibility for your mind, life, and career.

Sources of support:

- Look for people who can be good role models or mentors and adopt their winning ways of thinking, talking, and acting. Ask them what helped them.
- Browse the library, the internet or a bookstore - try Googling keywords such as "positive psychology and success" "being proactive in your career."
- Check out courses at places like TAFE Adult Community Education as well as online.
- Engage a career coach for life coaching or try a counsellor or psychologist for deeply rooted internal obstacles.

Personal responsibility – essential in today’s world of work

Taking responsibility for your thinking means developing good attitudes focused in your circle of power. Smart employers will actually pay good money for these attitudes. Experience and extensive employer surveys have consistently shown that employers will almost always choose someone with fewer skills and what they believe is a “good attitude” rather than better skills and a “negative attitude.” Negative attitudes are basically the result of people focusing outside their circle of power.

Job security cannot be found in most jobs today. It is to be found in you developing and maintaining your employability. Due to global competition and continuous change very few employers can guarantee you a job these days. You need to keep yourself current. Observe the trends, note what skills and knowledge are in demand, and develop yourself to meet those demands. You are not helping yourself if you think something like “I can type 90 words a minute on the typewriter, I’m not going to learn computers!”

Valuable career attitudes include:

- Every job is a learning opportunity.
- My work-life should benefit all concerned: my employer, my customers, and myself.
- While I accept this work position I’ll do the best I can. If I can’t find a way to be satisfied in my job then it is up to me to find a better position.

Tips

For career success improve your mind as much as possible but don’t wait for perfection. Swing into action as soon as you can and learn from your mistakes and your victories.

Don’t get stuck looking for the perfect job – where you save the world and make \$200,000 a year. Think big but be willing to start from where you are.

Final thought

“We who lived in the concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken away from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

- Victor Frankl – Concentration camp survivor and psychiatrist



Step 2 – Self assess

To chart your course through the world of work you have to know where you are starting from.

Who are you? What do you have to offer others? What do you want from life in return? In this step you do whatever you can to assess yourself and take stock of a number of factors.

The key to this step is to be willing to ask yourself questions and keep asking as your career unfolds. As you do this, pay particular attention to anything which hints of your purpose and passion for they are the essence of your internal career compass.

The exercises below introduce some factors to consider and suggestions on how to do a personal stocktaking.

(1) Your Current Career Influences

What is influencing your career thinking at the moment? Possibilities include:

your self-image	beliefs	age	disability
friends	parents	relatives	employers
colleagues	teachers	role models	media
government	local economy		

Other influences (list):

We are all influenced by each of these at times. Ask yourself “Am I being too influenced by one or some of these factors?” For example, our career direction has to be right for us, not for our parents or our friends.

Circle factors that are currently influencing your career thinking. Place a ↑ next to **helpful** factors and ↓ next to **hindering** factors or barriers.

(2) Your Emotional State

Have you just been impacted by a major change in your life? A job loss, relationship ending, health issue, geographical move, or lifestyle change? If you are it is normal to go through an emotional adjustment or grieving process.

A common 5-stage emotional transition process that people can go through is show below.

Circle any of the emotions you have experienced in the last 12 months and underline them as well if you are currently experiencing them.

1. **DENIAL** – disbelief confusion shock
2. **RESISTANCE** – anger resentment depression anxiety
3. **GRIEVING** – expressing sorrow beginning to accept & let go
4. **EXPLORATION** - adjustment tentative action investigation
5. **COMMITMENT** - new start growing enthusiasm clarity

If you are in one of the first 3 stages seek support and give yourself time. Don't try to jump too quickly to the commitment stage or the new start may be problematic.

(3) Your Basics

Please write - what are your minimum requirements regarding:

- Money (how much a year) ?
- Where you work (areas you will consider)?
- Your family (any limitations or factors)?
- Health (any limitations or factors)?

(4) Reality Check

Choose two or three people you respect and who know you fairly well, ideally in a work situation.

Tell them you are gathering feedback to help you evaluate your career direction and set up a meeting. If a face-to-face meeting is difficult, a phone call or email connection with them may be enough.

Ask each of them the same three questions and record their answers here:

1. What do you see as my natural strengths?		
Person 1 Response:	Person 2 Response:	Person 3 Response:
2. What do you think are my best skills?		
Person 1 Response:	Person 2 Response:	Person 3 Response:
3. What kind of things could you see me doing well in the future?		
Person 1 Response:	Person 2 Response:	Person 3 Response:

Note: Sometimes the responses you get will be very valuable in helping you to see “blind spots” about yourself that you were unaware of. For example, you may not have realized that other people consider you to have an unusual ability to focus on computer work for long hours or to handle difficult people when they get upset.

The one possible downside to this exercise is that sometimes our co-workers and friends can only see us in our past roles and this limits what they can see for us in the future. People who know us can help or hinder us in imagining a new future for ourselves.

Pay attention to their feedback to you but consider carefully before letting them steal your dreams. They should be helping you uncover new dreams if they aren’t supporting your existing ones.

(5) Life Areas – How are you doing?

Your career sits in the context of your total life. It influences and is influenced by all areas of your life. Consider the list of life areas below. Are you satisfied in these life areas? To what degree? **Circle the number next to each life area which best describes your response.**

1 = Serious problem area. Definitely needs improvement.

2 = Not satisfied. Needs improvement.

3 = Some satisfaction. Could be better.

4 = Mostly satisfied. Can't complain.

5 = Totally satisfied. Life couldn't be better in this area.

Life Area	Satisfaction scale	What do you want more of?
Family	1 2 3 4 5	
Partner	1 2 3 4 5	
Friends	1 2 3 4 5	
Community involvement	1 2 3 4 5	
Worklife	1 2 3 4 5	
Financial situation	1 2 3 4 5	
Professional development	1 2 3 4 5	
Health	1 2 3 4 5	
Spirit (peace & purpose)	1 2 3 4 5	
Hobbies, sport, & fun	1 2 3 4 5	
Location & lifestyle	1 2 3 4 5	

Which of the following do your responses suggest a need for:?

- Change in how I approach my life and work in my current job
- Change of employer
- Change of occupations – new career direction
- All of the above!

Obviously, don't change careers when you just need to change the approach to your current job. Occasionally, we need to change our employer or career to help us change our attitude and approach!

(6) Perceived Career Success Constraints

Our career decision-making takes place in a system or “game” where both internal factors (beliefs, knowledge gaps, insecurities, etc.) and external factors (financial commitments, office politics, etc.) can act as career constraints. We all have constraints at times that can limit our ability to discover and create the career we want.

In this exercise place a tick in the box, which best describes your perception of the whether a factor is a barrier to your career success.

Perceived Career Success Constraints							
	Definitely	Possibly	Not at all		Definitely	Possibly	Not at all
Lack of support from friends				Financial commitments			
Lack of support from partner				Poor self-marketing skills			
Lack of support from parents				Fear of failure			
Poor self-image				Stigma of unemployment			
Lack of skills				Not coping with stress			
Lack of confidence in skills				Fear of change			
Emotional impact of recent forced career change				Difficulty in handling workplace politics			
Mental or physical disability				No references or referees			
Lack of support from current employer				Feeling lost and frustrated – no idea what to do			
Too many personal problems beyond my career				Fear of what others may think if I choose a lower job			
Lack of qualifications				Can't afford to do what I want			
Dislike of networking				Age – too old or too young			

List your “definite” constraints and any “possible” constraints you are concerned about under one of the following headings:

Constraints I may be able to overcome by changing my thinking or perception of the situation	Constraints which I can take external action to address	Constraints I think I may have to accept

Consider how you can best manage the constraints you have identified above. This program will suggest some strategies and resources relevant to some of the above.

It is often wise to talk about some of these constraints with a career coach, counsellor or trusted friend.

(7) Your Work Values

One way to begin to identify what we want is to evaluate and rank a list of things work can offer us.

Place a tick in the box which best describes the relative importance to you of each work value.

High = essential. Medium = desirable, but not essential. Low = little importance.

YOUR WORK VALUES							
	Relative Importance				Relative Importance		
	High	Medium	Low		High	Medium	Low
Leadership & authority				Excitement & challenge			
Autonomy & independence				Physical activity			
Opportunity for advancement				Learning			
Responsibility				Personal development			
Integrity				Harmonious relationships			
Location				Fun			
Lifestyle				Adventure			
Predictable				Community contribution			
High potential capital gain				Work-life balance			
Variety				Creativity			
Recognition & status				Helping others			
Entrepreneurship				Friendships			
Fast pace				High income			
Professionalism				Time freedom			
Peace of mind				Meaningful work			
Security				Winning			

In the list above, tick (or highlight) your eight most desirable work values and cross your three least desirable work values.

Then write your top eight in order here (most important at the top).

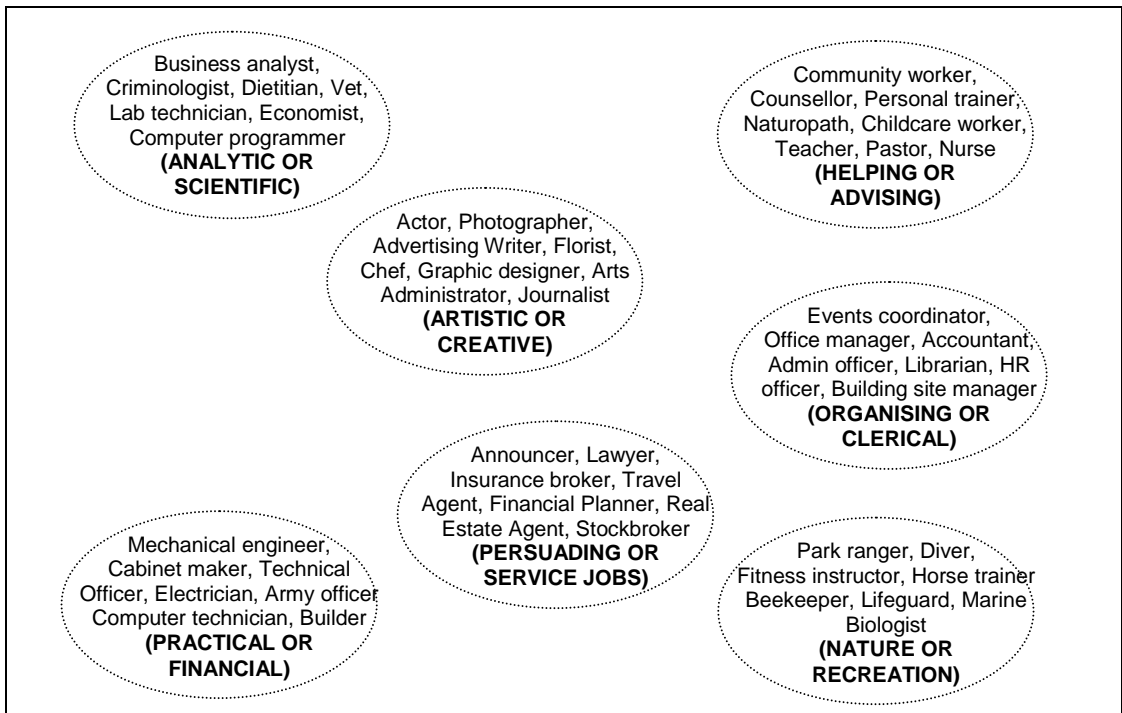
Ranked Top 8	What does that value word mean to you? Why is it important?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
Ranked Bottom 3	What does that value word mean to you? Why is it important?
1.	
2.	
3.	

(8) Interests

Write here any current ideas you have for your future work:

Your main interest areas can provide further job ideas.

Imagine the the box below is a diagram of a party with seven very different groups of people standing around talking. **If you were feeling confident that day, which group would you be MOST drawn to?** Which group would you go talk with second... and third (if there was time)? Number these groups 1, 2, or 3.



Now go to the **Job Guide** - www.jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au , then click on “**Search the Job Guide**” on the left & then select “**Type of Work**” dropdown box - these are the same 7 categories as used above. Now try expanding your option ideas by checking out your favourite groups from above using the Job Guide’s search. You can narrow it down by also searching on one or two of the other fields at the same time.

Write any new job ideas that you get from the Job Guide here:

Also think about:

What are your main non-work interests now?

What were your interests as a child? What did you dream of doing?

What would you do with your life if you took money out of the equation altogether?

(9) Natural Strengths

Substantial research has shown that the more you can use your natural strengths in your work the more happy and successful you will be at it. We tend to go into a **state of “flow”** when using our strengths.

Now take some time to reflect and remember the times that you were most absorbed in your work or some project or activity. You may find that time seemed to pass quickly as you found the task so interesting.

“FLOW” EXPERIENCES	
Brainstorm and list times, projects or activities you found most absorbing or fulfilling. These are productive activities that you tend to like doing and do well.	

The next step is to analyse the list of flow experiences above and your list of achievements and from them identify your natural strengths.

Natural strengths are crucial in identifying future job options. Strengths tend to be transferable to different occupations. Natural strengths are NOT the same thing as learnt skills, although there may be some overlap.

Learnt skills tend to be more past oriented. They tell us where we have been, not where we can go:

- **Natural strengths** – your talents and competencies for which you have an innate aptitude or gift
- **Learnt skills** – specific skills, often of a technical nature, that you have gained by experience or training

Based on a review of your listed achievements and your list of flow experiences, you can now list as many as possible of your natural strengths.

Just have a go now. There are many ways to describe strengths. If you want some more ideas after writing your own, you can Google [strengths wiki](#) and read the different lists of strengths under the “Now, Discover your Strengths” and “Character Strengths and Virtues” links.

YOUR NATURAL STRENGTHS: (Brainstorm possibilities based on your achievements and flow experiences)	

Now tick or highlight the top 12 above. Then in the table below list them in order of preference and strength.

TOP 12 NATURAL STRENGTHS	
1.	7.
2.	8.
3.	9.
4.	10.
5.	11.
6.	12.

You can also refer to this list when writing cover letters and resumes and preparing for interviews.

In addition to these structured self-assessment exercises, remember to take some time out to reflect and do some soul searching about what is really important to you.

SELF ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

(Gather key points from previous exercises.)

1. My Key Influences:

2. My Current Emotional State:

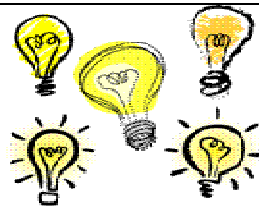
3. My Basics (minimum money needed, where, family factors, health considerations):

4. My Reality Check Feedback:
Natural Strengths

Best Skills

Ideas and Suggestions

5. My Life Areas Needing More Attention:



Look for patterns
What ideas does all this suggest?

6. My Perceived Career Constraints:

7. My Work Values – What I want:

What I don't want:

8. My Interests – 3 main interest areas:

Interests now & as a child:

9. My **Natural Abilities**, Learnt Skills, and Knowledge Areas:

10. My Personality:

IPIP NEO Scores -

E = , A = , C = , N = , O =

Jung Typology Type –

At least **5 main strengths** of my personality –

(See <http://career-wise.com.au/career-counselling.html> for these assessments)

My Purpose:

Category –

Description –

(See Step 3 for these)

My Vision – Key Goals Summary:

Step 3 - Define success – your purpose and vision

Some people may be in a hurry to get to Step 4 where the “real action” begins, but at least read & think about these deeper aspects of your career/life!

3 a. Purpose

Reviewing what you have learnt about yourself now consider where your sense of purpose and passion lie. Finding something that you can become passionate about creates the energy for career and job search success. Purpose serves as the foundation for your vision for your life.

“When work is soulless, life stifles and dies.”

- Albert Camus

A sense of your purpose in life is your deepest internal compass for navigating your way through whatever changes take place in the world of work. Being “on-purpose” with your career unlocks your passion – that spark and energy which drives your career development and learning and at the same time makes you someone employers want to hire and retain. It can also be the source of deep motivation which can power you through the challenges of creating your own business when the time is right.

Let’s look at purpose more closely. You actually have two purposes:

Your universal purpose – personal development

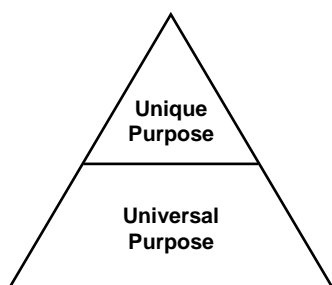
This is the broad purpose you share with all people. You, like all of us, are here to be happy, healthy and evolving as a human being. As you develop as a person you become more able to contribute to others, including family and friends, in many ways – emotionally, socially, spiritually, practically, and intellectually.

Your unique purpose – career vocation

This is your distinctive vocation or “calling,” which is a natural expression of who you are. It is your unique purpose you need to detect.

Some people have a clear sense of their unique purpose from an early age while for most of us it is something we gradually develop an awareness of, as we grow older. It is common in our society distracted by excessive consumerism that many people fail to develop a sense that their career or life has any purpose or meaning beyond themselves. We just go to work and fit in with what the system expects of us.

The existential vacuum that results is often experienced as a deep sense of boredom, or addictions to chemicals and other destructive behaviours. Some



researchers believe we are actually genetically programmed to self-destruct if we feel our tribe or society does not need us. Physical ailments tend to be less common amongst people who believe they are needed. One of the best things we can do for our mental and physical health is to find a way to forget about ourselves and become more involved with others. This is our universal purpose (or if you prefer... our genetic programming). If we can detect our unique purpose and express it through our career our wellbeing is further boosted.

Purpose is central to career. In the broadest sense we all have a career no matter what work we do, but it is only when our jobs are connected by a sense of purpose that our sequence of jobs becomes a coherent career with its own direction.

Work + no purpose = job (at best)

Work + purpose = career

Our awareness of our purpose is not static. It evolves and matures with us. To detect your unique purpose follow your passion.

What excites you? What do you deeply care about?

You do this by observing yourself and all that you considered in Step 2. Look carefully at your natural abilities, personality, values, and interests. What are the patterns? Also search your childhood dreams and watch yourself. What gives you energy? What can you lose yourself in? What would you do even if you took money out of the equation?

Reflect

Take time to reflect, ideally in a peaceful location in nature. Consider:

- What do you enjoy most?
- When do you forget yourself and lose track of the time?
- What need do you see in society that you could address?
- If you knew you were going to die in 10 years time what would you feel best about having done in the mean time?

Consider

You will need to write it in your own words but your unique purpose will probably fall into one of these eight broad categories of career purpose:

1. Help heal others
2. Teach, coach, enlighten, and entertain
3. Improve living conditions
4. Meet practical human needs
5. Safeguard and manage the environment
6. Create beauty
7. Support justice and fairness
8. Set an example of love and service

Which do you identify with most? Circle yours or write your own category here:

.....

Write

Having done the above, don't delay. Have a go at writing your purpose statement for your career. There is really no right or wrong but if it helps here is an example (mine):

To find, create, and promote ideas and information which will inspire and help others.

The important thing is that it means something to you. That it excites or resonates within you!

It is okay to do several drafts or change it over time. Have a go at writing it here:

If your purpose is not becoming clearer you may not be ready for it yet. You may have other developmental tasks you need to engage with first. At the very least you can define your purpose to be "to find and make my contribution to the world."

Expressing your unique purpose through your work will give your career power.

Some people may be in a hurry to get to Step 4 where the “real action” begins, but at least read & think about these deeper aspects of your career/life!

3 b. Vision

Your Personal Definition of Success

To be successful you must know what success for you is. It is unlikely that you will arrive somewhere if you don't know what the destination is when you set out... or at least the direction in which you want to head! The desired outcome from this step is to create your own personal definition of success, which includes:

You give birth to that on which you fix your mind.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

- **Your broad vision** of what you want for your life
- **Goals** in different areas of your life

Your personal vision is different from your purpose in the preceding step in that a vision has goals which can be reached and accomplished whereas your purpose is an on-going calling never completed.

Your purpose focuses on what you want to contribute to the world while your vision integrates that purpose into a more complete image of how you desire to live your life.

If you set life goals that align with your unique purpose it will be a sturdy foundation for your life. If, on the other hand, you set goals that are in conflict with your purpose then your life will suffer from a sense of meaninglessness.

The trap that many fall into is that their vision of success is more an expression of society's conditioning than their own deepest desires. Consider what are the “musts” operating in your mind. Do you sometimes find yourself thinking something like “I must have a respectable job as a neurosurgeon, a BMW convertible, a five bedroom house, and two overseas vacations a year to have MADE IT!”

Where did your “musts” come from?

Frequently our parents, peers, advertising, and popular culture program our “must haves” into us... even while we think “This is what I want!”

“It takes courage to hold visions that are not in the social mainstream... But it is exactly that courage to take a stand for one's vision that distinguishes people with high levels of personal mastery.”

Peter Senge

For your vision of the future to serve you and bring you lasting happiness it needs to be YOUR vision... your definition of success, not someone else's.

Once you become aware of these “must have” distortions you can begin to define your success by visioning exercises and active dreaming. For example, see yourself on an ideal Friday in 10 years time. Where would you be living? What would you be doing for work? Imagine your whole day from the moment you wake up to the time you go to sleep.

Your vision of the future will be strengthened by including goals in a range of areas so as to create balance in your life. If you neglect any one of the following areas it will tend to undermine your success in other areas of your life, including your career. Defining what is important for you in each of these areas will create a context or frame into which your career can fit.

Describe each of the following in 5 years time:

Note: If you find some of your life goals conflict with each other try referring to your purpose to resolve it.

*Take your dreams
and your knowledge,
mix in your hopes
along with your desires,
create a vision
and let it come true.*

Adele Basheer

Family

Partner

Friends

Community involvement

Location and lifestyle

Financial situation

Professional development

Health

Spirit (peace and purpose)

Hobbies, sport and fun

Work life (the place, what you do, colleagues, hours, etc.)

Write

Review and reflect on all the work you have done until here. **Now write a paragraph here that summarizes what you want to create for your life.** If you can capture it on paper, you have far more chance of making it happen!

(**Collage Exercise:** If you can't express it in words some people find it very powerful to cut pictures out of old magazines and stick them together on to a piece of paper or cardboard as a way of capturing their vision.)

Step 4 - Expand, explore and evaluate your options

Now is the time to begin exploring the outer form your career will take. There are three parts to this step:

- A. Expand your options – develop a long list
- B. Explore and evaluate your long list – select top options
- C. Research your top options in-depth

For good results considerable self-directed action is called for in this step. Hence the action planning process suggested in Step Six can be valuable here also.

4 a. Expand your options – develop a long list

Research has shown that people often choose careers based on a small list of jobs they have been exposed to through friends and family members or perhaps seen on television. As a result they often miss highly suitable job options. You need to cast your net wide at this time and expand your awareness of all your options that are out there. This is the time to have some fun, let your critical mind take a small vacation and search out all the things that might appeal to you.

Idea sources

Look at the previous steps – your self-knowledge, purpose and personal vision – what do they suggest? Keeping them in mind look at a range of idea sources and **develop your “Long List” of between 15 to 40 possibilities.**

Idea sources include:

1. Job suggestions you may receive from **Step 2 career assessments** such as the Jung Typology
2. **Products and services** you like
3. **Causes and groups** you identify with
4. **People** – talk to as many people as possible, find out about what they do and ask for ideas

5. **Yellow pages** phone directory, situation vacant columns, college course catalogues
6. **Internet sites** – go to www.myfuture.edu.au and click "**the facts**" tab. In the "Work and Employment" box click on "**Occupations.**" You can now browse in a number of ways or search by different categories. (If an occupation strongly attracts you don't reject it, at this time, just because the job outlook is below average. A determined job search campaign with the right strategies can still succeed.)

You can use the "**Long List**" table on the following page to list your ideas.

Be sure to consider lots of jobs you are not familiar with and don't limit your thinking to just traditional careers. There are new types of work being created every day and some of the more rewarding work doesn't even have job names yet.

Consider a wide range of possibilities such as:

- Same career but in a new organization or location
- Combination and hybrid careers (eg. a software programmer who develops an interest in real estate and develops a new computer program for the real estate industry.)
- Composite careers (2 or 3 part-time jobs)
- Contract, consulting or temp work
- Small business or home businesses
- Part time and/or voluntary work
- Tertiary study

For some people the best reason for them to get a traditional job is for them to gain skills, knowledge, and contacts that will enable them to start their own business later. This is how most independent contractors & consultants got started.

If you are currently with an employer consider career actions such as:

- Exploration – seek temporary project work or secondment
- Enrichment – identify and negotiate tasks you want to do more of
- Realignment – seek a position demanding less time or stress
- Relocation – change to a different business unit
- Vertical move – seek promotion
- Lateral move – seek a different job on the same level
- Proposal – present a proposal to create a new job

Develop your long list

Use the “idea sources” described above and brainstorm all your options in the table below.

The Long List	
1.	21.
2.	22.
3.	23.
4.	24.
5.	25.
6.	26.
7.	27.
8.	28.
9.	29.
10.	30.
11.	31.
12.	32.
13.	33.
14.	34.
15.	35.
16.	36.
17.	37.
18.	38.
19.	39.
20.	40.

Remember, at this stage you are expanding your thinking.

4 b. Explore and evaluate your long list – select top options

Now that you have expanded your thinking about possible options and have a long list of possibilities, you need to do a quick assessment of each option so that you can select the top ones to focus on.

To do this use the following **Quick Access Resources**:

- **Government websites** – go to www.myfuture.edu.au and click "the facts" tab. In the "Work and Employment" box click on "Occupations." You can now browse in a number of ways or search by different categories. Consider particularly "Duties," "Personal Requirements," "JobOutlook" under Labour Market (click on "Job Prospects" on the next screen), some specific "Vacancies," "Related Courses" and "Further Information."
- **Search engines** such as www.google.com.au to search on relevant key words for professional associations and examples of employers.
- **Employment websites** such as www.seek.com.au. Do Australia-wide searches. What similar jobs are being offered? What skills, talents, qualifications and experience are they looking for from applicants? What are they offering to pay?
- **Yellow Pages** – Are there many potential employers in your area? Who are they? Can they afford large advertisements in the Yellow Pages? Do they have websites you can look at?

Compare your findings with what you learnt about yourself from Step 2 and 3. Refer to your SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY PAGE at the end of Step 2.

When selecting your top options consider your alternatives from these perspectives:

1. **What gets you excited?** What would you love to do – your dream?
2. **What is practical?** What do you have the entry requirements, money or connections for? Where do you want to live and what is the work availability there? What meets your minimum requirements regarding financial income, hours of work, and lifestyle?
3. **How could you bring together your excitement and your practical situation?** What fits with your long term "big picture?" What might be a "stepping stone" option? For example: working as a restaurant waiter in a resort before or while studying tourism and hospitality at university to eventually become a resort manager.

The number of top options you need to select varies between people.

For one person there might be just two options that stand out clearly above the rest. For someone else there could be as many five top options or clusters of similar jobs which call for more careful examination. More than five top options are too many for most people to research in-depth.

4 c. Research your top options in-depth

Your in-depth research has three sources:

1. Written resources

Become as knowledgeable as possible on every aspect of your top options using the internet as suggested in the preceding section. Also include other written sources, such as brochures, annual reports and information packs, which professional and industry associations, universities, and the PR departments of large companies will usually send you upon your request.

2. Information meetings

For your top 2 or 3 options set up information meetings with people who work in those fields.

These meetings, which are sometimes also called “*information interviews*”, are a crucial step in career decision-making.

People will tell you things face-to-face that you will never find in writing. You will get a much clearer sense of the realities of working in the occupation.

You may also be offered help in unexpected ways.

One of most common mistakes is to spend years studying to enter an occupation without doing information meetings. Graduates are often disappointed with the realities they find. It is not unusual to even enjoy studying a field but not enjoy working in it. Don't make the same mistake – do your information meetings BEFORE you choose an option and invest years of your life and thousands of dollars pursuing it.

Information meetings are normally short, focused discussions. **You should prepare specific questions prior to the meeting.**

The following table outlines important areas to prepare questions for and some sample questions.

INFORMATION MEETING QUESTION AREAS AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Job content – what do you do?

- What is your job like? What proportion of your time is spent doing what?
 - A typical day? What do you do?
 - What are the duties/functions of your job? What problems do you deal with?
- What are the pros and cons with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
- Is there anything you suggest I read? Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?

2. Employment environment – what is it like working here?

- How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?
- Do you work outdoors/indoors as well? How much?
- What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you hold?

3. Lifestyle implications – hours, stress, travel demands?

- What are the hours?
- Do you need to travel?
- How does the job affect your personal life?
- Is there flexibility related to dress, work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?

4. Job rewards – what do you like about the job, what don't they like?

- Do you find your job exciting or boring? Why?
- What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field? Is there a salary ceiling?
- What are the major rewards aside from the money?
- From your perspective, what are the major frustrations of this job?

5. Entry requirements and short cuts – what tips and advice can they offer?

- What are the educational, requirements for this job? What other types of credentials or licenses are required? What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field? What path would you recommend?
- How important are grades/GPA for obtaining a job in this field?
- What skills, abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions? What entry level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
- What other kinds of organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here? Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?
- How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience? Is volunteer or "prac" work a possibility?
- What was most important to your career advancement?
- These are my strongest assets (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits and values):_____. Where would they fit in this field?

6. Job prospects and local conditions – what is happening in the local area?

- What can you tell me about the employment outlook in your field?
 - What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?
 - Do you have any special word of warning or encouragement as a result of your experience?
 - With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?
-

Information interviews are best set up through **networking** when possible. Starting with everyone you know ask if they know anyone who works in the field you are interested in and if they could put you in touch with them.

If you can't make the connection through networking then use the **direct approach**: call an organization that interests you, explain your purpose (researching your career options, NOT job hunting – at this time) and ask whom they could suggest you should talk with. When you get the person on the phone say that you realize their time is valuable but you would really appreciate meeting with them for 20 minutes so that you can ask some questions about their field. Ask if you could meet with them some time in the next week or two.

It is always better to have information meetings **face-to-face if possible**. You will get far more information and also be establishing a relationship which may be helpful later when you are job hunting. **If they say they're too busy**, ask if you can ask them a few questions on the phone and be ready to fire away with your most important questions.

Always ask towards the end of the discussion if they could recommend someone else that you should talk to. Ask if they could either call them first for you or give you permission to use their name when calling. Always try to make a good impression, as you never know how this person may be of assistance in the future.

Setting up and conducting information meetings requires most people to get out of their comfort zone. It is not easy, as you can expect at least some "No's." Don't take it personally.

Persevere, as it can make the difference between an on-target career and what turns out to be a dead-end career.

If you'd like further information on setting up and managing an information interview go to www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html. They offer an excellent tutorial on the subject.

3. Career experiments

If you want to be more certain of an option, before making a major commitment of time and money, look for ways to do some real world testing. Set up limited, but tangible, career experiments that allow you to experience different options.

See the table below for examples of ways you can do this.

Career experiment method	Examples
Short term contract, casual or consulting work	Take on some limited contracts or consulting work you can complete in the evenings or weekends in addition to your current day job. Before you quit your job to become a full time writer, try being a freelance writer and get some magazine articles published. Considering a sales career? Try some commission sales work or casual market research interviewing assignments.
Volunteer work	A few hours a week or even a month can expose you to new areas as well as give you valuable new contacts. For example, if you were considering a career in counselling you could train to become a volunteer telephone counsellor with Lifeline.
Help a friend	Work with a friend on a paid or unpaid basis to experience the business they are in.
Vacation and leave of absence work	Use your vacation time to do paid or unpaid work for an organization for a period. Public sector employees can often get extended unpaid leave of absences to try out new career options.
Current employer options	Your current organization can be an excellent place to test out options. Methods include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Temporary project work or secondment▪ Negotiating to take on new tasks▪ Seeking job rotation, training program and multi-skilling opportunities▪ Presenting a proposal for a new project

Research your top options - Summary Sheet

Option:

Summary of main facts (what, when, where, how, how much, etc.):

Key information sources:

Evaluation Checklist - Tick your response							
	Definitely	Possibly	Not at all		Definitely	Possibly	Not at all
Within my circle of power?				Uses my knowledge areas somehow?			
Aligns with my work values?				Does it reflect my career purpose?			
Builds on my interests somehow?				Does it support my life vision statement?			
Uses my natural abilities				Does it support my life area goals?			
Uses my learnt skills somehow?				Does it excite me? Is my heart as well as my head attracted to it?			

What I like about it:

What I don't like about it:

Who can I set up an information meeting with to learn more about this option?

How could I set up a career experiment to real-world test this option?

Step 5 - Decide and Set Goals

5 a. Decide

You now need to decide which option to focus on and set some goals so that you can then begin planning actions to achieve them. Once again you need to review everything that you have learnt about yourself, your career purpose and vision, and your career evaluation checklist and compare it with what you have learnt about your top options.

There are a number of ways you can approach your decision making process. Some personality types prefer more structured, formal evaluation techniques while others prefer to rely more on their intuitive sense of all the variables. The best approach is to engage both the rational and the intuitive parts of the mind in the decision-making process. A good example of how to do this is to use a **Decision Table** like the one on the next page.

Your Decision Table process would be:

1. **Consider and score** your decision factors for each option:

Total the scores at the bottom of the table.

2. **Allow some time** to let your subconscious mind consider the matter. What comes to mind when you wake in the morning? Spend several hours alone in nature (eg. at a beach, river, park or mountain) to allow yourself to reflect deeply. The previous step was primarily rational; this step is designed to tap more profoundly into your intuition and values. Reconsider your scores.
3. **Discuss your options** with significant others in your life such as your partner or parents. Their input is often important. Seek advice from others whom you respect as well. Reconsider your scores.
4. **Decide.** If your two top options are very close, go with the “bigger” one... the one that excites you more. Remember, most people on their deathbeds regret most what they DIDN'T do, not what they did.

DECISION TABLE

Decision Factors - Degree of fit with my:	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
1. Work values			
2. Interests			
3. Natural abilities			
4. Learnt skills & knowledge			
5. Personality			
6. Purpose (sense of contribution)			
7. Vision			
8. Social needs – partner, family, & friends			
9. Financial needs			
10. Demand for this service (job availability in target location)			
11. Degree of risk (uncertainty x required investment of time & money)			
12. Intuition - “gut” level feelings			
13. Reality check – views of others			
<i>Additional factors:</i>			
Totals			

Score each factor between 0 and 10 for each option where:

0 = very important and unquestionably negative factor overall

2 = important or not so negative factor overall

5 = unimportant or neutral factor overall

8 = important or not so positive factor overall

10 = very important and unquestionably positive factor overall

You might have up to five option columns if that is how many top options you are trying to decide between so a large piece of paper or a spreadsheet program may be best.

If you are stuck and you still can't decide you probably need to do more work in one of the preceding four steps of the Seven Steps. Perhaps you need to understand yourself more deeply, discover a different option, or research your options more thoroughly. Or you may need to use some of the suggested strategies in Step 1 to reduce some of your self-sabotages such as fear, doubt, and self-criticism.

5 b. Set Goals

Having decided your career trajectory you now need to set some career goals. This means writing your career goals down as the act of writing them helps you clarify and commit to them.

Having clear goals that challenge you, but are based on realistic research, is incredibly powerful. Outstanding performers in many fields attribute their success to setting goals and then focusing consistently on them.

Many people avoid setting goals because they are afraid of not being able to reach them. If you find yourself feeling this way then remind yourself of the old saying: "Better to aim for the moon and hit the top of the mountain than to aim for nothing and hit it easily." Others resist writing down goals because they're afraid they'll get them wrong. It is however okay at times to refine, revise or refocus your goals as you proceed.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try, ... and then re-evaluate!

But first determine if the problem is really the goal itself, or if it is your strategies (such as your job search approach), your self-sabotages, or you just need to learn to persist more. Set the best goals you can at this stage. Even if you do need to modify them it is far better than having no goals at all. Career management is an on-going process so you should be revisiting the Seven Steps at least annually anyway.

Ideally you should identify long-term, medium-term and short-term career goals:

Long-term goals = 5 – 10 year horizon
Medium-term goals = 1 – 5 year horizon
Short term-goals = 1 – 12 month horizon

These career goals should fit in with your broader life goals from *Step 3 – Define Success*.

With all the changes in the world of work it is not practical for most people to try to set definite career goals beyond a 10-year horizon.

A simple example of this goal setting for someone who had identified their unique purpose in the area of “safeguard and manage the environment” and life goals that included an income from a professional business would be:

Long-term goals – expand knowledge, skills and contacts and start profitable environmental planning firm within 10 years.

Medium term goals – enter and complete university qualifications, gain work experience and contacts in the field and secure job in an environmental planning firm upon graduation

Short term goals – complete prerequisite studies for mature age university entry, save \$15,000 for university fees.

The content of your goals will be completely unique to you and will need to be updated as you and circumstances change.



Step 6 - Plan and Act!

Having the best-developed career and life goals in the world are worthless without planned actions to achieve them. First we will look at the planning and then the action itself.

6 a. Plan

While the amount of planning that people are willing to engage in varies with the personality of the person some action planning is essential. The more you focus on planning your actions and then enacting your plan the sooner you will achieve your career and life goals.

Successful action plans are:

- **Exciting** – what you are planning to do has to motivate you!
- **Specific** – clear, time-bound goals and definite actions
- **Realistic** – well researched and reality tested with input from others
- **Flexible** – able to adapt to unexpected circumstances or setbacks

There are a number of types of action plans that may be relevant to you:

1. Career plan

This is your big picture or master plan for the next 10 years of your career. Your career plan should include:

Goals – these include your short-, medium-, and long-term career goals from the previous step and your life goals from Step 3.

Key Tasks – the components or steps that express your strategy for accomplishing your goals. You should consider your real and perceived barriers and obstacles to your goals and include strategies/tasks for overcoming or avoiding them.

Actions – important actions you can identify to achieve your steps with a particular focus on the next 6-12 months.

Resources and support – the information sources, organizations, training and people that you can identify to support you in implementing your actions and accomplishing your goals. Importantly, this should include motivational support from family, friends or mentors.

Timeframe – when you expect to commence and complete your specific actions.

Back-up Plans – your “what if” plans if the goal in its current form can not be achieved. It is important to recognise that there are many ways to achieve your goals and many ways around perceived and real barriers.

A good practice is to take each key task, step, or strategy from your career plan and do an action plan for implementing it on a separate sheet of paper.

The following pages provide two simple planning templates you can adapt to your needs if you wish:

- **Career Plan**
- **Key Action Plan – Short Term**

2. Training and development plan

To create a training and development plan you identify the knowledge and skills you will need to achieve your career goals and workout ways to acquire them. If this is not a major area of need it can be incorporated in your career plan. However it is usually a good idea to keep it separate but linked to your career plan. It also will need the normal action plan elements: goals, tasks, actions, resources, and a timeframe but with a focus on training and development.

3. Job search plan

A job search plan is an action plan requiring special knowledge and skills if it is to be as effective as possible. There are seven key job search strategies which I explain in more detail in the Complete Job Search Guide. Research suggests that effective job searches use at least three of these strategies concurrently.

To develop your job search plan access the Complete Job Search Guide.

4. Business plan

This extensive subject is outside the scope of this manual. Much information about the development of business plans can be found on the internet if you do a Google search on business planning and some other keywords relevant to your business idea.

5. Weekly or daily action plans (time management)

This is the ongoing time-management planning you will need to do to implement your career, training, business, and/or job search plans so as to focus your actions on a daily and weekly basis. Weekly or daily action plans will also help you manage the implementation of the prior Seven Steps such as organising information meetings and career experiments.

A diary or computer-based time management system is recommended. At the least, you must make time to create weekly or daily “to do” lists based on your progress in implementing your career plan.

The Connections – Planning and Action

As the following diagram indicates your research and reflections develops your guiding vision or idea for your career-life which flows into broad level planning and then needs to be enacted in your weekly and daily time management. Given time and perseverance, the success you seek will then come.



Career Plan

Long-term Goals (5-10 years)

Medium-Term Goals (1-5 years)

Short-Term Goals (1-12 months)

Key, Steps, Strategies, or Tasks	Time-frame	Resources & Support
1.	(start & finish)	
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
Back-Up Strategies		

Key Action Plan – Short-Term

Key Task, Step, Strategy

No. :

Description :

Actions (things I will do in the next 12 months)	Time-frame	Resources & Support
	(start & finish)	

6 b. Act!

Now is the moment of truth. . . where all your reflection, research and planning can come together into powerful, focused action! You now need to commit yourself strongly to move forward and take those first steps to pursue your dream.

It is widely recognised that successful people are people of action. They may make mistakes but they pick themselves back up, dust themselves off, and try again. The more you get out into the world, talk to people, and have a go, the more successful you will be in the long run. Now is a good time to remember some of the words that encourage us to act:

Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it! For boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now!

Johann Goethe

Our doubts are our traitors and make us lose the good we oft might gain by fearing to attempt.

William Shakespeare

Just do it! (As declared by the well-known footwear advertisement)

The reflection, research and planning you have done in the preceding steps will strengthen the effectiveness of your actions. However there are some things that need to be learnt by trial and error. Goethe went so far as to say, “Self-knowledge is best learned, not by contemplation, but by action.”

You will also maximise your chances for “getting lucky” with your career by being active and engaged with the world. A career theory called “planned happenstance theory” actually proposes that you can improve your career by **five action-oriented skills that will make you more “lucky” with your career:**

1. **Curiosity** – exploring new learning opportunities
2. **Persistence** – continuing to exert effort despite setbacks
3. **Flexibility** – being open to changing your beliefs, ideas and attitudes when called for
4. **Optimism** – viewing even challenging situations as offering possible opportunities
5. **Risk taking** – willingness to take action in the face of uncertain outcomes

If you stay open and alert for unexpected opportunities and new possibilities your career will reap the rewards!



Step 7 - Stay alert and enjoy the journey!

The previous six steps are just the beginning of your journey. They provide the framework for you to manage your career but **career development is not a once in a lifetime task. It is an ongoing process...** a journey of discovery of self and the world of opportunities you live in.

It is possible to identify **four basic career journey patterns or experiences**. Your career will fall into one of these patterns or possibly a hybrid of two or more. The four career patterns can be described as follows:

Career Pattern	Pattern description	Key personal motivators
Linear	More or less vertical movement up an organizational hierarchy to positions of greater responsibility (primary traditional view of career)	Power, achievement and external rewards
Expert	Focus on building skill and knowledge within an occupation or field (secondary tradition view of career)	Competence, status and stability
Spiral	Periodic moves across related occupations or fields with sufficient time in each (5-10 years) to achieve a high level of competence before progressing on	Creativity and personal growth
Transitory	Frequent (1-5 years) moves across different occupations or fields	Variety and independence

In the past, the world of work was most suited to individuals who naturally tended towards the linear or expert career patterns. However the **changes in the world of work now tend to often favour those who are proficient with managing a spiral or even transitory approach** to their careers. In fact, except perhaps for a few government departments and well protected companies, it is becoming increasingly rare to find organizations in our global

economy today that support traditional linear careers. Even fields of expertise are changing and occasionally becoming redundant themselves. Being the number one expert on typewriter repair is no longer a viable career. The closest to these traditional career paths most of us can expect today is a spiral-expert or spiral-linear hybrid career as we move in and out of various product areas, technologies, functions, organizations, and industries.

Hence it is important for you to be prepared to navigate a spiral or transitory career.

Many people successfully make a career transition, get a little comfortable and then fall asleep at the helm of their career.

Eventually they may get jolted awake when they hit a rock... they've been made redundant, their industry is in decline or their company has gone out of business. Alternatively, some people finally wake themselves up after years of vague dissatisfaction and realize they don't really have twenty years of experience in their career but rather one year repeated twenty times. Either way, their career neglect is reflected in their skill set, their employability and their earnings potential. If that is your current situation do not despair. By working through these seven steps you can still create a course to career success.

If you are just setting out on your career or your career is currently thriving the important point is to stay alert at the helm of your career. As you approach each of your spiral or transitory moves you will need to revisit these seven steps.

Career Check Up

To help you monitor your career and alert yourself to the need to revisit the seven steps ask yourself periodically questions such as:

1. Are my attitudes, beliefs or behaviours limiting or even sabotaging my career?
2. Do I still know what my best skills are and what I want in return?
3. Are my career goals clear? Have I updated my short-, medium-, and long-term goals and plans?
4. Am I going to work thinking it is my employer's fault that I'm not happy in my job?
5. Is my life in balance? How are other areas of my life going – partner, family, health, finances, etc.?
6. Am I over-stressed?
7. Am I getting good feedback from my employer and/or clients that I am adding value and developing myself appropriately?
8. Is my position, department, organization or industry in danger of decline?
9. Are there better options out there for me? What are they?
10. Am I maintaining and expanding my network of acquaintances to keep me informed of opportunities?
11. Am I doing the same thing that I was doing five years ago?
12. What have I learnt in the last six months? Am I developing professionally?

13. When was the last time I reviewed my career action options with my current employer – project work, secondment, new tasks, reduced responsibilities and stress, relocation, promotion, lateral moves and new position proposals?
14. Am I taking action or procrastinating?
15. When was the last time I felt really excited about my work?
16. Am I enjoying what I do?

The last question is important. In our society at least, your career is rarely just about surviving. **If you find yourself just doing something because you “have to” then ask yourself why are you really doing it?** It may be a choice you have made based on assumptions, beliefs and values which may not be accurate or in your best interests any more. There may be better alternatives out there that have been invisible to you until now.

Many people, for example, declare that they are stuck in their career path for the sake of their family. But if they come home stressed out, irritable and unfulfilled from their work is it really the best thing for their family? Some people eventually develop an illness which forces them to change their lives because they weren't willing to face up to the need for change earlier. Don't let this happen to you. A life is a valuable thing and not to be wasted.

Value yourself, your family and friends, and your career. There are worthy career options out there and these seven steps will help you find... or create them.

If you'd like some help from a professional career coach and counsellor please get in touch. (mitch@career-wise.com.au or just call 0422 582 356)

Good luck and enjoy the journey!