

CAREER PLANNING

GETTING STARTED

Choosing a career is a lot like going on an overseas trip. Before starting out on a journey most people have a destination in mind and their trip – including itinerary, stopovers, airlines and luggage - is planned based on that destination. But would you start your travels by going to the airline check-in counter and asking for a ticket on the next plane leaving? Probably not! So why would you start work at the first job you were offered without considering your final destination? After all, the first job you are offered may not be a step towards the career you ultimately want to be in.

So how do you get on the right career path?

First the "destination" needs to be mapped out.

The easiest way to do this is ask yourself the **Million Dollar Question**.

"If I were paid a large amount of money per year and could choose any occupation in the world and I was given all the skills and qualifications to do my dream job, what job would I do?"

OK, so if you answered 'chocolate taste tester' we don't blame you! But is that really what you want to do for the rest of your life, or do you think you'd start to feel sick after a few days?!

To help you plan your "destination" you may wish to, use the simple steps below, which will lead you to your ideal career...

CHOOSING YOUR DESTINATION – 5 KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER

One of the key ingredients to a satisfying career is working in an area that naturally inspires you, something you enjoy doing.

When answering the following questions, reflect on how you've reacted in these situations previously, positions you have held and the types of things you enjoy doing in your spare time.

1. PEOPLE/ENVIRONMENT

Do you most enjoy working - alone, independently but around others, or with a team?

How do you most enjoy interacting with others? Or working alone?? e.g. educating, selling, caring, helping/supporting, writing, analysing, researching, competing, advising, leading, creating, etc.

What type of people do you, or would you, enjoy associating/interacting with? e.g. needy, disabled independent, healthy, professional, well educated, down to earth, caring, responsible, demanding, driven, etc.

What things would you like to talk to them about? e.g. areas of your interest, social, political, controversial, supportive, educational or highly technical subjects.

What industry or profession is of interest to you? (Flick through the Yellow Pages and write down the industries or areas that interest you.)

2. STYLE OF MANAGEMENT

Which of the following styles have you or would you most enjoy?

- Clear, direct and goal focused
- Caring and supportive
- Inspiring and enthusiastic
- Leading by example
- Entrepreneurial

3. PLACE

Where would you feel most comfortable working?

- What country/city or suburb?
- In an office in the CBD, from home, or an old villa in an urban street?
- Out calling on people?
- In a large or multinational organisation?

4. SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Be honest when you ask yourself:

- What are you good at?
- What skills do you like to use?
- What topics/subjects interest you?
- How do you like collecting information and on what subjects? e.g. through computers - Internet, books, magazines, conversations, film, video or formal learning.

5. REWARDS

- Think about what returns you really want from a job. Consider which of the following are important to you: Your starting salary level?
- Financial incentives?
- Opportunities for promotion?
- Status and title of your job?
- Being patted on the back?
- Making other people happy??

- Giving or sharing your knowledge?
- Having a mentor?
- Being supported to further your education?

NOW YOU'RE READY TO CHOOSE THE DESTINATION

Finding your main priorities in each area where you will not compromise will show you what you need in a job to really enjoy what you do.

PLOT THE WAY

Now that we've established some guidelines for your destination, start to gather information on where it might be.

Under People/Environment above, you made a list of industries you were interested in. If you are interested in an industry or profession but don't really know much about it, now's the time to find out!

People love talking about what they do, so make contact with as many people in that industry as you can to get a good picture of what it would be like. (A suitable approach to a manager might be: "I am interested in your industry, may I ask you what you do in your role and the steps you took to get to where you are in your career?") If you don't know anyone appropriate, ask your friends and family if they do. Speak to professional associations and ask for referrals. People will admire you for taking responsibility for your future. Talk to employees in companies you're interested in.

BE PREPARED!

From your career plan you can work out what questions to ask. (Use open questions "What...? How...?, Where...?, Why...?")

If you have found a role that interests you, talk to two or three people in that position:

- ask about the things they like and don't like about their role
- observe or ask about the skills they use: organising, planning, verbal, written, initiative etc.

If you can, spend some time observing them at work. Put yourself into their role and ask yourself:

Why would this role suit me?

What would I not like about it?

Why would I be good in this role?

What have I got to take into the role?

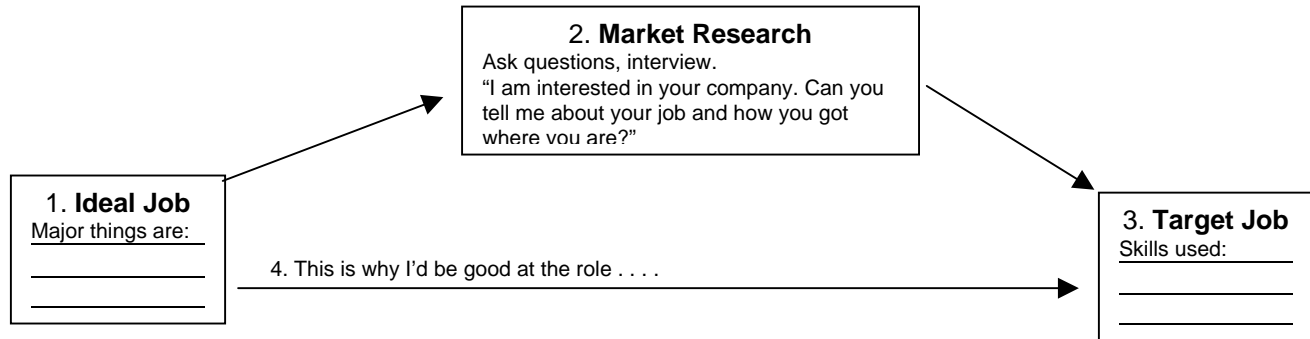
What challenges will the role present?

Do I understand what I would be doing on a daily basis?

Try to see yourself through the eyes of someone employing you. (More information is available under [preparing for interviews](#).)

What are the risks to the company of taking me on?

How do I fit into a new environment?



WHAT MAKES ME THE BEST CANDIDATE FOR THE ROLE?

Look at your resumé - does it show how well you fit the role?

Does it say enough about you to make someone want to interview you, but not so much that they don't need to?

Check out our tips on [creating a great resume](#).

Be realistic in your expectations and be honest to yourself.

MOST IMPORTANTLY...

Find a good consultant, one who appreciates the effort you have put in and the responsibility you have taken for your future. They will be able to help you find your dream job. Stay in touch with your consultant – even a brief phone call reminding them how committed you are may inspire them to go the extra mile for you.