

Planning your career — get to the dream job you want

Planning your career can be challenging. What do you really want to do with your life? Are you on the right path? Is this job just a dead end or is it helping you build valuable skills? Fortunately, you're not on your own. With the right process, mind frame, and experience you can carve out a career path that'll get you to the career you want — even if you're not sure what that is just yet.

In this BusinessManagementDaily article, we cover:

- Planning your career of success
- Ways to set goals and crush them
- How to research your career and build a solid portfolio

The next time you're career planning, use these invaluable tips:

Planning your career

Career exploration with an open mind

Sifting through career options is a task with near-limitless possibilities, so have fun with your job search. Be open to different options. Keeping an open mind open mind when it comes to your job position or job title will help you find a suitable fit easier.

Don't box your options into one category. You might be qualified for jobs that you didn't even know about.

Don't be afraid to change careers. You might like your new career better than the last, and professional development progress always comes from being well-rounded. Having experience in more than one spectrum makes you invaluable to employers, so a career change could result in making substantially larger amounts of money.

Ask for career advice

Asking for advice from knowledgeable sources is possibly the best way to form a career plan. Rely on the advice of people who have done it before. This could be someone internal in your organization or someone outside of it. Professional networking groups can be a great tool in syncing you up with others in your industry. However, don't just rely on those. Surfing around LinkedIn can also be a great way to get in touch with the right people.

If you applied for a job and didn't get it, try to ask for advice and look for reasons why they didn't hire you. This can give you direction on what to work on for the next time around.

Obtain as much information as possible

Research is huge when planning the rest of your life's work.

Do you know which companies you would potentially want to work for? Do you know what job title is fit for your qualifications? Do you know what kind of salary you need?

These are all questions that you should know the answer to when looking for work. Use the internet to your advantage when looking for your dream job. That old style of printing off your application and taking it into the business is long gone. LinkedIn, Ziprecruiter, Indeed, and other professional networking sites are great for finding jobs and other career information.

Whether you're considering jobs elsewhere or looking to advance with your current organization, look over some job listings and see what skills are required. Highlight what skills you have, what jobs look interesting, and what gaps may exist. That'll give you some direction for building your skills. Or you might find that you already check many of the boxes!

Keep a solid record of your accomplishments

Professional social networking sites are a great way to help you keep tabs on your accomplishments. Your future employer can't and won't hire you if they don't know what you're capable of. Additionally, when it comes to making a case for yourself you don't want to have to scramble to remember details. Keep samples of your work and notes on some of your accomplishments!

It's all about creating an impressive resumé/portfolio of yourself and making an action plan.

Let's note that professional experience is becoming increasingly more influential to managers when compared to a college degree when looking at your job application. However, many employers still look for formal education, and having both is a big-ticket to success.

Narrow Down Your Choices

Yes, you should be as open-minded as possible when choosing your career, but at some point, you're going to have to narrow down your options. Education Planner has a great tool that helps students follow a checklist for getting to the point.

You may not be a high school student, but using a checklist will still help you decipher which jobs you want and which jobs you want to crumple up and toss in the trash bin.

Set Goals

Make goals, and crush them. Goal setting is key in successfully planning your career

It's the classic 'where will you be in five years' question that needs to be set in stone. If you're not ready for that dream job now, then what do you need to do to get there? Determine what skills you need, what projects might help you build your resume. If you're considering a career change, how will you get that experience? Do you need a formal training program? Your goals may change over time, but having something set will ensure you're moving in the right direction.

Purdue University points out that you should [set attainable goals](#), and focus on the things you can control. Be sure to track those efforts. Smart goals involve good intentions and regular self-assessment.

Getting skills

Job Shadowing

Just like buying a car, trying out a job before taking it is always a great idea. What if you love the clean

environment of working at an accounting firm, but you lack the necessity of being able to stand up and walk outside when necessary?

Many organizations may allow you to do some job shadowing as part of your role, especially if you express interest in furthering your career with them. However, even if your organization doesn't permit it, then consider looking for other places to get the skills. Perhaps you can volunteer with a local organization and help someone doing work similar to the career you might be interested in. They'll likely be happy for the help.

Professional organizations might also have options like this, helping those in different jobs get a taste of what other careers might be like.

Education

If you don't quite have the skills you need to reach your career goals, then formal education may be a benefit. Do you need a degree? Would a Masters help? Sometimes just a class, certification, or other training might be all you need.

Take on new projects

If you're on the right path but short a few skills, there may be room within your current job to get there. Look at what new projects and responsibilities you can take on that will help you advance your career.

The right approach

Be multi-faceted

Successful people often excel at more than one occupation. For example, a business owner might be a professional at making a product and be an amazing marketing manager at the same time.

Do you want to be a jack of all trades and master of none or simply focus hard on one area to be the best in your field? There are advantages to both, and occupations like the medical field require an extreme focus on just one subject.

Everyone has a different style of working, and planning a career correctly demands knowledge of self.

Career success happens with a positive tone

Don't forget to smile and wave before the success touches your fingertips. Negative people rarely achieve their goals not only because they don't believe in themselves but also because other people don't want to help out a downer.

According to a Penn State study, [smiles are contagious](#). It's also very important to be alive when starting your first job or a new job. Learn people's names, and call them out when you see them. Say things like 'what's up!' or 'how are you today?' in an excited tone, and people will flock to your positive energy.

Finding a new job

Prepare yourself for interview questions

Preparation is key. You can impress your interviewer by answering questions with confidence and an upbeat tempo. Discuss detail in your answers to show that you know what you're talking about and aren't over exaggerating. Don't leave any of your talents in the shadows in your job search.

It helps to build a list of potential questions that might be asked in the interview beforehand. Make sure that your answers pull in the key skills and examples you want to convey in the interview.

Going on the hunt

If you're ready to look for new jobs, here are some suggested steps:

1. **Build an impressive portfolio/resume.** Impress employers by showing them what you're capable of.
2. **Add your portfolio to online job marketplaces.** Your portfolio isn't any good if it doesn't reach the eyes of employers. While sometimes sites like this can be spammy, they can also be a good way to find leads on jobs that you may not have considered on your own.
3. **Apply to as many jobs as possible.** With today's technology, you have no excuse for applying as many job applications as possible. Websites like Ziprecruiter let you scroll down a list of jobs and submit your portfolio by the touch of a button to each employer. That means you could potentially apply for hundreds of jobs in one day. However, it can also be smart to customize your resume and cover letter for individual jobs, so don't skimp out on effort here!
4. **Be prepared for responding to job offers.** Shooting at a wide range of targets means you could get a lot of responses. Be sure to respond quickly, keep an eye out for follow-ups, and be attentive. You should be prepared for multiple interview stages, have examples of your work to provide, and be prepared for the long haul — finding jobs can take a long time.

Say no to low numbers

The important thing to remember is that numbers are just numbers. In many cases, management actually *has* the money to pay you more. When it comes to initial job offers, this is a point when you might have the most negotiating power so don't miss the opportunity. Show that you value yourself and your time. You might not be successful in getting more money, but you definitely won't be offered more money if you don't ask.

Find The Job You Love

Don't settle for a job you hate. The most important thing about life is enjoying it. When you're planning your career, aim for something you'll enjoy. While not everyone will necessarily land their dream job, you also shouldn't aim for a job that you'll dislike.