

What do you want from work?

In taking the first steps towards a new career plan, we look at the following issues:

- your motivation for planning
- a simple framework for career planning
- what you want from work

As we set out to consider what we are doing at work and where we wish to go, there are always a number of seemingly good reasons to put it off yet again. So we have to start by confronting why we need to look at our own careers, and what the likely benefits might be.



Clearing away the barriers

The very term 'career' often seems daunting. Nowadays, careers are simply sequences of work experience. These can

involve sideways moves, moves between employers and/or between different types of work, and even periods out of paid employment. More people are having 'portfolio' careers, combining several paid or unpaid work activities at the same time. However, all careers need thinking about if we are to find satisfaction in our work and non-work lives.

A barrier to career planning for many people is the lack of a clear approach to thinking their way through the many uncertainties involved in sorting out future job options. We will introduce a simple framework which can be used to guide our thinking.

Once you have looked at why you need to plan and understood the overall framework, then you are ready to move on to the first personal task: to take a long cool look at what you really want to get out of work.

The aim of these initial steps is to reduce your level of anxiety and set you free to think as widely as possible before you narrow down the field to particular jobs. Few of us are ever really lateral enough in our career planning.

Why try to plan your career?

Most of us feel from time to time that we should reconsider where we are going, but it seems safer not to think about it just yet.

Career planning is not just for the very young or the redundant. Most of us will need to rethink our careers several times in our working lives.

Such rethinking may lead to very modest changes, such as a rather different job with your current employer. Or it may



lead to much more radical change of direction, as you realise that the essence of your line of work does not suit or satisfy you. Or it may result in no change at all, except a new appreciation of where you are going and why it feels right.

Planning as a necessity

It is important to be aware that by not planning you put yourself in real danger.

Work opportunities are changing all the time, and some jobs become obsolete or reduce in numbers as others open up. If we do not ensure our own employability by acquiring the right skills and moving into areas which offer some opportunity, then no one else will do it for us.

Gone are the days when careers were an orderly progression managed by the employer. These days change is continuous. Work often comes as projects and most employers expect individual employees to take the main responsibility for managing their own careers. This means we must look



around for suitable work avenues to pursue and persuade our employers that we are ready to tackle fresh challenges.

If you are in any real doubt as to whether you should stop and think about your career direction, remember that 'failing to plan is planning to fail'. Successful people often say they have 'just been lucky'. This is true only to the extent that none of us can map out our future careers in every detail. Success, however, does depend on having some goals in mind and seeking opportunities to move towards them.

Your own reasons for reviewing your career

Now you need to clarify why you are looking at your career at this particular time. Some reasons might be:

- not enjoying the current job (finding it boring, stressful, frustrating, etc.)
- feeling that career progression is blocked (no obvious next step, employer does not recognise potential etc.)

- suspicion that you are in the wrong kind of work altogether and need a more radical change
- fear of job loss, or wish to maintain employability
- trying to find a new route back into paid work (after redundancy or an educational course or a period of caring for dependants)
- a desire for other forms of work (voluntary work, work in 'retirement', self-employment, etc.)
- wishing to find a better fit between work and non-work priorities (caring for children, less travelling, more flexible or shorter hours)

A framework for career planning

Any approach to career planning involves focusing both on yourself and on the job market. The framework used here encourages you to think first about yourself.

First consider three main questions in relation to yourself:

- What do you want from work? (work values)
- What kind of job would you enjoy? (job interests)
- What are you good at? (skills)

Then turn your attention to the *job market* and:

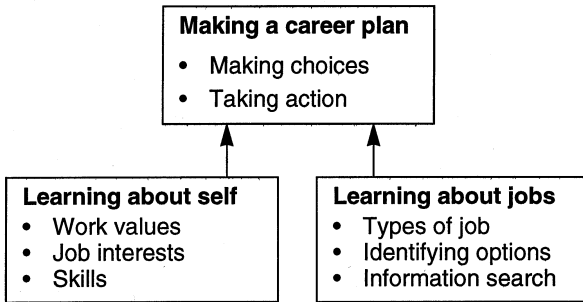
- look at the broad types of jobs available
- identify some possible career options
- find out about jobs with which you are not familiar, either inside your organisation or elsewhere

On the firm foundation of these two types of knowledge you can then:

- make your career choice
- start to take action

A simple diagram can help you to remember these basic building blocks of career planning.

The building blocks of career planning



What do you want to get out of work?

The rest of today’s programme will be devoted to starting to look at what you really want from work: your *work values*.

You may feel you work primarily to pay the bills. However, if you had to choose between two similar jobs, would you automatically take the job which paid more? Not necessarily. One job might involve a longer journey to work, the other might be in an organisation you know to be facing an uncertain future.

It is clear that what would matter most to another person might not matter most to you. Some of us are happy to take

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Exercise 1: understanding your work values

Give each statement a score out of 10 using the scale below.



How important is it that your work:	Score
1 Encourages accomplishment and achievement?
2 Offers you steady employment and security?
3 Provides new and different experiences?
4 Requires you to take personal and financial risks?
5 Provides good financial rewards and social status?
6 Benefits the community or provides a service to others?
7 Gives you the opportunity to use your initiative?
8 Is in an organisation that treats people fairly?
9 Is with colleagues that are easy to get along with?
10 Offers opportunities to direct and influence people?

Now identify which statement has been given the highest score and rank that statement 1, find the statement with the next highest score and rank that statement 2, and so on. The order in which the values are ranked shows us the kind of rewards we want from work. Values ranked highest tell us about work settings that are likely to be attractive to us and values ranked low are likely to be unattractive to us.

Value	Work involves:	Rank
Achievement/ Challenge	Using your abilities; offering interest and challenge	.....
Security/ Stability	A comfortable work environment that is not stressful	.....
Variety	Meeting new people and many different projects	.....
Enterprise/ Risk	Creating something new from scratch; coping with uncertainty	.....
Economic Status	High salary, occupational and social standing, prestige	.....
Altruism/ Service	Concern for the welfare of others	.....
Autonomy	Being in control of your own work	.....
Equity	Concern for fairness and equality of opportunity at work	.....
Social	Friendly work environment	.....
Influence	Opportunities to lead, manage and influence	.....

a risky career decision, because, for instance, we are confident in our own abilities, or because we think that a particular job is really worthwhile.

Start with your real priorities

Knowing the kind of work that would meet your real priorities means understanding your work values.

Start by completing Exercise 1 on pages 12–13.



Where does work fit with the rest of your life?

This is another key question to think about early in the career planning process. For example, how much time do you want to devote to work? It is not just a question of whether you want to work full time or part time, or whether you mind working shifts or at weekends. The question is about how central you want your work to be in your life. How will you achieve work/life balance?

How important is it that you:

- Have opportunities to work as a ‘volunteer’ for a charity or in a political campaign?
- Spend time with your family and friends?
- Are involved in caring for children or elderly parents?
- Play sport or participate in your favourite hobby?

Perhaps it does not matter if your work takes over the whole of your life, because what you plan to do is going to be so important to you.

It is not for ever

We all change, and our circumstances change. You are not committing yourself irreversibly to a course of action when you make career plans.

If you no longer want to continue with the sort of work you have been doing, it does not mean you were wrong to start doing this sort of work in the first place.

What matters most to someone at the age of 20 is not necessarily going to be what matters most to the same person at the age of 30 or 40. On the other hand, there may be things that you have always wanted to do or to try out but, for some reason, in the past have never had the opportunity to do or never thought it would be possible for them to be the basis of paid employment.

It is not too late

It may not be easy to change career direction, especially if it means leaving a well-paid secure job to start again at the bottom rung of a career ladder, or becoming a student again; but lots of people have done it.



Over the next six days we will work through the remaining six steps in planning your career. We continue on Monday by looking at job interests.

Summary

We have spent Sunday examining the crucial issue of what we want from work. In doing that we have looked at:

- the barriers to career planning
- why you need to plan your career
- your own reasons for reviewing your career
- a framework for career planning
- understanding your work values
- where work fits with the rest of your life