Career Plans: Why Have One?

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IRVINE
CAREER SERVICES

When starting your job search, it can be tempting to surf the Web for job ads or grab the help-wanted section of the newspaper. However, before even searching for job openings, you need to know what to look for. Today's job market is constantly changing and widening, so there are many career paths to follow that you have yet to discover. Reflect on who you are and what you want in order to direct your career exploration. Talk to people in the fields you explore and research similar jobs in different industries; you never know what you will find! Make sure you have your job search tools in hand – such as a polished resume and confidence in your interview skills – when you are ready to start searching for jobs.

Step 1: Self-Assessment

Understanding yourself is a critical aspect of career and educational exploration and planning. The more you know about your career-related interests, values and skills, the better equipped you will be to identify the career fields and education pathways that best suit you. Assessment tools will help you develop an accurate self-assessment of your personal qualities:

- **Your Work Interests** are a reflection of the kinds of work related activities and tasks you most enjoy doing.
- **Your Values** are a description of what is most important to you in your life. For example, you might value earning a lot of money, helping other people, being creative and artistic, etc.
- **Your Skills** are a reflection of your talents and the things you easily learn and perform.
- **Your Personality Type** is a description of how you react to certain situations and people, how you make decisions, how you organize information and go about solving problems.

Step 2: Career Exploration

Gathering accurate information about careers is the next important step in the decision process. Become an "information expert" on the fields you are considering.

things to consider

- How much training or education is required to enter and advance in this career?
- Do jobs in this career area exist where I live? If not, where do they exist and can I move there?
- What are the skills, values, interests, and personal traits of the people who are successful in this career?
- What are the daily tasks involved in this work?
- Will the salary and benefits meet my needs?

career exploration continued...

You can gather the information you need in a variety of ways:

- Explore career discovery websites (like the Bureau of Labor Statistics or InsideJobs.com) to learn about jobs across field and industries.
- Watch CandidCareer videos to hear real interviews with employees in various fields.
- Talk to people who do the work you want to do. “Informational interviewing" helps you discover skills needed for specific jobs, find out about training/education, and learn how people feel about their work.
- Volunteer, work part-time, or participate in an internship in your field of interest.
- Job shadow. Spending a day or part of a day with a person in a career field that interests you can provide a lot of information about that career.

Step 3: Implement your Career Choice

After exploring potential careers, it's time to pick which to pursue. Taking this step may be the most challenging part of the entire process. However, you as a decision-maker bring a unique combination of personal characteristics — values, strengths, limitations, attitudes, and feelings — that shape the decision. You are also influenced by surrounding environmental forces: family and friends, social values, personal circumstances, and community and educational resources.

Even if you aren't completely sure of a career choice, this is the time to hone your other job search skills. These skills include:

Resume and Cover Letter Development Interview Preparation
Social Networking Networking Strategies Job Search Strategies

Step 4: Start Your Job Search

Once you have decided on a specific career, follow a job search strategy for finding openings. While you can search on job boards and company websites, make sure to also spread the word in your network about your search. Create a job search plan and make sure to dedicate time to finding openings that match your chosen career path.

Adapted from Carroll College, Vermont Student Assistance Corp. and Dr. Frank J. Minor, Saint Anselm College

Victoria.Jaffe@cui.edu
Professional Development Coach
(949) 214-3042 | careercoach@cui.edu