

## Lesson 7 — Workplace Planning (developing and advancing your career plan)

Workplace planning refers to the process of developing a personal “Career Plan.”

A “Career Plan” is a statement of direction regarding your future, along with an outline of the goals and timelines necessary to reach your goal. In other words, your “Career Plan” will help you outline how to get from where you are now to where you want to be in the future.

Who successfully builds a house, car, bridge or anything without a plan?

Success in any endeavor can be further assured by taking the time to develop a plan on how to move forward and achieve your goals. Without a plan, the future is often left to chance – and when things are left to chance, there’s usually a greater chance for failure. So, increase your chances for success by building, updating and following a “Career Plan.”

Also, know that plans are ultimately projections about what should be done or accomplished. Plans get changed all the time. As you move forward, new circumstances and opportunities arise that may suggest the need to change or modify your plan. So, as you build your “Career Plan,” always be ready to update and improve it.

### The career plan

Your career plan is going to be the story of your work life.

As with any good story (and we want yours to be a great one), it should always be guided by the basic framework needed to have a full and complete narrative. All good stories should attempt to answer the questions represented by these interrogative words: who, what, where, when, why and how. These single word questions constitute the guide on how to compose your career story.

Therefore, as you begin to formulate your career plan or the story of your “work life,” let’s be guided by these key words so they can guide you.

(NOTE: A Blank “Career Plan” is Appendix D on page 241)

### First, the “Who?”

Answer this question about yourself: “Who am I?”

Reflect, think deeply, and study yourself.

Talk to those you know and trust to possibly help you find the answers to this question.

When you have free time, what do you first think about doing during that free time? What are the fun things you like to do? Think about these questions and then list your interests, activities, hobbies, and

sports. Once you've created this list, try to identify from these activities the key elements or qualities which represent the reasons why these things appeal to you.

For example, if you LOVE to play video games, ask yourself "why?" Maybe you love to solve problems. Maybe you love to see your score go higher and higher. Perhaps it's the technology that appeals to you. Or, maybe you love to work on complex projects which have many stages to complete before success can be achieved (game over). These are the deeper reasons why you like an activity and they may begin to reveal to you what attributes or qualities you need to have in your dream job.

Another example might be if you answer this question by saying you love sports. Again, ask yourself why you love them. Maybe you love the challenge of having to practice and repeat skills until they get better and better. Maybe it's the idea of winning or it's the joy of competition. Maybe it's because of the teamwork involved or maybe it's the friendships that come from having people on your side or team. Maybe it's because of the physical aspects: staying in shape, getting an adrenaline rush, and so on. Again, these types of questions and answers can build a foundation for understanding which careers offer you the attributes or things you like the most.

Let's start to explore "who" you are, as you begin to build your story. To help get you started, the first three lines are possible examples of entries.

<b>Things I like to do -- interests, activities, hobbies, sports, etc.</b>	<b>Which parts most appeal to me &amp; why</b>
1 collect old things	1 learn history
2 swimming	2 be near the water
3 playing basketball	3 physical activity
4	4
5	5

And, on the other side of the ledger or coin, here are the things I don't like to do.

<b>Things I don't like to do -- Interests, activities, hobbies, sports, etc.</b>	<b>Which part(s) don't appeal to me &amp; why</b>
1 writing	1 spelling and grammar
2 sports	2 being clumsy
3 meeting new people	3 feeling shy
4	4
5	5

Next, as you consider other things relative to learning more about “who am I?” begin to think about the qualities you have or want to develop in yourself – not necessarily related to jobs (they can be), but overall. Let's first look at identifying some of your good qualities.

<b>Good Qualities – Qualities I have that I like about myself</b>	<b>Ways of improving</b>
1 I like to solve problems	1 Take more science or math courses
2 I like to play video games	2 Invent new video games
3 I get good grades	3 Ask for extra credit
4	4
5	5

Next, let's go negative on your qualities. What are the things about you that you don't like and may want to work-on and improve?

<b>Not-so-Good Qualities – Qualities I don't have which worry me</b>	<b>Ways of improving them</b>
1 Afraid of change	1 Try new things & talk about them with others
2 Don't speak well in public well	2 Join "Toastmasters Club"
3 Can't make friends easily	3 Read a book about making friends
4	4
5	5

## Second, the "What?"

Answer this question about yourself: "What's my situation?"

What are both your assets and liabilities? What are your work-related strengths and weaknesses? What education opportunities, work resources or experiences do you already have that strengthen your situation as a job applicant? What are you missing or needing to improve to become a desirable job applicant?

Take stock of your current situation with regards to what you already have and what you might need next to keep moving forward. Make a listing of your strengths and weaknesses. (If you completed the SWOT exercise in Part I of this book, refer to it for use here.) Call this listing your "current location or status" and keep updating it as time passes, because things change. If you always know where you are in your journey or story, you will be better able to direct yourself to where you want to go.

What's my situation right now?

<b>List your assets or strengths (education, work, volunteer activities).</b>	<b>What makes you proud about it?</b>
1 Sing in the church choir	1 I like giving to others
2 Getting my college degree	2 Am completing my educational goals
3 Had two summer internships	3 Gained workplace experience I can mention
4	4
5	5

And, the negative is...

List your liabilities or weaknesses (lack of education, work, volunteer activities – be sure to include your emotional fears and anxieties)	What’s needed or missing?
1 Failed a course in college	1 Take it again & improve grade
2 Never had an internship	2 Make a plan to get one
3 Not sure anyone would hire me	3 Talk about it with people you trust
4	4
5	5

### Third, the “Where?”

Answer this question about yourself: “Where do I want to go with my career?”

Dream, dream, DREAM!

Think about the ending of your work-life story: where do you want to be when you retire? Also, develop your ultimate dream in increments of 5 years. Where do you want to be after the first 5 years of working? In 10 years? In 15 years, etc.? What kind or type of success would make you proud? With your future goals in view, the overall picture of where to begin and how to progress will become clearer.

As you do this exercise, imagine the places you might like to work. Think about the jobs you might like to hold on the way to the “top” of your dream job/career and if they are useful “stepping stones” to your ultimate goals. Also, consider where you might want to live. Do you dream about living somewhere else? Plus, do you have dreams about making major contributions to a specific profession or occupational field? Think about all these aspects surrounding your career and consider them as your dream about what’s best for you.

Dreaming is vital to building a strong career plan. Having a well-considered dream or plan will excite, focus and motivate you to make it happen.

Possible Dream Jobs	Where should I be in 5 years?	Where should I be in 10 years?	Where should I be in 15 years?	Where should I be in 20 years?	When I retire?
1 Educator	Teacher	School Principal	Area Supervisor	Educational Consulting Firm	State Superintendent
2 Pilot	Regional Airline Pilot	Major Airline Pilot	Pilot Trainer	Airline Supervisor	VP for Airline Operations
3 Business	Regional Sales	National Sales	Start Company	Have Successful Company	Chair of Board
4					
5					

#### Fourth, the “When?”

Answer this question about yourself, “When do I get started?”

Remember, time flies by.

Before you know, it will be tomorrow and you will be finishing school – and if you don’t start your planning right now, you’ll not only lose precious and valuable time, you’ll also increase your anxiety and fears about this important subject.

We already know that subject of getting prepared, seeking and going to work is a frightening subject: it’s notorious for developing a severe case of avoidance behavior in everyone, especially students. Don’t let this behavior attack you!

Get started immediately and set dates to do the various tasks necessary to keep you moving forward. Stick to your plan and timelines. For example, decide on a timeframe for when you should change any of your habits that aren’t going to help you become an attractive or appealing professional; decide exactly when you should apply to the next level of education (if appropriate); decide when you should work in

internships, summer jobs or as a volunteer; decide when you should start preparing for and looking for work; decide when you should begin to apply for jobs; and decide, decide, decide! Make a plan. Then, keep to your schedule.

Your plan will be your coach and guide. And your fears will begin to melt away because you have a plan and are acting on it.

Tasks needed to be completed	On this date I will (fill in the step to completion)	On this date I will (fill in the next step to completion)	Date to be completed
1 Summer Internship	By March 1: Apply	April 1: Check-in	June 1: Start Job
2 Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation Services	By June 1: Research Completed	July 1: Apply	Sept. 1: Get intake appointment
3 Write Resume	By Sept. 1: Finish draft	Oct. 1: Get draft reviewed by Career Center	Nov. 1: Complete master resume to be adapted for each job application
4			
5			

As a student, please remember to avoid, at all costs, delaying your career planning and searching until you graduate from school because you're too "busy" with school.

As we've discussed earlier, employers want to get the cream of each year's graduating class. This means they think that the best students are out looking for work before they graduate (and they are). These are the students who seem the freshest and some of the most promising of all students emerging from college each year. As time passes after graduation, each month makes the late starting candidates less and less interesting to employers. They think, "Why hasn't anyone hired them yet?" "Are they overlooked because they are less desirable?" "Are they lazy?"

Don't fall into this trap.

Start your job search before you leave school.

### Fifth, the “Why?”

Answer these two important questions about yourself: “why do I want to work?” and “why don’t I want to work?”

Let’s begin by listing the reasons why you want to work – in general and for specific jobs. What’s your motivation? Is it to accomplish certain things in your life? Is it to help a cause that’s important to you? Is it for power, prestige or money? Is it to impress certain people? Try and discover what your underlying motivation might be to work.

If you don’t want to work or are somewhat negative or fearful about working, let’s list these items also. Does work scare you? Are you just a tad lazy? Or is it more fun not to work and just play? With these basic facts revealed, talk to someone you trust about your feelings and see how they hold up, evolve or advance with some more consideration. Dig deeply into your feelings and discover what the basic truths are about you and working – both the good and not-so-good reasons. Deal with them early on, especially “the not so good ones,” as they will trip you up if you don’t address them right away.

Why I want to work?	What does this reason really mean to me?
1 To make money	1 I want to have a house, car, family, and kids
2 To improve people	2 I feel good when I help people
3 To make changes in the world	3 I want to save the environment
4	4
5	5

Why I don’t want to work?	What does this reason really mean to me?
1 I have a fear of rejection	1 I’m afraid of failure
2 I just like to party	2 I’m still immature about life
3 It seems hard	3 I’ve not identified work that would be rewarding and motivating
4	4
5	5



## Sixth, the “How?”

How can I make this all happen?

This last section can help you answer this question.

This last step in the career plan process (for now – remember, your career plan is a “living concept” which should change and evolve over time, so you won’t be finished updating it until you retire) is to make an actual plan to get a specific job.

The section below invites you to list realistic first (or “starter”) jobs upon completion of your schooling. These starter jobs might be the first step needed to begin the track to your dream job. You’ve got to start somewhere. If your dream job seems currently out of reach, pick a lesser job which may position you better for your dream job. Your starter job might be in the company or office where your dream can be found. Or, because there are many jobs and organizations in each industry, a starter job might be viewed as an experiment to see if you like that particular type of work.

In this section, list realistic entry-level, first or starter jobs for which you are likely to be qualified for.

After each of the jobs you may list below, begin to develop your actual steps to make it happen.

Pick job to go after	Qualifications required	Missing Qualifications	Plan to get missing Qualifications	Networking activities to get job	Time, place & effort to apply and interview for specific jobs
1) Entry Level accounting job	Degree in accounting.  Internship in accounting.  Knowledge about a specific type of accounting.	Internship in accounting.	Apply to five (5) accounting firms for their summer internships.	Visit accounting firms for an informational interview.  Attend area accounting events/conferences.  Find accounting firms at school job fair.	Apply for five (5) internships at (federal government, state government, company X, company Y, & nonprofit X) by December.

2) Starter job in the aviation field	Customer service skills.  Knowledge about the industry.  Knowledge about aviation science.	Knowledge about aviation science.	On-line courses.	Meet professionals in the field to learn more about opportunities and pathways to employment.  Attend career fairs in the field.	Complete three (3) informational meetings by December.  Go to Air Show and meet people in January.
3) Starter job in medical field.	Specific field's medical license.	More education.	Work at doctor's office in administration.  Volunteer at area hospital.	Talk to your doctor about opportunities.  Talk to various specialists you meet while volunteering at hospital to learn what they do.	Make appointment with doctor and have your questions prepared.  Volunteer at hospital this summer.
4					
5					

This last component of your career plan gives you a strategy to follow to get from point “a” (the job you wish to get) to point “b” (employed in that job).

## But what if I cannot decide on a career plan or dream job?

No dream jobs come to mind.

Are you sunk even before you get started?

Well, of course you're not. Most people starting out don't know what their dream job might be. Only 5-10% of students getting out high school or college know exactly what they want to do for their careers. For the majority of us, it's less than fully clear. That's why the questions and planning exercise we did above can be helpful.

For the 90-95% of us who don't know what we want to do for a career, answering the first five question sections above gives us some hints as to what types of jobs to explore or seek out for a test drive. In addition, if you're in the majority of new job seekers who just can't find their passion, don't worry. Instead of worrying about finding it – relax and let it find you.

Such things take time to reveal themselves. Instead of looking for that perfect fit or dream job, look for a job that seems mildly interesting and good enough for now. You never know where it might take you. While it may not be the right door, it's a door and what lies beyond it may prove revealing. It will surely give you more experiences and new opportunities to find your way forward.

As you keep moving forward, even if it's slowly, be alert for signs and signals which suggest the next step or direction to take. That's how most people ultimately find their passion. It can be sometimes a random and slow process, rather than an "ah ha!" revelation.

Additional strategies that can help you find dream jobs are:

- ✓ Pay attention to what people are doing for a living. Look around you, at your parents, family and friends – what do they do for a living? If what they do seems mildly interesting to you, ask them questions about what they are doing and how they got to their current job. This is a powerful and personal way to gather more information about career options.
- ✓ Talk with career counselors about jobs. Listen to what they tell you and think carefully about what they suggest. Career counselors can be found in schools as well as the community. For example, you might call, write or visit your area's American Job Center (mentioned in an earlier Lesson) to find a community career counselor to talk with and help you with this research.
- ✓ Surf the internet. Search key terms about what you might like to do or general words about qualities in work that appeal to you and see what appears. Explore the links that emerge, then see what you can learn or discover about jobs and fields that you may have never heard about. Use the power of the internet for career exploration. In addition, there are some key search sites that might prove useful. One is the nation's listing of possible jobs. It's a program of the U.S. Department of Labor and is called O'NET. Here's the link – surf it at:  
<http://www.onetcenter.org/tools.html>
- ✓ Networking is a great strategy to use for exploring careers. Whenever you find a job that might seem interesting to you, try to talk (network) with someone who is doing that kind of work.

Most workers are happy to talk with students or young people about their jobs. So, just ask people. Tell them that you're trying to find the right career path for you and you are wondering if they would be willing to talk with you about what they do. Tell them of your interests and that you want to learn more. They will be very likely to want to help you with your research.

- ✓ Volunteering or taking summer jobs or internships with organizations that seem interesting to you are other ways to further test your interests. The added advantage of this strategy is that you become known to the organization (make sure it's as a good worker) – and this direct experience with you will make those organizations more likely to hire you in the future.

While you are exploring various jobs and careers, be sure to keep a record of those that seem most interesting to you. Once you've compiled your listing, strive to learn more about each. Read and study what you can about these jobs. Talk with others about your interest in these fields. They can help you refine your understandings and thoughts about which ones might be best for you. Contact the professional or trade associations related to the job that interest you. They often have a great deal of information what will assist you in your research.

So, those are some things to do if you can't decide on a dream job.

Most of us who have gone before you have found our dream jobs by accident or chance. Action creates opportunity. So, don't hold back waiting for the clouds to part and a voice from on-high to boldly announce, "Your dream job is \_\_\_\_." Instead, go find it yourself.

Don't let your uncertainty hold you back. Get a job, any reasonable job, and you will find that over time and with workplace experience, your future will come to you.

### The job action plan

Your "career plan" is half the battle. Think of your "career plan" as the big picture or the storyline for your career success. It's a blueprint. Think of your "career plan" as your game plan on how you hope to win the career game.

However, in order to be successful with your grand strategy, you need sound tactics or moves to follow whenever the next job is to be pursued. Think about the relationship between your career plan (above) and your job plan (below) as the relationship between strategy and tactics. The strategy (your "career plan") is your broad vision or goal to achieve overall success. Along the way are intermediate steps or tactics (jobs) which must be successfully gained to keep moving your career strategic plan ahead.

So, supporting a "career plan" should be a specific "job action plan." These are the tactics you need to follow to successfully accomplish the next step in your career plan. For example, as you graduate or leave school, the career plan helps you define what career field you want to pursue; and you may even know the job you first want to go after. But, you need a plan on how to get that job you want – and that's the purpose of the "job action plan."

So, when you have your sights on the job you want, be sure to follow the "job action plan" below.

## Job Action Plan

(One for Each Job Wanted)

Week or Month Timeframe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Search for Places to Work												
Create or Update Resume												
Identify/Contact Resume References												
Constantly Monitor Vacancies at Place You Want to Work												
Find Actual Vacancy Announcements												
Submit Tailored Application for the Job You Want												
Research Company for Interview Ideas												
Anticipate & Prepare Answers for Interview Questions												
Practice Interview												
Define Disability Accommodations												
Give Interview												
Send Thank You Message												
Decide Your Salary/Start Date												
Prepare for First Day of Work												

The steps to follow are outlined in the chart above and are for each and every job you seek. These steps are as follows: search for place to work; create updated resume; identify/contact resume references; monitor vacancies at place you want to work; find actual vacancy; submit tailored application; research company for interview ideas; anticipate and prepare answers for interview questions; practice interview answers; define disability accommodations; give interview; send thank you message; decide your start date and salary requests; prepare for first day of work.



Published by the World Institute on Disability  
3075 Adeline St., Suite 155  
Berkeley, CA 94703  
[www.wid.org](http://www.wid.org)

© 2018 by the World Institute on Disability

Portions of this text may be reproduced for educational purposes, only if individual authors and the World Institute on Disability are fully credited in each transmission or reproduction in any form, provided parts reproduced are distributed free – not for profit.

Any organization or individual who wishes to copy, reproduce, or adapt any or all parts of this book for commercial purposes must obtain permission from the World Institute on Disability.

Published 2018.

Printed in the United States of America

“Part II: Workplace Planning” from *Make It Work: Disability & Competitive Employment*