

TIP SHEET: Career Planning

11 Tips for Career Planning at Any Age or Career Stage

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Career planning is not something that you do once and then forget. Considering that research has found that the average worker will change careers – not jobs but careers – five to seven times in their lifetime, career planning is an activity you should do at least once a year.

Here are 11 steps you can take right now to develop a career plan that will get you where you want to be professionally:

Tip #1: Keep an Up-to-Date Resume

One of the most important steps in planning for the future of your career is to be ready to pounce when opportunities present themselves.

Tip #2: Make Career Planning a Regular Event

Find a day or weekend at least once a year and schedule time to truly focus on what you want out of your career.

Tip #3: Reflect on Your Career Path from Your Career Planning Session

Research shows reflection increases productivity and performance, so take time to think about your current situation and the path you want to follow. Are you happy with your career path so far? What could you have done better or differently? What can you change in the future? When you understand yourself and what you really want, it's a lot easier to create a plan that suits your goals and your lifestyle.

Tip #4: Reflect on What You Like, Dislike, Need and Want from Work

Make a list of what you like and dislike about your job. Hopefully you still enjoy a lot of your work activities, but if that's not the case, it might be time to start considering a new job or career. It's also important to have a clear and meaningful purpose that you find emotionally engaging. What do you really need from your work? To make a difference? To become financially independent?

Tip #5: Keep A Record of Your Achievements

Most of us don't keep a track record of work achievements; however, this is not only useful for building your resume, it's also useful for career planning. Learning to track and write about your professional accomplishments will serve you well when working toward your next career goal.

Tip #6: Identify Your Transferable Skills

Think beyond your current job title by considering your goals and how the skills you have now would be useful in a new role. Make a list of relevant transferable skills to add to your resume.

Tip #7: Set Career Goals

While you can be successful in your career without setting goals, you can be even more successful with [goal setting](#). What are your short-term (within a year) and long-term (within five to 10 years) career goals? You probably already know about SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timebound) goals. Always write them down and share the list with someone. This will help you to create a sense of accountability. Another big part of career planning is reviewing and adjusting these goals on a regular basis – and developing new goals once you accomplish your previous ones. So, each time you sit down for a career planning session, break out this list and review it.

Tip #8: Explore New Education or Training Opportunities

Never miss a chance to learn and grow more as an employee and individual. Part of career planning is finding training opportunities, courses, or workshops that will help you further your career. If your company offers professional development opportunities, take advantage of them. This is free money and can be valuable in reaching your goals.

Tip #9: Leverage and Learn from Others

The better your network, the more opportunities you have to learn from others who've enjoyed success. To find out more about other possible career options, you can conduct some informational meetings with colleagues or managers – people are generally willing to share advice if you ask.

Tip #10: Step Out of Your Comfort Zone

One of the best ways to advance your career is to identify and solve an organizational problem a company is experiencing. If you can identify a problem within an organization, propose a solution, and ask to implement it, you will not only increase your visibility, but also expand your skills.

Tip #11: Set Career Goals

A fun part of career planning is picturing your career in the future. Where will you be in a year or in five years? While it's impossible to plan everything, it's always good idea to know where you're going and what various career paths are available to you. You can continue to experience career growth by investing in your career development – e.g., job shadowing employees to learn about different jobs, or attend various training sessions. Regularly reviewing and planning will make you better prepared for whatever lies ahead in your career. Steer your career deliberately, but also be open to life surprising you with new adventures even if they don't exactly match the destination you had in mind.