

# Career Planning

This article has been developed by the Careers and Cooperative Education team of the University of Western Sydney.

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[www.uws.edu.au/careers](http://www.uws.edu.au/careers)

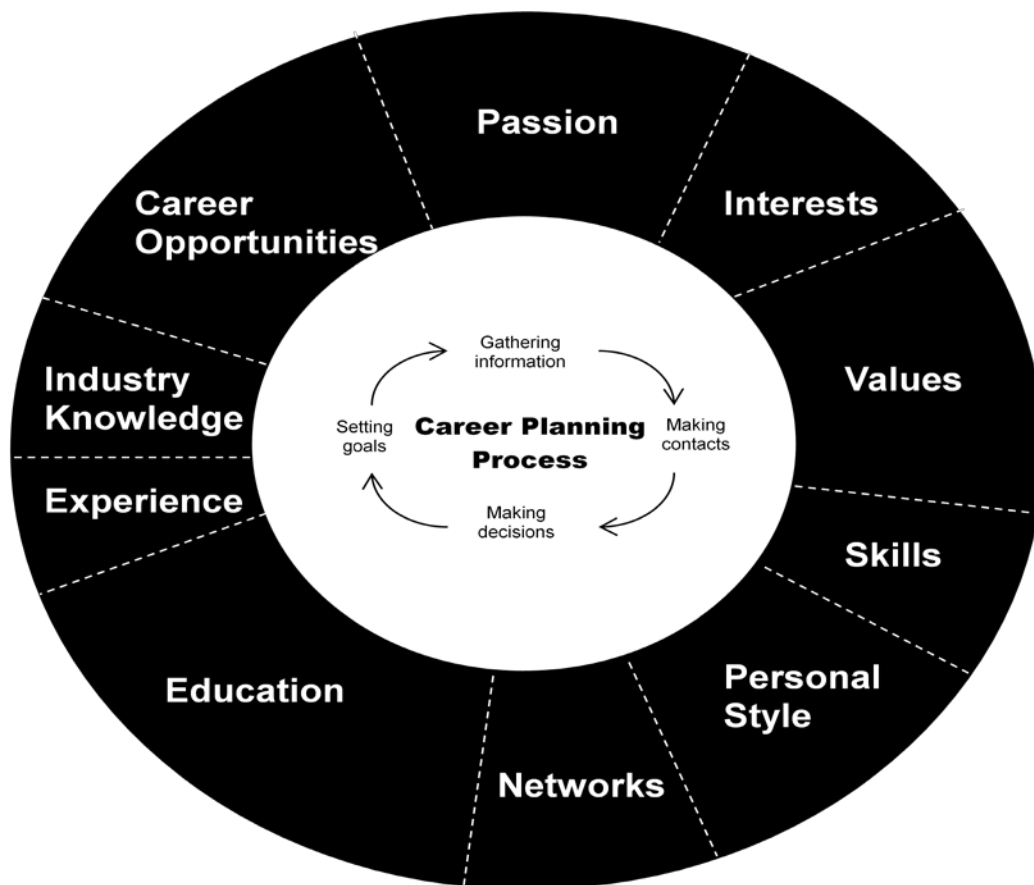
# Career Planning

## Table of Contents

Career planning model.....	2
Where to start.....	3
Igniting your passion and knowing your interests.....	3
Identifying your values.....	4
Your skills.....	5
Understanding your personal style.....	6
Developing your networks.....	6
Career planning inventory.....	6
Resources.....	9

## Career planning model

The model we use in Careers and Cooperative Education at the University of Western Sydney appears below and is broken up into 10 elements. *Career planning in its simplest form is about making occupation choices. In its more complex form it is about life planning.*



This model was adapted from 'The Wheel', a Career Planning model developed by Norman Amundson and Gray Poehnell in their book *Career Pathways*. (2004). 3rd edition. Ergon Communications: Canada. The career planning process in the middle has been adapted from Allen L. Hammer. (1993). *Introduction to Type and Careers*. Australian Council for Educational Research: Melbourne.

### Where to start

Wouldn't it be terrific if you just had to 'tick the boxes' on an inventory and magically your future would be revealed? Naturally, it would be a satisfying and successful career! Maybe you've already begun the process of career planning and didn't realise it.

### I know my career destination...

If you have clear career goals, and you're confident your study is leading you in the right direction to fulfil these goals, consider yourself very fortunate. Most people do not have this level of clarity. Taking yourself through a career planning process can still be a valuable activity as it may highlight for you a number of career opportunities in your field you haven't previously considered e.g. in accountancy there are some fascinating emerging careers such as forensic accounting or maybe you hadn't considered auditing as an option.

New career fields develop in response to the demand for new skills to meet changing business needs and the introduction of new technology. If your short-term goals are clear, you may also want to look at your longer term career goals, consider postgraduate study that will complement your undergraduate degree and explore the career pathways this might open up for you in the future.

### I have no idea what I want to do...

Don't stress too much – you're not alone! Perhaps you've chosen a degree that is very broad or you have specialised in a number of majors. Don't undervalue your education, it will all lead somewhere. Sometimes, the career planning process will highlight for you a range of possibilities, but not clarify which particular path appeals to you most. Learn to be comfortable sitting in your indecision while you put some energy into assessing your skills, values, interests and personal style. At the same time you can make some serious contacts with a range of people who do the sort of work you find interesting – spend time with them, learn more about what they do, and try and imagine yourself doing similar work.

### Igniting your passion and knowing your interests

**Passion** is an intense emotion, a deep feeling or enthusiasm. Some people refer to their passion as a natural curiosity.

We often associate passion with a particular talent, such as music or people can also have passion for a cause (the environment, animal rights, refugees) or for a deeply held interest (fostering learning or personal growth in others, gardening, and a business venture). You can choose to use your passion as in your career choices or you may decide it is purely a hobby.

There are lots of people who are unable to identify a specific passion. If you don't have one or have not yet found one you're not alone.

Ask someone about their passion – what they enjoy about their work and what keeps them going. Ask them about the people they admire in their field and what or who influenced them to take up their occupation.

**Interests** are your preferences, the things you like or the things you think you would

## Career Planning

enjoy. Think of all the activities you enjoy and draw up a mind map. Include things you enjoy doing at work, organised sporting activities, hobbies, social events, community activities or activities from your home life. The idea of the mind map is to free you up from structured thinking and to encourage you to jot down as many ideas as you can. Think about:

- Which interests have you actively pursued in the last 6 months?
- Which ones are free or involve minimal cost?
- Is there a balance between solo activities and socialising with others?
- Which personal needs are your interests meeting for you?
- Are there any interests, hobbies or activities you would like to get involved with in the next 6 months?
- What patterns begin to emerge about your style, likely skills and preferred types of job activities?
- Which interests are most relevant for your resume?

### Identifying your values

Values are your personal beliefs. Your beliefs determine what is important to you and are the principles by which you conduct your life. Values are often associated with beliefs about personal behaviour, beliefs about how people should interact with one another, economic beliefs, religious beliefs, and moral issues concerned with justice.

Whether you realise it or not, major decisions, including choosing careers, are usually based on your values. Therefore, it is important to identify your values when planning your career.

For some people, their work values are clearly defined. Decisions about career pathways, employers to work for or the type of work undertaken may be based on these values. For example, some people choose not to work for banks, insurance companies or organisations that sell tobacco or alcohol because of their personal beliefs and preferences. Some people have firm opinions about ethics, politics, and the environment or policies regarding equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and make career decisions according to their value system.

For other people, their particular value system is not yet clear. They may be happy to consider working for any number of organisations. These people may be more concerned with immediate rewards such as their salary, work conditions and opportunities for promotion or travel than with aligning their personal values with those of a company.

Those happy souls who express satisfaction with their position and company would generally agree that there's a match between their job and their personal values. Those who express a sense of discontent with their job are often able to identify a conflict between their values and those of the job, organisation or industry in which they work.

A browse through the company website and promotional literature will normally provide some hints. Look at the track record of the organisation. Talk to people already working in the company or in the industry for more specific information.

## Career Planning

### Your skills

There are many generic skills, some skills employers often look for are:

Communication Skills

Problem Solving

Teamwork

Planning and Organising

Think about all the jobs you've had, the community or sporting groups you've been involved with, and the extracurricular activities you participated in at university and senior high school. You will find that you have a large range of skills which have been developed from these experiences. You should determine the transferable skills you've gained from these experiences and ensure these are clearly expressed in your job application.

If you have retail or fast food experiences but no corresponding experience in your professional field of study, it's important that you try and gain some professional and relevant experience before you graduate. Identify organisations that could provide such opportunities and make contact with the Human Resources department to enquire about paid or unpaid experience. It's possible to negotiate to spend a few days or more in your vacation time (sometimes one day per semester) with an organisation observing a professional practitioner in your field.

You should develop skills in areas you think the employer is looking for. As you approach graduation, you need to learn how to translate your units of study into a set of comprehensive professional and generic skills that you can offer a potential employer. Add any skills gained through professional work experience, cooperative education and community activities and ensure you have a summary of your relevant skills in your resume.

Take a look back at the units of study you have completed at university and through any other learning institution e.g. TAFE. Select the subjects which seem most relevant to your preferred career direction and/or in which you achieved your best results. Also think about the subjects you particularly enjoyed. Review the key learning (theoretical knowledge and practical skills) you gained from the study (lectures, tutorials, projects, fieldwork, research, group work, additional reading) and what this means you can take into a job role. You might have to go back over your assignments, notes and texts to do this thoroughly.

For example

Unit of study Consumer Behaviour		
Key learning topic	What I produced/developed	Skills acquired or developed
Consumer needs	Survey of toothpaste product packaging according to different market segments	Survey design Survey testing Survey analysis using SPSS

### Understanding your personal style

Personal style and personality are difficult to define and label. And yet, philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and many others who study human behaviour have observed certain patterns and similarities in people. There are many personality indicators that attempt to classify traits. The aim is to make career choices that will utilise your strengths based on your personality traits. A word of caution is in order here: basing your career choices on personality indicators alone is not a predictor of job satisfaction, nor is it a measure of skill.

Personal style descriptors may include any of the following (or the respective opposites!): Determined, outgoing, reserved, creative, independent, tolerant, resourceful, mature, analytical, considered, spontaneous, trusting, positive, logical, objective, structured, flexible, decisive, empathic, innovative, dominant, sociable, responsible, collaborative, accepting, and spiritual.

### Developing your networks

Write down the names of people you know who could assist you with information about the sort of work you would like to move into. Ask for their recommendations about who else you could talk to. You'll be surprised at how helpful people are when asked politely and how quickly your networks will grow. For example contact: peers, alumni, academics, people employed in the role, family, work colleagues and associations.

### Career planning inventory

Complete the following exercise to explore your career planning process.

#### Instructions:

Place a cross (X) in one of the boxes (1 - 5) for each question in the inventory. Use the scale 1 = not true and 5 = very true.

At the completion of your career planning program or within 6 weeks, review your answers and this time place a circle (O) to indicate how you answer each question using the same scale. Are you more confident in how you would approach the suggestions made in each question? What specific steps could you take to get a head start on your career planning?

### Igniting your passion

1 2 3 4 5

1 I am clear about the things I love to do

2 I have a 'calling', a drive, a deeply held motivation for something

3 I can describe my dream job/s

4 I am willing to devote energy and time to pursuing this passion

5 If I were unable to engage in work or leisure that related to my passion, I would feel there was something missing in my life

## Career Planning

### Knowing your interests

1 2 3 4 5

- 6 I can list 10 things I enjoy doing (leisure, sport, activities, work tasks)
- 7 I actively participate in 2 or 3 key interests on a regular basis
- 8 I can describe patterns and similarities in the things I love to do
- 9 I have listed the relevant interests in my resume
- 10 I can list 5 activities or work tasks I don't enjoy doing

### Identifying your values

1 2 3 4 5

- 11 I can describe the things that are important to me in life
- 12 I am clear about what I value in a job or career
- 13 The type of career I wish to pursue fits well with my values and lifestyle choices
- 14 If selected for more than one job, I know on what basis I would make a decision
- 15 I know what I am not prepared to compromise on

### Articulating your skills

1 2 3 4 5

- 16 I can describe 10 skill areas I can apply in a professional work setting
- 17 I can talk confidently about my unique strengths at interview
- 18 I am clear about how to further develop my skills to suit my goals
- 19 I have listed my professional, generic and IT skills in my resume
- 20 I can provide evidence to support my claims to each skill listed

### Understanding your personal style

1 2 3 4 5

- 21 I am clear about my strengths (qualities, skills, attributes and style)
- 22 I am comfortable describing myself in a job interview setting
- 23 I know how others describe me
- 24 I have considered how my personal style fits with my career choices
- 25 I have an understanding of what makes me unique

### Developing your networks

1 2 3 4 5

- 26 I have used contacts from family and friends to obtain work
- 27 I have developed a list of people who have experience in my field of interest
- 28 I have joined at least one professional association relevant to my field
- 29 I feel confident about calling people on the telephone to ask them about their work and to discuss possible work opportunities
- 30 I have a mentor I speak with regularly

### Maximising your education

1 2 3 4 5

- 31 I can see the fit between my degree/major and my career goals
- 32 I can describe the subjects I enjoyed most and why I enjoyed them
- 33 I have considered additional qualifications and/or postgraduate study
- 34 I am prepared to keep my skills current after I graduate (formal and informal learning, on-the-job training, industry accreditation)
- 35 I have completed projects and research which have allowed me to explore specific topics in depth

### Describing your experience

1 2 3 4 5

- 36 I have a range of transferable skills developed from study, work and

## Career Planning

community activities

37 I am confident about how I can gain additional experience in my field

38 I have examples of my work in my portfolio

39 I have organised to undertake professional work experience before the completion of my studies

40 I have an up-to-date resume which lists relevant experience and transferable skills and has recently been reviewed by a friend, colleague or career professional

### **Gaining industry knowledge**

1 2 3 4 5

41 I have a list of potential employers and organisations I would like to work for

42 I understand which specific skills employers look for in new graduates in my field

43 I have made contact with 5-10 potential employers to gather information about jobs and careers

44 I can describe the role, duties and expectations of the positions that interest me

45 I regularly read the SMH and/or The Australian to scan vacancies, current events and relevant business news

46 I have spoken with 2 or more people in the occupations of interest to me

47 I can describe recent trends in my field (mergers, emerging occupations, new legislation, quality standards, accreditation)

48 I have attended two relevant industry events (expos, fairs, lecture talks, professional development, networking events) in the last 6-12 months

49 I have registered with at least 2 relevant online job boards or agencies

50 I have registered on the UWS CareerHub website

51 I keep track of job advertisements, position descriptions, contacts I have made and applications I have submitted (in files, folder, scrap book or on computer)

### **Listing career opportunities**

1 2 3 4 5

52 I can list a range of career options available to explore further

53 I can describe the sort of work I would like to be doing within 3-5 years

54 I can describe the pros and cons of my alternative occupations

55 I understand the opportunities for possible career progression

56 I am open to unexpected opportunities

57 I am comfortable making a number of career decisions and changes in the future

© 2004. The Career Planning Inventory has been developed by the Careers and Employment team, University of Western Sydney. The concept for this inventory was originally adapted from [http://www.cdm.uwaterloo.ca/getting\\_started.asp](http://www.cdm.uwaterloo.ca/getting_started.asp)

Create an action plan to develop progress your career planning.

For example

Today's date	Tues 30 June 2009
My career goals are	To become a retail manager in the fashion industry, preferably in an internationally recognised store.



## Career Planning

<b>Steps to achieve my goals</b>	
<p>Gain additional management experience in current retail role during summer vacation break.            Finish degree in Business and International Management with at least a credit average result.            Collect references from current and previous employer.            Complete Skills Audit and make sure my most relevant skills are listed on my resume            Gain experience in budgeting, planning and staff supervision.</p>	
<b>This week I will</b>	
<p>Update my resume.            Prepare a cover letter.</p>	
<b>Next week I will</b>	
<p>Approach my store manager about acting in Assistant Manager's role over Christmas break.            Apply to attend the Trainee Management course offered by Head Office.            Ask the Manager at another store if I can do a three-day placement with them, observing them in their role.</p>	
<b>In the next 2 months I will</b>	
<p>Explore other related career options with current employer e.g. fashion buyer, training officer.            Explore additional career options relevant to degree e.g. Marketing, Public Relations, Business Development Coordinator/Consultant, Import/Export Adviser.</p>	
<b>In 12 months time I would like to be</b>	
<p>Working full-time for a major store, with some experience in buying and product display.            I also want to have travelled to UK (4 week holiday) and check out the industry in London.</p>	
<b>Barriers: the things that are stopping me are (and what I could do about the barriers include)</b>	
<p>Lack of confidence (get more experience, learn from mistakes, smile, give myself credit for what I do well).            Insufficient savings (see financial adviser, open a savings account, cut back on spontaneous purchases).            Not enough contacts in industry (cold calling, door knocking, prepare networking list)</p>	
<b>My reward for taking all listed steps will be</b>	
<p>A day at the beach with friends and a spending spree for summer wardrobe (limit \$)</p>	
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### Resources

Norman Amundson from an Australian Association of Career Counsellors conference presentation, Melbourne 2002.  
 Norman Amundson and Gray Poehnell *Career Pathways*. (2004). 3rd edition. Ergon Communications: Canada.  
 Allen L. Hammer. (1993). *Introduction to Type and Careers*. Australian Council for Educational Research: Melbourne.  
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