



Career Center  
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## **THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

This handout provides tips to help you with your career development throughout your professional life. **You will likely change your career at least once in your life**, if not more. Refer back to these tips as you sense a change coming, in order to make educated decisions about where you want to take your career.

### **Continuous development**

- **Monitor and evaluate your progress** – Do some serious soul-searching at various points in your career. Evaluate yourself in comparison with the goals you have set throughout your life. Revise these goals as necessary and develop new plans to refocus and redirect where you want to take your professional life.
- **Invest in yourself after your formal education ends** – Take advantage of your organization's education opportunities, such as conferences and trainings. Seminars and researching outside of your working hours is a great way to cultivate your knowledge.
- **Use current strengths and develop new ones** – Continue to capitalize on your strengths and look for new ways to develop. Change is a guarantee in the workplace, which requires you to adapt your current skills and continually look for ways to improve your skill set. Assess your knowledge base, both in and outside of your current occupation, employer, and field.
- **Play from ahead** – In sports, the team that is ahead in the score has an easier time winning. Apply this idea to your career. Continually monitor your progress, communicate with your network, keep your resume up to date, and know your story as it develops. Be ready to go on the job or career hunt at a moment's notice. Some day you may have to find a new job due to downsizing, etc. If you let your process and development become inactive for a long period of time, it is that much more difficult to get going.

### **Research and network**

- **Be aware of the marketplace** – Keep up with the latest trends and advances in the job market in general and in your field in particular. Careers are changing faster than ever, with new occupations emerging. Join organizations and associations, and maintain active membership.

- **Talk to people** – This is, and always will be, the most critical action in your career development process. Whether it is interviewing, finding out information about jobs and careers, or simply staying in touch with colleagues, you can easily invest in yourself and your future by talking with others. This time investment will greatly increase your understanding of the steps you need to take to have career success.
- **Be professional** – Always show courtesy and use your best manners with anyone you are in contact with in the job process. Utilizing a goal-directed approach does not leave room for bad manners. Treat others how you want to be treated, both in person and in written communications.

### Reflect

- **Focus on what you want and what you like to do** – This may sound obvious, but many people actually forget about this when considering jobs and careers. You will probably spend over half of your waking hours at work. You owe it to yourself to seek opportunities that interest and excite you.
- **Think about fit** – Bottom line, you need to find opportunities that best fit you. While the perfect job does not exist, knowing what you want and evaluating potential jobs based on your interests and qualifications is key. Elements of fit include job duties, training and support, pay, work environment, culture, values, etc.

### Change your circumstances as needed

- **Do not confuse the wrong job with the wrong work setting** – Organizations change whether for better or worse. Do not ditch a career because of changes in your workplace. Career renewal may be simply a matter of finding a better organizational fit for your skills, knowledge, and personal priorities.
- **Watch out for the Killer B's: Blockage, boredom, and burnout** – Job dissatisfaction is usually tied to one of these areas. Evaluate the hurdles, monotony, and stressors that are making your work experience unhappy. Develop alternatives to address them.
- **Change jobs or careers if you need to - or want to** – You owe it to yourself to be happy. No one ever said you have to stay in a job or career you dislike. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average person has around 12 jobs in their lifetime. You should make the adjustments and changes that will give you the happiness and fulfillment you need.
- **Recycle versus replace** – Do not throw out a career without in-depth examination and soul searching. If you have had solid decision-making to this point in your career, dissatisfaction

may be primarily related to the employer or workplace. Discussing taking on new responsibilities with your current employer, or even searching for a new employer, can renew your energy and outlook. Take these steps before dropping this career in favor of a completely new one.

### **Maintain work-life balance**

- **Focus long-term** – Positioning yourself to reach your long-term goals should be a strong motivator for you. Taking on long-term challenges is key. At the same time, do not totally forsake the short-term considerations. You need to pay bills, eat, and have a good work life balance. Try to find ways to use short-term experiences to achieve your long-term goals.
- **Remember the big picture** – Your career is only part of your life. The decisions you make concerning your career must be made within the greater sphere of your life planning. how you blend your work and personal life is up to you, but keep in mind that this balance will play a key role in your happiness throughout life.
- **Remember that these are important decisions - but not life and death decisions** – Yes, careers and jobs are important. But what else is important to you? health? Family? Travel? Leisure time? Ask yourself how these (and other things) interact to make you a happy and fulfilled person. Remember, you are striving to make the best decisions based on what you know and anticipate. There are no perfect decisions, and as you gain information, you will continue to revisit your decisions to evaluate and make new adjustments.