



Choosing a Career

By Connie Blaine

You're the Captain
of Your Future

You're probably going to be working
for 30 or 40 years,
so your occupation should be
something that gives you
satisfaction AND
a decent paycheck.

It's up to you to make it happen.

Time and planning are the keys to a successful career. The time you take to really plan your career will pay off for the rest of your working life. Here's some advice on getting started:

Do a good self-assessment

Remember, your work is part of your total life, and you are the captain of that ship. To get the rewards of a successful and satisfying career, you must accept the responsibility of getting to know yourself fully, researching your options, and making choices all along the way that will help you reach your life goals.

Clarify your values

Your basic beliefs and values need to be reflected in the career you choose. You cannot be happy doing something day after day that violates your values.

Prioritize your needs

What do you want your job to offer you? List those things in order of their importance to you. Understand that in order to have one thing, you may need to sacrifice another.

Assess your skills

Look at the skills you have, including interpersonal skills, language skills and your work ethic. If they are lacking, figure out how to build them.

Be willing to make the effort - and don't get discouraged.

- Spend *time* planning your career, and expect to keep doing it on a continuous basis.
- Do one career-building task every week, such as: building your professional network, increasing your skills, talking to others about potential opportunities, learning more about your industry.
- Ask people in your preferred career about how they got where they are. From their stories, you can learn things you need to do and how to position yourself to achieve your own goals.
- If you can afford it, taking a position in the industry of your career choice that will help you develop a valuable skill set is better than taking an unrelated job that pays well.
- Look for paid opportunities to learn transferable skills. Training offered by the company - tuition reimbursements, and other opportunities - can serve you even after you've left your current job.

Ultimately, you want a balance between your lifestyle and your career plans. When evaluating yourself, make sure you've included everything that might be useful in your choice.

Identify your work interests and your hobbies

These may help in the type of job you'd like. Also keep in mind that some hobbies should stay hobbies.



Most of All...

Take responsibility for your own career. You need to shape it, not let it shape you. Decide what you want your career to be and make your opportunities match. True, sometimes you have to take a role assigned by employers. But, you can also make roles for yourself that will help you further your career. Look for projects to take on that will help you get from where you are to where you want to be. Be prepared to put in extra time and effort now, for a payoff later.

On the Web

<http://www.careerknowhow.com/guidance/reframe.htm>

<http://www.careerknowhow.com/perfectcareer.htm>