

6 Steps to Successful Career Management

In some respects building a successful career is no different from any other project. Clear goal setting, thorough planning and effective execution are key ingredients in the recipe for success. Though expert advice can help you with the process, in the end it is up to you to formulate objectives, develop a plan, and follow through to realize your career goals. While you may enjoy your share of luck, success seldom falls in your lap. Furthermore, if you ignore the basic principles of career management, an unexpected setback could badly damage your long-term prospects. Here are six steps towards success in your career:

1. **Take a good look at yourself.** Understand your needs. What is important to you? What are you passionate about? A career spans many years. It can be hard to maintain enthusiasm, excitement and energy unless you believe in what you are doing. Look for the right balance in of career, earnings and fulfillment. Are you aiming for the top or is family more important? What are your unique talents and abilities? It makes sense to play to your strengths.
2. **Research career options** and prioritize. Discover what skills and experience various careers require ahead of time. What is a good fit for you with your skill set?
3. **Map a path** from where you are to where you want to be. Think strategically and long-term about your career. Don't place too much emphasis on compensation early on. It may be more important to develop the skills and experience to "set you up." Your action plan should build upon your strengths and improve your weaknesses. Establish firm bases for the future. If the platform is secure, you can usually survive a mistake or setback.
4. **Don't ignore ongoing training.** Acquiring the additional skills, knowledge and education needed for your new career is fundamental. Also consider getting some unique experience which will help differentiate you in the market place.
5. **Market yourself.** Don't take an overly conservative or narrow view. Consider start-ups and smaller organizations where you will get more responsibility. But always target companies that are excellent at what they do, and that place importance on developing staff, particularly at the beginning of your career. Don't forget to network! A well-developed list of professional contacts can open doors for you.
6. **Seek ongoing career management.** Continue to examine, evaluate and refine. The marketplace can change quickly. Be prepared for unexpected opportunities as well as setbacks. Don't ignore the value of mentors. Establish at least one quality mentor in the field you hope to pursue. Also, use advisors and experts often. Their experience, advice and influence may prove invaluable.