

Getting Started – Career Planning



Looking for a job isn't easy. Whether you are new to the labor market or a veteran job seeker, you need guidance to determine what route you must take to reach your employment objective. In what kind of occupation are you interested? Are you looking for a job in your present field or are you planning a career change?

These are some of the questions you must answer as you start on the road to re-employment. From staying motivated to assessing your career goals, this information sheet will outline some general steps to help you address your employment options and create your own successful career plan.

Staying Motivated

Being optimistic is one of the most important prerequisites for a successful job search. Yet, maintaining a good attitude can be difficult in times of transition. Leaving a job, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, is a big step. Here are some suggestions to help you cope with this change and stay motivated:

Keep your self-image positive—It is hard not to take rejections personally. However, keep in mind that layoffs and hiring rest on many factors that may have little to do with you personally. Resist the temptation to get angry at yourself and try not to dwell on negative past experiences. Reward positive job search activities and give yourself something to look forward to.

Work with others—Don't isolate yourself. If you are having a hard time dealing with your job loss, talk about it with family, friends, a job counselor or your peers. Communication is very important at this time.

Be organized/schedule your time—Organize daily and weekly activities as part of your job search plan. Keep to the schedule so that you don't brush important tasks aside or waste time wondering what you should do next. Looking for a good job is a 40- hour-a-week commitment, so treat it like a full-time job.

Take care of your health—Eating good food and exercising makes you feel better emotionally and gives you the resources to handle your job search effectively.

Examine your budget—You'll be more in control if you know how much money you really need to make ends meet. Look at your expenses and figure out what you need to do to cut overhead. If necessary, seek out assistance in handling bills. Look around for local budget management workshops or counseling services.

Keep in mind the advantages of working—Remembering the reasons you enjoy working will motivate you to find a new job more quickly. As you plan your job search, list the benefits you will reap once you're successful—i.e., the earned income and benefits; the productive use of your skills; the boost to your self-confidence; and the chance to meet new people.

Assessing Your Career "Self"

Unemployed individuals often begin scanning the want ads and rewriting their resumes without stopping first to assess what they truly want out of their next job. What are your interests? What is your ideal work environment? What are your skills? Only through self-assessment can these questions be answered, enabling you to reach your employment goal.

Your Needs and Interests—Determine your personal preferences and what you need from a job. Ask yourself what conditions would exist in your ideal work environment, such as your schedule, means of getting to work, and salary. For example, if child care is an issue, you may want a job with a flexible schedule and little travel.

Your Work Values—Your effectiveness on the job is directly related to your work environment. Therefore, consider what sort of work values are important to you. Do you thrive on working alone or with others? Do you crave challenge or repetition on

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the job? Your “fit” in the company is essential to your effectiveness and happiness as a worker.

Your Skills—It is natural to focus on the specific experience gained from your previous job. However, keep in mind all of your skills and accomplishments, including those from other activities such as internships, volunteer work or hobbies. Many abilities are not specific to any given job, but applicable to a wide variety of settings. As an example, a person who runs a household effectively has managerial and organizational skills, even though they were not gained at a work site.

Learning About the Job Market

Once you have considered your employment needs, it is critical to assess the needs of local companies. What occupations are growing? What is the industry outlook in your community? What types of jobs suit your interests? Here are some tips for researching the careers that match your personal profile.

- Identify people working in your career of interest and talk with them.
- Go to your local library, Career Center or vocational school to gain access to publications that outline industry, occupational and wage information.
- Write to professional associations for more information on your career choice.
- Visit local companies.
- Find a related part-time job or volunteer experience.

In addition to **where** to look, it is important to consider **what** type of information to research when investigating your career. Look for the following facts:

- A brief description of the occupation, including daily tasks;
- the education or training required;
- the skills or interests required;
- the starting salary, salary range and benefits;
- the work hours; the tools, materials or machines used;
- the career ladder; and
- any other related occupations.

Making the Commitment

Planning your job search is more than sending a cover letter or filling out a job application. It takes planning, research and commitment. DCS's Job Search Journal and other publications are on hand in this One-Stop Career Center. Workshops are also available, to provide you with more information on creating your career plan.