

# Career Advisor

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## 7 Steps to Career and Life Management

The seven steps to career and life management are at once simple and complex. Simple because parts have to do with discovering and itemizing things about you, and complex because there is much to add to your 'bag-o'-tricks.' Your bag-o'-tricks is made up of the first six steps. And, as you work your way through the steps, you will grow in self-knowledge, awareness of how to successfully market yourself, and gain the confidence to go out and market 'you' to the world. Let's start with self-assessment.

**Step 1** involves assessing yourself. It is you asking and answering questions such as:

"What is my purpose in life?"

"What are the personality traits that describe the professional me?"

"What are my achievements? What skills did I use to make them happen?"

"What are my personal values for life? For Work?"

"What are my interests in life and work?"

"Do I want to be an employee or self-employed?"

**Step 2** involves researching for information about jobs/work, industries, and specific companies. Also, use research to discover trends in various fields and industries. What has happened to the industry and the type of work/jobs that will have significant growth over the next few years? Will temping through an agency be meaningful for me?

**Step 3** is decision-making time. You have to brainstorm your personal, career, and growth objectives. Additionally, you must evaluate opportunities and establish a marketing plan to reach your objectives. Each sub-step decision will help you toward your objective.

**Step 4** deals with your marketing materials. Part one involves the development of your resume, writing string cover letters, identifying your references (and how to think of them as part of your network). Part two consists of understanding the importance of the interview, preparing for interview questions, and developing strategies for the interview.

**Step 5** is networking. Networking is simply identifying people you know out there in the community who are potentially useful to you for various reasons. Often, we think in terms of people we know, but the more important question is "Who knows me?"

**Step 6** involves evaluating an offer. To do this, you need to know what the market value for the work is, what the opportunities are to develop your skills and interests, and what kind of environment you want to work in.

**Step 7** is your career continuation. On a yearly basis, re-evaluate your purpose, interests, and growth. Make changes to ensure that you continue to be happy in your work.

**Questions:** Are you productive? Committed? Flexible? Use your initiative? Sensitive to the needs and wants of others? An effective problem solver? A take control person? If so, you will be a success – you can't miss! But, if you are not these things then . . .

You, Your Comfort Zone and Your Future

Your comfort zone is the area where your mind and body are at peace. You're comfortable! But, a characteristic of the comfort zone is that it is never at rest or inactive. It is either expanding or contracting. When you are not consciously expanding it, it contracts and closes you in. Your comfort zone is not a simple collection of emotional discomforts. It is a complex psychological and physiological being. A few emotions which hinder comfort zone expansion include fear, guilt, unworthiness, hurt feelings, anger and discouragement. Even one of these can inhibit the healthy expansion of your comfort zone.

In this article, I'd like to focus on fear and its impact on the comfort zone. There are many levels of fear, such as: apprehension, worry, misgiving, dread, alarm and panic. While fear can be physically felt "in the stomach," it is rarely real. Most of the time fear is our mind imagining something awful that has not yet happened. Someone wrote that fear is an acronym for "False Expectations Appearing Real." We rarely do what we fear, so we rarely find out if your projection is accurate. In fact, when we don't do the thing we fear, we react as though it actually would have happened. We're even relieved!

Fear results in not attempting the experience we fear. This "non-experience" results in ignorance (a very curable disease) which results in greater fear. It's quite a cycle. However, you have broken that cycle many times in your life. Think back to all the instances when you enlarged your personal comfort zone. Most of the time you have quite successfully made the transition in spite of whatever fears you had. As you move into the future, keep these successes in mind.

You will be "asked" to expand your comfort zone more frequently as organizations move into greater competitiveness and work functions dramatically change to meet technological and other challenges. To survive, you must take on 'your' challenge to change, to grow. And, you must welcome this new environment as an opportunity to develop and live your vision.

Reaching your personal vision means bumping against your present comfort zone, pushing and stretching it to make it larger. If you don't, it will limit you. But, it is a self-limitation. You can choose to control it. In fact, if you learn to accept and embrace choosing to control your behaviors, your growth and personal responsibility, you will master change.

For you to become or continue to be competitive, you must consciously choose to change and enlarge personal and organizational visions, using the enormous energy inherent in you to succeed.

## 6 Job-Getting Skills

Six skills that employers commonly look for in candidates include:

1. **Public Speaking** – The ability to communicate clearly and concisely in both casual and pressure situations.
2. **Writing** – The ability to communicate clearly and concisely on paper via the computer.
3. **People Skills** – The ability to work effectively as a team member and to provide initiative in developing positive, productive relationships among diverse groups and levels.
4. **Training** – The ability and willingness to continually learn and to train and develop others.
5. **Managing** – The ability to ensure that the work gets done properly and that competent successors are in place to move forward.
6. **Financial Management** – The ability to efficiently and cost-effectively carry out the work or manage an operating budget.

## Reasons for Working Hard

A recent survey asked over 2000 men and women the question: "Why do we work as hard as we do?" Consider the results: (Responses of over 50%.)

"Feeling like I've done a good job." 83%

"Having an impact on business and the success of my customers and the company." 72.5%

"Taking control of my own destiny" 69%

"Having a good balance between work and personal life/family." 61.5%

"Making a difference in the lives of others." 54.5%

## TEN STEPS TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR CAREER

I have or can develop the ability to:

evaluate and learn from all experiences – my own and those of others.

identify and describe skills learned from formal education, training, and overall challenges of life.

identify, describe, and evaluate the importance of my needs, values, interests, strengths, and growth needs, as they relate to my life and career.

relate the skills developed in one setting such as school, workshops, and training to the requirements of the work.

match my knowledge about my characteristics, motivated skills, and talents to information about job and career opportunities.

develop personal growth goals and maintain my motivation.

stick with my career goals and overcome obstacles.

take risks.

accept the results of my choices and actions.

market myself as someone who is valuable, capable, skilled and productive.

Work Hints

Create and maintain momentum.

Attack your work with more energy than required.

Set and keep standards higher than expected.

“Hang-in” beyond what is reasonable.

Display positive attitudes and work habits.

Lead the way into your future and become your own personal manager.

## **INTERVIEWING**

### **“Why should I hire you to work for me?”**

This is the main thought behind each question an interviewer asks. Interviewers have a picture puzzle made up of skills, experiences, and personality traits that, when finished, adds up to the best person for the job. Your answer must demonstrate that you have the right ‘pieces.’

Following are some “not so easy questions”. The list was compiled from people who are actively interviewing. How will you answer them? Are you prepared to answer them effectively?

1. Have you taken calculated risks? Give two examples.
2. Give me an example of something that didn’t work out well. How did you handle it? What have you learned from it?
3. Do you handle instructions or criticism without feeling upset or hurt? Describe a specific situation.
4. Describe a specific, difficult situation you’ve had to deal with.
5. How does your job relate to the company’s goals?

6. Does your job fulfill your overall goals and objectives? Explain.
7. When you've disagreed with your supervisor, have you voiced your opinion? Example?
8. How do you see your role as a group or team member?
9. How do you work with difficult people?
10. How can your manager get the best out of you?
11. Tell me how you organize and plan your projects.
12. Tell me about your ability to interact with people at different levels.
13. What do you personally have in place to deal with change in the workplace?
14. How long will it take you to benefit our department?
15. Have you had a poor supervisor? What could he or she have done to do a better job?
16. In your present (most recent) job, how do you spend most of your time? Why?
17. Describe the kind of person you enjoy working with.