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Lesson Proper for Week 1

WHAT IS A CAREER?

A career can be defined as a person's progress within an occupation or series of occupations. However, a career is more than just a job, or working, or your occupation. It also includes your progress through life, your growth and development in vocational and avocational areas of life.

Many of us think that there is only one occupation that is best suited for us, but there are really several that may be good choices. The secret is to identify those occupations in which you have a high probability for success and happiness. As a college student, whether your career goals are accounting, theatre arts, or environmental sciences, there are general skills which will be required regardless of the career you pursue. These skills include the ability to read, write, compute, think critically, and communicate in an effective manner. For the most part, these skills are developed and/or sharpened in general education courses. These skills, along with effective career planning techniques, and the ability to cope with ambiguity in a changing environment, will enable you to overcome obstacles throughout your work life.

CHOOSING A CAREER

Deciding on your initial career may present a stressful and frightening prospect. Many tend to perceive career decision-making as complex or even mysterious, only because they tend to concentrate on the outcome and overlook the decision-making and planning process. Successful career decisions are based on current and accurate information. Today, career information is abundant and easily accessible. While this is exciting and potentially helpful, it can also be overwhelming. Nevertheless, one major fact emerges from the mass of data and literature available: *effective career planning is a process that involves the total person*. Comprehensive career planning stresses the importance of knowing enough about your unique attributes, about specific career fields, and about your life priorities.

Career planning is an individual activity that occurs throughout a person's working lifetime. In American society, the career that you enter will influence your entire lifestyle, self-concept, income, prestige, choice of friends and living location. Career planning is indeed a subcomponent of life planning. It is influenced by many of the same factors, but it focuses attention on work tasks and work environments



The career planning process is ongoing and sequential. Since it is fluid rather than chronological, you move to the next step only when you are ready to do so, and you may move back and forth between steps at any given time. The career planning process is also cyclic. When career change is desired anytime during your work life, you may repeat the process once again. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the majority of members of the labor force will make three to four major changes in their career during their 35 to 45 years of working. Because human beings are complex, each of us has unique aspirations, goals, potential for development, and limitations. Although we can follow the same process, career planning outcomes must be individualized.

CAREER PLANNING

Career planning is the continuous self-evaluation and planning process done by a person to have a strong career path which is aligned with one's career goals, aspirations and skills. Career planning process is the continuous reiterative process of understanding oneself, setting career goals, revising skills and searching for the right career options.

A person may need to start this planning process from scratch every few years based on the market trends or demand and also on the base of the outcome of the current plan.

Importance of Career Planning

Career planning is a step-wise process which enables an individual to focus on where to want to be in life professionally. With the short-term goal and the long-term goals in place, It can help to plan their journey in their professional life. Self-assessment is necessary to understand one's capabilities and drawbacks. The various career options should be explored in detail to find a fit between one's abilities and the opportunities provided by a career option. It involves continuous learning and improvement to build and growth in the chosen career path. A good career planning helps a person grow in life in their professional career, which also help them grow personally.

If there is no career planning, then the career of an individual would be controlled by external factors and circumstances. Based on decisions and evaluation done by others, the person would go forward in the career. It may lead to a desirable career path but it can also lead to a job profile which was not at all part of individual's aspiration or career goals.

Career Planning Process





Career planning process is an important aspect for an individual's career development. Some of the basic steps in a career planning process are:

1. Self-Assessment

The first step in the process is self-assessment to be done by the individual to understand his or her skills, areas of interest, aspirations etc. Aspirations and goals are very important here as that would define how person would create future plan.

2. Research on Careers and Opportunities

The second step in the process is to understand the career options, companies available, and growth options in career etc. which are aligned with the self-assessment done already. Right opportunities need to be identified and proper research is required for that. An individual needs to be aware of the market trends and growth areas.

3. Set Career Objectives

The next step in the career planning is to set short-term as well as long-term career goals for oneself, and to have a clear career path. These can be defined as the immediate goals and how one looks at the career further down the line. A plan has to be according to clear objectives.

4. Learn & Improve Skills

The fourth step in the process is to keep acquiring new skills and knowledge to be in line with career objectives and with industry requirements. Many a times there can be clear gaps in the objectives, aspirations and skills. To fill those gaps, proper planning is required to acquire and learn those skills so that career plan can be properly executed.

5. Preparation of CV/Resume

The next step in the planning process is to be fully prepared in terms of CV, cover letter, recommendations etc. The resume should clearly highlight the skills, qualifications, objectives which is aligned with the career planning of an individual

6. Job/Work Search



The sixth step is to short-list the companies where an individual is seeking a job & start applying. It can be also working an entrepreneurship project as well.

7. Revise Career Goals

The last step in the career planning process is to continuously evaluate the career goals and again do a self-assessment to build a strong career path.

Career Planning Example

Let us take an example of an engineer AJ who has recently graduated and is interested in robotics. To start the planning, AJ has to first assess what kind of robotics he is interested in and what is his skill level. After that, he needs to set the objectives with time box approach on how he wants to grow in his robotics career. If there are gaps, he needs to take trainings and courses to reduce the gaps and search for jobs may be in manufacturing and automotive sector where robotics are natural fit.

If successful in securing suitable job, career planning can be more precise based on the hands on experience in the field and then the goals and objective can be defined for new career trajectory.

Hence, this concludes the definition of Career Planning along with its overview.

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