

His problem, of course, was a very common one. But I realized that just to arrange for the young man to have interviews with several possible employers would not help him. Trial and error is a pretty poor way to select a career. With dozens of career possibilities, the odds of stumbling into the right choice are several dozen to one. I knew I had to help F. B. see that before he starts going some place careerwise, he's got to know where that someplace is.

So I said, "Let's look at your career plan from this angle. Will you describe for me your image of yourself ten years from now?"

F. B., obviously studying the question, finally said, "Well, I guess I want what just about everyone else wants: a good job that pays well and a nice home. Really, though," he continued, "I haven't given it too much thought."

This, I assured him, was quite natural. I went on to explain that his approach to selecting a career was like going to an airline ticket counter and saying "Give me a ticket." The people selling the tickets just can't help you unless you give them a destination. So I said, "And I can't help you find a job until I know what your destination is, and only you can tell me that."

This jarred F. B. into thinking. We spent the next two hours not talking about the merits of different kinds of jobs, but rather discussing how to set goals. F. B. learned, I believe, the most important lesson in career planning: *Before you start out, know where you want to go.*

Like the progressive corporation, plan ahead. You are in a sense a business unit. Your talent, skills, and abilities are your "products." You want to develop your products so they command the highest possible price. Forward planning will do it.

Here are two steps that will help: