

Career Planning and Development

I. Balancing Life and Career

A. What is Career?

Have you ever envisioned yourself engaging in a career after graduation? What does the word "career" mean? Listed below are several definitions of this word:

From Merriam-Webster's Dictionary:

- A profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent calling
- A field for or pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement especially in public, professional, or business life

From Oxford Dictionary:

- The series of jobs that a person has in a particular area of work, usually involving more responsibility as time passes
- The period of time that you spend in your life working or doing a particular thing

B. What is Work-Life Balance?

According to business.tas.gov.au (2017), *work-life balance* describes the relationship between work commitments and life commitments and how they impact one another. Success in achieving work-life balance will differ for each person and may alter over time as family circumstances and personal commitments change. There are three (3) elements of work-life balance: (1) work and career; (2) family friends, and community; and (3) health and recreation. *Figure 1* shows that a balance among these three (3) aspects would result to productivity, support, and wellness of individuals.

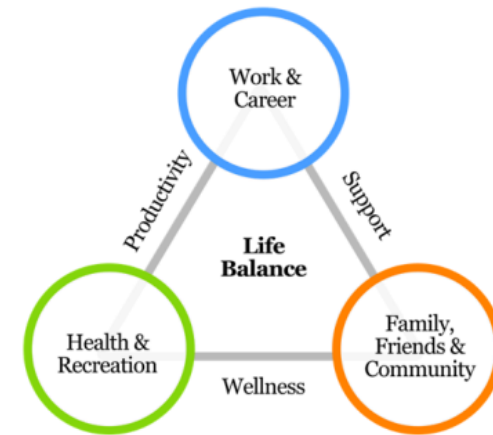


Figure 1. Work-life balance paradigm

Source: https://www.business.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/150487/Life_Balance_Resources.pdf

C. Benefits of Work-Life Balance

Due to the increased connectivity that is brought by technology, the lines between work and personal life are becoming blurred. Several studies have shown that employees who can balance their work, family, and life commitments are happier in their job and are more likely to stay with their employer (business.tas.gov.au, 2017).

Employer Benefits	Employee Benefits
Reduced staff turnover	Reduction in the impact of work on home/family life and vice versa
Lower recruitment and training costs due to decreased turnover	Reduced stress levels and higher levels of well-being

Reduced absenteeism due to higher levels of well-being	Control over time management in meeting work-life commitments
Gaining a reputation as a good employer or an employer of choice	Autonomy to make decisions regarding work-life balance
Improved ability to attract staff	Increased focus, motivation, and job
Reduced stress levels amongst staff	Satisfaction, knowing both family and work commitments are being met
Improved morale and job satisfaction	Increased job security, knowing the organization understands and supports family responsibilities
Greater staff loyalty and commitment	
Improved productivity	

Table 1. Benefits of having work-life balance

Source: https://www.business.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/150487/Life_Balance_Resources.pdf

D. Six (6) Tips for Better Work-Life Balance (Lee, 2014)

1. Let go of perfectionism

Life gets more complicated as you grow up. Your responsibilities increase as you climb the ladder at work and as your family grows. As a result, perfectionism becomes out of reach unlike before that it seems easier to maintain. Striving for perfection will only cause a burn-out. Thus, one should strive for excellence.

2. Unplug

Technology has helped our lives in many ways but also created expectations of constant

accessibility. Nowadays, many people were interrupted with their off time by tons of emails and notifications in their smartphones because they don't know how to "unplug". Respect your time off and other's as well. Unless it is an emergency, do not text during your family dinner and do not send work emails while you are hanging out with friends. Make quality time true quality time.

According to Robert Brooks (as cited in Lee, 2014), by not reacting to the updates from work, you will be developing a stronger habit of resilience. Resilient people feel greater sense of control over their lives, while reactive people have less control and are more prone to stress.

3. Exercise and meditate

Exercise is an effective stress reducer as it pumps "feel-good" endorphins through one's body. Dedicate few chunks of time each week to activities that will promote self-care. A refreshed mind and body will be more efficient and ready to face challenges at work.

4. Limit time-wasting activities and people

Identify what is most important in your life. Then, draw firm boundaries so you can devote quality time to these high-priority people and activities. Several technologies and techniques can help you in scheduling your tasks or blocking you from mindlessly surfing social media sites when you are supposed to be working.

Robinson (n.d.) likened prioritizing to the "airplane metaphor" where a person is in a dilemma whether he/she will put the oxygen mask first to himself/herself or to his/her child. He said that, "If

you have a child, you put the oxygen mask on yourself first, not on the child." The lack of oxygen would be dangerous as it could result to disorientation and being unconscious. In order to help the child better, the person has to put the oxygen first. It may seem selfish but it is not, he added, as he believes that "the better you are yourself, the better you are going to be in other areas as well."

5. Change the structure of your life

Do not assume that your habits are set in stone. Periodically, try to take a birds-eye view of your life and ask yourself: "What changes could make life easier?" Marilyn Puder-York (as cited in Lee, 2014) gave a relevant scenario about changing habits:

"I met a senior executive woman who, for 20 years of her marriage, arranged dinner for her husband every night. But as the higher earner with the more demanding job, the trips to the grocery store and daily meal preparations were adding too much stress to her life. My response to her was, 'Maybe it's time to change the habit.' The executive worried her husband might be upset, but I insisted that, if she wanted to reduce stress, this structural change could accomplish just that."

Instead of trying to do it all, focus on activities you specialize in and value most. Then, delegate or outsource everything else. If you have to let go of things (e.g., a task or a responsibility) to give others a chance to learn something new, do it. In that way, you will have more time in devoting your attention to higher priorities.

6. Start small and build from there

Committing yourself to drastic changes is a recipe for failure: cutting your workhours from 80 hours a week to 40, bumping your daily run from zero to five (5) miles a day, and vowing to begin attending family dinners nightly. According to Robert Brooks (as cited in Lee, 2014), if you are trying to change a certain script in your life, start small, experience some success, then build from there.

II. Strategies in Career Advancement

A. What is Career Advancement?

Career advancement refers to the upward progression of one's career (McKay, 2018). Weiss (2013) defined it as forward progress toward positioning that brings you happiness and fulfillment. However, there are articles which differentiate the term *advancement* from *promotion*. The former refers to a career move within or outside the same organization based on proficiency, work experience, or training, while the latter signifies a movement within the organization and upward to the corporate ladder. Presumably, all promotions are deemed career advancement, yet some instances of career advancement are not promotion (Mayhew, n.d.).

There are factors which distinguish career advancement from promotion: salary, authority, job duties, and location or relocation. An employee who will get a career advancement may have increased authority, change in job duties, or may even experience relocation but not an increase in salary. On the other hand, a promotion generally changes an employee's rank, job

title, and salary.

B. What is Career Development?

As opposed to career advancement which is a short-term step or goal and just only a part of the bigger picture (e.g., promotion from assistant manager to manager), career development refers to "the lifelong journey of a person's work identity. It is the big-picture view of someone's ultimate career goal and includes her years of education, training and jobs" (Knuppel, 2015).

Meanwhile, McKay (2019) defined career development as "the process that forms a person's work identity. It is a significant part of human development and spans over the individual's entire lifetime, beginning when the individual first becomes aware of how people make a living."

There are several types of career development programs which a person can take advantage can capitalize on to enhance his/her skill in current roles, navigate organizational ladders, gain personal insights into their strengths and development needs, and sharpen their ability for career advancement when the opportunities arise. An employee needs to hone both his/her *soft skills* (e.g., flexibility, communication, management skills) and *hard skills* (e.g., computer programming, mastery in cooking Asian cuisine) to achieve growth and development in his/her career. There are two (2) classifications of career development programs: formal and informal. The former could be accessed through attending seminars, conferences, or training, and enrolling in a formal school or institution for post-baccalaureate or graduate studies, and the latter can happen in the workplace through mentorship, internship, or apprenticeship.

C. Factors and Barriers that Influence Career Development (McKay, 2019)

1. Personal characteristics

Personality type, interests, aptitudes, and work-related values influence which occupations we find satisfying as well as the types of work environments in which we will succeed.

2. Financial resources and obligations

Pursuing certain career options can be costly. If you choose an occupation, for example, that requires you to attend college, you may be limited by your ability to pay for it. You could end up altering your plans. On the other hand, you may find yourself working in a job just to keep up with your bills and unable to go after opportunities because of financial obligations. You can try to put away money for a future career change.

3. Physical, mental, and emotional impairments

Some of us are better suited to some careers than we are to others due to our physical and mental abilities, and limitations. If possible, find an occupation that makes the best use of your strengths while accommodating your limitations.

4. Support from others

Going after a hard-to-achieve goal is even more difficult if your loved ones aren't behind you. You have a greater chance of succeeding if you can convince them to become your cheerleaders, but if that is unlikely to happen, you may have to find motivation from other people in your life.

5. Age

Our age, or our perception of it, can hinder us in

our career development. During a large part of our lives, we may worry about being too young to pursue a particular path, advance in our careers, or make a career change, and as our age increases, we fret about being too old to do those things. Instead of focusing on your age, concentrate on your abilities and how motivated you are.

6. Family obligations

An individual's career development may stall if he/she takes time off from work to take care of children or elderly parents. He/she has several options including getting outside help to provide childcare or eldercare if the individual desires it.

D. Five (5) Things You Can Do to Advance Your Career
(Prossack, 2018)

1. Define what success looks like for you

Everyone has their own definition of success. For some people, it might be reaching the C-Suite and getting a coveted executive role, and for others, it could be finding a career that allows them to spend more time with their family. There's no right or wrong way to define success; it looks different for everyone. What matters is that you're able to define it for yourself.

Think about what's most important to you in your career now and what you want your career to look like in the future. What you're striving for now may look different than what you want in five (5) or 10 years. Thinking long term will help you define your version of success.

2. Establish goals and a timeline

Goals and a timeline go hand in hand. Without a

timeline, it is much harder to achieve your goals. Without goals, a timeline is simply a schedule. Using them together is how you achieve success. The goals you set give you something to strive for, and the timeline keeps you accountable and on track to achieve them.

Refer to your career roadmap and take a look at your plans for years one (1) through five (5). These are your biggest long-term goals. To accomplish these big goals, you'll need to break them down into smaller, more manageable short-term goals. Consider the steps you need to take to reach the next level in your career. What skills will you need to learn? Who in your network can help you develop? Will you be able to reach your goal at your current company?

Take the time to analyze and think critically about your goals. There's no limit to how many short-term goals you can create, but the general rule of thumb is "more is better than less". Once you've identified both your long- and short-term goals, it is time to add them to your career roadmap. The more detailed your plan is, the easier it will be to stay on track to meet all of your goals.

3. Seek out feedback

Feedback is a way to measure your progress and make sure you're on the right path to achieving your goals. If you only have formal reviews twice per year, schedule a check-in meeting with your manager in between reviews. Don't limit feedback to just coming from your superiors. It should also come from your peers, as they offer a different perspective and point of view.

Ask your peers to assess your strengths and weaknesses or provide specific feedback from a time you worked together. If you're in a management role, ask your employees for critiques as well. The more diverse your sources of feedback are, the more you'll learn from them.

4. Be open with your manager

There are usually many more opportunities for advancement than you realize. Talk to your manager and see what career possibilities exist within the company. Share your goals with them and see how they can help you achieve them. By talking to your manager and letting them know your aspirations, you're putting yourself on their radar. If they're supportive, they'll offer you help and advice to help you reach your goals.

5. Use your network

The only way to advance your career, no matter what your goal is, is to have help and support from others. Tap into your network for every stage of the process. When you're thinking about your definition of success, talk to your mentor or a trusted advisor. When you're creating your long-term goals, talk to your manager to see what the possibilities for advancement are. Once you've identified what you want to do next, seek out people that are currently in that role and ask them about it. The more information you can get, the clearer your action plan becomes.

All together, these actions help you create your career roadmap, which in turn becomes your action plan and guide to career advancement. Remember that it is not set in stone, and you can update it with new goals at any time. A career path is not a straight

line from point A to point B, so don't feel that you have to follow a rigid set path to get there.

References

- Career*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/career>
- Career*. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/career_1
- Career development programs*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.chr.ucla.edu/training-and-development/career-development-programs>
- Knuppel, B. (2015, March 16). *Career development vs. career advancement: leaders need to understand both*. Retrieved from <https://www.smartbrief.com/original/2015/03/career-development-vs-career-advancement-leaders-need-understand-both>
- Lee, D. (2014, October 20). *6 tips for better work-life balance*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/deborahlee/2014/10/20/6-tips-for-better-work-life-balance/#5ca12da29ff5>
- Mayhew, R. (n.d.). *Advancement vs. promotion*. Retrieved from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/advancement-vs-promotion-33323.html>
- McKay, D. (2018). *Career advancement*. Retrieved from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/advancement-525653>
- Prossack, A. (2018, August 29). *5 things you can do to advance your career*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashiraprossack1/2018/08/29/a-guide-to-advancing-your-career/#495e78123cfa>
- Weiss, B. (2013, May 7). *4 simple career advancement strategies*. Retrieved from <https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2013/05/07/4-simple-tips-for-obtaining-professional-bliss>
- Work-life balance resources*. (2017). Retrieved from https://www.business.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/150487/Life_Balance_Resources.pdf