

Jobs vs. Careers: Case Studies

PFL Academy - Chapter 1.1

Case Study 1: Maya's Story

Background: Maya is 22 years old and has worked at a fast food restaurant for 4 years.

Starting situation:

- High school diploma
- Hourly wage: \$11/hour
- Limited benefits - no health insurance, no retirement plan
- No clear path for advancement

Decision point:

Maya decides to pursue a career in healthcare by enrolling in a community college program for medical assistants while continuing to work part-time.

Results after 5 years:

- Associate's degree in medical assisting
- Full-time position at a healthcare clinic
- Salary: \$42,000/year
- Comprehensive benefits including health insurance and retirement plan
- Clear advancement path to lead medical assistant or specialized roles
- Pursuing additional certifications for career growth

Case Study 2: Carlos's Story

Background: Carlos has worked in technology for 3 years after completing a coding bootcamp.

Career path strategy:

- Started as a junior developer at a small company (\$55,000/year)
- Volunteered for challenging projects to build his portfolio
- Deliberately focused on learning in-demand skills (cloud computing, DevOps)
- Built a professional network through meetups and online communities
- After 18 months, moved to a mid-level position at a larger company (\$78,000/year)
- Continued skill development with company-sponsored training
- After another 18 months, promoted to senior developer (\$95,000/year)

Carlos's approach:

- Treated each role as a stepping stone in a larger strategy
- Made strategic career decisions based on skill development, not just salary
- Built career capital through experiences, skills, and professional relationships
- Leveraged career capital for advancement opportunities

Discussion Questions

1. How do the financial outcomes differ between Maya's job-focused and career-focused approaches?
2. What specific types of career capital did Carlos develop, and how did each contribute to his advancement?
3. What sacrifices or trade-offs did Maya and Carlos make in pursuing their career paths?
4. How might Maya's and Carlos's financial situations differ after 10, 20, or 30 years?
5. Which approach would you prefer to take in your own life? Why?