



A SHORT CAREER PLANNING GUIDE FOR YOUNG INDIVIDUALS



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WHAT IS CAREER PLANNING?

Career planning can simply be defined as the continuous self-evaluation and planning process done by a person to have a strong career path that blends with one's career goals, dreams and skills¹. The process of planning one's career involves doing the following constantly and repeatedly which are: understanding one's self, setting career goals, developing skills, and searching for the right career options which may depend on one's skillsets, specialized education acquired and the job options available.

The College for Adults² defines career planning as a process for:

- Identifying what you are good at.
- Knowing how your skills, talents, values, and interests can lead to possible jobs or careers.
- Matching your skills, etc. to existing jobs or careers.
- Matching your career goals to your financial needs.
- Matching your career goals to your educational needs.
- Making good decisions for yourself.
- Finding ways to meet your educational and financial needs.

Career planning is a rigorous process and requires a lot of soul-searching, diligence, research, and counselling from people who have experience in the career paths being considered. The importance of counselling and mentorship cannot be taken lightly, as those already in the field are able to point out potential challenges within the career path, and also suggest helpful ways to remain focused and achieve set goals even with the presence of challenges.

Overall, career planning is a tedious but rewarding process of taking intentional steps towards ensuring career success and fulfilment.



WHY IS CAREER PLANNING IMPORTANT?

You most likely would have heard the adage, “those who don't plan, plan to fail”. The same thing applies here, as not defining your career goals and aspirations early enough and adequately, may impede your ability to achieve what really makes you happy, what makes you motivated, and what makes you consider yourself a success; hence, choosing a career path early enough is an action that must be taken seriously. Another essential point to note is that picking a career path helps to avoid confusion, makes one's life easier and in turn more enjoyable and fulfilling. It is also important to plan your career to enable you focus and channel your energy purposefully. By developing a career plan which should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound), you are positioning yourself for success.



Intentional steps



Informed decisions



Increased Focus



IMPROVED CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN CAREER

STEPS INVOLVED IN CAREER PLANNING

Career planning is a cycle that is continuous and might constantly change, but what is important is that you stay committed to the process to achieve your desired result.



SOUL-SEARCHING/SELF-ASSESSMENT

The first and probably most important step is soul-searching yourself about your peculiarities and personality. In order to fully optimise the soul-searching stage, you would need to explore yourself in different situations e.g. get involved in a focused club (book, football, music, dancing etc), or vocational activities, seminars, skill acquisition programs etc. where you would be able to discover either your strength and/or the things you feel motivated about and areas you naturally gravitate towards. You can ask yourself the following questions to help your judgement:

- Do I find it easy to motivate myself in doing this activity?
- Do I like doing the activity?
- Was I able to do it naturally or learn the skill without much difficulty, and even if there was some difficulty, was it something I enjoyed learning?
- Does the activity reflect or showcase the principles I value e.g., human rights, helping others, equality, etc?

RESEARCH

The next step is to carry out research on what such career plan entails. What are the necessary skills, education, professional and non-professional certifications needed for such career? Read through the biography (and other related sources of information), career journey or relevant materials focused on some of the most respected individuals in that field. Identify relevant skills that would be needed in that field, for instance a lot of fields today require excellent communication and problem-solving skills to succeed in the career. Take time out to understand those skills and be intentional about learning those skills formally through attending skill acquisition programs, trainings, seminars; or informally, by seeking avenues to demonstrate and hone them in everyday life.

For professional careers such as Accounting, Engineering, Legal etc, you would most likely require recognised professional certification exams to prove your competence and your capability. It is important to be aware of the skills relevant to your chosen career path and work towards acquiring them as soon as possible. It is never too early!

ASK QUESTIONS

During your research you would likely have a lot of questions and clarifications you need. Identify the right persons to discuss these with. Such persons might include your parents, teachers, older siblings, mentors, or any responsible, trusted and experienced individuals you know. There are also online tools available today to provide further insights, knowledge and information on almost everything. Be careful to compare, validate, and verify information from one source to another to ensure information are accurate and free from biases.

DRAW OUT A PLAN

Using information from your self-assessment, research and conversations, draw out what would be the comprehensive goals and objectives you want to achieve. The skills, qualifications and certifications needed, let us call these necessities. Actions you intend to take to get these necessities including a timeline for both the actions and necessities. Remember the importance of time management and setting a SMART goal for your plan. If your goals are SMART, then you should indeed be able to monitor and track progress.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

This can be done by committing yourself to the plan or seeking an accountability partner who would help you stay focused toward achieving your career goals. Record both successes and failures along the way using them as a motivational tool towards achieving your career goals.

REVIEW YOUR PLANS!

We live in a fast-paced world now enabled by advancements in technology. As such, always be on the lookout for trends or changes happening in the career or industry you are interested in. This is vital to help you identify new developments in the necessities for that career path. Also, it is important to review your career plan so as to take cognisance of changes in your self-assessment. As you go along in your soul-searching journey, you will continually discover new things about yourself and the world which might change your perspective, desires and goals. Keep this in mind as you go along this continuous journey, and aim to revisit your plans at least once every year.

EDUCATION AND CAREER PLANNING

Getting educated is one of the most important actions that could help you achieve your career goals. Education goes beyond the certificates obtained from an academic institution, but more importantly encompasses the skills, networks, and relevant experiences you build during the studies. It is important to focus on ways your education can be transmitted into real life opportunities, sharpen your knowledge base and build relationships and networks that could be vital for your career goals. For instance, people have been able to build successful businesses through partnerships with former classmates.

■ TIPS FOR CAREER PLANNING

- Be open and honest with yourself when planning your career.
- Don't base your career plans on current trends and money only, as things can change rapidly. A skill- and motivation-based approach is always advised.
- Identify one or two mentors who would help monitor your progress and provide some guidance.
- Build relationships along the way as this could be helpful in the future.
- Monitor sector trends in the country and the world all through your career journey. This will help you make informed decisions at every stage of your career and adapt your career plans as necessary.
- Take conscious effort to develop general skills such as team work, problem solving skills etc., also called transferable skills, as these go along with technical skills required for your career path.
- Offer yourself for internship (paid or unpaid) and volunteering early to get a feel of different career paths, gain valuable experience and also develop critical skillsets. This would help you avoid regrets and making hasty decisions.
- Enhance your communication skills. This is perhaps the single greatest skill that will accelerate your career. Communication extends beyond speaking—it involves writing, reading, and listening. Leverage every opportunity you get, for example, to do public speaking, present on behalf of a group or your class, etc., and also read widely to learn and also build your diction and vocabulary.
- Be time-conscious and effectively manage your time. It is important to note that procrastination significantly hampers productivity and should be rigorously avoided. Also, build your discipline and avoid distractions, as well as unprofitable activities that kill time.

EXPERIENCES

Dipo Ojekunle - [Member, ITET Gem Foundation](#)

One thing I have loved for a while is analysis, looking at data and determining what it means and how data can be applied makes me excited. I have a degree in Mathematics and currently work as a digital marketing and public relations specialist in a financial services institution. This career path started a little over 5 years ago after a volunteer role led to a work role as a digital marketer with a company serving several clients, including one of the most reputable fast food companies in Nigeria.

One thing that has been consistent in my career journey is how a previous role plays a part in linking with the next. For example, volunteering to manage social media handles leading to a social media analyst role. The latter role being vital in transitioning into a digital communications associate in a PR firm; and eventually my current digital marketing and public relations specialist role. This linking thread highlights the importance of being diligent and excelling in whatever one has at hand.

I am building a career in marketing communications, and it has been quite an exciting journey. Consistent learnings, campaigns with different approaches, proactively planning ahead, and occasionally, stand-out moments of excellent performance, have made the journey a good and interesting one. If there is one theme that has stood out for me and I would pass across to anyone starting up in their journey, it is to always keep learning and to find ways to incorporate learning into doing, because practise they say makes perfect. You can never tell just how the little you are building now adds up in the future. Don't stay discouraged even when you fail or make mistakes, go again.

Awa Michael - [Trustee, Itet Gem Foundation](#)

I didn't have my future career figured out during or after school. I studied accountancy in school, so I knew I would work somewhere within the accounting profession. I had the opportunity to work across industries with a consulting firm and with the exposure I gained, it was easy to identify the areas I naturally gravitated toward, and it was structures – governance structures. I was fascinated to see how large multinationals and small companies alike work almost on autopilot due to the structures in place.

This fascination is what led me to pursue a career in Internal Audit. Audit gives you a 360-degree view of an organisation, with a focus on governance, risk management, and internal controls.

I encourage young people to explore because you don't know what you don't know. It is unlikely to know that you have a natural affinity for synchronised swimming if you have no idea what it is. In like manner, you may not know those areas where you have a natural competence to thrive except you explore.

REFERENCES

1. College for Adults(n.d.) What is career planning. Available at: <https://collegeforadults.org/career-planning/what-is-career-planning/#:~:text=Career%20planning%20is%20a%20process,to%20existing%20jobs%20or%20careers> (Retrieved: 10 November, 2023)
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■ ABOUT ITET GEM FOUNDATION

We are on a mission to help the youth achieve their potential by providing support in any way we can. We are focusing more attention on secondary school students and leavers as we believe they are at the intersection of self-discovery and navigating the uncertainties and challenges presented by the career world ahead.



CONTACT US

 08106787900 |   @itetgemfoundation |  www.itetgemfoundation.com