

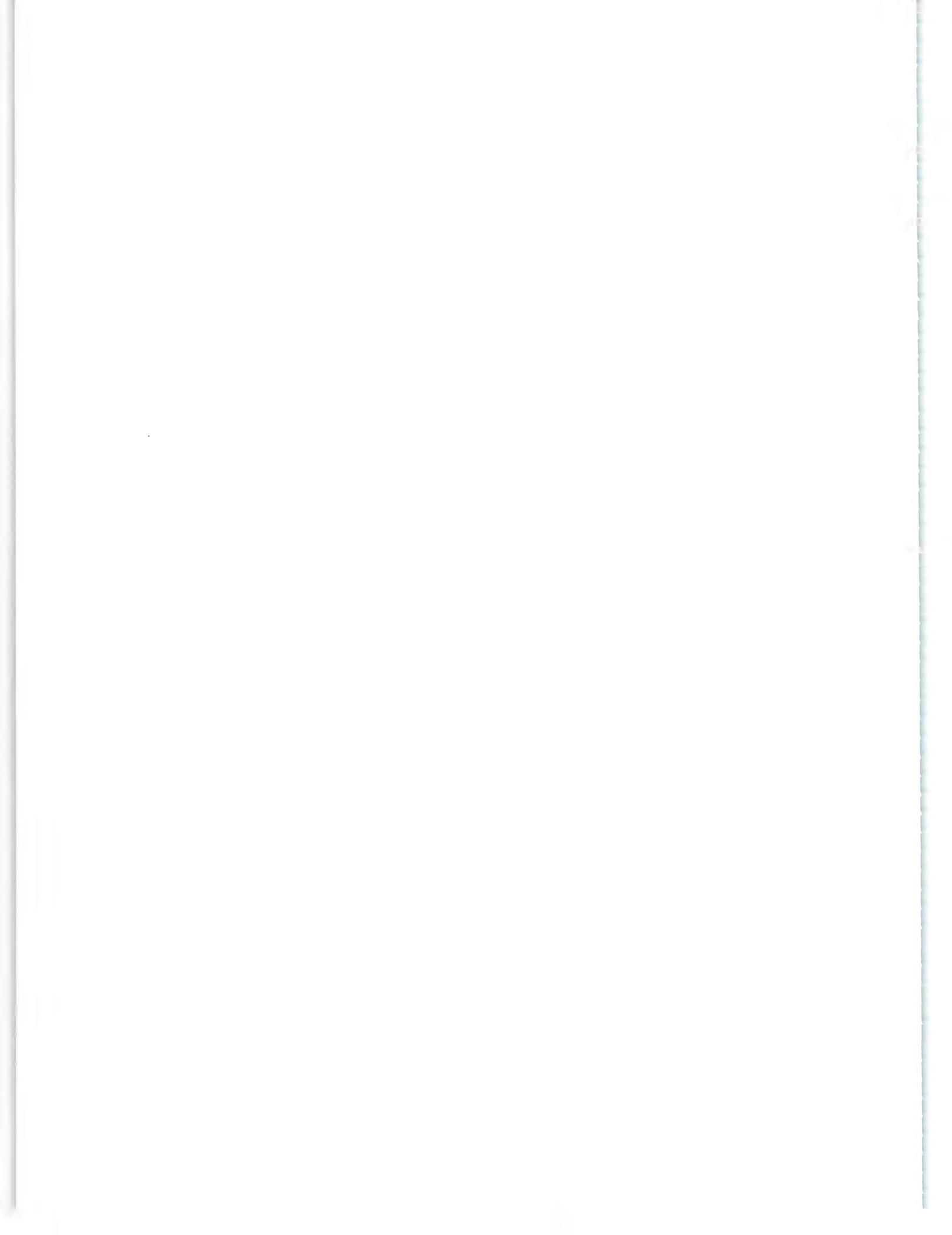
Third Edition

CAREER PLANNING

Dave Ellis
Stan Lankowitz
Ed Stupka
Doug Toft



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Houghton Mifflin Company
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CAREER PLANNING



Introduction

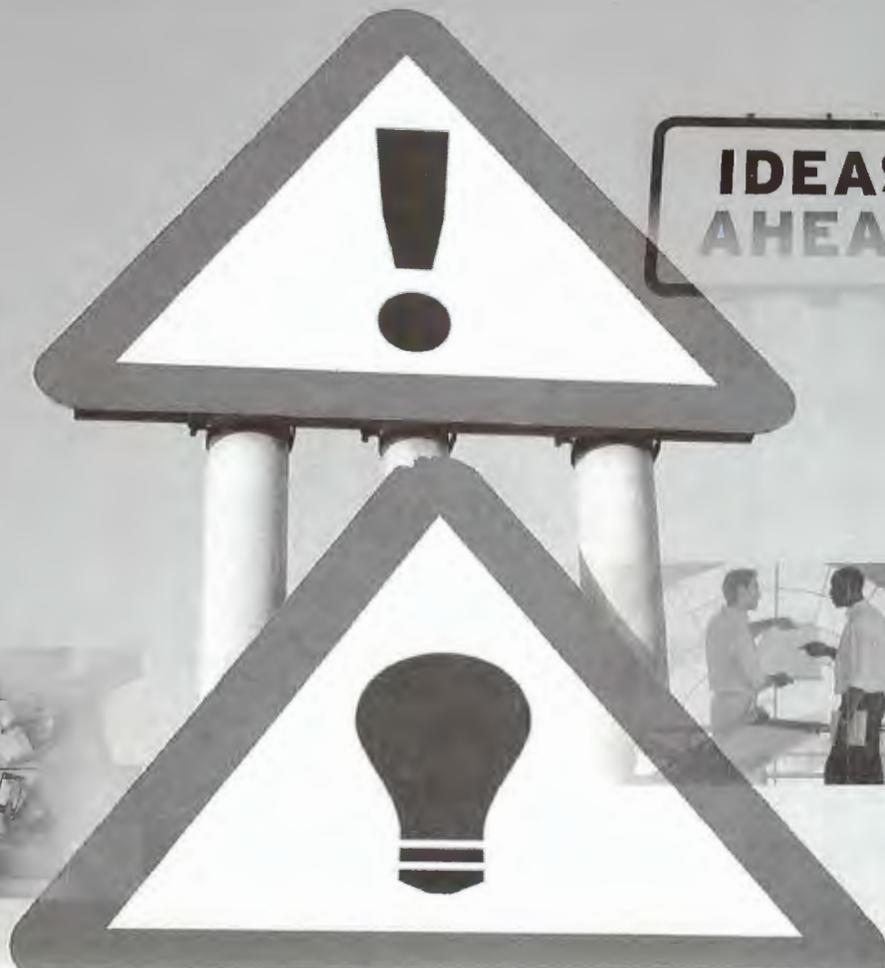
For most people, the job market offers traps, blinds, false leads, and even mirages which block the way to their goals. Yet it offers countless rewarding opportunities for those who know their way around in it.

RICHARD LATHROP

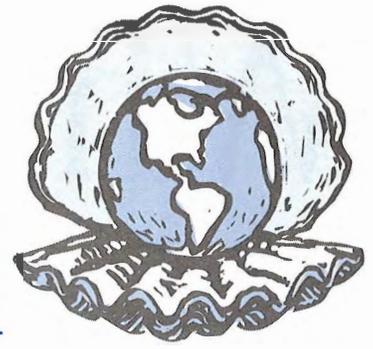
All adventures, especially into new territory, are scary.

SALLY RIDE

AS YOU BEGIN . . . Consider one way to use this book to succeed in planning your career. Also do a textbook reconnaissance and discover options for getting the most from this book. You can declare what you want in planning your career and commit to making this book a partner in your success.



Get the most from this book



Any book is merely an invitation. Books invite you to think for yourself, come to terms with your dreams, and look at the world through new lenses. They invite you into the hearts, lives, and passions of other human beings. They invite you to plan, choose, create, reflect, and act.

This book invites you to practice planning your career. It distills many of the lessons people have learned while choosing careers and looking for work. If you apply the ideas in this book, you're likely to avoid dull, dead-end jobs. You might make more money. And you will probably save days, months, or even years or frustration in the work world.

This book does not guarantee those things. However, there is one thing it can guarantee. If you apply the ideas in this book, you will take charge of your career. You won't be leaving it to your boss, your teachers, the job market, a personnel department, or anyone else. You will be the author of your own life. You will choose how to live it.

Reading the articles in this book is an effective way to start planning your career. Even more powerful are reading and doing the book. That includes doing the exercises, answering quiz questions, and completing the Discovery Statements and Intention Statements, which are journal entries. Fill this book with your writing and keep plenty of extra paper on hand for recording more ideas. (Three-by-five index cards work especially well for this purpose; you can carry them in a pocket or purse, write on them, and sort them later.) Through taking action, you start putting ideas to work in your life.

You can read this book cover to cover, but you don't have to do that. Though the chapters are designed to be read in order, you can skip around and focus on the parts of the book that apply to your current situation. Look through the table of contents and the index to find what you want.

Without your active participation, this book is worthless. But if you combine reading with reflecting, dreaming, planning, writing, choosing, and acting, something will happen. You can get something in return for the money, effort, and time you put into this book. You can come away with a plan for what many people spend 88,000 hours of their lives doing: working. More than that, you could come away with a far greater chance to spend those hours doing work you choose, work that is worthy of your talents and dreams—work you love.

This book invites you to take charge of your career. It contains ideas, hints, suggestions, experiments, skills, resources, and tools. Only you can put them into action. If it sometimes seems overwhelming, take one suggestion at a time. Breaking a major project like career planning into small steps makes it doable. Building on a series of small successes, you can accomplish goals that do justice to your dreams.

All kinds of readers can use this book. It is for people beginning their careers, people well into their careers, people in career transition, people of various cultures and ethnic backgrounds—everyone.

You are invited to preview this book and discover what's in it for you.

What's in here?

You can use this book as a guide through six phases of activity: commit to career planning, discover yourself, discover the world of work, plan, act on your plan, and celebrate work.

Key elements of this book promote these activities.

Discovery Statements help you learn more about your thought processes and what you think about your future career.

Intention

Statements help you use what you have learned about career planning. In doing the **exercises**, you'll actually produce and evaluate ideas, thus gaining practical experience in career planning. A **web site**

(<http://collegesurvival.college.hmco.com/students>) dedicated to this text offers additional articles, exercises, suggestions, ideas, and tools for expanding your career planning practices. Each chapter in this book has a specific purpose.

The main purpose of this introduction is to persuade you to commit to spending the energy to use this book actively. Before you stiffen up and resist, the purpose of this sales pitch is not to separate you from your money. You already bought the book. Now you can get something for your money by committing yourself to take action—in other words, commit yourself to planning your career. Here's what's in it for you.



Chapter One: Commit

Gives you an idea of what career planning involves. This includes a critical look at some common ideas about work and career planning. You can also take the opportunity to consider possible payoffs of career planning and decide how deeply you want to commit to this process. One step in creating your dream career is to dream. Finding work that you love means discovering what you love in the first place. This chapter asks you to let your imagination soar; dreaming is the foundation of a truly practical career plan.

Chapter Two: Discover Yourself

Is about an essential ingredient in every career plan: you. Your desires, preferences, interests, and abilities are a great place to start your career plan. Here you are asked to explore what you want to be, what you want to do, and what you want to have. You can start translating your skills and interests into careers you can plan.

Chapter Three: Discover Work

Discusses what's "out there" in the work world, another key to your career plan. Included are strategies for researching career options. With that knowledge, you can match your skills and interests with the opportunities that await you.

Chapter Four: Plan

Focuses on planning, a step that bridges dreams to reality. To some people, planning means getting locked into a rigid schedule, closing ourselves off from adventure, or losing the fun in life. Actually planning can put us more at ease and open us to change. By planning, we create new possibilities in every aspect of life. Planning creates freedom.

Chapter Five: Act

Asks you to put your career plan into action. This involves writing résumés, going on interviews, and more. Basing these steps on knowledge and planning empowers you in the job market.

Chapter Six: Celebrate Work

First invites you to think about the world of work by first finding success in getting along with your coworkers. Embrace diversity. Then celebrate—step back, laugh, relax, and remember the big picture. Recalling your broad goals and life purpose is part of this. So is beginning again, changing directions, and celebrating your mistakes.

Career planning boils down to expanding and narrowing down. Expanding involves opening up as many possibilities as you can, exploring whatever you're interested in, and surveying the full spectrum of available careers. If you choose a career too soon, you may not find out about a new field that holds the most promise for a career. You may miss learning about the company you never knew existed—the kind of place where you've always wanted to work. Or you might forget to consider self-employment, the chance to create your own business.

Narrowing down means choosing a field, focusing on certain skills to develop, and finding work. In career planning, there is a time to explore possibilities. There also comes a time to choose, to act. That calls for a pointed, specific plan.

The trick is to keep those two tasks in balance. Working through this book is one way to find a rhythm of expanding and narrowing down and move toward a career you love.

Action makes this book work. To get the most out of an exercise, read the instructions carefully before you begin. To get the most out of this book, do most of the exercises. These exercises invite you to write, touch, feel, move, see, search, ponder, speak, listen, recall, choose, commit and create. Learning often works best when it involves this action.

Remember, career planning is an adventure that involves exploration. There are dozens of effective paths to planning your career. This book will help you on your way.

JOURNAL ENTRY



Intention Statement

Even if you are not sure of your career preference, write a career plan right now. Include three elements: a career goal, a list of steps you can take to prepare for that career, and a timeline for reaching that career goal.

Your plan might be incomplete or tentative. No problem. This book will help you make it more complete. You can change this plan later—even throw it out and start over. Career planning is a continual cycle of discovery, intention and feedback. The point is to dive into the process and make career planning a lifelong habit.

You can plan now, with no further research. Go ahead. There's nothing to lose. Make an outline, do a mind map—use any format you like. Discover what you already know. Consider using your computer to complete this exercise.

This book might be wrong— and you can change that

This book might be wrong. Some of the ideas in it may not work for you. Some of the exercises and journal entries may not take you where you expect to go. Some suggestions just may not apply to you right now. Exercises, journal entries, quizzes—it may all seem like too much.

Fortunately, there's a lot you can do about all this.

You can remember that ideas are tools.

Career planning is not a creed, formula, or dogma. It is not a recipe or painting by numbers. It is not a formal system, a schedule of obligations, or a list of requirements. There is nothing to sign and no hidden agenda.

In reality, career planning is only a body of ideas—tools—to try. You are not being called on to believe anything. You're only invited to test the techniques, try them on for size, and judge them for yourself. All of them have the goal of guiding you to a career that you choose freely and enjoy. If an idea or technique brings you closer to that goal, you can use it. If not, you can ignore it for now.

There is nothing mysterious about this. A career plan is merely a road map. It marks the high points of the trip, notes the landmarks, and tells us where to turn. Like a map, a career plan can save time and help us avoid getting lost.

A career plan is to life what a compass is to an explorer, or what a conductor is to an orchestra. Maps, compasses, conductors—none of these things are “true” or “false.” Better words for describing them include *effective* or *ineffective*, *useful* or *not useful*, *accurate* or *inaccurate*.

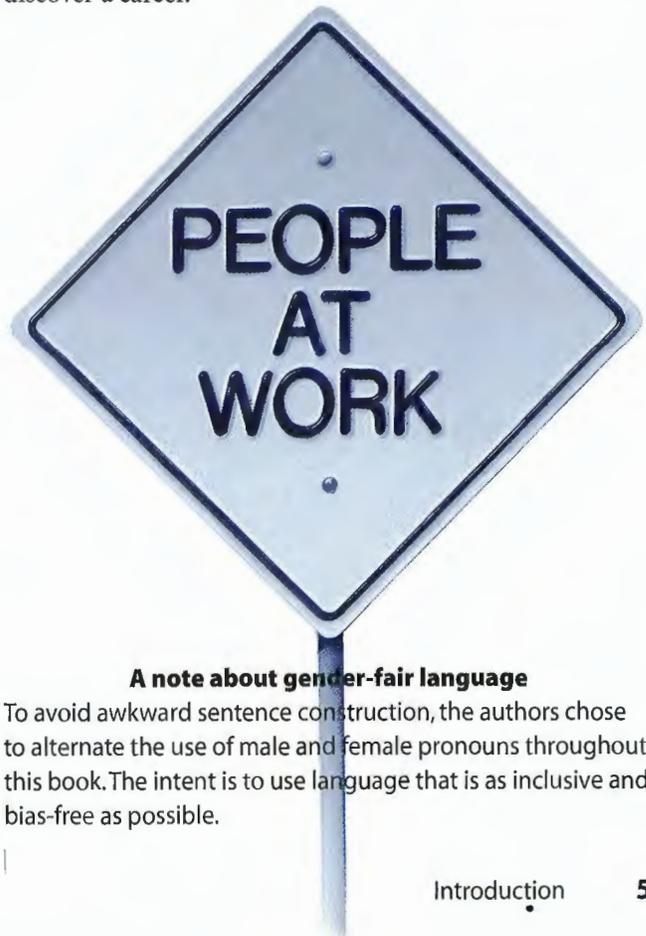
Throughout this book, you may meet surprising ideas. Some of them may inspire anger or automatic rejection. For many people, the very idea of finding a dream career or enjoying work seems an illusion.

Another tendency is to grow attached to ideas. This is a very human tendency. Some ideas easily become our pets. We fasten on to them as the keys to the future. They

even inspire our undying allegiance and become self-evident truths.

Readers with either attitude can squelch many of the benefits of career planning, even before they begin. An alternative is to release ourselves from these extremes.

In this process, there's no requirement to always be “right”—no plan, idea, or technique we must champion, attack, defend, or preserve. When we let go of those obligations, we may feel lighter, more detached, more playful. We glimpse possibilities we've never seen before. And with the blinders of a rigid position set aside, we can discover a career.



A note about gender-fair language

To avoid awkward sentence construction, the authors chose to alternate the use of male and female pronouns throughout this book. The intent is to use language that is as inclusive and bias-free as possible.

Commit

*You must be the change
you wish to see in the
world.*

MOHANDAS GANDHI

*Instead of thinking
about where you are,
think about where you
want to be. It takes
twenty years of hard
work to become an
overnight success.*

DIANA RANKIN

IN THIS CHAPTER . . . Begin now. Jump right into the process and write a career plan—now. Explore the choices you’ve already made. Discover what you already know and then find out more. Ask others about career planning. Begin to incorporate what you learned from doing these exercises—now.



What if I make the wrong choice?

You are not asked to make a final decision. You can always choose again. Changing your mind is OK. There is no right answer. You are exploring now. This is only practice.

What a strange way to start this book.

We learn by doing. This journal entry gets the process started. Later in the book, you'll be invited to do it again and notice your progress.

I don't know about my career yet!

That's OK, because the purpose of this assignment is just to begin the process of exploring.

I don't WANT to do this!

Examine your purpose for using this book. Forget the whole thing if it doesn't help you get what you want.

There's not enough room on the page for me to do this.

You can also use a notebook. You might want to use it for many of this book's other journal entries and exercises.

Begin now

JOURNAL ENTRY



Discovery/Intention Statement

Write your career plan.

Yes. Now.

Do this before you go any further in this book. Jump right into the process and discover what you already know about your wishes and plans for a career.

If you have no idea where to begin, make up something. This journal entry can get you started.

The plan you write right now might not match the reality of your future. That's not the point. A master, one who excels at an activity, fumbles when she first attempts her art. Even accomplished artists begin, revise, discard, and begin again. Ernest Hemingway rewrote the last page of *A Farewell to Arms* 39 times before he was satisfied.

What you are being asked to do is far less complicated. Just write a rough draft of your career plan on the following page. It's only for practice. At this point you can do nothing wrong. There are many opportunities to refine your plan as you use this book.

Your plan might take up one paragraph or one page. Or it might be longer, listing long-term and short-term goals. You might include a specific job title or list of tasks you enjoy. Or you could simply list the general values you'd like your work to support.

For example, one person's plan could include the steps necessary for becoming an anthropologist. It might list the courses required for this major and any additional training desired. Such a plan could also list tasks to do after schooling is complete. It might name companies to research, people to contact, and target dates for completing a résumé and interviews. This plan might take up several pages or a stack of 3×5 cards.

For other people, a much simpler plan may be appropriate. For now, this plan could be only one sentence long: "I will work as a music teacher in an elementary school." Or "On Monday I will contact the Career Planning Center and set up a time to talk with a counselor there."

To make your plan effective, make it visual. Put it in writing. If you prefer, use flow charts, mind maps, diagrams, or drawings. Some people like to list each action from their plan on a separate 3×5 card. To get the big picture, they pin the cards on a bulletin board or tape them to a wall.

The point is to get started with the process of planning—to make it a working tool in your life. As you experience the power of planning, you can return to it again and again.

When you write your plan, remember the difference between the terms *job* and *career*. In this book, *job* means a specific group of tasks, chores, or duties that make up whatever we call "work." A *career* is a general field of employment, a group of related jobs. Someone interested in the career of counseling, for example, could work in teaching, career counseling, social work, or the ministry.

EXERCISE**Discover what you know already**

Before they begin career planning, many people know a lot about what they do not want to do for a living. Chances are you've already ruled out many jobs and careers, but this is not being negative—it can clarify the things you'd really like to do. At any time, you can choose a new list of careers and jobs you've ruled out for now. And you can be willing to reconsider your position later.

To do this exercise, scan the following lists, crossing out all the jobs you're not interested in.

1. Actuary, Chemist, Chiropractor, Dental Hygienist, Dentist, Dietitian, Electrocardiograph Technician, Forester, Geologist, Health Record Technician, Laboratory Technician, Licensed Practical Nurse, Mathematician, Medical Assistant, Meteorologist, Mining Engineer, Nuclear Engineer, Occupational Therapist, Optometrist, Pharmacist, Pharmacy Technician, Physical Therapist, Physical Therapy Assistant, Physicist, Podiatrist, Radiologist, Radiology Technician, Registered Nurse, Respiratory Therapist, Software Engineer, Stationary Engineer, Surgical Technician, Surveyor, Veterinarian, Water and Sewage Plant Operator.
2. Aerospace Engineer, Air Conditioning Mechanic, Air Traffic Controller, Aircraft Mechanic, Airline Pilot, Architect, Assembler, Automotive Mechanic, Boilermaker, Bookbinder, Broadcast Technician, Bus Driver, Carpenter, Chemical Engineer, Civil Engineer, Coin Machine Repairer, Computer Programmer, Computer Service Technician, Computer Software Designer, Computer Systems Analyst, Construction Inspector, Construction Machinery Operator, Construction Worker, Data Management Specialist, Diemaker, Electrical Engineer, Electrician, Electronics Technician, Industrial Engineer, Industrial Technologist, Landscape Architect, Laser Technician, Lithographer, Machine Tool Operator, Machinist, Mechanical Engineer, Metallurgical Engineer, Mining Engineer, Model Builder, Nuclear Engineer, Office Machine Repairer, Optician, Painter, Petroleum Engineer, Photoengraver, Pipe Fitter, Plumber, Printing Press Operator, Refrigeration Mechanic, Sheet Metal Worker, Telephone Installer, Telephone Repairer, Toolmaker, Truck Driver, TV Mechanic, Web Programmer, Welder.
3. Accountant, Administrative Assistant, Auditor, Bank Manager, Bank Officer, Bank Teller, Bookkeeper, Buyer, Cashier, Certified Public Accountant, Clerk Typist, Commodity Buyer, Court Reporter, Economist, Food Service Manager, Hospital Administrator, Hotel Manager, Insurance Agent, Insurance Underwriter, Labor Relations Specialist, Manufacturer's Sales Representative, Marketing Manager, Office Administrator, Park Administrator, Personnel Specialist, Production Manager, Public Administrator, Public Relations Specialist, Purchasing Agent, Real Estate Agent, Receptionist, Retail Buyer, Sales Manager, Secretary, Securities Sales Worker, Transportation Planner, Word Processor.
4. Actor, Architect, Artist, Commercial Artist, Computer Analyst, Dancer, Designer, Editor, Fashion Designer, Graphic Artist, Interior Decorator, Interior Designer, Jeweler, Model Builder, Musician, Newscaster, Pattern Maker, Photographer, Radio/TV Announcer, Reporter, Singer, Technical Illustrator, Writer.
5. Automotive Body Repair Technician, Automotive Mechanic, Barber, Bartender, Carpenter, Computer Trainer, Cook, Corrections Officer, Cosmetologist, Counselor, Dental Assistant, Dental Hygienist, Fashion Merchandiser, Firefighter, Flight Attendant, Guard, Lawyer, Legal Assistant, Librarian, Library Technician, Minister, Nursery School Educator, Nursing Assistant, Park Manager, Police Officer, Priest, Psychologist, Rabbi, Reservations Agent, School Administrator, Social Worker, Sociologist, Solar Technician, Teacher, Teacher's Aide, Travel Agent, Urban Planner, Waiter.

Next, go through the five lists again and circle the jobs that sound interesting to you. Finally, from the jobs you circled, choose the three that interest you the most and write them here.

JOURNAL ENTRY**Intention Statement**

Write an Intention Statement describing how you will find out more about the three jobs you chose at the end of the previous exercise.

Career planning— enjoy the benefits



Career planning is a relatively new field. Throughout history, many people simply mirrored their parents' choice of career. Women became housewives, teachers, or nurses. Men went into farming or business. Today that's changed.

Even so, career planning is often unknown or untried. It is common for people to spend less than 20 hours in a lifetime on career planning. That's less time than many of them spend watching television in one week.

Career planning involves adventure and exploration. It can transform the experience of working from repetitive drudgery into playful excitement. That can happen in several ways, and each amounts to a sales pitch for career planning.

PITCH #1: Choose in the face of constant change

In our country, the numbers and types of jobs are growing fast. Thirty years ago, there were few jobs for applications programmers, systems analysts, or robot repair technicians. When looking over lists of available jobs, people rarely saw openings for hazardous waste managers, video text designers, laser technicians, or genetic engineers. Even 15 years ago, few considered becoming geriatric social workers, VCR technicians, full-time day care providers, or cable TV producers.

In addition to constantly adding new jobs, our economy is phasing out others. Careers pursued by thousands of people today may no longer exist in 10 years.

The rate of change in many fields is accelerating. This is especially true of the computer industry, where the life span of the latest technology is measured in months. Without constant updating, sales and technical people would be hopelessly lost.

Each year nearly 40 million Americans change jobs. Many workers will go through three to six career changes during a lifetime. Not just job changes—career changes.

Viewed this way, career planning becomes less of a luxury. Instead, it can be a tool for keeping your head in a complex and constantly changing future.

PITCH #2: Move from chance to choice

Many people never have the experience of choosing their work. Instead, work chooses them. Driven by desperation or chance, they take the first job that comes along—one that has little to do with their interests. One experience of leaving jobs to chance can set up a lifelong pattern.

Career planning is about choice. In this process, we discover the full scope of our abilities. We learn that our society offers a limitless range of jobs. We find that our favorite activities help us develop valued skills, and we encounter proven techniques for job hunting. Each of these facts multiplies our options. They increase the odds that our careers will stay in line with our dreams.

To get what you want out of your career, begin with your dreams. Know what you want. Before you make your goals clear to an employer, first make them clear to yourself.

Think critically about

Traditional beliefs about career planning often include certain ideas:

- 1 I don't know where to start.
- 2 The best way to plan a career is to enter a field that is in demand.
- 3 All the planning in the world won't change the number and kinds of jobs available.
- 4 I don't have any work experience, so I don't have any skills.
- 5 With school, work, and family I'm already overextended. I don't have the interest, time, or energy for career planning.
- 6 I know what I want to do. Why should I waste my time on career planning?
- 7 I'm in school now, so I don't have to worry about career planning until the future.

These ideas, even when we are not aware of them, can color our actions. With such attitudes, it's no wonder that some people find career planning as enjoyable as chicken pox.

To generate new possibilities for career planning, consider alternatives. One sure-fire way is to put a positive slant on the opposite point of view and assign yourself a proactive role. Like most of the important challenges in life, this requires an open mind, critical thinking, and commitment to get involved. Below are the opposite of the ideas state above, reworded in a positive, proactive way.

1

This book can help you get started.

Career planning is a many faceted, open-ended process that will help you learn more about yourself and the world of work. There is no one "right way" to begin. This book will introduce you to ideas, strategies, and tools that can dramatically change the way you see yourself and life in general. It will get you started on the lifelong journey of planning for the future. It can give you confidence to explore and initiate new and challenging options you never considered before.

Success in career planning does not depend on specialized knowledge or training. It rests on a commitment to learn, to plan and then to act on what you know. That commitment is something only you can provide.

2

It's practical to enter a field I enjoy—even if it's not in demand.

When planning careers, we may be tempted to choose fields with the most job openings. This could work against our long-term goals. Even in fields that are highly competitive, there are usually openings for qualified people. And jobs that are "hot" today may be "cool" by the time you've completed your education. In the fact of accelerating change, your own interests and values can be just as reliable as current trends.

Some people limit their careers to the job titles displayed most prominently in the want ads. By doing so, they may overlook their own genuine interests and abilities. In addition, only a fraction of the available job openings may be advertised there—as few as 20 percent.

3

Planning will help you take charge of your future.

Although it is a choice, you don't have to settle for whatever career happens to come along. Career planning is not simply choosing the "right" career but involves increasing your knowledge, seeing new possibilities, and taking action to create a satisfying and rewarding career. This book can help you take charge of your future. Applying what you learn can maximize the career options available to you. Becoming the director of career planning in your life does not automatically insulate you from all the ups and downs of life, but it can smooth out the bumps and make the journey a lot more enjoyable.

4

With or without formal work experience, I have skills.

It's easy to fall prey to the fallacy "I don't have a skill unless someone has paid me to use it full-time." People constantly use skills for which they receive little or no money. Some choose to stay home and care for their families full-time. They plan and prepare meals, coordinate health care and education for their children, and manage household finances. These are true work skills.

Students also gain skills, even if they don't work. Students write, manage research projects, speak in public, and think

career planning

critically. They also take part in internships, cooperative education programs, and volunteer work.

Word processing, driving cars, drawing, playing sports, cutting hair, evaluating movies, organizing closets, telling jokes—these and a thousand other common activities develop skills that employers will pay for.

5

Even if you feel overextended, there is no better time to begin planning your future than now.

When it comes to career planning, sooner is better than later. It is the best of all options when you begin taking an active role in shaping your career right from the start. A little planning now can save you a lot of heartaches in the future. It will enable you to improve your skills, increase your knowledge, and enhance your decision making. Many of life's disappointments can be avoided if you invest the time and effort needed to explore your options sooner rather than putting it off until later.

6

Approach career planning as though you don't know what you want to do.

Career planning can reinforce the decisions already made or, if done with an open mind, it can introduce you to possibilities that you overlooked or were not aware of. Think of it as an insurance policy with two payoffs. It can either give you peace of mind to understand clearly why you made the choices you did or help you see new possibilities that you had never considered before.

7

I'm in school, so I can start planning my career now.

A course in French suddenly takes on new meaning when your goal is to work in a foreign embassy. A required writing course seems like an opportunity once you've decided to become a magazine editor or newspaper reporter. Career planning can make a difference for the work you're doing in school now. And whenever you can relate course work to a personal goal, you tap a limitless source of energy.

EXERCISE



Generate new ideas for career planning

Here's a chance to practice the art of creating options. Restate each of the following ideas by putting a positive slant on the opposite point of view and assigning yourself a proactive role in implementing the idea.

Career planning is only for people who are undecided about their careers

Writing a career plan now means it will be a hassle to change it later.

When the job market is tight, there are fewer career options for me.

I can't plan a career now. I can't afford to take the time from my schoolwork.

Career planning—

come as you are

People put off career planning for a host of reasons. Some of the most common include:

- It will all work out for the best anyway.
- Others seem to handle it fine without all that work.
- It takes too much time.
- I'm just trying to make it through school.
- I don't need to worry about this right now.
- All I need to do is send in my résumé and answer the want ads.
- Career planning is kind of fun, but it's a pie-in-the-sky exercise.
- I already know what I want to do.
- This is not the right time.
- It's silly to even start thinking about careers right now.

Understand that planning for your career is part of college

Higher education presents you with many choices—where to attend school, how to structure your time, what to study and with whom to associate. You will find that this experience is valuable practice when you make the move from college to career. While there may not be tests when you're on the job, the grading might be tougher. Your boss may expect more from you than some of your professors.

Your commitment in college is good practice for making the transition to career. Build support systems into your life by cultivating new friendships, including those with members of other races and cultures. School activities, student services, volunteering and study groups are places to find support. Student services include career planning and placement, counseling services, financial aid, student ombudspersons, language clubs, and programs for minority students.



Focus on the process

One possibility in planning for your career is to come as you are. Take the first step in career planning from where you stand now—wherever that is. At this point it's the process that matters, not the results.

This book is based on the idea that you have a choice. You can make a plan. You can chart your way. There is possibility, promise, and passion in the world of work. You can find work that expresses your values and draws on your skills. Your career can build on your interests and actually give you more energy than it takes. You can find work that supports your life purpose. You can even look forward to Monday mornings: *You are on the edge of a universe so miraculous and full of wonder that your imagination at its most creative moment cannot encompass it. Paths are open to lead you to worlds beyond your wildest dreams.*

You can apply this to your career. Making it happen starts with commitment.

Some meanings of commitment

Committing yourself to career planning means a lot of things. It means dreaming about the life and work that excite you most.

Commitment to career planning means discovering how to create those moments again in the work you do every day. It means dreaming, relishing, remembering, getting excited. It means trying on new ideas and new roles. It also means choosing a new path, if that's appropriate.

Commitment to planning a career means analyzing, choosing, writing, and coming to terms with the work world. It means making contacts. It implies the freedom to be wrong, to forgive yourself, to explore, and to change your mind. Most of all, this commitment means a never-ending cycle of choosing, discovering, and starting over.

If you really use this book, you'll do all these things. It can be hard work. And if you accept the reports of many students who try career planning, it can be fun and rewarding too.

This book is about taking charge of your career—and along with it, your life. It's about becoming a master planner. It's about keeping disappointment, lost dreams, sadness, and regret to a minimum. Career planning is about the freedom to work with passion, energy, enthusiasm, and even joy.

If you're skeptical, read on. Play with the strategies outlined in this book. Then judge for yourself.

EXERCISE



Commit to career planning

Take this opportunity to get your money's worth from this book. Circle the statement that represents your level of commitment:

1. "Well, I bought the book, didn't I?"
2. "I'll skim the book and see if anything looks worthwhile."
3. "I'll read the whole book and work at remembering the main ideas."
4. "I'll study this book and do some of the exercises and journal entries."
5. "I'll master this book, fill it with my writing, and constantly be on the lookout for any tool that will help me find the career I want."

If you circled statement 1, you may have wasted your money. See if you can get it back. If you chose statement 5, you're on the way to a fulfilling career. And if you fell somewhere in between, use this book for a while and see if it works for you. If it does, consider raising your level of commitment.



Imagine for a moment that you had enough money to sustain yourself for a lifetime. Visit the Houghton Mifflin Career Planning web site and access the **Now that you've got money handled** exercise at <http://collegesurvival.college.hmco.com/students>. Work through the exercise by brainstorming about your goals and moving towards achieving them.

JOURNAL ENTRY



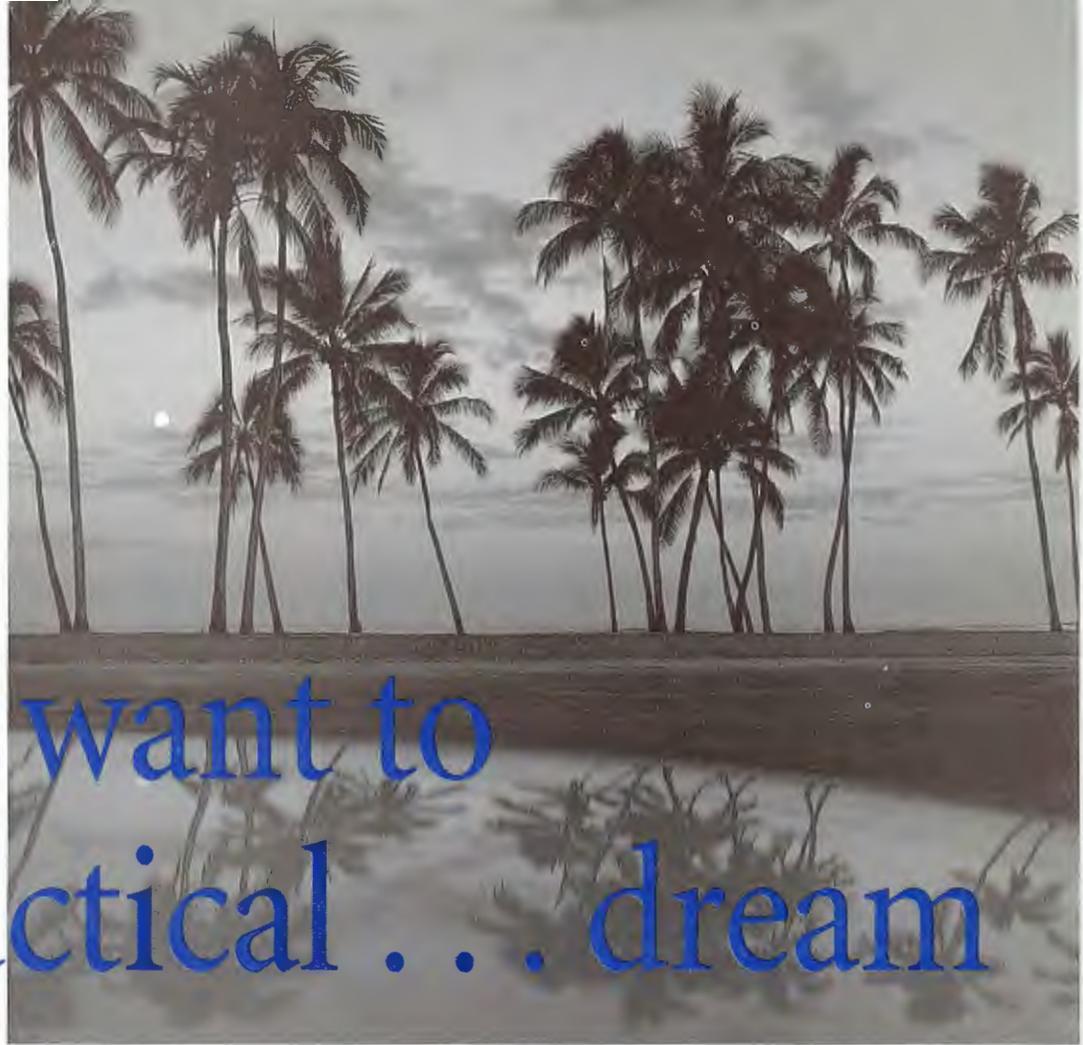
Discovery Statement

Imagine the course of your life assuming that you will do no career planning. You'll think about careers only when you're unhappy with your current job. Taking this approach, consider what work you might end up doing. Do you foresee any outcomes you would like to avoid?

Without career planning, I can see myself ...

Next, do a very general career plan. What work would you like to be doing in 5, 10, and 20 years? Quickly list four or five steps for reaching those career goals.

Now think about the advantages and disadvantages of the planned and the unplanned approaches. Does one approach offer more benefits? Does one offer a greater chance of finding work that you enjoy and value? Could one approach result in a more satisfying life? Could one approach save time or money? Write about the benefits and costs of each approach.



If you want to be practical . . . dream

Career planning does not begin with grinding out résumés, churning out cover letters, poring over want ads, saving for an MBA, or completing a 200-question vocational interest test. Rather, it begins with wishing, reflecting, contemplating, imagining, pondering, savoring, and relishing. Career planning starts with your dream.

Dreaming makes sense in a hard-nosed, practical way. Consider people who change careers in mid-life. Often they talk about the need for work that fulfills them. Many of them have been in the work force for several decades. They've raised families, taken out mortgages, gone into debt, bought life insurance, and acquired possessions. They've spent a lifetime being "practical."

When such people decide to change careers, they're frequently looking for more than just another job. Instead, they speak of discovering a meaning and purpose in life. At the center of that quest is work that not only pays the bills but excites their passion and enthusiasm.

Instead of waiting 10, 20, or 30 years to discover your passions, you can begin now. This does not mean slighting

the other tasks often associated with career planning—defining interests, listing skills, writing résumés, filling out applications, going on interviews. It only means that such tasks come later in the process.

When the subject of careers comes up, some people advise us to "just accept whatever happens with work. Even if you hate your job, you can do whatever you want in your free time." Consider that all your time is free time. There is no work you have to do. There is no attitude you have to hold. Our jobs follow directly from the plans and decisions we make. All of us are "self-employed," even when we work full-time for someone else. We give our time and skills to an employer or a client, and we do this for our own purposes.

In order to find work you enjoy, first discover exactly what it is you enjoy. Explore your dreams. Consider what you want in your career—and in every other area of your life. Such activity is not a meaningless or idle exercise. It's an investment in your future. The following exercise and journal entry can help guide you to that discovery.

EXERCISE



Imagine your ideal life

On a separate sheet of paper, write a free-form fantasy about your “perfect” life. What would you do if you had no money worries and all the free time you wanted? What would one day in this life be like? Where would you live? Who would be with you? When would you get up? What would you do each hour of the day?

Describe your daily routine, lifestyle, relationships, use of time, possessions, income, and geographical location. In your mind, see yourself actually doing the things you’d love to do each day.

Stay in the present tense. Write quickly and keep your pen moving. Don’t worry about grammar, punctuation, or spelling. You may even want to jot down just phrases, single words, or random images. If you want, draw pictures or diagrams to capture what’s in your mind.

Most people find it works best to just register first impressions. These can be significant. Trying to fit your ideal life into existing jobs, careers, lifestyles, locations, or companies is too limiting at this point. Yes, this might seem unrealistic and difficult. Try it anyway. The purpose is self-discovery—not immediate action.

When doing this exercise, be outrageous. Push your ideas of what’s possible to the limits.

JOURNAL ENTRY



Discovery/Intention Statement

Imagine you’re a reporter writing a feature story for one of your favorite magazines. Play the part of that reporter and write about yourself 20 years from today. Answer these questions:

What are the highlights of the past 20 years in your career and personal life?

What was your most important accomplishment in the past 20 years?

What would you tell someone who’s entering your field of work?

What are your major career goals for the next 20 years?

EXERCISE



Write your own definition of success

The slick pages in popular magazines scream out a hundred definitions of success. They glorify fat bank accounts, fan clubs, yachts, limousines, and chauffeurs. You'll see carpeted offices, teakwood desks that take up half a conference room, executive suites, and private secretaries. Other images of success include having a face that everyone recognizes, a company named after you, a twenty-room house with three fireplaces, and a wardrobe that fills seven closets.

Some people laugh off these plush images. Others simply accept popular definitions of success without much thought. In planning a career, it's useful to go one more step and define what success means to you.

To start thinking about success, glance through a popular magazine at a library or a bookstore. Then complete this sentence:

As judged by the articles and ads in this magazine, success is ...

Do the same with a popular TV show or the commercials aired during that show.

These presentations suggest that ...

Would these definitions of success and the good life promote your own career plans and values? How does your notion of success compare to those promoted by the mass media? Complete the following sentence:

To me, success means ...

EXERCISE



Do your dream career now

Imagine that the people closest to you—family, friends, coworkers—are now suddenly enlightened. They will give you unconditional support, both emotional and financial, to do whatever you choose.

As of today, you also possess whatever skills you want to achieve your career goals. If you're a "wanna be" rock star even though you can't carry a tune, *voilà!* You now possess a thunderous, stunning voice. If you always wanted to be a surgeon but never wanted to invest in the necessary training, no problem. You are now a surgeon on a par with the greatest in the world.

Look to see if any other constraints in your life prevent you from doing what you want to do. This could be anything that you see as a limitation: your size, gender, race, nationality, physical ability, and so on. Simply imagine that these limits no longer exist. Don't worry about *how* to make this happen. Just play with the possibilities.

In short, you now have the skills, support, time, and money to do whatever you want. Now describe the career you would choose. Write on a separate sheet of paper.

When you've finished writing, consider whether your response suggests any possible goals for your future. Ask: What's interesting to me about this career? Could I make this interest part of my life *without* retraining or even making it a career? (For example, the person who loves to sing could join a church choir without becoming a professional musician.) Record your answers as goals on 3x5 cards.

Tune up your conversation space

Career planning is largely about introducing a new conversation into your life. In a sense, planning your career amounts to tuning up your conversation space.

If the term *conversation space* is new to you, don't be surprised. It's not in the dictionary. Even so, this term points to a practice that can reshape your relationships, your work, and your very experience of time.

Here the word *conversation* includes any occurrence of thinking, speaking, writing, listening, watching, or reading. Talking with another person face-to-face is one type of conversation. Watching television is also a way of taking part in a conversation, even if it seems one-sided. Other examples of conversation are reading the newspaper, writing an article, listening to the radio, going to a meeting, or making an entry in a personal journal.

All these activities involve both exposure to information and ideas and your reactions to them. When combined, these activities take up a lot of "space" in our lives. That is, they make up a lot of what we do.

Moment by moment, we choose ways to fill our conversation space. Minute by minute, we make choices about where to place our attention. Every second presents us with an opportunity to choose our conversations—what we listen to, talk about, watch, read, and therefore think about.

Conversations can be described in dozens of ways. For the purposes of this book, we can classify conversations according to their focus in time. At any moment, we can ask: Where is my conversation resting right now—past, present, or future?

Focus on the past

Most people fill their conversation space with the past. They focus on events that took place five minutes, five weeks, five years, or even five decades ago. The same can be said of our media. Most television programs, radio shows, newspapers, and magazines dwell on events of the past. This is not good, not bad—just typical.



Focus on the present

There is a second way that we can fill our conversation space—focusing on the present. This is the domain of artistry, excellence, and joy. This is the focus of the tennis player at the moment of a great swing, the musician giving a great performance, the mountain climber ascending a sheer cliff. Friendship, romance, good meals, massage, and sex also offer opportunities to savor the present moment.

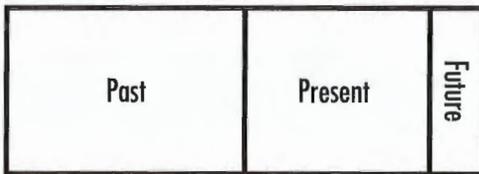
Focus on the future

Another option is to fill our conversation space with the future. This is the time we spend thinking, writing, reading, listening, and speaking about what's yet to come in our lives, including our careers.

For many of us, conversations about the future usually focus on prediction. This happens even in sophisticated think tanks. Here conversations typically dwell on forecasting—in a word, prediction. Talk is seldom about the future that people want. Instead, conversation is about the kind of future they will have *if present trends continue*. The resulting predictions about the future of our education, society, or planet often lead people to worry.

When worry and prediction dominate our future, we find little space for creating a future that we want. In fact, worrying and talking about the past can become a kind of addiction that chokes off other possibilities.

We can draw a diagram that represents our conversation space and how much of it is typically devoted to the past, present, and future. For many of us, that diagram would look like this:

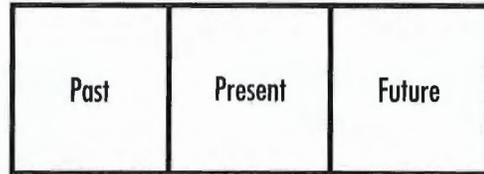


Find balance

From reading thus far, you might get the idea that speaking about the past is bad, while speaking about the future is good. Actually, conversations about the past can

be wonderful, affirming, and powerful. This is how many of us relax, celebrate, learn, and deepen our relationships. There also is no problem with prediction. At times, prediction is appropriate and even necessary for survival.

The point is that we can have all the options. One benefit of creating the future is the opportunity to balance our conversations among the past, present, and future. When that happens, our overall conversation space looks like this:



The suggestion here is to continue having conversations about the past and the present. Then *round out your conversation space by creating the future*. Talk about the career you *want* to have, the future you *choose* to create. Instead of predicting the future and extrapolating from current trends, start changing the trends.

It's not useful to limit conversations to any one period of time, just as it's not useful to eat only one food. Creating the future allows us to become trilingual—equally skilled at speaking about the past, the present, and the future we want to create.

JOURNAL ENTRY



Discovery/Intention Statement

One way to balance your conversation space is to devote approximately equal time to the past, the present, and the future—about 33 percent for each. This is only one option for filling your conversation space. You could also choose to devote 50 percent of your conversations to the present, or only 10 percent of conversations to the past and 40 percent to the future. Many other combinations are possible.

Describe the kind of balance *you* want as you choose the focus of your conversations and plan your career. If you like, represent your plan visually.

I intend to ...

EXERCISE**Just open your mouth and speak your future**

Sometimes we don't know what we want to say until we literally open our mouths and speak it. Powerful goals can emerge from daring, reckless verbal creation. What's more, speaking can turn a general goal into a specific one, an abstract goal into a concrete one.

Writing down a goal is one way to make it come alive. Speaking about a goal gives it yet another dimension of life. When you speak a goal, it resonates with your voice, your very breath.

Practice speaking your goals in the presence of another person who will be your partner for this exercise. Ask that person to function as a sympathetic listener—one who will not interrupt as you speak, ask questions, or criticize any of your goals. Also ask this person to record your goals on 3x5 cards.

Once you've created a safe atmosphere, just speak. Talk about your goals without rehearsing or editing your thoughts. These goals can relate to your career or any other aspect of your future.

The point is this: Just speak even before you know what to say—and listen to what comes out of your mouth. You can begin by saying, "What I want is" or "What I *might* do is" Another option is to say, "I've got several brand-new goals I've never spoken to anyone before. The first goal is" Then finish any of these sentences with as many ideas as you can create.

Speak your goals for five minutes. Then switch roles and let the other person speak her goals for five minutes while you listen.

As you do this exercise, keep the following ideas in mind:

- Quality is not an issue. Remember that you don't have to adopt or act on any of the goals that you speak.
- Prepare for something wonderful and unexpected to happen. You might speak a goal that's never occurred to you before. You might create a plan that seems so on-track that you'll want to make it part of your life right away.
- Maintain an environment of safety. Let your partner "try on" outrageous plans without the fear of being quoted in public. Keep what you hear confidential. Listening with full, permissive attention to another person's wishes for the future is an empowering and unusual gift.
- If you feel any signs of fear or apprehension about what you'll say, just notice these feelings. Then continue speaking your goals. When in doubt, just keep your lips moving.
- If you get stuck during this exercise, read off or recall a few goals you've written before.
- Stand up as you speak your goals. Many of us think better on our feet.
- As you speak, allow completely new goals—no preconceptions, no agendas, no limits. Don't worry about telling the other person what he or she wants to hear. Simply speak your greatness.

Do this exercise regularly, with people you know well and those you know hardly at all. Gradually lengthen the amount of time you spend speaking goals. Go from 5 minutes to 10 minutes, 15, and even 20 or more.

Quiz

- 1 When can you begin planning your career? Explain your answer.
- 2 What does commitment to career planning mean to you?
- 3 List three alternatives to your first thoughts about career planning.
- 4 Dreams and wishes are fun, but they are not useful when it comes to serious career planning. True or False? Explain your answer.
- 5 How can you change your conversation space to make it a more effective place for career planning?