



CHAPTER

9

CAREER DECISION MAKING: Assessment – Exploration – Goals

How can I systematically evaluate all of my options?

Career management consists of decisions made over time that influence the direction of your work life. Each decision must be made independently of one another. You build each new decision on the base of earlier decisions.

You need to lay out a plan for future decisions that ties all decisions together.

Many frequent small decisions build your strategic career plan. This chapter is about putting it all together through written projects.

Career Planning

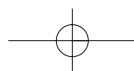
Your goal is to learn how to manage your career as opposed to letting fate and fortune determine your destiny. How do you tie together each career decision you make over time?

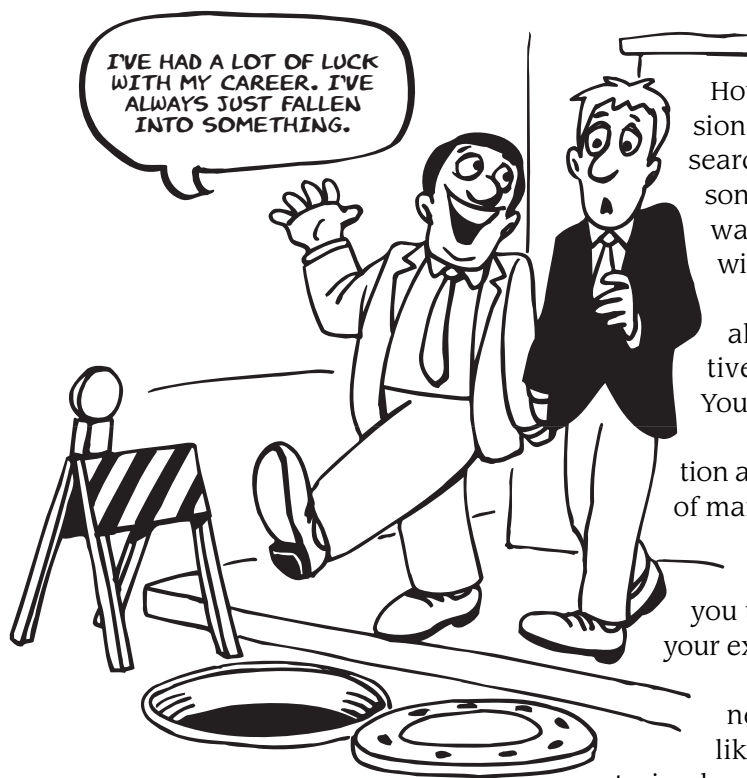
Self-Assessment

Knowing yourself is important in your career decision making.

Career planning is a process that integrates an analysis of self with an analysis of the world of work. An in-depth investigation of the self develops a very high level of personal awareness about values, interests, personal qualities, and your skill attainment.

You have a broad overview of the world of work. It is composed of specific assignments and tasks that operate together to achieve stated organizational objectives.





Career decision making requires development of your career options.

A career profile is the first step in exploring your career options.

Decision Making

How do you develop objectives through a decision-making process? Before you begin the job search process you must establish specific personal career objectives. Not to do so leaves you wandering aimlessly searching for something without knowing what you are seeking.

Decision making is developing a set of alternatives and then evaluating the alternatives against a predetermined set of criteria. Your criteria are found in your self-assessment.

Career exploration is collecting information about careers of interest to you. An overview of management and how organizations function is critical to the investigation process.

An awareness of organizations gives you the framework in which you must conduct your exploring.

A "management level" position, but not necessarily a supervisory career, is most likely your goal whether you are technically trained or liberally educated. This requires you to

understand the management process, industry groups, occupational classifications, functional organization structure, and the level of responsibility concepts.

You must overlay your self-assessment on that framework and, through a pattern of logical investigation, discover which fields of career interest best suit you.

Career Profiles

Can you prepare a career profile for your special area of interest? A career profile is a fairly extensive summary of all information you collect about the career field of special interest to you.

In actual practice, depending upon your current level of job specification and responsibility level, you may prepare *several* different career profiles.

A later analysis of these profiles will give you a wealth of information consolidated in one place for you to review in specifying which career field you feel is best suited to your self-assessment.

Figure 9.1 gives a brief description of the content that belongs in a career profile. The career profile gives various job titles, duties, requirements, career paths, training normally received on the job, earnings, the employment outlook, and any points that are peculiar to the career field.

Career profiles need to be developed within an organizational framework and functional field designations.

Where do you see your career profile resting within the organizational framework?

Career Profile

Entry-Level Job Title(s): One-word or two-word descriptors.

Nature of the Work: Duties . . . activities . . . physical requirements . . . tools used . . . psychological demands . . . typical work period (hour/day/week/month) . . . structure and pattern of tasks . . . scope of responsibility and authority.

Working Conditions: Physical layout of environment . . . length of work periods . . . pressure level indoors/outdoors . . . nature of supervision . . . number of colleagues . . . team/individual work . . . geographic location . . . climate.

Qualifications: Education . . . experience . . . skills . . . values/interests/personality.

- **Education:** Level of general education . . . degrees . . . major subject areas . . . special education and seminars . . . technical training . . . honors . . . grade standards . . . on-the-job training . . . dates of education . . . special licensing requirements.
- **Experience:** Months of full-time work . . . nature of full-time work . . . internship training . . . related part-time work . . . apprentice experience . . . degree of relatedness of work.
- **Skills:** Equipment operation . . . selling abilities . . . interpersonal skills . . . physical skills . . . speaking . . . writing . . . numbers . . . accounting programming . . . research . . . dexterity . . . mechanics . . . scientific . . . organizing . . . planning . . . motivating . . . supervision . . . goal setting . . . decision making.

Values/Interests/Personality: Personality traits most frequently required . . . attitudes . . . variables found in people in the career . . . likes and dislikes.

Advancement: Initial assignment . . . mid-career job titles . . . high-level assignments . . . time between promotions . . . promotion criteria . . . examinations or licensing requirements for advancement . . . common indirect promotion ladders . . . horizontal mobility . . . related career fields . . . probable additional education required for mobility . . . geographical limitations on advancement mobility.

Career Demographics: Age of career incumbents . . . number in the field . . . geographic distribution . . . number in work units . . . net annual additions/deletions to the field.

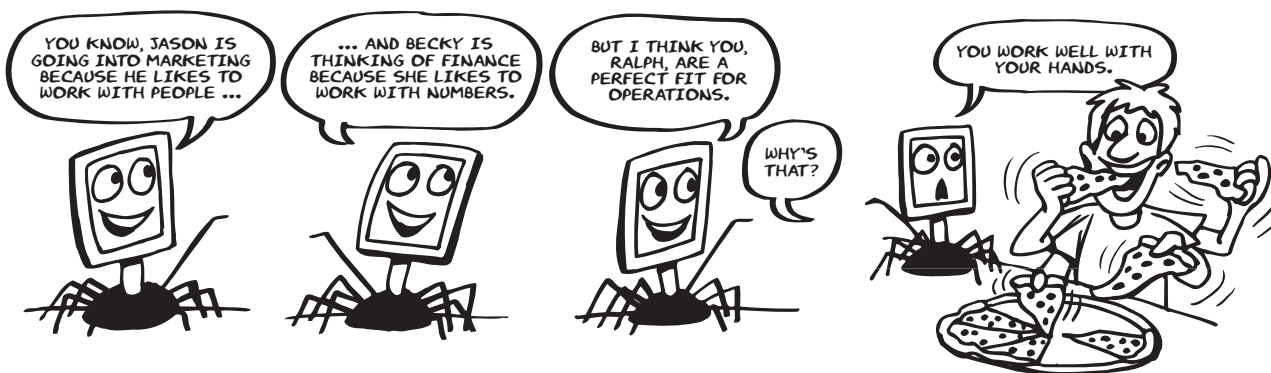
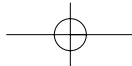
Earnings: Starting rates . . . average annual increases . . . local compensation market . . . average promotion salary increases . . . overtime . . . bonuses . . . allowances . . . expenses . . . monetary benefits . . . life insurance . . . medical insurance . . . vacation . . . sick leave . . . retirement plan.

Non-Economic Benefits: Psychological income . . . job satisfaction . . . lifestyle . . . social mobility . . . advanced training . . . ease of mobility.

Disadvantages: Seasonal . . . irregular hours . . . frequent overtime . . . night work . . . hazards . . . location . . . environmental factors . . . pay . . . growth . . . limited advancement . . . overcrowded field.

Outlook: Present and future demand . . . need for career . . . stability during recessions . . . automation impact . . . geographic mobility . . . career mobility.

Figure 9.1



Career profiles fit somewhere within the organizational structure. Career profiles are not complete analyses, but they do offer ideas and suggestions that will cause you to investigate your profile in much greater depth as you get closer to the job interview. You will need to later put your career profile into an organizational culture.

Exploration

You can systematically explore several career alternatives by accumulating specific career information on each alternative.

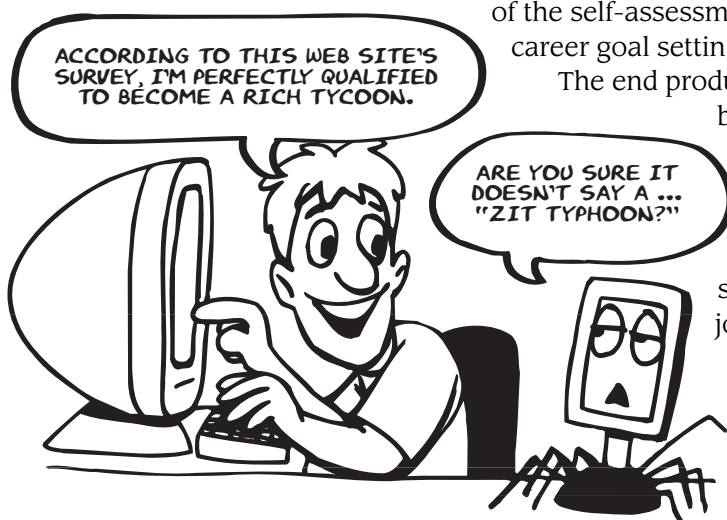
Through various "career exploration projects" you should conduct an in-depth study of a particular career field including specific employers. You should gather information through library research, web surfing, reading, and interviewing others.

Which career options should you be exploring?

Career Objectives

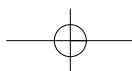
You may initially investigate one field in great depth or conduct a superficial overview at first to ascertain which field you wish to explore in greater depth.

After you have completed the in-depth analysis you must correlate, compare, and relate your self-assessment with your findings. This integration of the self-assessment and the career field is critical to strategic career goal setting.



The end product of this analysis is a career profile that can be translated into a specific career objective statement suitable for a resume, cover letter, or interview discussion. As the job search focuses in on industries, employers, and specific jobs, the career objective statement becomes more clarified and job-specific.

As this required crystallization occurs in your job search, your long-term goals must be kept intact so they can bloom again from the specific seed you are planting.



Integration

The integration of self and career demands specification of a related job at a level appropriate for your background. As you progress in the job, you should be able to progress on a path that leads to your long-term career goal and, thus, life satisfaction.

This does not imply that whatever job you accept must be the “perfect” match. You make certain compromises along the decision path. The job will get you started on a track that leads to where you eventually want to be.

Exploration Purposes

The purpose of completing an exploration project is to develop a very high level of career awareness about a given position, career field, industry, or even a specific employer. This career awareness is the only valid way to relate your self-awareness to your potential happiness in a chosen job and career field.

A second major purpose of this exploration is that you will learn how to approach the exploration process. The projects provide a practical working definition of career exploration.

You will learn a *methodology* of investigation about a single career field that will speed up projects in the future as you investigate additional career alternatives for yourself.

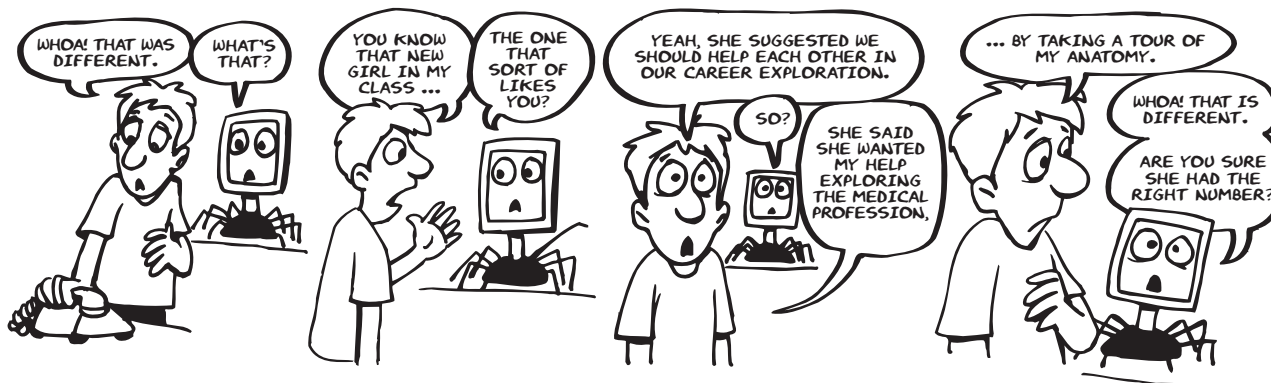
Before you select a single project to investigate, read through several of the projects in order to get an idea of what type of information you need to collect. Although it is not necessary to complete more than one project, it is important that you gain an understanding of how to “approach” the career exploration process.

It is recommended that you completely write out at least one project in order to obtain a feel for the commitment that a good investigation requires. This is serious business, and superficial efforts may be more damaging than not starting the project at all.

After reading the proposed project descriptions, you may discover that none of the projects fit your specific needs. Your area of career interest may not even be listed, so you may have to create your own project.

These particular projects will give you a feel for the depth of analysis and content that is needed in the career exploration.

The purpose of your career exploration is to help you write a definitive career objective statement for your resume.



The topic choices are almost limitless. Each suggested project is intended to take several hours of library and/or web researching and interviewing for information. To be effective, you must generate new information and then organize it in a manner that will be useful later as you approach the job search process.

The rest of this section describes several extensive career action projects. Read through each of them before you decide which one, if any, you wish to complete.

For each project, before you move to another career resource, first visit this website and browse to the career options of interest to you. No other source is as inclusive and this website (www.careeronestop.org) leads you to other resources and specific job options.

Exploration Projects

Career Profile

The purpose of this project is to prepare an in-depth analysis of the occupation for which you feel you are best qualified. It assures that you have identified one career field that initially appears to best match your values, interest, personal qualities, and skills.

Review at least two occupation-related websites and two in-depth articles that describe the occupation. Identify the level of responsibility at which you would be most likely to seek employment.

Interview at least two people in the occupation at the level of responsibility you feel your background matches best. Based upon the information you gained through your review and your general knowledge, formulate a series of at least twenty questions to ask your interviewees. Record their responses later.

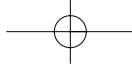
Contrast and compare the information obtained via the web and publications with that obtained from your interviews. Why do they differ?



Career Action Project. *Based upon the information obtained from all activities, prepare a career profile.* Follow the format and content suggested in Figure 9.1. Your career profile should be three to five single-spaced, typewritten pages when complete.

Using your career profile, relate the information to your credentials, qualifications, and background, category by category.

Develop a convincing presentation on how your credentials and interests relate to the career profile. If and where different, describe what future education or work experience will bring



Compare your career profile to your resume.

the two into closer harmony. This presentation needs to be about two single-spaced, typewritten pages to complement the "Career Profile."

If you complete a project like this, you are well on your way to developing a quality strategic career plan.

Management Training

Many career-undecided people who have done only minimal amounts of career exploration often say they are seeking management training programs. Indeed, most jobs, regardless of their functional field, do eventually lead into management.

This project is designed for the undecided person who is ready to explore the various assignments that lead into management.

Is management a noun or verb? Is management an art or a science? Scan an introduction to a management principles textbook to get a handle on these points. Show how the formal definition differs from your working definition of management. What is the functional difference between the following job titles: "general manager," "department manager," and "executive vice president"?

Pick an organization in business, a unit of government, or a quasi-public institution such as a hospital or university. Using the organization chart of the institution, describe all of the basic management functions that must be accomplished on a regular basis. List some of the position titles normally associated with the department or basic management function.

Which of these positions are normally regarded as entry positions and which require experience? Organization charts are usually available in annual reports and sometimes in recruiting brochures. If you are unable to locate them in these sources, you will need to approach a specific employer for the chart.

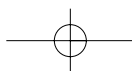
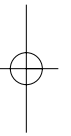
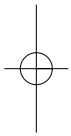
Review an employment brochure, website, or interview executives of two organizations in which you have an interest. Describe in as much detail as possible the format of their management career path programs.

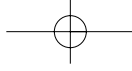
Identify the qualifications needed to start in their programs. How long does it take to move into a management position? When you leave the initial assignment, do you immediately become a manager? When do you know you are in management and not just in one of the assignments leading to a management position?

The on-line *Occupational Outlook Handbook* lists many occupations requiring college degrees. The OOC is on several websites. Select any three occupations for which you are qualified and give a brief summary of the qualifications required for entering the field.

Assume that you are going to interview for one of these jobs. Using the phone book's *yellow pages*, various websites, and other sources, make a list of ten potential employers. First, assume that you are the recruiter for the position and that you must interview twenty applicants for it. As recruiter, make a list of the ten most important things you will be looking for during each interview. These are the competencies required for this job.

Second, evaluate yourself using the ten most important items. Give both positives and negatives. This should be similar to your actual interview





presentation. Last, return to the role of recruiter and write up an "Interview Report." Play the recruiter's role and write a formal memo recommending yourself for further interviews to your hypothetical boss, and support it with documentation from the "Interview Report." Chapter 18 includes several examples of reports that many employers use.

Management Action Project. Write a two- or three-page management-level job description for the position that you will be seeking in one of the organizations that you identified. Use the "Career Profile" as your guide.

Using two of the evaluation forms used by recruiters (copied from this book), evaluate yourself for the position. Be as verbose in your evaluation as possible, drawing upon the results of your hypothetical interview and your resume. Use two different evaluation forms to give yourself two different evaluation perspectives.

When you finish, write one page summarizing your qualifications for the management position, which is exactly the job of a recruiter. You now see how a good strategic career plan can be developed. Writing everything is a very useful exercise.

Sales Management

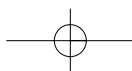
Each year, over 100,000 openings are available in professional sales. The high salaries, travel, expense accounts, automobiles, and job autonomy offered by many of these positions are attractive benefits. The purpose of this project is to provide an understanding of the field of professional sales.

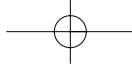
There are at least four sales occupations described in the on-line *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Read and summarize these descriptions. Select two firms that employ sales representatives and read and summarize their recruiting brochures and employment websites, and formally interview two different sales managers. Contrast what the government publication says about the jobs with what the employers say.

In some people's minds, the professional sales occupation has low job status and prestige but high pay and good lifestyle. Is this characterization correct? Why do you think it is so widespread?

There is the attitude that a professional sales career is a waste of a college degree, yet employers insist that all their new front-line representatives have degrees. Why are employers so "gung-ho" on the degree when many of their good, older salespeople have only high school diplomas? If you were a company executive, how would you respond to these issues? Would you require the college degree? Why?

Sales Action Project. Assume that you are the employment manager for a large organization that anticipates sales doubling in three years. Management asks you to recruit fifty new people. You need to know what to look for when interviewing the applicants. As the employment manager, you must write a brief job description and a set of specifications for the job. You will send out recruiters who must know what to look for and what to ask. Develop a packet of information and instructions to give to your recruiters. It should contain job descriptions, job specifications, and an evaluation form on which to evaluate each candidate interviewed.





Now assume that you are one of the interviewees. Evaluate yourself based upon the job specifications. Be fair and give ratings for both your strengths and your weaknesses. Write the recommendation that you think the recruiter would give using any two of the evaluation forms given in Chapter 18.

Upon completion of this project, you should have written several single-spaced typewritten pages. These include a two- or three-page "Career Profile," a one-page interview presentation that matches your credentials with the career profile, and two different "Recruiter Evaluation" forms, filled out recommending you with concrete reasons for the sales assignment. You have the making of a strategic career plan.

Marketing Management

Many people without technical skills narrow their job interests to either a job that deals with people or a job that is analytical in nature. This project is designed for those individuals with an interest in dealing with people.

The purpose is to introduce you, in some detail, to one of the basic functions of management—marketing.

Select any basic marketing textbook and summarize the major functions in marketing. What is marketing management? Does the textbook give an idea of how long it takes the beginning sales representative to work up into a management assignment? How does one know when he or she has "arrived" in management?

Using the marketing textbook as a reference, show the interrelationships among advertising, marketing research, and sales. How much experience in each of these functions must a person have before he or she can be considered for a management position?

Sales appears to be the most common and essential function in marketing. Many firms have only the sales function listed on their organization charts. Explain how this can occur when college textbooks place so much emphasis on the other functions. Why do college professors write so much about non-sales functions in marketing and so little on preparing people to sell a product or service?

Review several sales manager job advertisements on two or three corporate employment websites.

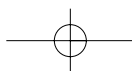
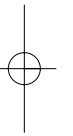
Scan through a sales management textbook and notice the responsibilities of the sales executive. Based upon this quick review, list the characteristics a sales executive should possess, from analytical skills to people skills.

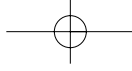
Can the characteristics needed for the job be learned, or must people naturally have that happy, backslapping, jovial personality in order to be a success?

Select a relatively large organization for which you would consider working. Read its annual report, employment website, a web-based stock report evaluation, and an employment brochure or job description and then interview one of its sales managers.

Briefly identify all of the principal products or services and explain the marketing training program. Which marketing activities seem to be stressed in the brochure?

Contrast the marketing program of this organization with that of a smaller manufacturer. Explain how small firms continue to be so profitable with only





a few people employed in the whole marketing organization. For which firm would you prefer to work? Why?

Analyze what organizations seek in hiring people for assignments in marketing. Discuss the program of rotation among the various marketing departments in the organization you just reviewed.

Show where your background characteristics are weak and strong in relationship to what employers are seeking in people they feel have marketing management potential. This should be a presentation similar to what you might give in an interview situation.

Ad Age

www.adage.com

Explore the Ad Age news features, conference & events, and marketing database, which includes such information as rankings of national advertisers, research companies & brands, and a salary survey (some research functions require a fee).

Marketing Action Project. Many questions were posed in this project. You need to develop a minimum of three to five typewritten pages in a report that addresses these concerns. As you write responses to several of these questions, insert information about yourself that illustrates how your background fits into the field of marketing.

Another approach is to be very organizational-specific by writing a "Career Profile" that fits the specific organization's job description. Under each section of the "Career Profile," discuss your qualifications and interests by describing how the two fit together.

At the end of each section of the "Career Profile," insert a new section titled "Presentations." That series of paragraphs will illustrate the match. This should also be a minimum of three to five typewritten pages. Use the "Career Profile" description in Figure 9.1. You are on your way to creating a strategic career plan with the written documents.

Retailing

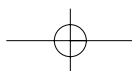
Thousands of people begin their careers every year with the long-term goal of someday owning their own businesses. Many will achieve their goals eventually by starting retail businesses.

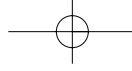
The training offered in a retail management development training program can be an ideal beginning toward meeting that long-term ambition. The purpose of this project is to introduce and expose you to one of the largest industries in the world: retailing.

Every library contains books, career literature, and course textbooks on retailing and merchandising. Give a definition of retailing and discuss the types of retail business based upon website and library research.

Summarize and briefly discuss the various functions in running a retail business. Try to develop a strong understanding of the basic functions including service, buying, selling, supervision, etc. Prepare an interview presentation that demonstrates a high level of retail awareness. Describe what you know about retailing.

Relate each of the basic retail activities to your personal background, training, and experience. Explain why you might be suited for a career in





retailing. Show your entrepreneurial spirit by citing examples of it in your own life.

Select two national chain stores and two urban department stores. Obtain literature on their training programs from websites and interview two managers if possible. Analyze the financial position of each organization and describe the operations.

Describe the training programs offered for new hires at the management level. Prepare a well-documented presentation of the training programs and where they lead.

What are the personal requirements for a retailing career? Discuss college degree and major, work experience, activities, grades, personality, etc. Try to determine the starting salaries in retailing and attempt to show salary progress. Visit websites like www.salary.com to get salary data.

Using a web search engine and/or the *Business Periodical Index*, you can find a list of trade journals in various fields of retailing. These journals and websites often contain classified ads for high-level job openings that give job titles and information about required experience and salary levels.

Read articles in retail trade journals about a company in which you have a special interest. Use the World Wide Web. Summarize the articles. Contrast what the articles say about the company with what the employment brochure or website says.

Describe the store management function and the buying function in retailing. Which is more important? Why? Which function best suits your background? Why?

Retailing Action Project. *Prepare a presentation that integrates your background with the field of retailing. Make a convincing case for why the employers you select should hire you.*

Pose several specific questions that an employer may ask and provide convincing responses. Write down your limitations that the employer might focus upon and describe how you propose to counter each of them with your strong points.

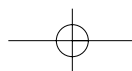
Your project should be at least three to five single-spaced, typewritten pages to be effective. *You might wish to incorporate the "Career Profile" (in Figure 9.1) into the analysis as a part of the project.*

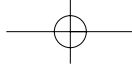
The information you collected for your research on the project should be used as supporting data that you might want to save in a file folder. You now are in a good position to explain to retailing recruiters why your strategic career plan is consistent with the firm's jobs.

Banking

Banking (and the broader financial services industry) is an industry that has attracted a large number of people from diverse academic backgrounds. It is a field that you may wish to explore.

Refer to textbooks on "Money and Banking" and "Commercial Banking." Identify and briefly explain the activities and functions performed in commercial banking. Contrast commercial banks with other types of financial institutions, such as savings and loans, credit unions, investment banks, and Federal Reserve Banks.





Using employment brochures, websites, or annual reports from three large banks, identify the internal organizational structures. What are the various departments? Are their training programs designed for training in all departments, or are they more oriented to single departments? Describe the management training programs of three major banks based on interviews with employees and web surfing.

The big banks are often viewed as salary leaders for college graduates. What was the average offer to college graduates last year, and where does banking rank among the industries in terms of salary? How do banks compare in fringe benefits? Why do smaller banks have such a different image?

Select a major city in the United States and identify the three largest banks in that city. How can the sizes of banks be measured? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of working for a large money-center bank as opposed to a medium-sized or small bank? Describe the operations and organizations of the three large banks.

Banking Action Project. Identify at least one position in a bank for which you want to be considered. *Describe the duties and activities in this position (after a training program if you are inexperienced). What are the job qualifications (grades, degree level, major, personality, experience, etc.)?*

Your banking job description should be at least two single-spaced, typewritten pages long. The "Career Profile" in Figure 9.1 might be used as a guide in preparing this job description. You should try to answer many of the questions posed above for banking.

Your interview presentation must respond to answers that you feel an interviewer is likely to ask. Anticipate these questions. Use the research that you collected to provide answers to these questions. Review the typical interview questions given in the interview chapters.

Simultaneously, you must integrate elements of your background into these hypothetical questions. This will let the interviewer know that you have prepared for your interview by researching the firm.

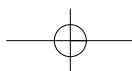
Prepare a presentation that intelligently relates your background to organizational needs.

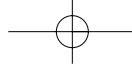
Develop a single-spaced, two or three page typed report that explains and supports your interests in banking. These will be the same answers that you will give to questions in the interview. It reveals your knowledge about banking and gives your strong points for being the person that the interviewer should hire. Your strategic career plan has now moved forward several notches if you have created this portfolio in financial institutions.

General Accounting

Several books on accounting careers are available in most public libraries. Professional accounting associations have great websites. Select two books or websites and thoroughly read them. Given your background, at what level of responsibility would you fit? Based on your research, develop an in-depth job description for a position in accounting.

The U.S. Department of Labor puts out two publications that provide information on accounting: *The Occupational Outlook Handbook* and the





career onestop website. Read and summarize these. How does the government information relate to the two publications you read? Are the statistics on the profession consistent? What other materials have you researched? Use everything you can.

Discuss the differences in the jobs of the bank examiner, the internal auditor, and the public accountant. They all conduct audits using acceptable accounting methods, but there are variances in the assignments. What are they, and are the requirements and qualifications for the three jobs the same? Does an Internal Revenue Agent do the same job?

The corporate controller is a key executive on the management team.

Review the job of the controller, its requirements, and the types of accounting background experiences necessary for this position. Outline the typical controller's career path.

Select the employment brochures or websites of five industrial and/or government organizations and read the openings available for accounting and finance people. List these organizations and, beside the name of each, write the various job titles and a brief description for each.

Based on web research and information from your placement office, discuss the salary outlook for accounting majors in various industries. Using the *Wall Street Journal* and the classified ad section of a major metropolitan newspaper, describe the most common job for the highest-paid financial executives.

Based on your advertisements review, what is the average amount of experience required and the salary range for the controller position? Identify benchmark salaries by years of experience and identify a position in which you would be interested.

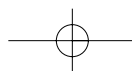
Accounting Action Project. Using the research that you have just completed, prepare a "Career Profile" that is at least two or three single-spaced typewritten pages in length. You may use any of the organizations that you researched as a guide and integrate what your research showed into the firm's job description. Use Figure 9.1 as a guide.

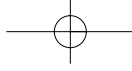
Using the job description or "Career Profile" as a guide, the next step is to prove how well your background matches the job description. In essence, you are matching your resume with the job description.

Prepare at least a two page, single-spaced, typed report that identifies your strongest qualities and how they match the needs of the accounting job description. Be specific. Take your top ten qualities and relate them to elements on the job description. If there are major limitations in your background that the job description prefers, show how you intend to address these limitations. Your strategic career planning is now in gear if you have converted your research and analysis to a written document.

Public Accounting

What is public accounting? Describe the industry. Outline the various departments within the public accounting firm. Describe the duties, responsibilities, and relationships among the various levels of management.





What is the method of supervision? How specialized do auditors become? How is responsibility assumed and shared among the various levels of management and among peers? What responsibilities do auditors have to clients?

Describe the duties, responsibilities, and daily activities of the entry-level job in public accounting. Describe in detail all of the typical functions a new person would perform during the first two years on the job. How much diversity and specialization exist?

Does the new person have decision-making authority, or does the new person play primarily an advisory role and perform nitty-gritty “dog work”? Do the same for the next level of responsibility.

Outline the various job requirements for a position in public accounting including education, grades, certification, ability to travel (length and frequency), personality, time commitments, location, age, and so forth. Discuss the role of teamwork.

What is the typical career path to partnership in public accounting? For each level of management, describe the duties and responsibilities. Identify characteristics of partners. Discuss the role of turnover in the industry.

How do these questions relate to your goals? Does your personality fit with this type of work? How interested are you in both the initial and the long-term assignments? Do you consider yourself a decision-maker or basically an advisor? How do your interests relate to public accounting? Summarize why or why not public accounting is the career field for you. Contrast public and private accounting and show why you feel that your background is best-suited to one or the other.

AICPA**www.aicpa.org**

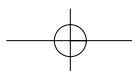
American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. With more than 330,000 members, the AICPA is the premier national professional association for CPAs in the United States. This site offers the latest news and information, as well as conference information, job listings, and an online resume posting and referral service.

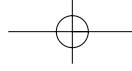
Public Accounting Action Project. Using the “Career Profile” (in Figure 9.1) as a guide, prepare a two or three page single-spaced, typed report for a position in the public accounting field. You may use an entry-level or an advanced job in any of the basic functional areas. Be as specific as possible as to the job, the location, and even the firm if you have identified a preferred choice.

Your summary “Career Profile” should address many of the questions posed above. Your research into the industry and a specific firm should provide you with some detail upon which to make a decision about the compatibility of the industry and your background. How well does your self-assessment compare to this career exploration?

On one page make a list of all of the areas of compatibility. Indicate beside each factor how your characteristics best match. On another page make a similar list of the areas of incompatibility and indicate how you plan to address these limitations.

On the last page write a summary evaluation about yourself and the firm. Assume that you are the initial interviewer and that you must write a convincing case to your supervisors about why this person (you) should be hired.





You have now started a thorough strategic career plan with this written research in public accounting.

Engineering

Engineers tend to have more definitive career profiles than most other occupational fields. Why is this? Are there factors in the education and work experiences of engineers that cause a close tie between the profile and the self-assessment? What are they?

Engineering majors usually have a fairly concrete understanding of what their profession is all about by their senior year in college. Yet many begin to agonize over whether to go into design, process, applied, field sales, management, etc. There are many ways to apply an engineering background in the work setting.

There are decisions on whether to specialize or remain broad. Is it better to remain a generalist or to become an expert? There are fields within the engineering specialty and industry specifications that make these decisions more complicated than one would initially suspect.

Select a sub-specialty within one of the major engineering fields, and describe its duties and responsibilities in great depth based upon reading in textbooks and interviews of practitioners in the field. Compare the information from the books, websites, and the practitioners.

Study the design, process, application, and sales aspects of your technical field. What characteristics in your background relate to those in each of these areas? Which factors would help you resolve the decision on which approach to take? Where do you fit best? Why?

A great concern of many engineers is the potential for obsolescence of their knowledge within five years after graduation. Is this a possibility in your field? What will you do to face this issue? Be specific on exactly how you will keep current. Lay out a specific plan.

Engineering employment tends to be highly cyclical. There are many openings during boom times and engineers are laid off during recessions. What plans are you taking to address this situation?

Engineering Action Project. *Based upon all of these concerns, prepare a "Career Profile" following the format given in Figure 9.1. Incorporate your decisions reached above into the "ideal" career profile.*

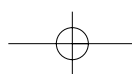
Describe how your technical background best fits with this profile as if you were doing so in an interview situation.

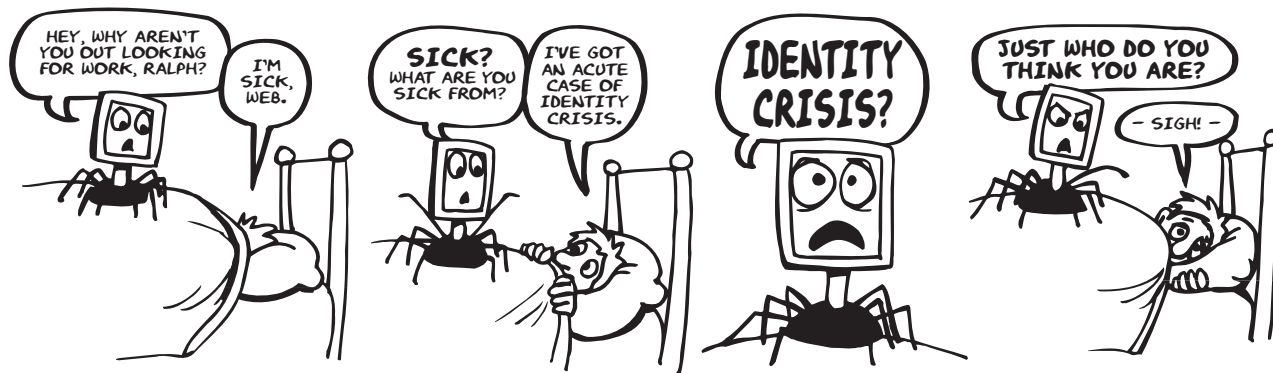
Prepare a hard-hitting presentation of about two to three single-spaced, typed pages in length that integrates your background with the career profile.

This analysis is a major step in the creation of your strategic career plan. If you have written your research, this career exploration, self-assessment, and interview plan makes a great career portfolio.

Human Resource Management

A number of jobs in human resource management (HRM) are available each year to job candidates with proper training in the field. The purpose of this





project is to explore the opportunities that are available and the requirements for those openings.

The HRM department of an organization consists of a relatively small number of people. These people are employed in the following HRM departments:

- Labor relations
- Wage administration
- Employment
- Benefits and insurance
- Training and development
- Publications
- Management development
- Performance appraisal
- Equal employment
- Compliance regulations
- Security and safety
- Affirmative action

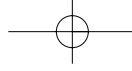
Define each of these areas and describe the daily activities of people working in them. Identify the qualifications, education, interest profile, personality, etc., required of individuals working in each area. Base your comments on a college textbook in "Human Resource Management" and professional association websites.

Based on information in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and the Careerinfonet website published by the U.S. Department of Labor, what are the estimated numbers of annual openings? Using additional sources, determine the long-term outlook for employment in human resources.

Using web, newspaper, trade journal advertisements, and personal information interviews, determine the typical starting salary and the average salary of HR managers. What is the typical advancement path in the field? How do salaries in HRM compare with those in accounting, marketing, and other professional fields?

Select two major employers and review their job descriptions, employment brochures, and websites. Based upon your research in the HRM field, critique the descriptions, brochures, and websites. What type of employers are more likely to offer job opportunities in HRM?

Based upon your review of the field, explain why your background is ideally suited for a career in HRM. Develop a strong presentation that you can



use in your interviewing for a HRM job. Draw upon your technical skills, values, interests, and personal qualities that are best related.

ASTD**www.asted.org**

The American Society for Training and Development offers a magazine subscription for members, job listings, training program listings and a marketplace that includes audiotapes & videotapes, books & interactive media. This is an outstanding resource site.

SHRM Online**www.shrm.org**

The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) is the global voice of the profession. The 100,000 plus HR professionals are likely to be using this site for any job searching that they do for themselves or for their company. Although the site offers a wealth of information, especially to its members, here are some of the highlights:

- Browse HR positions by location, title, post date, keyword search, etc.; register to have them e-mailed to you.
- Peruse the *Information Center and Library*, which offers articles on Benefits and Compensation, as well as a Job Description Databank that contains hundreds of job descriptions categorized by function and industry.
- View up-to-date information regarding SHRM Conferences and Seminars.

HRM Action Project. On two single-spaced, typed pages write a brief description of the specific duties and responsibilities of a person working in each of the HR departments listed above. *Define each department and describe the specific activities that managers do in each.*

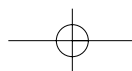
Develop a two or three page "Career Profile" for one of the positions in HRM for which you feel that you would be qualified. If you can identify a specific job opening in a firm, use that as a guide.

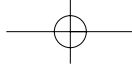
Lastly, explain in a one or two page evaluation why you are the best qualified person for such a position. This would be similar to the presentation that you would use in any interview. One approach that you could use is to try to anticipate the series of open-ended questions that an interviewer is likely to ask and provide a reasoned response to each of about eight to ten questions. The interview chapters can help you formulate your questions. If you have written this, you have a great start on your strategic career plan.

Public Relations

Public relations employees build and maintain positive images for their employing organizations. Public relations staffers work closely with newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, so they often have extensive training in media. Many create websites.

Many people who are unaware of what the function really involves say they want to go into public relations when they are really more interested in the marketing function. The purpose of this project is to help you decide if you are interested in and qualified for a career in public relations.





Describe the principal duties and responsibilities of the chief public relations person in a major organization. In the past few years there have been several articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and other business periodicals about the profession. Summarize and critique two articles in the field.

A web search engine like google using “public relations” and professional association websites would be good sources of articles. Read a college level textbook on public relations and summarize the main functional areas.

Scan through two books or articles in the library on the web about careers in public relations. What are the typical job titles of beginners? What are the qualifications, education, skills, personality, appearance, and special interests of people entering the field? Where are most of the jobs located?

Give some information on salaries and describe the most typical career path. From newspaper and professional journal advertisements, what are the experience requirements and salary levels of top public relations personnel? What is the employment outlook? Use association websites.

Public relations people are often accused of creating false, but glowing images. This media image building often runs counter to people’s demands for truth and openness. If you were employed in the field, how would your value system face this issue?

Public Relations Action Project. Given that you want to advance in this field, describe how your background is suited for a public relations career. *Design a concise summary of your background and experience to appeal to a public relations executive who currently has a job opening at your level of expertise.* Create your summary profile with some creative words and ideas that reveal your special talents in the PR field.

Use web search engines to identify specific job openings in public relations. Use these job descriptions in your analysis. Use the big job boards as well as PR job websites.

Make it a creative and innovative presentation that is sure to attract interest and get you the interview you desire. From your current level of education and experience, discuss how and when you might realistically expect to break into (or advance upward to) the field of public relations.

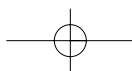
By design, this project is very open-ended. There would need to be a great deal of creativeness and cleverness used to help you open the door into this arena.

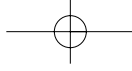
The goal is to encourage you to write five creatively designed, single-spaced, typewritten pages about the profession and show how your credentials best relate.

You may wish to use the “Career Profile” (Figure 9.1) as a guide and your resume as your qualification record. The important aspect of this project is to explain in a graphical and creative writing style why you are the best qualified candidate for a specific type of job opening in the field. With this, your strategic career plan has started.

Career Book Review

All libraries include recent books on various career fields. Select any book about a career field in which you have an interest and read it. You may substitute a professional association website instead of using a book. A website





search engine might lead you to other extensive collections of materials about your area of career interest.

Book Review Action Project. Write a review that provides a summary plus a critical analysis. Discuss what you wanted to know that the materials did not cover. Note whether you are more or less interested in the career field after reading the book or website and explain why.

Develop a presentation that integrates your self-assessment with the information you derived from the in-depth analysis of the career field. *Using the career profile in Figure 9.1 show relationships between your background and the career field at every level of concern.*

Based upon this analysis, identify several likely employers within your geographical area of concern. *Describe how you would methodically show that your background relates to the career field.*

Assume that you were having a job interview in this field and as you tell about your background characteristics relate them to the career profile headings.

Your report should be at least five single-spaced, typed pages in length to be most helpful. This is a creative and thorough way to develop your strategic career plan.

Graduate Study

Many people decide to attend graduate school to obtain an advanced degree (MBA, JD, MS, etc.) either immediately following undergraduate training or after several years of work experience.

The reasons for doing this should be thoroughly investigated before the decision is made. The purpose of this project is to conduct the analysis. Read Chapter 21 on "Continuing Education," before completing this project. What factors are important to you?

Graduate Study Action Project. Describe the type of position you wish to hold after graduate school and give supporting evidence that the degree is essential for obtaining the position.

Which schools will you consider for this type of program and how do you rate their degree programs? What is the placement record of graduates from the various programs? Analyze the placement outlook with hard evidence, not generalizations.

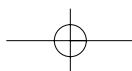
The College Board

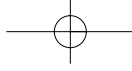
www.collegeboard.org

The SAT folks have a super search engine that zooms you to college sites/application process and pertinent college info.

What are some of the criteria used in selecting a school (e.g., hours required, cost, location, aid, reputation (define), difficulty, etc.)? Which criteria are most important to you and why?

Visit the website of several schools and compare three schools on criteria that are important to you. Calculate the cost of the programs and estimate your return on the investment.





What are some of the admission requirements and how does your background stack up in relation to them? Would it be better to have some more relevant work experience before entering this program?

Outline the academic program of study for you at each school. Appraise your chances of getting accepted.

Prepare an admissions strategy with fallback positions at each step in the process. Plan your academic program course by course.

Analyze your present education, work experience, job interests, background, and personality in relation to the *daily* duties, *general* responsibilities, and *specific* job activities of the job for which the further education would train you.

Download and print the application of one school from its website. Complete that application including "To whom it may concern" reference statements.

Develop a career profile (as shown in Figure 9.1) for the position to which you aspire that integrates your new background (with the advanced degree). This project should be at least five single-spaced, typed pages in length to be most useful to you. This is an important phase of a strategic career plan for careers that require an advanced degree.

See Chapter 21 for an extensive list of websites on continuing your education.

Industry and Employer Analysis

Assume that there is a specific employer for whom you wish to work. The purpose of this project is to better prepare you for an interview by enhancing your knowledge of the available opportunities and your understanding of how your background meets the requirements of the potential employer.

Select an employer and then thoroughly research that employer from their career employment website. Also research the industry in which it operates.

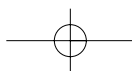
Identify other major employers in the same industry. Investigate some of the current problems that are common to the industry and specific to that particular organization. Are there pressing concerns that may impede progress in the industry? Is there current legislation that is important to the industry?

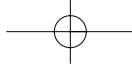
Project trends in the industry that could stimulate or restrict growth. Show how population growth, economic trends, legal concerns, and technological developments may influence the industry. Relate these to your employment prospects.

Industry Action Project. *Identify and describe the position in which you wish to be employed by the organization. Present the organizational structure of the organization and its size (assets, sales, employees, etc.) and rank in the industry. Show where your specific job goal fits into the organizational framework.*

Use the firm's website and at least one web-based independent source for specific information.

Identify the organization's range of products and/or services, and support an outlook for its sales growth. Who is the competition and how strong is it? Where are its various locations? How strong is its financial foundation?





Discuss any development program for the position you are seeking. How long is it and to what position does it lead? Describe the duties and responsibilities of the job you want and evaluate your chances for advancement.

Summarize your findings and relate them in a positive fashion to your education, background, interests, and personality. Use the "Career Profile" in Figure 9.1 as a guide in structuring the relationships. Compare your self-assessment to this profile.

Go to a web search engine like google or Yahoo and record the recent articles that have been written about the organization in the past two years. Use the WWW to do most of your research.

Select articles that have appeared in the most widely circulated publications such as *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Barron's*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, etc. Read and summarize these articles. You can find many magazine articles on-line.

Read a recent analysis of the company's stock and internal growth potential in one of the leading investment research services, such as *Value Line*, *Moody's*, *Hoover's*, or *Standard and Poor*. These, too, are available in most libraries and the WWW. For smaller firms you may have to call a brokerage house and ask them to send you a research report. Summarize the reports.

Obtain a copy of the employer's latest annual report and contrast it with the investment reports. Report on the various product lines and internal operating divisions. Identify the additional information you were able to obtain about the firm from the annual report. Does the annual report fairly portray the company's prospects? Offer a critical analysis.

Evaluate the employer's *employment brochure* (if available), preferably on-line. Summarize it and critically respond to the following questions. Does the brochure define and describe the available openings? Are qualification requirements fully explained? Is the training program explained? What additional information should the brochure/website contain?

The *employment brochure* can often be obtained from your college placement office or by writing the organization's central HR department. It is often on the firm's website also. But try to get independent appraisals also.

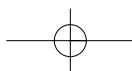
If possible, try to obtain a copy of the organization's employee publication (house organ, company newspaper, etc.) and comment on how much new knowledge this adds. *After all of your research is complete, write a list of ten questions pertinent to your employment with the firm that have not been answered.*

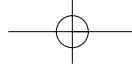
If possible, obtain an interview with a company employee to get answers to your questions. Record the results of that interview.

The purpose of this project is to help you carry out important research before your first interview with the organization. With the experience you gain using the methodology outlined here, your later research on other firms is likely to be much less time-consuming but just as essential.

This project will also strengthen the validity of the career exploration and self-assessment that you employed to arrive at your current career decision.

Summarize your research on the organization based upon the research and analysis suggested above. Focus on the single employer and its industry. Illustrate how your credentials fit both the industry and this employer.





This report should be at least five single-spaced, typed pages in length if you are to remember all of the appropriate details. Your comments should be supported with the research that you collected.

This is the type of analysis summary that you should prepare prior to each of your interviews. Relate your research to the interview research discussed in the interview chapters. If you complete this research in written form, your strategic career plan is well underway.

Summary

Formal career planning projects are important learning devices. Forcing yourself to write out a detailed, several-page analysis involves a commitment. You are about to make some extremely important decisions that may have a lasting impact upon your career. This career exploration is very important to your future.

The time you invest in a serious written analysis will be well worth the effort.

After reading through the projects you may not have discovered an “appropriate” topic. However, you will have gotten a flavor of the approach to career field exploration. As a result, it should be fairly simple for you to write a career project specific to your situation.

Write it. Complete it. By doing so you will learn what you need to know before approaching the next step in career planning. This chapter introduced you to a process that leads to a sound development of a strategic career plan.

