



CHAPTER 22

MANAGING YOUR CAREER:

Planning – Organizing – Controlling

How can I be sure that I made the right decision?

Careers are managed.

Management is a continuous process of planning, organizing, and directing. A career is a work experience commitment that involves achievement and advancement based upon a high level of significant training and experience in a select field of work.

Career management integrates the principles of career planning, goal setting, and decision making into a framework designed to help you understand your working life.

Career planning never ceases! Can you produce a business plan equivalent for your personal strategic career plan?

The Career Model Summarized

Career planning is built on three key concepts.

- *Self-assessment* defines your values, interests, and personal characteristics. These parameters influence your career choice.
- *Career exploration* evaluates your potential career options.
- *Search* starts with a career objective and develops a strategy that turns your broad goals into reality by using tools, techniques, and strategies that lead to new employment.

Career decision making is based upon compromises made throughout your life.

Decision-making principles form the web that brings together all of your concerns and creates a feedback loop that permits you to make appropriate compromises based upon real-world testing. This total career management



process continues throughout your working life. You need to regularly review *career planning strategies*.

A successful career search, given your career goals, begins with your preparation of the proper tools.

The interview is a goal-directed activity.

- The foremost tool is your *resume*.
- *Cover letters* that are sent with resumes open doors for interviews.
- Developing *contacts* and using them properly to produce *interviews*.
- Interviews lead to *job offers*.

Productive interviewing requires planning. The key factor in interviewing is preparation. A strategy and an interview presentation are the basics of preparation.

Career planning is a lifelong revolving cycle.

Career planning does not end with your acceptance of career-related employment. Career planning is cyclical; it continues as you more clearly define your self-concept and as you process new career information. The cycle frequently includes a career search that may lead you to a career or employer change if new circumstances warrant.

Career planning involves you in a continual evaluation of your career progress based upon realistic assessments of your job performance. Continued education throughout your lifetime is likely.

If success in life (however defined) is valuable to you, you will use this career planning strategy throughout your life. Regardless of your current life status, career planning is a lifelong meaningful process. If you permit your working life to roll along without conscious direction, you will overlook an important opportunity.

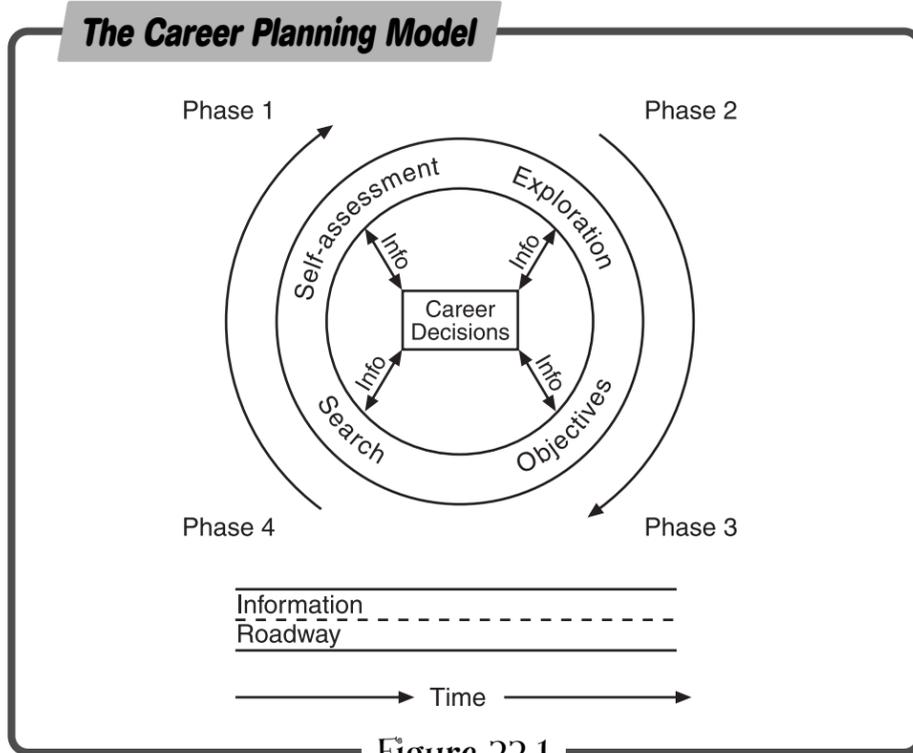


Figure 22.1



Career Planning Analysis

All of these facets of career management fall together quite naturally once you put the process into action. Once you fully understand the concept, you can implement any of the various aspects by a quick review of the process.

The career planning concept, with all of its inherent techniques, does not have to be a major project each time you want to review your current career status. Where are you headed? You can change if circumstances change. You can take side trips or different routes along the way to however you defined your destination.

The beauty of this concept is that your goals and the specific techniques used to get here are separable. Over time, human resource experts will undoubtedly improve on the techniques used in the self-assessment, career exploration, job search, and career decision-making phases. For example, computer technology use in the career exploration phase will undoubtedly be advanced greatly within the next decade.

The strategies and techniques recommended work very well in today's work environment. They will hold up well in the future. New ideas and techniques get incorporated and outdated ones discarded. Techniques are the tools used to apply your strategies. The basic career planning concept (and the system within which it must operate) are likely to be around for many years.

Awareness of the employment system and how to effectively access it complete the career planning process. Knowledge about how employment works helps you meet your goals.

When you put your strategies into action, you will be managing your career and your life. Putting the approach into action can become an automatic response. You do not need to go back to the basic elements each time and systematically rebuild the various stages of the career planning process. You just tweak them.

As you go through everyday living you will collect new knowledge about yourself and the world of work. There is no finite number of pieces of life like there is in a jigsaw puzzle.

Factors Influencing Change

As your information base builds, you will reach a point where you feel there is a need to reorganize your thoughts regarding your career. Any number of factors can trigger the reaction. It may be a sudden crisis or a gradual accumulation of information that creates a desire to take stock of where your life is headed.

Following a career reassessment, you may conclude that the search phase may or may not be needed. You may only want to test the waters to rebuild your confidence and ego.

A decision to move into the search phase necessitates a more thorough analysis of self-assessment and career exploration. The degree of analysis is a personal decision based upon your judgment of your personal environment. Do you need a work environment change? When?

The most fundamental idea to remember is that career planning is understanding yourself and your work options for the purpose of integrating this awareness into a realistic goal statement through a logical decision-making process.

Job search tools and techniques make lifelong career planning concepts into reality.

Sometimes only testing the water may be all the career planning you need.





Changing jobs is a major decision in your life and deserves a very thorough career analysis.

You alone must decide what factors will force your career planning process to move from low gear to high gear. Many people never get out of neutral. The factors that cause you to shift from a slower moving gear to a higher gear are the things that you deem as important based upon your values, interests, and personal qualities.

Should you change jobs or your career? Is it time to look around? Different things spark different people. It may be a single significant event. It may be an accumulation of activities and events. It may merely be a routine inspection of where your life is headed.

Your career analysis may generate a decision to do nothing. You may be in a state of career satisfaction but just want to take a look at how things are going.

Career analysis creates many interrelated decisions. Much confusion can be avoided by using the career planning model. Any career change can bring exciting and challenging new elements into your life.

Career change and mobility are common in American culture today. Are you ready for a change? Use *Career Planning Strategies* content as a guide in assessing and implementing.

Re-Careering

Developing your career planning strategy can be an intense. The events in the process can move you from very strong psychological highs to lows and back to highs. It is time-consuming, too, especially the first time through it.

This “roller coaster ride” can be smoothed out somewhat by your organized approach to career planning. You recognize what is happening and, as a result, are able to develop a coping plan.

Changing employment or a career is a major decision in life. The career planning model helps you cope with the situation in an organized, methodical manner. You prepare yourself for a critical life decision.

You cannot stay in high gear indefinitely. Your energy is rapidly drained, and you risk burning up your personal engine by dealing with anxieties and stressful situations involving career decisions

You speed up and you slow down. There are continual assessments and reassessments of your personal situation. Sometimes you set goals far too unrealistically and then your reassessment brings about a compromise.

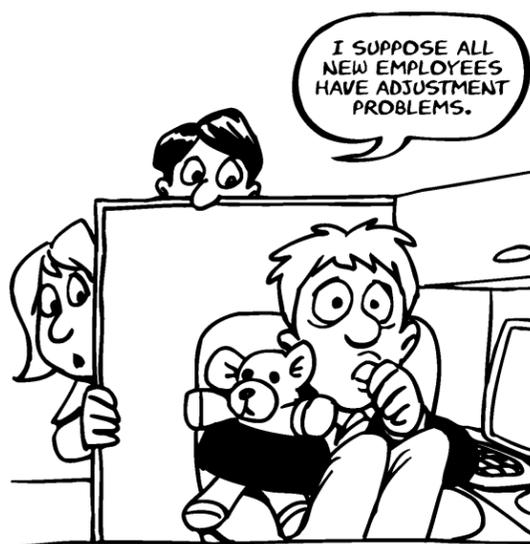
Once you achieve your immediate goal, a stabilization period should set in. The job search process stops. The halt may come about as the result of a decision to remain in your current situation or to accept new employment due to a promotion, a change in employers, or leaving school to take a job.

Ethically, you can take no more interviews once you have made an employment decision. You can ethically not even consider new offers that come in as a result of your previous search process. Your employment decision is extremely important because it is morally binding on your subsequent behavior. You don't want a “job-hopper” label.

If a super opportunity comes up after your decision, you must ethically turn it down. Reneging on a commitment is a very serious breach of ethics. An ethics charge is serious business. It can have long-lasting negative effects on a person's future career progress.

Once you make an employment decision, you must mobilize your energies to insure that you made a wise decision.





You are not alone in making this unequivocal decision. Your new employer is bound to the same ethical considerations. The employer may subsequently interview a better qualified applicant for the position you accepted, but he or she has made a binding commitment to you.

Both parties have exchanged verbal or written words of their intentions. Only extreme hardship or grave consequences should be permitted to influence either party's position. Most experts suggest that you stay put for at least 12 months, but it is not a lifelong commitment!

Plateau. Immediately after your acceptance, the search phase of your career planning downshifts quickly. A plateau is reached. Over time, that plateau will begin to rise, but at no time is your career

in a more relaxed state than immediately after you have accepted an offer for a position. You should feel good about this important step toward achieving your career goals.

Career Threats

Very few jobs are totally secure today. **Your only security is your own ability.** Your qualifications must be kept current for them to remain secure.

You face many job and career threats. Surprises hit people hard because they rely on the organization and other people to protect them from both internal and external threats.

Reorganization is a common threat. Both service and manufacturing employers face a barrage of forces that cause budget cuts and personnel reductions to meet competition or revenue shortfalls. Middle managers and technical staffs often get hit the hardest.

Merger and acquisition activity is a common threat. There is no need for two separate staffs doing the same job in the new organization. Staff personnel cutbacks of key departments often ensue.

Slow or no growth threaten many jobs. When the product or service life cycle begins to slow, fewer new people are hired. The price of products and services do not rise as before. In order to make a profit, compensation increases are curtailed and staff reductions quickly follow.

Technical obsolescence threatens careers. When the products no longer meet the demands of a changed marketplace, a no-growth situation rapidly follows. These circumstances breed layoffs.

Weak management practices threaten careers. If management is unresponsive to the marketplace or your boss is not satisfactorily performing, an unstable work setting quickly follows.

Discrimination continues to be a career threat. Age, sex, race, religion, and other protected classes seem to be vulnerable in some organizations when times get tough.

Job and career security in our society is not a fundamental right. Even if you own your own business or work for yourself in a legal or medical profession, you are vulnerable to the market forces.

The solution to these career threats is simple. The answer is sound career planning. You must learn how to **manage your own career** and maintain your ability to move upward as the external (and internal) situations demand.

Job Shock

- Routine duties
- Definite work hours
- Critical bosses
- Competitive co-workers
- Tight personal budget
- Unfairness everywhere
- Minimal influence
- Colleagues; not friends
- Accomplishment without reward
- Individual (not team) review
- Constant appraisal (daily)
- Amorphous decision making
- Organizational politics
- Daily performance pressure

Figure 22.2

You must now mobilize your powers and abilities to ensure that your decision turns out to be a wise one. By preparing yourself psychologically and intellectually for this new adventure, you move yourself along on the path toward career satisfaction.

Believing that you can handle the assignment and convincing yourself of its “stepping stone” value (if it is not your ultimate employment goal) creates an attitude that almost guarantees success.

Job Adjustment

If you are changing jobs or moving from an academic setting to the world of work, significant changes are going to occur. Even if you have decided to remain in your present position (after your career analysis), a new attitude may be in order.

Vocational theorists view this next period as a “transitional adjusting period.” It may vary from a few weeks to several months in length.

Reality Tests. At this time you begin a reality test of your decisions.

- You will test the *validity* of the self-concept you arrived at through your self-assessment. Were you honest with yourself?
- You will test the *adequacy* of your real-world career exploration. Did you thoroughly investigate your options?

When you made your career decision, you hypothetically merged your self-concept and a career together.

Reality is often different from the hypothetical. Unexpected issues enter the picture. Coping with the unexpected can cause a few problems. If you have built a sound career foundation, these obstacles should not prove to be detrimental to the satisfaction of your goals.

Starting over, whether real or merely through altering your attitude, presents interesting challenges. Occasionally people “get in over their heads.” Recognizing this when it occurs and retrenching because of it is a necessity.

It often takes a person about a year on the new job to discover this. If it happens to you, you only need to recycle through the career planning process once again.

In all probability, you can handle the assignments and responsibilities with ease. After all, your decision was based on much analysis of yourself and the job.

In fact, most people want to assume more and more responsibility before they are really ready for it. The people you work with, not the duties and responsibilities of the job, are likely to be your greatest challenge. They include your bosses, higher-level superiors, colleagues, peers, subordinates, and customers.

Suing an Employer May Ground Your Career

The litigious society freely tackles offenders who have brought any type of harm. The newspapers are filled with announcements of layoffs. Age discrimination is often the basis for legal action by an employee against an employer. Indeed the lawsuits run the gamut from sex, race, and religion, to the handicapped.

Most lawsuits are legitimate, and the offender deserved punishment. A settlement is often made out of court. Employers occasionally lose lawsuits but the employee, though legally victorious, may be the real loser. What other employer is willing to hire a litigious person?

Some experts acknowledge that returning to the workforce after litigation, whether successful or not, is tough to do. Common sense by an employer dictates that an interviewer avoid undue risks. The employer is far more likely to hire another “equally” qualified individual who does not bring negative baggage—a potential lawsuit—to the position.

Before you sue, consider your work future. Analyze the cost versus the gains. Even if you can prove conclusively that you were a victim, evaluate all consequences of the short-term versus long-term gains.

Learn your job and commit to excellence in it before moving forward.

People Problems. Your attitudes toward others and their attitudes toward you can make or break your well-laid career plans. You can shape others’ attitudes toward you as well as your own attitude toward them. A significant part of career management is “attitude” development and adjustment.

Moving smoothly from one social situation to another requires more understanding of the feelings of others than you probably suspect. You can avoid trouble by anticipating the reactions of others toward you.

Adjustment in a new work environment requires more than obtaining respect for your ability to perform well in all of your assignments. It demands getting along with others as well. Competencies matter but they are not used in isolation.

A great potential for people problems is other people’s fear and apprehension regarding you. The social fabric as well as the work fabric of the workplace is altered by your arrival. Uncertainty is the rule. Be prepared to eliminate the uncertainty when you arrive. Make many friends among your work colleagues.

Expectations. Part of your personal adjustment may relate to the expectations you take on the job. What is your career path? How long before you will make a job move? What will you do? How will you develop friendships? How much will you earn?

You surely have some ideas about the answers to these questions, but your expectations may not coincide with reality.

For example, many people take unrealistic salary expectations to their new positions. The United States is basically a middle-class society where

Career management is a flexible attitude adjustment.

Ten Adjustment Problems

Job success is not dependent solely upon your competencies. Are you ready for change?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Relating theory to practice: | the transition, why issues |
| 2. Adjusting to work routine: | hours, scheduling, deadlines |
| 3. Adjusting to structure: | operations, procedures, guidelines |
| 4. Unrealistic expectations: | anticipating too much too soon, too ambitious |
| 5. Developing cooperative attitudes: | people differences; team vs. me |
| 6. Accepting responsibility, decision making: | completing jobs; just do it! |
| 7. Understanding management philosophy: | profit motive, survival, change again |
| 8. Recognizing inadequacies: | finding self, unable to cope, re-careering |
| 9. Adjusting to new location: | different lifestyle demanded |
| 10. Learning to communicate effectively: | writing, speaking, presenting, networking |

Have you mentally expanded to each adjustment issue?

Figure 22.3

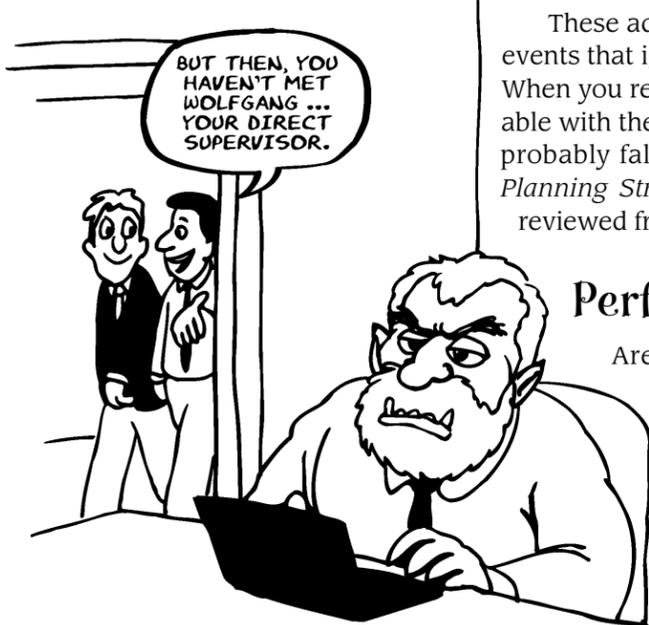
earnings of technical, professional, and managerial employees fall into a relatively narrow salary band. On a percentage basis, most people find themselves in the middle class.

Are your attitudes realistic and do you know how to compromise gracefully?

Higher earnings are possible. Expectations of a fast growing salary is not very realistic. That is a major attitude adjustment problem for many young managers.

In all probability, you will face some reality tests that demand changes in your attitude. Over time, facts will be filtered into your career planning model, and when they first hit, a kind of shock effect will touch you. Your adjustments to these "shocks" constitute your career *compromises*. There will be some mental compromises.

These adjustment factors can bring about the significant events that ignite your career planning "motor" in the future. When you reach the point where you are no longer comfortable with the necessary compromises and tradeoffs, you will probably fall back on your career planning model. *Career Planning Strategies* will be dusted off and the handbook reviewed from time to time.



Performance Appraisals

Are you performing according to your employer's expectations? Are financial rewards coming? Another event that tends to reignite career planning interest is the performance appraisal. Few people enjoy sitting down with superiors and discussing their performance limitations over the preceding twelve months. Even strong performers must admit to some failures. You and your boss get an annual plan. Are you meeting expectations?

Creative Behavior Guidelines

Your employer and co-workers expect you to blend into their work habit and behaviors. Are changes necessary?

- Keep lists of your ideas
- Challenge yourself daily with new questions
- Stay current in your field—read constantly
- Fertilize your ideas by cross-field reading
- Avoid rigid, set patterns of doing things
- Be receptive to the ideas of others
- Watch for new working relationships
- Engage in an avocation—multiple interests
- Laugh easily and keep a sense of humor
- Take risks regularly
- Develop self-confidence and courage
- Learn to understand yourself

Are you ready to adapt your behaviors?

Figure 22.4

The performance appraisal is both an oral and written report card. Are you ready?

Upward mobility is not the only route to success. Personal job satisfaction outranks finding yourself appearing successful but inwardly hating your job.

Verbal performance reviews, especially if they turn into harsh critiques, make most people uncomfortable. There is a tendency to put up defenses rather than concentrate on ways to improve performance.

The purpose of performance reviews is to assess the past and lay down some realistic, achievable objectives for the future, but many people only hear the negatives and react accordingly.

Some employers refer to “performance appraisal” as “performance management.” Others like the phrase “management by objectives.” Regardless of the terminology, it boils down to a job assessment. What kind of job are you doing?

Unfortunately, appraisals often have the effect of encouraging some people to begin looking around for other opportunities. People who react in this manner frequently find themselves job hopping from one entry-level assignment to another, never gaining enough credibility to really move up in their chosen careers.

Properly conducted performance appraisals can and do have the opposite effect. Constructive evaluations identify problem areas and help you improve in your weak areas. In effect, they strengthen



you. They provide the evaluation that allows you to improve and build a meaningful career path within the organization.

Upward Mobility

Surveys of senior executives in all types of organizations invariably indicate a consistent upward mobility. It is slow but steady progress to the top of a profession or organization that distinguishes the movers.

In a very high percentage of instances, the top layer of management has been with their employers for more than 15 years. Superior performance over several years usually is reflected by increased earnings and greater management responsibilities. Patience is a virtue in most organizations. The true performers are rewarded.

Job Hopping. Job hoppers seldom move into positions of major responsibility. Most studies show that the vast majority of top leaders are in their forties and fifties when they assume high levels of responsibility.

Employment with only three or four employers during their career is very common among this group. Most of them have stayed with each employer for seven to ten years and during those tenures experienced several promotions. Of course, exceptions also occur.

In general, job hoppers tend to move from larger, more prestigious organizations to smaller organizations. At the time of a job hopper's move, the new title may be perceived as higher than the old one, but the responsibility in terms of people and resources managed is often much less.

Employer changes that occur in careers usually come in the early years. When you reach a dead end in terms of your career goal satisfaction, the time is ripe for you to make a move.

You should not attempt a major move without first conducting a thorough career analysis. An analysis should even be conducted whenever you contemplate a promotion within an organization. Some promotions, especially if they involve a geographical move, may not be in your best career interests. Analyze your promotions using the career planning model.



Turnover. Turnover has some unpleasant costs for both you and your employer, and if it can be avoided, both stand to gain. In addition to the financial considerations, there are some negative psychological costs that can have lasting negative influences on your career progress.

Turnover usually implies some level of dissatisfaction with the employer. Dissatisfaction emerges when both (not just one) of the parties are unhappy. You may be unhappy because of job content, lack of promotion, people conflicts, etc. This is usually reflected in a lower level of performance that the employer observes.

Whether you are fired, laid off, or see the handwriting on the wall, it is difficult for you to

Your career progress (in terms of rank in the organization, salary, and job satisfaction) is enhanced by identifying the most satisfying use of your skills and then building a solid base of performance. Occasional employer changes may be necessary, but frequent job hopping can work against your career progress.

Career Mobility Strategies

- Maintain high visibility—be a national authority
- Develop reputation for delivering results
- Create long-term professional relationships
- Look for employment while still employed
- Cultivate networks—stay visible to externals
- Maintain marketability—stay in demand
- Avoid specialization—be a generalist with a theme
- Avoid group assignments where credit is diffused
- Maintain personal credibility by keeping current
- Maintain mobility and flexibility

Figure 22.5

Is the problem really your desires and not a real problem with your employer?

Motivation issues, not competence concerns, cause most turnovers.

face failure. Your natural instinct is to blame the employer. You may have some underlying issues. As you begin your career planning cycle, you must admit and factor these concerns into your new career objective.

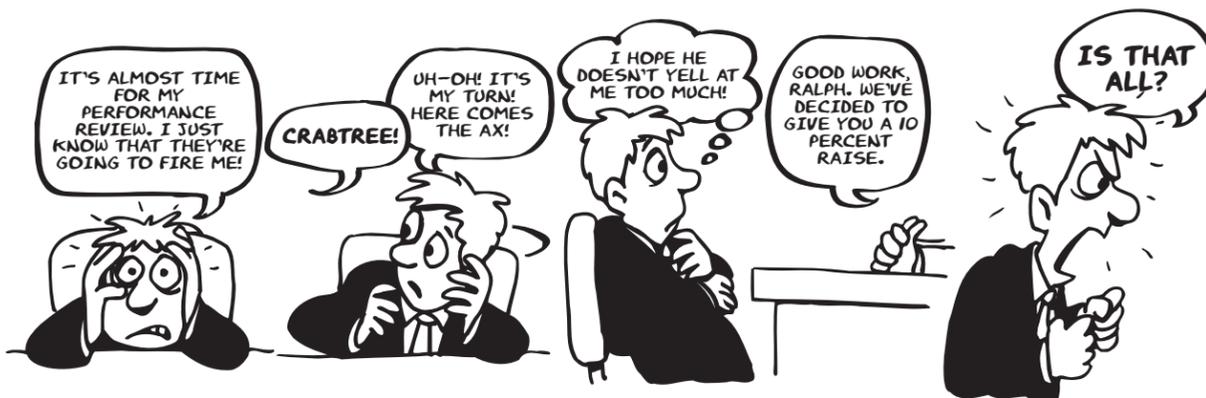
Turnover can be very expensive for an employer. It frequently comes about due to underlying people issues in the organization rather than to a lack of competence in the individual who leaves.

People problems are a major disruption to an organization's productivity. In addition, there is the time and expense involved in advertising, interviewing, relocating, and hiring a replacement. Very often, the employer loses a large investment in the training given the previous employee and must then reinvest in a new person.

A major (and valid) reason employees often give for leaving a firm is the desire to return to school. This implies an unhappiness with job content (or performance competence). Additional schooling can change a career thrust by building a stronger knowledge base.

Returning to school is a common reason cited for leaving. The need for developing new skills in an increasingly information-based technological society is a significant reason cited for turnover.





Some employers build turnover statistics into their entry-level hiring plans.

Returning to school is often part of people's broad career plans. Technical, professional, and managerial employees not only want to renew skills, but they also use education to change the direction of their careers or hasten their upward advancement.

Turnover among recent college graduates varies greatly by industry and occupation. Turnover may be quite low among engineers and very high among computer talent.

On the average, many employers of college graduates expect to lose one-third of their new campus hires within the first three years of employment. A few leave for educational reasons and later return, but most move on to other employers.

The attrition of technical, professional, and managerial employees who have tenure of more than three years is very small. Major employers expect less than 5 percent of their employees in this classification to leave within a one-year period.

Your only security is your own ability.

Your only security is your own ability! If your abilities are not being fully utilized or recognized, you have a choice to make: either leave the employer, or try to work out a more productive relationship with your current employer.





Some of the more positive reasons most frequently cited include:

- More challenge
- Relocation needs
- Health concerns
- Financial security
- More money
- Additional training
- Better opportunity
- Advancement

There are many very legitimate and positive reasons for making an employment change. The most important reason is to further the satisfaction of your long-term career plans. Advancement is the single best reason for making a change.

Internal Politics. Politics play a role in advancement. Regardless of the organization, internal relationships determine who is chosen for promotion.

As the hierarchy narrows, there are many well-qualified applicants for promotion if the organization has done a good job of developing its people. Ideally, from the employer's perspective, every opening should have two or more interested people competing for it.

In any well-managed organization, the first selection of viable, promotable candidates for a given position is made on the basis of competence and previous job performance. This may yield several candidates.



Mentors Aid Your Career Progress

A mentor is a career coach who takes a personal interest in you by offering career insights, advising an entry into the social and political environment, evaluating inside information, and promoting your career internally. In selecting potential mentors you should ask yourself these questions:

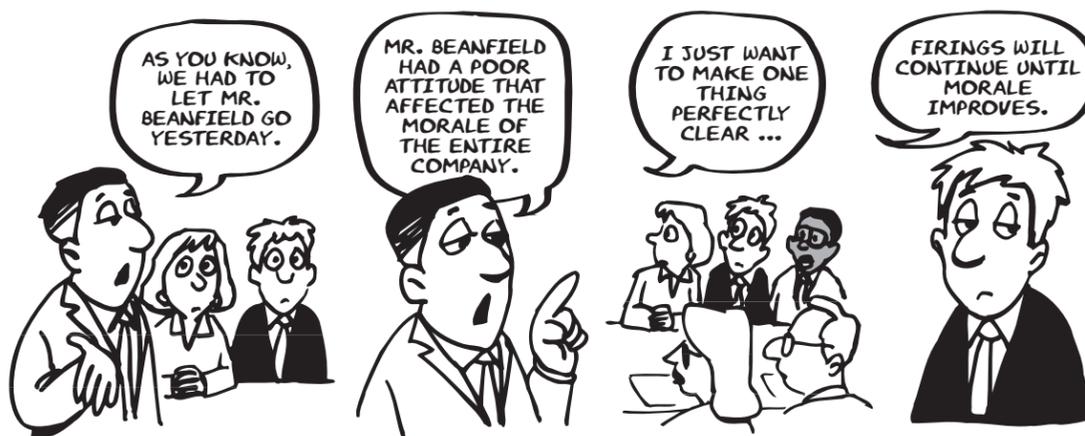
1. How powerful is the mentor?
2. Is the mentor gaining support?
3. How secure is the mentor?
4. Is the mentor a good teacher?
5. Are your views consistent?
6. How long will the mentor be around?

A good mentor can make your job life more pleasant and satisfying. Evidence suggests that a mentor can influence how far and how fast you rise in an organization.

Mentors open doors to information access from both peers and superiors. Involvement in organizational politics is unavoidable, so the use of a mentor can affect your rewards in terms of raises, promotion, power, and responsibility. A thoughtful selection of one or more mentors can be an essential decision in your career development.

Seniority may be a selection factor, but for management-level jobs it is not often considered. The choice is often based on “people skills” rather than technical competence. Some call this “politics” and others effective “networking.”

How can you win in internal politics? It boils down to getting others (superiors, peers, and subordinates) to know and like you. You must develop feelings of respect, rapport, and confidence among the people who count in the organization. You need to consider your personality, competence, credibility, values, social life, habits, manners, attitude, personal philosophy, and other factors that make you a unique person. What activities help you to network?





Teaching you how to succeed in power politics is a foolish activity.

Anyone who gives you advice on how to beat the political game should be held suspect. In some organizations the “Girl Scout” image wins; in others the “hatchet man” wins. In some organizations the motto is, “Do it to others before they do it to you,” while in others it is the golden rule.

In no case should you assume that internal politics are unimportant for you and your career. Some people literally make a game of internal politics; and some of them win at it too. The level of its importance to you will be based upon your values, interests, personal values, and career objectives.

Teaching you how to succeed in internal politics is tough, but advising you that it exists is important. From a career management perspective, succeeding in that area may not be important to you. If it is important, you need to factor that element into your career decision-making framework. Networking, by itself, will not move you up the ladder, but smart networking strategies can definitely help.

The figure titled “Forty Action Ideas for Advancement” offers advice on how to move up in the organizational hierarchy. Admittedly, some of these sound facetious when they are applied to career planning, and indeed some of them are. Nonetheless, following many of the ideas could contribute to

Power Politics Destroys Careers

Power politics exists! Do you have a plan to deal with it?

Do unto others before they do unto you. Watch out for Number 1. Success above all. During your career movement you will undoubtedly face many opportunists who unwittingly follow strange advice. Power politics occasionally work in the short run, but the actions described below rarely survive in most organizations.

- Controlling people
- Massaging egos
- Manipulating situations
- Calculating relationships
- Spreading false rumors
- Withholding facts
- Managing information
- Playing favorites
- Name dropping
- Bootlicking
- Yes man
- Playing safe
- Demeaning others
- Back stabbing

This is not to suggest that tough political decisions need never be made. You occasionally must take unpopular stands, establish firm commitments, practice total loyalty, and be aggressive on important issues. But political decisions often boil down to these dichotomies.

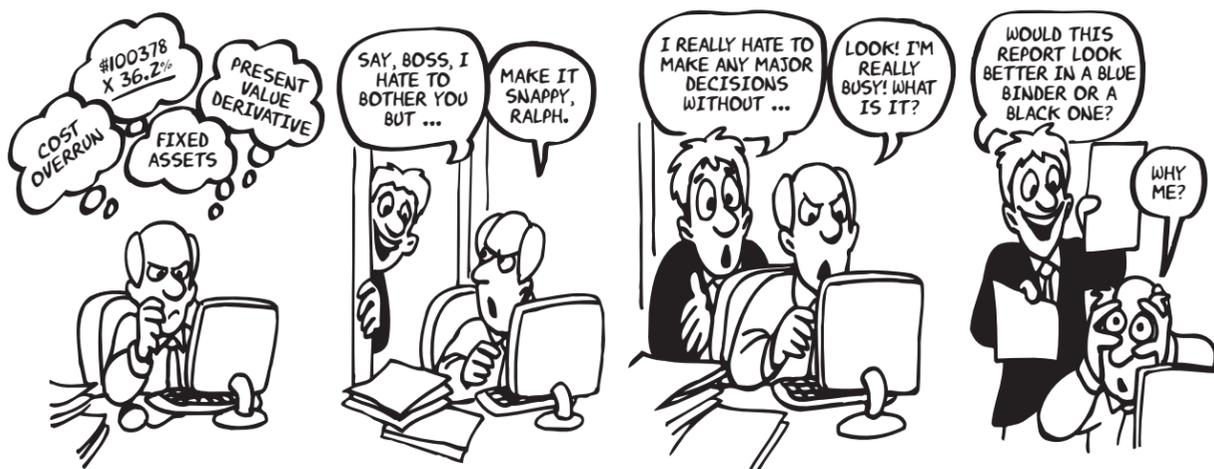
- Maintenance versus Greatness
- Acceptable versus Excellence
- Caution versus Courage
- Dependence versus Autonomy

You may discover that politics impact your future success. Organizational politics does not mean a dirty or sinister action. The street-smart, hustling, striver may turn out to be you.

Political savvy builds careers as well. Your role may eventually be to give stress rather than merely suffer stress.

Are you ready to become political savvy on the job?





your survival in an organization's political arena. It would be beneficial for you to memorize many of these ideas if "upward progression" syndrome is a part of your career plan.

Are your goals compatible with those of your employer?

Employer Career Pathing. Career management is not solely your responsibility. More and more employers are sitting down with high-potential employees and helping them map out internal career paths. Career pathing is destined to become a major human resource planning activity within the larger employing organizations in the future.

Your goals and your organization's goals may not be compatible. Within any organization, your upward mobility is dependent upon appropriate openings that cannot always be guaranteed, regardless of the superiority of your performance. For that reason, sound career management must always remain your own responsibility.

Career Politics

Perhaps you do not want to admit that career politics exists. It does. How can you indirectly play this game?

- Make your work benefit someone else
- Define the value of your work to superiors
- Avoid "loose cannon" label
- Make your boss a star
- Make your subordinates stars
- Give yourself minimal credit
- Force consensus in work groups
- Tolerate inconsistencies
- Welcome change
- Look forward, not backward

What are your "top ten to do's" to address career politics?

Figure 22.6



Your employer may hire a professional "out placement" firm to assist you in making the transition to another, more compatible employer or occupation.

Nonetheless, organizational career pathing promises to play an important role in meeting the needs of many employees. The career analysis suggested here may be forced upon you by your employer.

Career pathing will help employers retain the people they desperately need for future leadership. Career pathing will encourage those who find themselves dead-ended, through no fault of their own, to seek greener pastures elsewhere.

Career pathing forces employers to become more aware of the needs and aspirations of their employees. If frank and realistic counseling is given, both parties will come to have more reasonable expectations.

A major cause of turnover is employees' unrealistic expectations. They change jobs only to find that their own attitudes were the problem, not the employer. Often, many employers will address this concern during the required annual performance review period. Others will assign an experienced "career coach" to work with you. Others will rely on a formal "mentoring program." Some just let it happen without a formal plan.

Career pathing encourages employers to seek new and innovative ways to reward achievers. Upward mobility is limited by the sheer definition of organizations. The higher you move, the fewer the available slots left.

As you move up the pyramid, are you really closer to the top? Mentoring, lateral moves, job enrichment, professionalism, and so forth, are only a few ways to address the inevitable crunch toward the top of the pyramid.

Career satisfaction is not necessarily compatible with the onward-and-upward mentality. Realistic career planning can be an alternative to it.

Changing Jobs

Factors that cause the career planning process to rekindle are the same factors that can lead people to seek a new career field or a new employer in the same field. The reason job changers most frequently give as to why they change jobs and yet stay in the same field is that they believe it will open up greater advancement possibilities.



Pay, location, boss, job content, and other factors add weight in decisions to change employers, but the most prevalent reason is advancement.

If the changers are asked why they are changing their career *directions*, there is a split between job content dissatisfaction and advancement limitations. The plateauing and ceiling restrictions seem to be major change agents.

Sometimes the reasons for changing jobs are underlying personal problems that make coping within the career arena difficult. These problems can make success with any employer unattainable. Until the personal problems are solved, no amount of career planning can be very fruitful.

These problems must be faced squarely and honestly, because running away from an employer or a career field does not solve them. In most cases, the problems resurface later in other settings.

You must recognize the difference between a personal problem and a career problem and then deal with the problem before activating the career planning model.

Employers directly and indirectly terminate professional personnel. The direct approach of firing or laying off people is embarrassing, but it is the most honest approach. It makes people wake up and acknowledge the need for career planning. Some employers recognize this and provide professional counseling by outside "outplacement experts" for employees they must terminate.

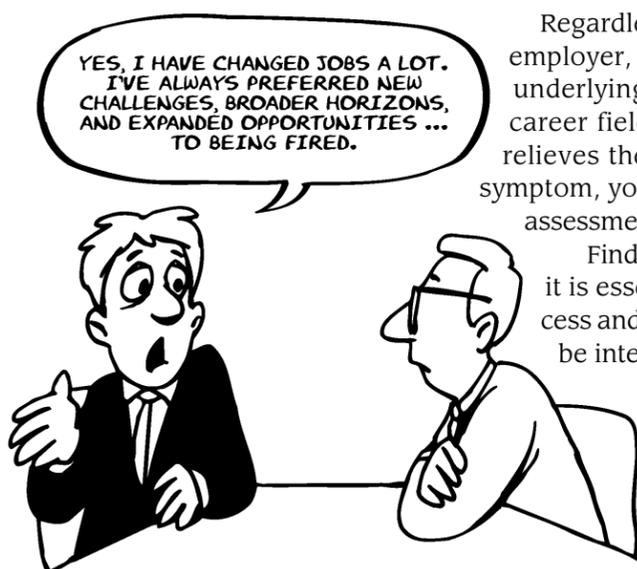
The indirect approach simply lets people hang on in maintenance capacities. They are productive but they are not utilized to the fullest possible extent. The indirect approach says, "We think you should leave because we see no future for you here."

That signal should be recognized and heeded immediately unless the individual has made a conscious decision to bide his/her time to retirement. Another indirect approach is simply to force the individual to quit by making his/her working life miserable.

Every employer must occasionally terminate professional employees.

The request for you to leave may come via subtle signals designed to avoid confrontation later.





Make every job decision as if you intend to work there for life but realize that changes are not an indictment.

Regardless of whether a change is initiated by you or the employer, you risk the same fate again if a solution for the underlying problem is not found. Merely changing jobs or career fields is a temporary “band-aid” solution that only relieves the pain for a short time. Rather than deal with a symptom, you should tackle the problem head-on in the self-assessment and in subsequent career choices.

Finding cures for career ailments is no simple task, but it is essential if you are going to achieve real career success and satisfaction. If there is no cure, the limitation must be integrated into the self-assessment, the career exploration, and the career objective as a “compromising” variable.

The Career Planning Model

Career changes (and employer changes) are healthy and necessary for most people. Two to

six employer changes over a working lifetime are very common. If you change employment more than six times, you need to review your rationale for each change.

Many people do stay with their first employers throughout their entire working careers. Many of the firms that actively recruit on college campuses can point to hundreds of instances of this. This is one reason why it is so important to make the employer analysis before making your first employment decision.

Outplacement Protection Tactics

Get real! Lifelong employment with one organization is a myth. Our competitive society watches even the seemingly “best” organizations disappear.

- Be loyal to yourself first
- Recognize that employment relationships are getting shorter
- Rewards are tied to contribution, not years and loyalty
- Accept that every organization needs to outpace sometimes
- Guard against surprises but lead with strength
- Accept the odds—it could happen
- Maintain independence—avoid dependence
- Prepare psychologically for outplacement
- Don't get burned twice—anticipate being outplaced

What plans do you have to address the issue that you could be forced to change jobs tomorrow? You need a plan!

Figure 22.7



Forty Action Ideas for Advancement

Seek additional responsibilities.
Complete assignments immediately.
Make suggestions instead of critical reviews.
Solve problems instead of just identifying them.
Praise others for good work.

Develop new skills through training.
Seek assignments that offer exposure to senior managers.
Search for the reason behind each assignment.
Look at problems from a management viewpoint.
Do not underestimate your social responsibilities.

Nurture personal friendships in your peer group: network.
Ask for certain work assignments.
Study the normal promotional channels.
Develop your personal life outside the organization.
Make professional contacts outside the organization: network.

Seek line, not staff, responsibilities.
Be patient for rewards, but go after challenges.
Beware of "assistant to" titles. Watch go-fers.
Avoid internal politics and cliques: but network.
Show your enthusiasm for the organization.

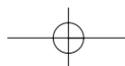
Discuss ideas, never people.
Advertise your abilities by superior performances.
Keep records of your work to show later.
Work on your public speaking skills.
Talk to subordinates as friends. They make you.

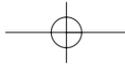
Never allow pressures to compromise quality.
Maintain personal and organizational ethics.
Make a written appraisal each year for your review.
Ask your superiors for advice about your career.
No negative criticism does not equal positive praise.

Rate your supervisors' potential for promotions.
Get help if an assignment is over your head.
Accept criticism and ask for it. Use it to improve.
Rethink your plans if the pressure bothers you.
Be prepared to relocate if promotion merits it.

Maintain organizational loyalty and advertise it.
Learn to delegate authority.
Accept blame for poor work of subordinates.
Expect two- to three-year plateaus in promotion.
Watch for earnings ceilings.

Figure 22.8





Circular Model. The career planning model is a dynamic, cyclical, process. The approach may be used time after time during a career. The techniques you use at given times will differ, but the basic concept remains intact.

For example, early in your career you may carry out the process and decide that your analysis indicates you should return to school to change the thrust of your career direction.

Later in your new career, you may use the model to evaluate a promotion that you have been offered that would require a major geographical move for your family. At another time you may use the model and decide to make an important job change.

The cyclical nature of the model increases its flexibility because it gives it multiple uses. Many times you may spin off of the cycle before you reach the job search phase. You may access the model, make a thorough analysis, and then come to the conclusion that you should make no career change at that point in time.

The cyclical nature of the model also permits new information to be fed in regularly. The decisions resulting each time are based on the most current information available.

Your career planning model used in analysis should be used on a regular cycle even if you are very satisfied with your job.





Creating Career Opportunities

Many road blocks face you as you move forward on your road to career success. Solid career *management* coupled with regular and systematic career *planning* destroys many of the obstacles on your way to success.

Your plan demands a take-charge approach. The ten “Career Commandments” listed below can open up many career opportunities for you.

Career Commandments

1. **Manage Your Career.** Effort alone is not always rewarded so try to influence decisions made by others on your behalf.
2. **Strive for High Visibility.** Create a setting where your abilities can be observed by career enhancers.
3. **Nominate Yourself.** Modesty is not necessarily a virtue.
4. **Evaluate Promotions.** Avoid positions that expose your weaker qualities or entail activities you dislike.
5. **Initiate Leaves.** Make a job move if your supervisor has not moved up in the past three to five years.
6. **Avoid Specialization.** Watch getting trapped into narrow job descriptions that limit your sphere of influence.
7. **Play Smart Politics.** Establish alliances and fight necessary skirmishes but avoid battles with important superiors.
8. **Avoid Being Indispensable.** Watch for reasons why people would be unwilling to promote you.
9. **Strong Marketable.** Your professional mobility enhances your external opportunities and increases the organization’s impression of your value.
10. **Evaluate Yourself Regularly.** Examine your personal values to help identify where you are sacrificing too much for the organization.

These ten “Career Commandments” provide ideas that can mean the difference between success and failure on the job.

The ideas cannot replace the “Three Ms” sought by every employer.

1. Mental ability
2. Maturity
3. Motivation

When positioned with your periodic career planning routine, the ten commandments point the way toward upward mobility in your chosen occupation.





Keep your career moving forward based on your definition, not someone else's opinion.

Career planning takes control of your career away from the hand of fate.

You can move your career in a direction that will achieve your personal **life** goals as well.

Career management works. It is your ticket to success.

Forward Motion. The career planning model is like a giant snowball rolling down a slope as you progress in your career. As it rolls along with you, you can easily access it at any time, and it collects information about you and your career interests daily.

This undated model follows behind you, collecting data and picking up momentum as your career progresses.

Building Blocks. Its cyclical nature and its forward movement permit the model to absorb information as your career develops. It can also discard useless or outdated pieces of data about your self-assessment and career exploration. You essentially are building a house of knowledge on a firm foundation, which was laid when you first made use of the model.

Your initial access of the career planning model takes a significant amount of time if it is properly carried out. But once the initial work is done, periodic updating requires only a few hours of time. Your self-assessment and resume should be regularly updated because they are useful for a variety of purposes, many of which are not career-related.

The strategy in this career planning model will help you to manage your career. Management consists of the decisions you make daily and periodically, and those decisions can be planned, organized, and orchestrated.





