Career Strategy
CAREER STRATEGY

Making a decision on what you want to do in the future can often be difficult. You need to decide where you want to take your career, what the options available are, and how you can make an informed decision on the right career path for you.

Self Assessment
What makes the perfect job? It is a combination of what you:

- Enjoy doing
- Are motivated by
- Are good at
- Are interested in

Before you can start to explore the areas that are right for you, you need to start to focus on yourself and build a picture of your strengths, motivators and interests. You need to consider what your strengths and weaknesses are? What do you enjoy or not enjoy? What motivates you in the workplace?

Step 1) What are you good at? What do you need to develop?

Start with your own understanding:

- Think back through your job roles in terms of where your strengths are and jot down your skills.
- Then look at your education history with a particular focus on your postgraduate studies.
- Also look at other courses, outside interests, languages and IT skills. These can all begin to build a picture of your strengths.

You should also go through the same exercise looking at your development points. These can help you decide what responsibilities or skills to either avoid in a position, or work on to improve. Map these out in a table so that you are clear what your strengths and development points are.

Step 2) Incorporating feedback
Also reflect on any feedback you have received from work appraisals, courses or activities. What do your peers or boss outline as your main strengths? What did they outline were your main development points?

Step 3) What do you enjoy?
Start with your list of strengths and development points and map them out into whether you enjoy them or not. This will involve self-reflection. Would you like to use that skill again? Would you like to be involved in that task in the future? Did that make you happy?

Also bring in other things from your experience that you enjoy/don’t enjoy that you haven’t already considered. For example, it may be that you enjoyed reading about M&A in your coursework – but you don’t have any practical experience of this. You would then put this as something you enjoy, but a development point.
You are trying to build a picture of the skills you can bring to your ideal job as well as the skills you need to develop for your ideal job.

Take the time to focus again on the skills that you want to use (i.e. enjoy using), but need to develop. Are you able to work on these in your current role/course? Can your current role/course offer you any opportunities to build on these? What about other personal development courses that you have access to?

**Step 4) What is your working style and preference?**
You should now have explored your strengths and development points and the things that you enjoy doing. Now you can begin to explore these concepts further by thinking about your working style in the workplace.

Think of what motivates you in the workplace. Some of this will come from the extent to which you can utilise your strengths, and some of this will come from specific aspects of the role. What motivates you in the workplace may refer to the variety of the role, gaining financial reward or having work life balance. Refer back to the motivational questionnaire that you completed to incorporate some of these thoughts.

Also think back to organisations that you have enjoyed being part of – determine what part of the culture you particularly appreciated. What most motivated you? Think in terms of company size, team size, hierarchy or specific geographical location.

**Step 5) What interests you?**
Your personal interests are important to note, especially if you are clear on the sector you want to move from, but not sure which sector you want to move to. To build a list of personal interests that can be applied to the working environment think of:

- Products, brands, messages that appeal to you and why
- Stories in the news that appeal to you and why
- Elements of previous education that appeal and why
- Events, talks, conferences whose themes interest you, interesting people and why
- Lastly think about your hobbies and why they interest you.

If there are areas of no interest to you and you know the reason(s) for this why not note them down as well? Can you see any theme developing?

Turn your attention to sectors or functions that are of interest to you. Include both those you understand and are familiar with and those that you don’t know or are unfamiliar with. Be honest with yourself; for example if a sector is not of interest to you because it is held in low esteem by your peers and that is important to you, include that here. Think about why they are of interest to you? Can you see any themes developing? Is there any interaction with the feedback from your skills and the things you enjoy?

**Step 6) Building your ideal job description**
A formal job description outlines both the main duties and responsibilities of the role, along with a person specification. You can begin to build your ideal job description by using the information you have already thought about regarding your skills, motivations and interests.

In terms of building your own job description, think about:
The Purpose of the Post / Company profile:
Include industry ideas and thoughts on company culture

Key Responsibilities: What you would be doing……
What are some of the areas / tasks that you want to be doing?

Person Specification: What skills and knowledge is required to do this……

Knowledge
What knowledge do you want to utilise?

Competencies, Skills and Abilities
What competencies / skills do you want to use?

Step 7) Researching possibilities
In terms of translating this information into understanding your real opportunities, you need to think about the research you need to do.

As you have worked through the process, you may already have had some thoughts on the career opportunities that are in alignment with this. Your step now is to do as much research as possible. You need to find out what exactly the different roles and sectors involve. Look at the match between your ideal job description and the description of these different roles and industries. What is similar? What is missing? What else do you need to know? Your research will need to include both reading material, as well as speaking to people.

• Start by thinking about the Sectors of interest that you identified earlier. Use this to begin your career search
• Look at industry guides here. You can find these through resources such as Vault or Wetfeet.
• Focus back again on your current or previous organisations – are there any roles that interested you here? Can you identify a group or department, or client or supplier’s role organisation that appealed to you?
• You might find it helpful to look at the websites of various professional associations to further explore career opportunities in these
• Ask about friend’s jobs, and any other roles or areas they might be aware of that might match your strengths or interests.
• Think about informational interviewing to clarify your understanding of the different roles. Ask the people you have identified what they do and what it involves. So, what are they paid to do in this role? What are the main requirements of the role? What are they responsible for? How is their success judged?

Step 8) Action plan
You need to start pulling all the information together to build an action plan.

So, to reflect you should have explored:
• What you are good at
• What you need to develop
• What you enjoy
• What you don’t enjoy
• What is your working style and preferences
• What you are motivated by
• What interests you
• What are your sector interests
• How your current role/organisation compares
• What is your job description
• Where to start researching opportunities

Put some key milestones in regarding:
I want to have completed my research by….
I want to have moved to my new position by….
In the next week I am going to….
In the next month I want to have achieved….