

ARTICLE: INTRODUCTION TO THE CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

THE CAREER & EDUCATION PLANNING PROCESS

Frank J. Minor, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Emeritus, Saint Anselm College, NH

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WHY CAREER PLANNING IS NECESSARY

In today's world of rapid change, transformation and progress, new career paths are constantly unfolding, traditional ones are being changed and shifts are taking place in occupation skills and educational requirements. These changes are a result of new technology, modifications in organizational design and the trend towards global business operations. With all these changes, you might ask "What is the point of planning ahead by developing a career plan?" It is important to be ready for change with a set of career goals, strategies and options based on your interests, personality, values and skills. Once you have a plan, you will be equipped to manage your career and take advantage of changes in the economy and job market rather than becoming a victim of change.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PLANNING AND MANAGING YOUR CAREER?

Planning your career is totally your responsibility. It is up to you to do the planning and take the necessary actions to obtain the education and training that will support your career plans. However, you can get help. For example, your advisor or career counselor can advise you about:

- your career planning strategy
- how to find information you need
- how to get around obstacles
- how to go about planning your current and long-term education and training

Keep in mind, throughout your life, you are the one who must make all the decisions about your career and produce the results that support your goals. It's up to you to control and navigate your own destiny.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF ASSESSMENT

Understanding yourself is a critical aspect of career and educational exploration and planning. The more you know about your career-related interests, values, skills, personality type and preferences, the better equipped you will be to identify the career fields, major areas of study and training programs, and education pathways that are compatible with your personal attributes. The FOCUS 2 system will help you develop an accurate self-assessment of your personal qualities:

- **Your Work Interests** are a reflection of the kinds of work-related activities and tasks you most enjoy doing.
- **Your Personality Type** is a description of how you react to certain situations and people and how you make decisions, organize information and solve problems.
- **Your Values** are a description of what is most important to you in life. For example, you might value earning a lot of money, helping other people, being creative and artistic, having a secure and steady job, etc.
- **Your Skills** are a reflection of your talents and the activities you easily learn and perform well.
- **Your Leisure Time Interests** are a reflection of the kinds of leisure-related activities you most enjoy doing.



THE BIG PICTURE: YOUR LIFE PLAN

It is a good idea to plan your career based on the big picture, that is, your life plan. Ask yourself, “What kind of life do I want to lead?” As you can imagine, your career decisions will dramatically impact your lifestyle. Your occupation will influence your

- income
- work hours
- travel
- job security
- colleagues and friends
- leisure time



- where you live

Questions you need to ask yourself about your life plan are:

- What principles am I committed to as a person? i.e. family, security, prestige, accomplishments.
- What kinds of experiences do I want in my life? i.e. travel, adventure, cultural.
- What personal talents do I want to develop? i.e. music, art, language, communication, intellectual.
- How do I like to spend my leisure time? i.e. community services, recreation and sports, travel.

Finally, you must ask yourself whether the occupational goals and educational avenues you are considering will be supportive of your life plan.

ROLES YOU PLAY IN YOUR LIFE

Being a worker will be interconnected with other roles you play in life. Examples of roles that are affected by your career could include being a parent, a community citizen, a student, a recreationist.

Your career reaches beyond being a wage earner in your chosen occupation. For example, consider the



following scenario: If you were a wage earner, parent, and student then clearly your income must be sufficient to pay for the expenses incurred in these other roles.

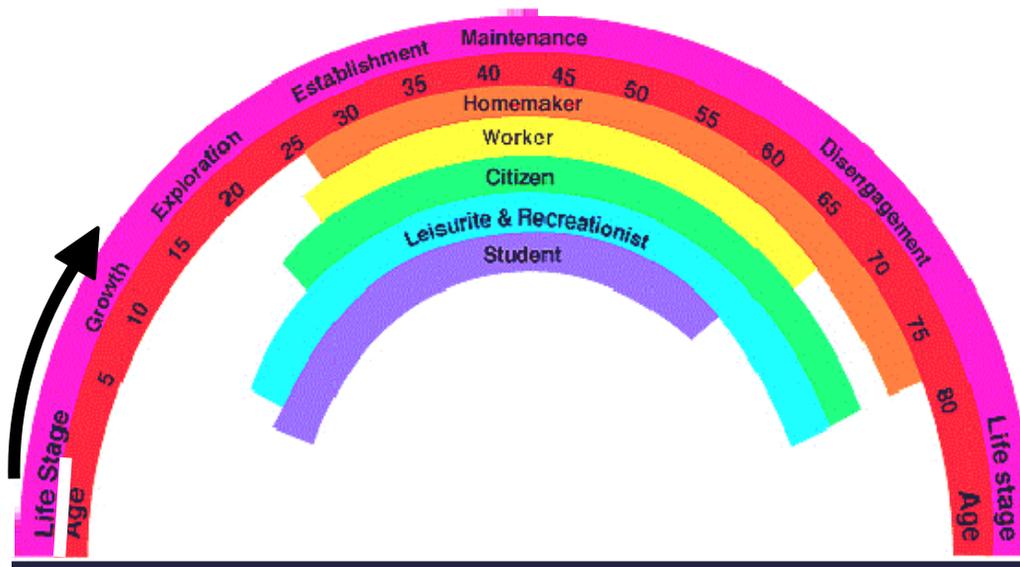
Most people are primarily involved with two or three roles at a time. Which roles you are focusing on depends upon your age and life stage. For example, in college, your principle roles may be as student and recreationist. Later in life your principle roles may be as worker and parent. The point is that throughout your life you will play a combination of work, leisure, study, homemaking and citizen roles that are intermixed. Therefore when you make

decisions about your career, you should take into consideration the effect of these career decisions on the other areas of your life.

THE LIFE-CAREER RAINBOW

Refer to the Life-Career Rainbow Chart below to get a better picture of the kind of roles you may play at various ages and stages of your career and life.

The two outer arcs of the Life-Career Rainbow show you the life stages you may move through during your career and life, and your approximate age in each. The lower arcs of the Life-Career Rainbow show you the different roles you may engage in while in different life stages and ages.



The Life - Career Rainbow

Source: Super, D. E. & Minor, F. J., (1987) *Career Development Planning in Organizations*. In B. Bass & P. Drenth (Eds.) *Advances in Organizational Psychology, International Review* (pp. 83-98) Sage Press, Beverly Hills, CA
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SUMMING IT ALL UP

Here is how to take the 'Big Picture' into consideration when making career and education plans:

First, when choosing an occupation, think about which of your options will most likely provide you with self-fulfillment in all your roles, not only in the present, but in the future.

Second, periodically re-examine your career plans, take stock of yourself and what's happening in your life, and then make adjustments in your career as needed. For example, changes in your career field may require that you learn new skills, or changes in your personal interests, values, social or family situations may affect your career aspirations.

BENEFITS OF HAVING A CAREER PLAN

Once you have established your career goals you will be better able to make choices about your college major and minor areas of study and the courses you should take. Your career goals will also enable you to make decisions about personal developmental activities while in college such as internships, volunteer work and summer jobs. Research has shown that there are many significant advantages and benefits of having career plans. College students with career plans:

- Are less likely to make costly changes in their college education plans and are more likely to graduate on time.
- Are more confident and satisfied with their choice of an occupation and major area of study.

- Achieve higher college grades because their decisions about their educational path are compatible with and based on their personal interests, values and abilities.
- Earn higher incomes in their entry jobs

While in college, it's a good idea to map out an action plan that leads you to your goals. The plan can serve as a reference that you and your advisers can monitor and adjust as needed.

SEEKING EXPERT ADVICE: CAREER COUNSELING

In conjunction with using FOCUS 2, you may want to meet with a career counselor, mentor or advisor.

Be prepared to ask questions concerning:

- Your career-related interests, values, personality and abilities.
- Your present occupational, educational and college/training goals and plans.
- Responsibilities or obstacles that are interfering with your career and college/training decision-making.
- Your life plan, life style desires and strategies to achieve your goals.



Your career advisor can give you ideas and information to help you:

- Verify the rationale of your career decisions and education plans.
- Help you develop your long-term educational path.
- Pinpoint your personal development needs that will help you to achieve your goals.
- Suggest ways to get around any obstacles that are interfering with your decision-making and planning.
- Formulate strategies and action plans to achieve your career and educational objectives.

Career Planning is a lifelong process of exploration and planning of your career and educational goals compatible with your interests, values, talents, personality and aspirations. Career planning involves thinking about which educational and occupational paths will provide you with satisfaction and fulfillment in all aspects of your life, present and future.