

Career Coaching International

190 Bronson Ave., Suite 200, Ottawa, ON, K1R 6H4 Fax (613) 233-1805 (613) 233-0010 www.ccinternational.ca

How to Plan Your Career

CCI Newsletter: September 2006

The Eleven-Step Process

At CCI we have found that planning a career involves a predictable pattern. No matter whether you plan a career on your own or with the assistance of a career coaching firm, we believe you must take the following eleven discrete steps, which involve:

- Discovering who you are
- Creating a life story that tells the full picture of who you are
- Describing succinctly who you are
- Defining what you want that will make you happy
- Learning how to find the job you want
- Creating a plan or market campaign
- Finding what you want
- Negotiating the best deal for you
- Keeping objectivity on the job
- Planning for new horizons within your existing company
- Planning and searching for new horizons outside of your existing company

Usually, eight of those steps are performed in the short term, whereas the remaining three steps have a long-term significance to them.

A. The Short-Term Plan

By short term, we mean a program entailing about three to four months' time for most people¹, the time that it takes to define and obtain a desirable position with a desirable employer. Now let's look at each of those first eight steps.

¹ At CCI, most people obtain their 'dream' job in three to four months. One month involves laying out the ground work and two to three months of search and finalizing the job. At the extremes, some people find the job search portion takes five days while for others it could take five months. Some people work with a career coach once a week; those who work with the coach twice a week usually cut the time in half.

1. Discovering Who You Are

If you don't know who you really are, how can you tell a prospective employer about you? How can you even know which kind of job will suit you? Answer: you can't. That is why 47% of new hires leave their jobs within 12 to 18 months of the start, even though they were eminently qualified for the position – having won the position over heavy competition. That is why you may often get the feeling at the interview that 'this interviewer has no idea of who I really am'. To discover who you are, you need to perform some psychological testing of yourself; AND THEN CONFIRM THAT IT IS RIGHT. Armed that way, you know if you need to be in a job where activity and urgency are key or where patience and people concerns are paramount or where detail and caution are essential or where ideas and creativity are the drivers. Some of those are you. Some are not. You must go for the jobs that cater to those personal traits AND STAY AWAY FROM THE JOBS THAT DO NOT. Notice that we have not even talked about your skills yet. Having discovered who you are, or at least having articulated who you are, how do you tell others about it – without boasting? Simply go to step 2.

2. Creating a Life Story that Tells the Full Picture of Who You Are

Next, you need to toss that traditional resume out of the window as quickly as possible. It is a boring laundry list that exhausts the resume readers as much as it pains you to write it. Inject life into the resume so that it displays the personality traits and strong points of you discovered in step one above, using facts, proofs, understatement, yet excitement. Keep this portion to one page and attach the laundry list as page two. That's it: a two-page resume that should take around 15 hours to prepare – if you are to get to the root of who you really are. Such a resume will serve you forever. Future job changes will only

affect a small part of the laundry list of page two.

3. Describing Succinctly Who You Are

With the hard work of the resume now in place and your own understanding of your personal drivers, summarize the picture of yourself with a one-paragraph biography, describing what you want and who you are. Done properly it will entice anyone who would be interested in you and will drive away anyone who should not be (thank goodness).

To go with the bio, create a single sentence that captures the essence of you – like the tag line for Coke: “The pause that refreshes” or Nike: “Just do it”. The simple phrase speaks volumes to the reader or listener and allows you to paint a brief picture of the essence of who you are on that 3-story elevator ride with a stranger.

4. Defining What You Want that Will Make You Happy

With a grasp of who you are, and of what you can do, define the ideal position for you. Now, focus your efforts towards it. Be so clear that any prospective employer knows exactly what you are after. Avoid being all things to all people. It will leave readers confused and skeptical about you. Avoid making compromises. If at this stage you find such defining difficult, take the time to create a personal mission statement, articulating your purpose in life, your vision of where and what you ultimately want out of life as well as the values you will hold dear as you pursue them (such as honesty, directness, integrity – whatever appeal to you personally).

5. Learning How to Find the Job you Want

Job searching is NOT about sending your resume to an advertised position where dozens of others will be equally qualified. That is playing the losing lottery game. Only the casinos win (read employers) and you lose. Avoid this at all costs. Nor is job searching about aimlessly networking. It is about purposeful, non-offensive networking; it is about having a clear method with proven

statistical probability of you connecting to your dream job. Enroll in a proven program to learn these steps that anybody can employ or learn them from a friend who has been there (successfully). Your job-finding odds will increase about 200 times with this handy capability in your back pocket.

6. Creating a Plan or Market Campaign

Take the above five steps and commit them to paper. Then develop a checklist to guide you as you set about a well-defined job search program, delving into the statistical probability of the unseen job market² with your success assured by chaos theory³ and your own confidence in your newly defined self.

7. Finding what You Want

Begin setting up meetings of people from all walks of life, interviewing them (rather than the other way around), discover what is going on out there in the world that is of interest to you. DO NOT LOOK OVERTLY FOR A JOB. This connection process will often lead to an unexpected and unpredictable opportunity – although you will never know where or when in advance. The success in this finding process is determined by chaos theory (like the ‘coincidence’ of meeting someone you know when you travel to another part of the world) and is often manifested by the phrase ‘six degrees of separation’. That is there are only six connections between where you are today and the ideal job that you want. (Test: look at a past successful job search. How many different people did you have to link in a chain to find it?⁴)

8. Negotiating the Best Deal for You

² The ‘unseen’ job market holds 70% of available jobs, has a fairly short time window and in sheer numbers involve about 150 new openings per day in the Ottawa region.

³ Chaos theory is anything but chaotic. It is a simple means to arrive at an elegant solution (a job in this case). The human embryo evolves into a breathing living, amazing creature, as governed by chaos theory.

⁴ It probably will take not more than six, usually a lot less.

Step seven above will often lead you not to one, but to two to four great opportunities all arising at nearly the same time. (Chaos theory again: it explains why at some time when hailing a cab there are none and at other times four or five taxis arrive within the same few minutes.) Having found someone who adores your natural talents is finding an employer who really wants to have you. You will never be in a better negotiating position. This is the time to carefully work the negotiations for the salary and benefits that you want and that the employer has available for you (secretly kept away from your prying enquiries, mind you). Simple methods usable by common folk lie at your beck and call as you turn the tables on the employer to have an exposé of what benefits really are available for you. Most people using these techniques get \$5 to \$10k more than they would otherwise have expected.

B. The Long-Term Plan

As we have stated, there is now a longer perspective to the career plan. Tune in to the next issue of this newsletter to get the final word on “How to Plan your Career”.

Bill Caswell