



## Top Tips

# Career Management

### Planning your future career

Many books on managing your career concentrate on planning out where you want to be and how you intend to get there. Fewer answer the question on how to get the best from your efforts, and this can leave you with the idea that you 'only get on if your face fits'.

There are four main headings to work at:

- Knowing yourself
- Knowing what you want
- Developing and using the skills required to get what you want
- Displaying the personal qualities and behaviours needed to contribute to your success

### Knowing yourself

Some key questions to ask yourself are:

- **What kind of person am I?** You may be able to describe yourself, but can you do so accurately? What do other people say about you?
- **What have I achieved so far?** Quantify this by adding numbers to your achievements wherever possible.
- **What are my strengths and key skills?** What are you good at doing? What else could you do?

There are many personality tests and questionnaires available, some of which may give you a clue about yourself, or the kind of role you would prefer, or your skills. These include Strengthsfinder, DISC profile, MBTI (Myers Briggs), and OPQ (Occupational Personality Questionnaire) as well as other self-check type questionnaires. Some of these require to be administered by a qualified person, others are freely available for you to complete and interpret yourself. It could also be worthwhile doing a 'Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats' (SWOT) analysis on yourself.

### Knowing what you want

'If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you've got there?' Find out what you can do; look at the range of options available to you, and look at the restrictions you impose on yourself:

- **Will I commute?** How far / for how long?
- **Will I work unsocial hours or weekends?** Evenings? Bank holidays?
- **What commitments do I have** outside work?
- **Could I move home?** etc

Work out what your goal is and concentrate on this goal; accept other options only as stepping stones on the way, if they will help you get there. However, be prepared

to revise or adapt your goal if the playing field should change, for example if a career option you have identified ceases to exist.

## Develop skills

Some of the most essential skills are:

- **Communication**
- **Problem-solving**
- **Decision-making**
- **Listening**
- **Questioning**
- **Motivating others**
- **Time management**
- **Stress management**

There will of course be others depending on your goal, and there are many other resources available to help you acquire these skills.

## Personal qualities and behaviours

Again, there will be many useful behaviours to adopt; some of the key ones are:

- **Enthusiasm** – being enthusiastic and showing it
- **Innovation** – being creative, support change positively
- **Show willing** – people like to appoint helpful people
- **Be positive** – do this consistently but sensitively
- **Work smart** – this includes **working hard** but being effective
- **Present yourself well** – impress people
- **Market yourself effectively** – network constantly and efficiently
- **Be ambitious** – but realistic
- **Be courageous** – take calculated risks where appropriate
- **Be assertive** – but not aggressive
- **Be resilient** – bounce back after a setback, keep looking forward
- **Seek and accept feedback** on your performance and style
- **Be commercial** – realise the impact of your decisions and actions
- **Develop yourself continually** – change ahead of the job needs

All these personal qualities will make you much more marketable, with consequent benefit to your career plans.

# Top Tips

**For related topics see Top Tips:**

- **Influencing**
- **Networking**