

A Strategic Plan For Your Career

Goals & Objectives:

- ❑ To perform an analysis of yourself and your career aspirations
- ❑ To realize your professional abilities – where you are and where you want to be
- ❑ To develop your own personalized strategic plan for your career

Outline:

- ❑ Where Are You?
- ❑ Mission and Vision
- ❑ Goals, Objectives and Action Items
- ❑ Self Analysis – SWOT Analysis
- ❑ Critical Success Factors
- ❑ Your Personalized Plan
- ❑ Executive Summary

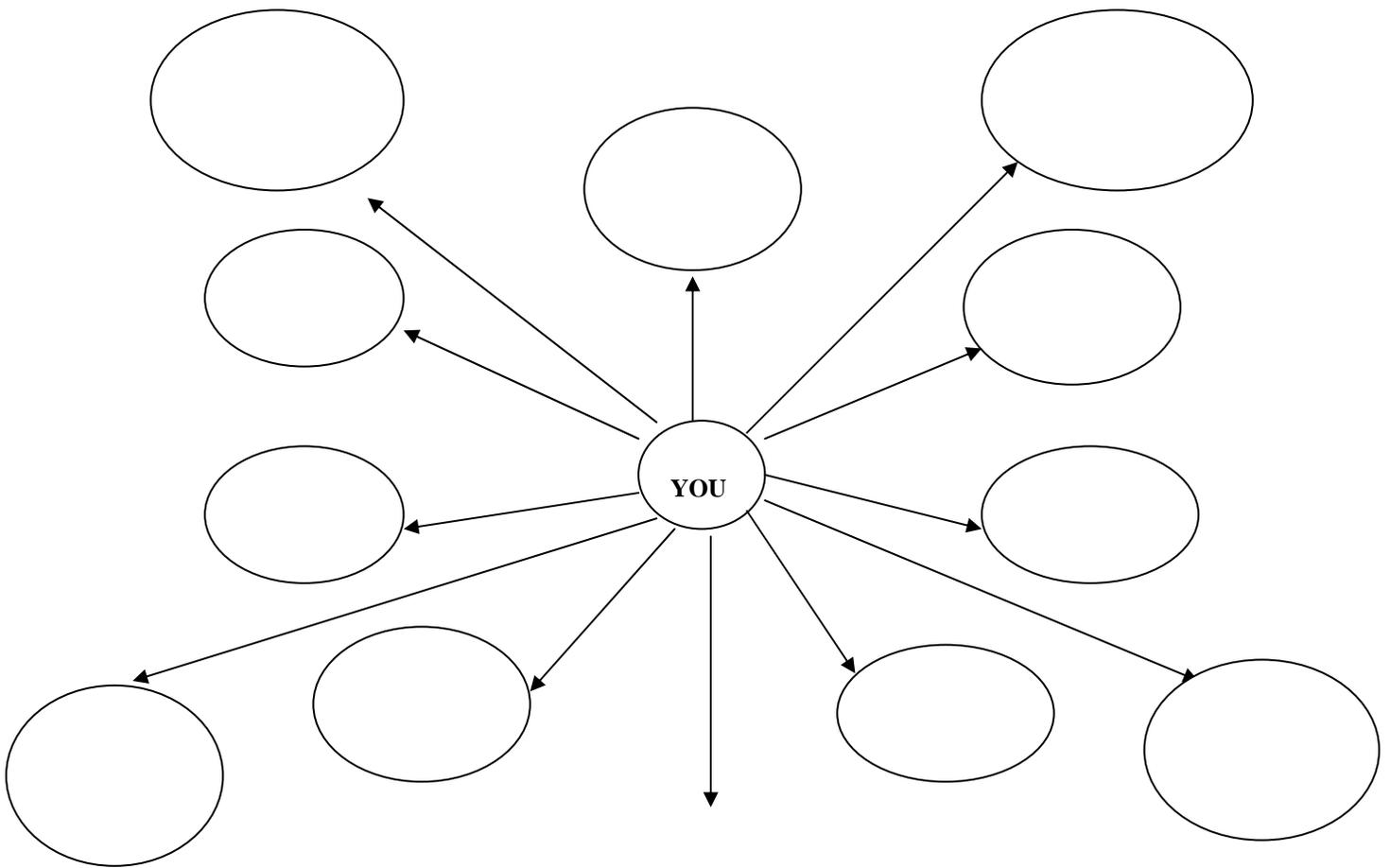
Where Are You?

Do you know where you are in your career? What are your future career aspirations – whether it involves your current position or a totally new position? Are you happy in your current career and looking for more challenges within your career?

These are some of the questions that we all encounter in our work lives at various times. Yogi Berra made a very powerful statement when he said: “You’ve got to be careful if you don’t know where you’re going because you might not get there.”

When you begin the quest of searching for a new job or taking steps to further your existing career, there are many factors that should go into that decision. What will the impact be on your family, your finances, and your personal life? Your life is not compartmentalized. Everything contributes to your individual success and happiness. You must analyze your current situation and ask yourself some serious questions. If you are abandoning a career because it is not moving in the direction you want or because you have been downsized, you need to make a decision on your new career but involve all those around you for support, both emotional and financial. If you are locked in a position because of tenure and are afraid of starting over because you would lose your tenure, then this should be discussed with those closest to you. Additionally, if you are in a very successful career, making a lot of money and you abandon this career for a simpler way of life, you still need to involve those around you because your decision impacts them as well.¹

EXERCISE #1: Complete the bubble chart below. Place yourself in the center and list all those individuals that could be impacted by any career decision you make.



Before we begin everything in our lives or careers, we should have a plan of action. Before a contractor begins to build a home, a plan is needed for the size of the lot needed to fit the home, the blueprints of the home for the carpenters to follow, and a financial plan to present to the bank for backing. Football players study a game book with a series of field plays that will bring them success against their opponents. To maintain our personal finances and household budgets, we must have a well-defined plan to follow for investments, children's education, and retirement.

Why do we not have a plan that we can follow to help us meet our goals and aspirations for a lifetime career?² ***You are not alone – we all go through this during our careers.*** A question is asked of all children and was, at some point, asked of us by others: "What do you want to be when you grow up"? "What do you want to do with the rest of your life"? Children dream at an early age of being a doctor or astronaut or teacher or fireman. Teenagers must give these questions more serious thought as they prepare for college.

“What do I major in”? Once we have made this decision, do we think ahead of what the career has to offer? Do we realize that we have opportunities within this career and are continuously striving to meet new challenges as we get older? We need a working plan, with short- and long-term goals, to fit our career choice and all that it has to offer. By writing this plan, you will gain a better understanding of your career and all the challenges and opportunities that you can pursue as you grow personally and professionally.³

Mission and Vision

The first step is to identify the mission and vision for your career. A mission statement should be clear and concise. This statement should be one sentence filled with action verbs and it should be easy to recite verbatim. If you cannot recite your mission statement at a moment’s notice, then it is a very high likelihood that you will not follow it.

Your mission should contain the following aspects:

- The accomplishments you wish to achieve
- The cause or group you wish to serve (it could be yourself or your family)
- The mission statement should be supportive of your current employer’s mission if you are trying to advance your career within your current place of employment
- The mission should be clear, concise and informative^{4,5}

List 3 action verbs and form the verbiage around these words. For example, 3 words could be: improve, explore, and implement. From here, develop the statement that best fits the points listed above. Your mission should paint a picture of what you are all about and what you want to accomplish.

Using the action verbs listed above, a sample mission statement may be: “My mission is to improve my clinical and technical skills, explore educational opportunities and implement that learning in my current position”.

EXERCISE #2: In the space provided, enter in your action words and your mission statement.

<p>ACTION VERBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____

<p>MISSION STATEMENT:</p>

The next step in the process of developing a strategic plan for your career is the vision statement. This statement is an extension of the mission statement because it tells everyone where you want to go in your career and what you want to become. This statement points you in the direction of the future by describing your hopes and dreams. The vision does point to the future and should be a statement that is not easily changed unless there is a major life-altering or career altering experience. The vision should allow ample time for you to meet your dreams.

Your vision statement should include the following aspects:

- The vision describes where you want to go and what you want to become
- The vision should be achievable and grounded in reality
- The vision should last for at least a decade to allow ample time for success ^{4,6}

Keeping in stride with our mission statement, a sample vision might be: “My vision is to advance within the nuclear medicine profession, either clinically, academically or within industry, with a focus in skill enhancement for myself and others and ultimately leading to a management position”.

EXERCISE #3: In the space provided, enter in your vision statement.

<p>VISION STATEMENT:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Goals, Objectives and Action Items

Once you have the mission and vision for your career, you must establish a list of goals and objectives that will assist you in staying on course for success. Goals are the broad results that you are absolutely committed to achieving. Goals dictate your decisions and choices in making your dreams come true. On the other hand, objectives are statements that relate to your goals by providing the description of what must be done and by what

time. Objectives are your roadmap or set of milestones that can be achieved at certain time intervals. By “checking off” your objectives, you will realize your dreams becoming closer to reality.^{2,3,6}

For each goal that you are striving to achieve, there should be a set of action items to support it. Again, this will enable you to chart your course for efficiency and effectiveness. Your goals should be identified in the short term and long term. In following the vision identified earlier, your goal may ultimately be a management position. Your short-term goal may be to work toward your MBA. The action items would revolve around taking courses to complete the degree. Additionally, you may seek out a manager that you respect and ask them to be your mentor. Every step along your career should be mapped out for you to realize your accomplishments at each stage and envision your ultimate goal. Remember, short-term goals run between 1-5 years. In contrast, long-term goals may take you 5-10 years to complete. Dreams are not static - they are dynamic. Goals should motivate not discourage, so keep your goals realistic. Learning and professional development / growth last a lifetime!

Exercise #4: By completing the following chart, you will be able to link your goals and objectives into your overall career plan.

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME
Be financially secure	Obtain a higher education	Register for courses	0 – 5 years

If you reviewed the example given, you saw that your **goal** was to achieve financial security. To achieve this, you must consider several factors. Your **objective** would be to complete and/or receive a higher degree. To accomplish this, the **action items** to be taken include the need for you to register and take courses to achieve your goal. You

may register for classes immediately but the **time frame** for your ultimate goal of financial security may be obtained within 5 years.

Self Analysis - SWOT Analysis

As you are developing your plan, a crucial part of the plan is in knowing who you are and where you want to be. Although your goals may be lofty, yet achievable, you need to do a complete analysis of yourself and, honesty is needed for this to be a successful evaluation. You need to make a complete list of your **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities** and **Threats**. This is the reason why honesty is a must!

S – Strengths

W – Weaknesses

O – Opportunities

T - Threats

Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors reflecting who you are – all that you have accomplished and all that you need to overcome. On the other hand, opportunities and threats are external factors and reflect the obstacles that must be overcome for you to succeed and/or the possibilities that are available for you to succeed. Constant reflection on these points will motivate and provide the needed energy to keep you moving forward and develop professionally. Having all this information spelled out will allow you to see the big picture and keep your goals in focus. ^{5,7} ***This is your self analysis.*** The self / SWOT analysis is a living document that should be referenced frequently and updated as another skill is gained or another event has occurred which caused a minor setback. Setbacks are a fact of life but should not be a reason for quitting. There is a saying, “The only place that failure is found before success is in the dictionary” (Anonymous)

EXERCISE #5: Complete the following chart with your self / SWOT analysis.

STRENGTHS – personal realities that will help you achieve your goals	WEAKNESSES – personal realities that will make it more difficult to achieve your goals
OPPORTUNITIES – outside events, conditions or plans that might create opportunities for your goals	THREATS – outside events, conditions or plans that might threaten your goals

Your Personalized Plan

We are now getting down to the home stretch of creating a strategic plan for your career. A major part of your plan should be a story about you – your resume. This should include those items that you have already accomplished and those items that you are still working on. You may have already identified where you are now and where you want to be in the future. You may have listed your goals and objectives. You may have established an action plan listing all that you are doing to meet your goals. You may have completed the self / SWOT analysis, which outlines your strengths and how you may have overcome the weaknesses – taken advantage of some opportunities and may overcome the barriers or threats, which impeded your progress. You may have listed the critical success factors, which have allowed you to progress to this point.

All these important aspects of your plan should be included in your resume. This document will demonstrate the effort that was placed on your part to develop professionally and will show the talent and ability you now possess to be an asset to any organization. An exercise to motivate you should be to develop a resume now and after you have accomplished each short-term goal, update your resume and you will be amazed at how far you have progressed and developed.

The following outlines the items that should be included in your strategic career plan:

- Executive summary
- Mission and Vision statements
- Goals, Objectives and Action Items
- Self / SWOT analysis
- Critical Success Factors
- Resume

Executive Summary

The executive summary is an overview of your plan. If someone were to look at your plan or if you were to share it with a mentor, the executive summary provides the reader with all the information that is in your plan in a condensed form. You should include an executive summary even though you know your plan better than anyone. In this way, the reader will quickly be able to ask you about your goals and objectives without having to flip through pages of information. It is not that the reader is not interested in reading more of your plan, but it allows you an opportunity to provide enough scintillating information for the reader to want to read your plan.^{3,7}

Your summary should be informative, yet concise. You should write your executive summary after you have completed your plan so you can go back and extract out the highlights that would draw the reader to want to read more.

As you interview for new positions, you can bring along your strategic plan. This will not only impress the interviewer, but it will demonstrate that you are serious, motivated, focused and the ideal candidate for the position! It is to your advantage to sell yourself. You have worked hard to achieve your goals and who better to tell your story to a future employer than YOU.

Good luck and much success!

References:

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