THREE STEPS OF CAREER PLANNING

This is a kind of map of the core elements of career planning. They are set out in step-wise fashion, but are not necessarily linear in progression. For any one person’s career development there is feedback between the steps, regression back through the steps, steps skipped and revisited later, etc. But good career planning involved elements of all three steps in some way and at some time.

Step 1: Self assessment
This answers the question “What do I want?”

There are several variables that go into answering this question well.

- Values: What’s important to you? What’s worth spending 40 hours a well working on? What’s worth getting up in morning for? Where do you want to make your contribution in your life? What do you want to be remembered for? In some ways this is the most important question to answer.

- Interests: These are the best predictor of career satisfaction. What kind of stuff do you naturally want to know more about or get more involved in? What kind of books do you read? What magazines do you subscribe to? What do you do in your time off? The SII can help with this one, and it will be a large part of making your decision about a college major.

- Personality: Most people want a job that fits their personality. Are you a people person who wants to work side by side with others, interacting with other during most of your work time? Or would you prefer your own office, an assistant to answer your phone, and quiet time to work on projects for most of your time at work? The MBTI can help with his one.

- Skills: Where are your talents? What are you naturally good at? What skills do you want to develop through your work? What are you limitations? Usually, if we're interested enough in something, we have the drive to develop the skills we need to support those interests, but not always. Many students passionately interested in medicine just can't pass OChem. You need to know your strengths and weaknesses to find a major and subsequently get a job that lets you shine.

- Lifestyle requirements: These are the pragmatics. What is the minimum amount of money you need to make to break even? Do you geographical limitations? Do you want to be home when your kids get home from school, so need to work part time? Is your partner going to relocated frequent, so you need a job that allows for mobility? Do you want to work overseas? These all get folded into the general category of what you want.

- Checklist of criteria: Once you’ve considered all the above, you should create a “Checklist of criteria.” This is a sort of outline of your ideal job, and will be useful in steps 2 and 3.

Step 2: Career Exploration
This answers the question “What’s out the there for me?”

Everyone – no exception – would like someone else to figure this out for them. We do our checklist then start looking around for some expert or computer or test into which we can dump all our criteria and come out with the perfect job title. Sadly, it doesn't work this way. Each of
us will have to spend a good chunk of time exploring the world of work to come up with some ideas of where is a good fit.

- Library research: Our CRR has a wealth of information on careers that often interest UCSB students. Any library will also have in-depth info on a wide range of careers. Library research is a good starting place.

- On-line research: This is the easiest way to get tons of information about different jobs. You have to sort through a lot of junk to get to the good stuff, but the web can be invaluable. Some good starting places are CHOICES in our CRR and the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook: http://stats.bls.gov/ocoshome.htm

- Information Interviews: The best way to find out about a career is to talk to someone in it. This is called doing an information interview, and is hugely valuable in getting an idea of what the day to day life is like in a particular career. For tips on conducting Information Interviews, see our Career Manual.

- Internships/Part-time/Seasonal jobs: Actually working a job is the final test of whether or not you’d like it. In many cases you can find part time or seasonal positions or internships that will give you taste of a particular field you are interested in. While you won’t be able to be a part-time lawyer, you could work in a law office or find a volunteer position at the court house and get a chance to see lawyers at work in their environment. This could really help in your decision process.

Step 3 – Job search
This answers the question “How do I get there?”

The core elements of a job search include;

- Networking: Getting connected with professional associations, local groups, and professionals in your field.

- Job Search Strategies: Pound the pavement, send out resumes, search for jobs on-line, talk to friends to see if they can hook you up. Finding the “hidden job market” is the key to a good job search.

- Résumé writing: You need to get together a résumé and cover letter so you’re ready to apply when you find openings.

- Interview skills: This is the last step – doing a good job interview. Interviews skills are just that – skills that can be learned. Make it your business to learn them and be able to present your self well in the interview.

- Negotiating skills: Once offered a job, you should be able to handle the negotiations for closing the deal. Knowing what you want, what you’d like but can be flexible about and how to talk this over confidently with your prospective employer is an invaluable asset in getting the job you want.