## LWR Guide To

# Planning Your Career



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## THE VALUE OF CAREER PLANNING

#### What is a Career Plan?

A career plan is a dynamic strategy that evolves with you as you move through your life as a professional. While your goals and priorities might change over time, having a comprehensive career plan can help you to retain your focus and accomplish more in the professional world.

Successful career planning gives you a compass to work with, whether you're trying to decide whether to move into a new job or sub-sector of or looking for ways to develop your skillset.

#### With the right career plan, you can ensure you:

• **Pursue your passions:** Evaluating your career goals and values ensures you can focus on actively pursuing work that's meaningful to you. Around 9 out of 10 employees, today say finding meaning in their work is more important than earning a huge salary. If you're passionate about what you do, you're more likely to be happy at work.

•Leverage your strengths: Studies from Gallup show people who tap into their strengths at work are 6 times more likely to feel engaged. With career planning, you can identify your strengths and weaknesses, and ensure you're pursuing roles that leverage your abilities. This can lead to greater workplace satisfaction.

• Guide your decisions: In a skills-short marketplace, employees are likely to face numerous job offers and counteroffers. Without a clear career plan, it can be difficult to decide what your next move should be. Your vision of your future will help you to make decisions that make sense for you as a professional.

• **Build your confidence:** Having a clear vision of the future significantly improves your confidence and self-esteem. It gives you a way to validate your decisions and rest assured you're always moving in the right direction. You can be more intentional with your work strategies, your training, and your job decisions.

# THE STEPS 1. SELF EVALUATION

Begin your career planning journey with a comprehensive self-assessment to gain a deep understanding of your own capabilities, preferences, and values. This stage is crucial in aligning your career choices with your true self:

• **Personality Assessment**: Utilize tools like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or the Big Five Personality Traits to uncover insights into your natural tendencies, communication styles, and work preferences. Understanding how you interact with the world and your colleagues is key

•Value assessments: These assessments look at the value you place on your work, by considering factors like salary level and benefits, but also your contribution to the industry, and the meaning you find in your role.

•Interest assessments: Here, you'll look at your interests, and passions. Ask yourself what you enjoy most about your current job, what you'd like to do more of, and what you dislike. If you could change everything about your role, what would you alter?

•Aptitude assessments: Consider your abilities and strengths. Ask yourself where you think you thrive in your current role, and where you might need additional training. Do your responsibilities align with your capabilities, or do you constantly find yourself struggling to reach your goals?

•**Opportunity assessments:** What kind of opportunities exist in your industry for someone with your skills and knowledge? What kind of roles appeal to you, based on the responsibilities you'll have, and the tasks you'll need to complete?

• Strengths and Weaknesses: Identify your strengths and areas for improvement. Leverage assessments like the StrengthsFinder to pinpoint your natural talents. This knowledge empowers you to focus on roles that align with your strengths and develop strategies to address weaknesses.

• Interests and Passions: Reflect on your hobbies, activities, and topics that genuinely excite you. Consider how these interests could translate into a fulfilling career. A career that aligns with your passions is more likely to bring satisfaction and motivation.

• Values and Beliefs: Determine your core values and ethical principles. Consider what matters most to you in a work environment, such as work-life balance, collaboration, or contributing to a cause. Aligning your career with your values promotes a sense of purpose.

• Skills Inventory: Take stock of your existing skills, both technical and soft. Identify transferable skills that can be applied across different industries. Recognize any gaps that need to be addressed through further education or training.



## 2. DEFINE YOUR GOALS

Once you have a clear understanding of yourself, establish clear and achievable career goals:

Pursuing your desired career path can take a number of years, and require many different steps. To effectively monitor and guide your progress, you need to ensure your goals are precise and insightful. Setting SMART goals will help you to achieve the right results. This means ensuring every goal you set (both long-term and short-term), is:

• **Specific:** Be detailed about what your goal is. Don't just say you want a higher paying job. Define what that role is, and what your salary requirements are.

• **Measurable:** Choose goals you can quantify. For instance, if you want to move into a leadership role, you might first need to earn three years of experience in a lower-level position, working on a certain number of leadership projects.

• Attainable: Set goals you can reasonably achieve. If you're just getting started in an entrylevel position, it's probably not realistic to set the goal of getting a manager job offer within the next 3 months.

• **Relevant:** Think about how each smaller or "sub-goal" on the path to your larger goals contributes to your success. Setting a goal to work extra overtime in your current position may not be relevant if your long-term goal is to move to another company.

• Time-based: Deadlines can help to keep us motivated and focused. Don't just say you're going to get a certification to improve your chances of a new job. Decide exactly when you're going to start training, and when your education should be complete. It's also worth thinking about how you can align your goals with organisational objectives, both with the company you're working with now, and any businesses you want to work with in the future. Aligning your own personal goals with the needs of the business can make you more valuable to current and future employers.

To ensure your goals align with organisational objectives, start by learning as much as you can about the priorities and values of your company. For instance, if the main goal of your current employer is to increase revenue and productivity, you could invest in personal development strategies that will help you to become more efficient and valuable in your role.

Identifying areas of alignment between your goals and the needs of your business is a great way to ensure your employer will support you on your development path. If you can show your employer or manager that your goals benefit the business, they'll be more likely to assist you in reaching them. Some may even offer workplace training to help you.

### **3. RESEARCH AND EXPLORE**

With a solid foundation of self-awareness, embark on researching and exploring potential career paths:

#### **Industry Exploration:**

Start by identifying industries that resonate with your interests, skills, and values. Consider the following factors:

Growth Potential: Look for industries that are projected to experience growth in the coming years. This could be due to technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, or other market trends.

Stability: Consider the stability of the industry, especially during economic downturns. Some industries are more recession-resistant than others.

Job Opportunities: Research the demand for jobs within the industry. Are there ample job openings, or is it a highly competitive field?

Innovation: Explore industries that align with your passion for innovation and change. These industries often offer opportunities for creativity and problem-solving.

#### Job Roles:

Once you've identified potential industries, delve into specific job roles within those industries.

Responsibilities: Understand the typical tasks and responsibilities associated with each job role. This will give you a clearer picture of what your dayto-day work might look like.

Qualifications: Identify the educational and experiential qualifications required for each role. Do you meet these qualifications, or are there additional skills you need to develop?

Career Progression: Research the potential career trajectory for each role. Some positions offer a clear path for advancement, while others may require lateral moves to climb the career ladder.

#### **Company Culture:**

Researching a company's culture is essential to finding a workplace that aligns with your values and preferences.

Mission and Values: Understand the company's mission statement and core values. Do they resonate with your personal beliefs? A strong alignment can contribute to a more fulfilling work experience.

Work-Life Balance: Look for companies that prioritize work-life balance and employee wellbeing. This can significantly impact your job satisfaction.

Diversity and Inclusion: Investigate the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion. A diverse and inclusive workplace can provide a more enriching environment.

#### Networking:

Building a professional network is crucial for gaining insights and discovering potential opportunities.

Networking Events: Attend industry conferences, seminars, and workshops. These events provide a platform to connect with professionals and learn about industry trends.

Webinars and Online Forums: Participate in webinars and online discussions related to your chosen industries. These virtual interactions can help you connect with experts and peers.

#### Informational Interviews:

Conducting informational interviews with professionals in your desired fields can offer valuable insights.

Remember that this research and exploration process is not linear. As you learn more about different industries and roles, your interests and preferences might evolve. Stay open to new opportunities and continuously update your understanding as you gather more information.

## **4. SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

Often, progressing towards your career goals means investing in developing new skills and capabilities that will prepare you for different positions. Much of a successful career plan revolves around constant learning and development. However, before you can start building new skills, you first need to identify the gaps in your current abilities. Start by:

#### Defining your core skills

First, you need an in-depth knowledge of your current skills, and how they align with your specific career and goals. Look at your CV/resume and ask yourself what kind of certifications you've already earned, what experience you have, and where your strengths lie.

Think about your past achievements and accomplishments, and which skills or capabilities have helped you to reach your targets over the years. If you're struggling to define your most important skills or traits, asking for feedback from friends and colleagues can be helpful. Your team members, as well as other people who know you well, will be able to help you see both the soft and hard skills you can offer employers in the industry.

#### Examine Job Descriptions For The Positions You Want

Examine job descriptions for positions you want Once you have a clear idea of your current skills and abilities, it's time to look at the job descriptions for the positions you want to pursue. Look at job listings for your dream role, and ask yourself what skills, attributes, and experience are required.

Pay attention to both soft skills and hard (technical) skills listed by companies. Keep in mind, the exact requirements of different organisations might vary.

It's worth paying close attention to the requirements listed by the companies you're most interested in working for.

If you're struggling to find useful job descriptions, you can speak to a [sector] recruitment agency. They should be able to give you a basic idea of the skills you'll need for a specific role.

#### **Creating a Professional Development Plan**

With your current resume/CV and a job description for the role you want side by side, start defining the gaps you'll need to fill to reach your goals. Pay attention to everything from specific competencies required by employers, such as conflict management and negotiation. It's also worth thinking about the experience you'll need to cultivate before you can start applying for higher-level jobs in your industry. Some companies require leadership-level employees to have a number of years of experience working in complementary roles before they move into a managerial position. When creating your professional development plan, you'll likely need to focus on two specific areas: soft skills, and hard skills.

Ask us for a Career Development Plan proforma

#### **Defining Relevant Soft Skills**

Soft skills are the interpersonal and peoplefocused skills that help you to thrive in virtually any job. They're the non-technical skills that determine how well you work as part of a team, collaborate with others, and even lead colleagues to victory.

The chances are you'll have some relevant soft skills already, but you may need to cultivate additional abilities to make yourself more appealing to future employers. Some of the most valuable soft skills you may need to work on include:

- Written and verbal communication
- Time management and organisation
- Conflict resolution and problem solving
- Leadership skills
- Adaptability
- Creativity and innovation
- Negotiation and persuasion

#### **Defining Crucial Hard Skills**

Hard skills, or technical skills are the more quantifiable, teachable skills employers require you to have in specific roles. They include technical abilities and expertise that will influence your ability to complete day-to-day tasks in your position.

Examples of hard skills can include everything from accounting and financial knowledge, to data analysis, computer programming or software knowledge, and foreign language fluency. Many of these skills will be obtained through educational programs when you're pursuing degrees or certifications in your industry. However, some employers will be willing to provide training on specific hard skills to employees when they join the team too.

#### How to Develop Your Skill Set

There are various ways you can build both soft and hard skills relevant to the role you want to pursue. Options range from traditional learning opportunities to more collaborative solutions like mentorship and buddy programs. Here are just some of the best ways to start working on your skillset:

• Pursue an industry degree: A degree from a reputable educational facility is one of the best ways to validate your technical skills in the space. Ask yourself what kind of degrees and qualifications are listed on the job descriptions you've looked at, to decide what sort of education might be right for you.

• Courses and training programs: Alongside traditional degrees, you could also consider earning certifications from both online and offline training programs. These resources can help you to develop both technical skills and soft skills. For instance, you might take a leadership course to help you become a more effective manager.

• Company training: Some organisations in the industry provide access to specific training resources and educational tools for their employees. Finding out whether your company holds any workshops or courses can be a great way to expand your skillset. Plus, it shows your employer you're committed to becoming a more valuable asset. • Mentorship: Finding an industry mentor is an excellent way to improve both your hard and soft skills at the same time. You can choose to request mentorship from someone in your existing business or look for a professional outside of your organisation. A professional mentor will be able to provide guidance and feedback throughout your career.

• Educational resources: In the digital world, there are plenty of amazing educational resources available online, from webinars and online courses to eBooks and guides. Even following an industry podcast, or reading blogs from a thought leader can help you to build your knowledge of the industry.

#### Commit to Continuous Learning and Growth

As mentioned above, successfully achieving your career goals requires constant effort and focus. Often, people spend years gradually working towards their professional targets. With this in mind, it's worth ensuring you're pursuing your career plan with the right attitude. Start by assessing your mindset. Switching from a "fixed" mindset to a growth mindset can help you to accomplish a lot more in your role. With a growth mindset, you believe that you can constantly develop and evolve your knowledge and skills. You don't see failures as a problem but as an opportunity to improve.

A growth mindset encourages you to constantly seek out new opportunities for development, whether it's enrolling in an online course, or reading industry publications. This approach will ensure you're constantly moving in the right direction.

## **5. BUILD A NETWORK**

Networking isn't just about collecting business cards; it's about building authentic connections that can propel your career forward. A strong network provides you with valuable resources, insights, and opportunities that you might not have access to otherwise. Here's how to strategically build and nurture your professional network:

#### **Attend Networking Events:**

Local Meetups: Seek out local industry meetups, workshops, and seminars. These events are ideal for connecting with professionals in your area and engaging in meaningful conversations. You can exchange ideas, learn from each other's experiences, and establish a local network.

Industry Conferences: Industry conferences bring together experts, thought leaders, and enthusiasts. They offer an opportunity to learn about the latest trends, gain insights, and connect with individuals who share your passion.

Online Webinars: Virtual events and webinars are convenient ways to expand your network from the comfort of your home. Participate in discussions, ask questions, and connect with fellow attendees through chat platforms.

#### **Utilise Online Platforms:**

LinkedIn: Your LinkedIn profile serves as your professional online presence. Optimize it with a comprehensive summary, detailed work history, and skills. Connect with colleagues, classmates, mentors, and others you've crossed paths with professionally. Online Forums and Communities: Join relevant online forums and communities related to your industry. Engage in discussions, share your expertise, and ask questions. Participating consistently can help you establish yourself as a knowledgeable and engaged member.

Social Media Engagement: Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram can also be used for professional networking. Share industry-related content, engage with posts from experts, and use appropriate hashtags to increase your visibility.

#### Offer Value and Share Insights:

Help Others: Networking is a two-way street. Offer assistance, share resources, and provide insights whenever you can. The goodwill you generate by helping others will likely be reciprocated when you need assistance.

Contribute to Discussions: Engage in discussions on online platforms by sharing your viewpoints, experiences, and expertise. Meaningful contributions can spark valuable connections and showcase your knowledge.

Share Content: Share articles, blog posts, research papers, or videos relevant to your industry. By curating and sharing valuable content, you position yourself as an informed and engaged professional. Online Forums and Communities: Join relevant online forums and communities related to your industry. Engage in discussions, share your expertise, and ask questions. Participating consistently can help you establish yourself as a knowledgeable and engaged member.

Social Media Engagement: Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram can also be used for professional networking. Share industry-related content, engage with posts from experts, and use appropriate hashtags to increase your visibility.

#### Attend Networking Events:

Networking Etiquette: Approach networking events with a friendly and open attitude. Listen actively to others and express genuine interest in their stories. Avoid hard-selling yourself or your services.

Exchange Contact Information: If you connect with someone interesting, exchange contact information. This could be done through business cards, LinkedIn connections, or other networking apps.

Follow Up: After a networking event, follow up with the people you met. Send a personalized message thanking them for the conversation and expressing your interest in staying connected.

#### Seek Mentorship:

Identify Mentors: Look for individuals who have achieved what you aspire to achieve. A mentor can provide guidance, share their experiences, and offer valuable advice.

Approach Thoughtfully: When reaching out to potential mentors, explain why you admire their work and how their insights could help you in your career journey.

Regular Check-Ins: If a mentor agrees to guide you, schedule regular catch-up sessions to discuss your progress, ask questions, and gain insights from their experiences. Building a network is an ongoing process that requires effort, authenticity, and patience. By attending events, utilizing online platforms, offering value, and seeking mentorship, you're investing in relationships that can significantly impact your career growth. Remember, networking isn't about collecting a vast number of contacts; it's about forming meaningful connections that add value to your professional journey. As your network expands, you'll find yourself in a community of like-minded individuals who can provide support, insights, and opportunities that contribute to your long-term success.

## 6. SET MILESTONES

. To effectively reach your long-term goals, break them down into smaller, manageable milestones:

#### Short-term Milestones:

Identify key stepping stones that will lead you to your long-term goal. These should be specific achievements that contribute directly to your overarching objective. For instance, if you're aiming to start your own business, a short-term milestone could be conducting market research to identify your target audience and competition.

#### 2. Measurable Steps:

Ensure each milestone is measurable so you can objectively track your progress. Use concrete metrics that reflect your advancement. If your goal is to improve your programming skills, a measurable milestone could be completing a certain number of coding exercises or projects.

#### 3. Timeline:

Set realistic timeframes for achieving each milestone. Consider your current commitments, resources, and any potential challenges. This prevents setting up unrealistic expectations and helps you adjust your plans if necessary. If you're pursuing a fitness goal, a realistic timeline might involve losing a certain amount of weight within a certain number of months.

#### 4. Celebrate Achievements:

Recognize and celebrate your accomplishments as you hit each milestone. This acknowledgment not only boosts your motivation but also reinforces the idea that you're making tangible progress. It doesn't have to be something extravagant; even small rewards like treating yourself to a favorite meal or taking a day off can be effective.

Remember, the purpose of setting milestones is to create a clear roadmap to your long-term goal while making the journey more manageable and fulfilling. Regularly reassess your progress, adjust your plans if needed, and stay adaptable as circumstances evolve.

## 7. EMPLOY EFFECTIVE JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

: Effectively navigating the job market requires a well-thought-out strategy:

#### Job Boards:

Indeed: A comprehensive job search engine where you can filter by location, job type, and salary. It also offers resume uploading and company reviews.

LinkedIn: A professional networking platform with a job search feature. You can follow companies, join industry groups, and receive job alerts based on your preferences.

Glassdoor: Along with job listings, Glassdoor provides company reviews, salary insights, and interview experiences shared by employees, giving you a holistic view of potential employers.

#### **Company Websites:**

Company Culture: Exploring a company's website gives you a sense of its values, mission, and work environment. This information can help you determine if the company aligns with your career goals.

Hidden Opportunities: Some companies only post jobs on their websites and don't advertise on external job boards. Regularly visiting the careers page of companies you're interested in can help you discover these hidden opportunities.

#### **Recruitment Consultancies:**

Their expertise can help match your skills and preferences with the right job openings. Access to Employers: Recruitment agencies have established relationships with companies. They can advocate for you and provide insights into what employers are looking for.

Temporary Positions: Some agencies offer temporary or contract positions. These opportunities can be stepping stones to permanent roles and allow you to build experience.

#### Networking:

Industry Events: Attending conferences, trade shows, and workshops allows you to meet professionals in your field. Engaging in conversations can lead to valuable connections and job referrals.

LinkedIn Networking: Building a strong LinkedIn profile and connecting with professionals in your industry expands your network. Engage with posts, join relevant groups, and send personalized connection requests.

Informational Interviews: Approach professionals for informational interviews. Prepare thoughtful questions to learn about their career paths, industry trends, and potential job openings.

#### **Personalised Applications:**

CVTailoring: Customize your resume for each application by highlighting skills and experiences that match the job description. Use quantifiable achievements to showcase your impact in previous roles.

Cover Letter Customisation: Your cover letter should explain why you're interested in the specific role and how your skills make you a strong fit. It's a chance to demonstrate your enthusiasm.

#### Informational Interviews:

Gathering Insights: Informational interviews are about learning. Ask about a professional's career journey, challenges, and advice for newcomers to the industry.

Expanding Connections: Even if an interview doesn't lead to a job, it expands your network and might result in future opportunities. Referrals: If you leave a positive impression,

professionals might refer you to job openings within their network.

Remember, a successful job search often combines multiple strategies. Flexibility, persistence, and adaptability are key. Each strategy offers a unique approach to finding opportunities and building connections. By employing these strategies effectively, you can increase your chances of landing a job that aligns with your goals and aspirations.

## 8. DETAILED INTERVIEW PREPARATION

thorough interview preparation is crucial to make a positive impression and increase your chances of success. Let's delve deeper into each of the key points you mentioned:

#### **Research:**

Understanding the company's history, values, products, and recent news demonstrates your genuine interest in the organization. This knowledge can also help you tailor your responses during the interview. Research the company's mission, vision, and any recent achievements or developments that might be relevant to the role you're interviewing for.

#### **Practice Responses:**

Anticipating and preparing for common interview questions allows you to provide well-structured and coherent answers. The STAR method is an excellent framework for answering behavioral questions. By breaking down your responses into Situation, Task, Action, and Result, you provide a clear narrative that highlights your skills and accomplishments.

#### **Behavioral Examples:**

Prepare specific examples from your past experiences that showcase the skills and qualities required for the position. These examples should illustrate how you've handled challenges, collaborated in teams, and contributed to achieving goals. Quantify your achievements whenever possible, as this adds credibility to your claims.

#### Questions to Ask:

Having thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer demonstrates your enthusiasm and engagement. Ask about the company culture, team dynamics, and opportunities for growth within the organization. This also provides you with valuable insights to determine if the company is the right fit for you.

#### Mock Interviews:

Practice interviews with a friend, family member, or mentor can significantly boost your confidence. They can provide constructive feedback on your responses, body language, and overall presentation. This practice also helps you refine your answers and become more comfortable with the interview process.

#### **Dress and Grooming:**

Choosing appropriate attire that aligns with the company's dress code is essential. Dressing professionally shows that you take the opportunity seriously and respect the company's standards. Pay attention to grooming details like hairstyle, grooming, and accessories, as these details contribute to your overall professional appearance.

#### Storytelling:

Craft compelling stories that showcase your skills and experiences. Engaging stories make you more memorable and help interviewers connect with your journey.

#### Body Language:

Practice positive body language, such as maintaining eye contact, offering a firm handshake, and sitting upright. These nonverbal cues convey confidence and professionalism.

#### **Elevator Pitch:**

Prepare a brief and engaging introduction that summarizes your background, skills, and what you bring to the table. This is often the first thing you'll share in an interview.

#### **Research the Interviewers:**

If possible, learn about the interviewers themselves. This can help you establish rapport and tailor your responses to their areas of expertise or interests.

Remember, interview preparation is not just about rehearsing responses, but also about building your self-assurance and demonstrating your potential as a valuable addition to the company.

## 9. STAY ADAPTABLE AND FLEXIBLE

In today's fast-paced world, adaptability is key. The career landscape is constantly evolving due to technological advancements, industry shifts, and global changes. Embrace a mindset that welcomes change and seeks opportunities to learn and grow:

Stay Informed: Keep yourself updated with industry trends, emerging technologies, and changing market dynamics. Being informed equips you to anticipate shifts and proactively adapt.

Embrace Change: Rather than resisting change, view it as a chance to learn new skills and explore different directions. Flexibility enables you to seize unexpected opportunities.

Continuous Upskilling: Invest in ongoing learning to ensure your skills remain relevant. Take courses, attend workshops, and acquire certifications to stay competitive.

## CONCLUSION

Effectively planning your career begins with a thorough self-assessment that considers your personality, strengths, weaknesses, interests, values, and skills. This introspection forms the foundation for defining clear and achievable career goals and guiding your exploration of potential industries and job roles. By setting milestones that contribute to your long-term vision and celebrating each achievement, you create a roadmap that keeps you motivated and on track toward career success and fulfillment. Remember that your career journey is dynamic and will evolve continually over time, requiring ongoing dedication and strategic thinking.

Good Luck and Keep In Touch!

## ABOUT LUCY WALKER RECRUITMENT

Lucy Walker Recruitment was founded in 1992 and is one of the North of England's leading independent recruitment consultancies with a well-established brand and strong presence in the market.

Lucy Walker Recruitment still remains focused on the key principles of the recruitment process and the team is passionate about providing a high level of service to clients and candidates in the region. The success of this way of working and the drive to utilise innovative and modern tools to enhance the recruitment process is what makes Lucy Walker Recruitment stand out from others in the recruitment sector.

#### Areas we recruit:

- PA and Business Support
- Sales and Business Development
- Clerical and Front of House Support
- Graduate and Entry Level Recruitment
- Marketing, Communications and PR
- Analyst and Project Management/Administration
- HR and Learning and Development
- Finance and Purchasing
- Legal Services
- Supply Chain, Procurement and Logistics
- Client Services and Account Management
- Customer Service and Administration
- Management, Head of Departments and Director Level

To find out more, please contact our team or check out our website below:

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