

Testing Your Career Savvy

Get Into Shape



STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the chapter you will be able to . . .

- Differentiate between a job and a career.
- Identify and apply Super's theory to your career development.
- Determine how generational differences affect the workplace.
- Discuss why personal assessment is the key factor leading to career satisfaction.
- Understand the process, challenge, and commitment necessary to exercise your career options.

Do you want to have a career that meets your needs, complements your personality, inspires you to develop your potential, and supports your vision and purpose? Are you someone who deliberately chooses the type of life you live rather than settling for what's convenient and available? If so, you need to set goals that will lead you from where you are now to where you want to be. However, to be achieved, goals must reflect your experiences, desires, attitudes, needs, interests, values, mission, and vision of the future. Collectively, these comprise your unique personal profile, which acts as a GPS, helping you navigate your way to your destination through uncharted paths, detours, and the uncertainties of the job market. Your personal assets also tap into your deepest, most authentic self, sparking the fire of motivation that you need to move you along your path with courage and conviction.

Yesterday is the past, tomorrow is the future, but today is a gift. That's why they call it the present.

—Bil Keane



Personal Assessment

As the first step in self-assessment, this chapter helps you examine your personal experiences, who you are right now, your current stage of career and life development, and your ability to deal with new information. As you begin to identify who you are and what energizes you about life, you will begin to incorporate those insights into a career. Self-awareness is the first stage of both the career choice and the career change process. As you look for insights that will help you chart your career, it is helpful to consider career development theories. Renowned psychologist Donald Super is credited with developing the theory that a career makes it possible for you to actualize or express your self-concept throughout your life span and life space. Your **self-concept** is essentially *how you see yourself*. Review the following principles of Super's theory on career development; and as you read, determine how they relate to you at this point in your career journey.

Self-awareness = first step



▲ Personal assessment leads to job satisfaction.

Super's Self-Concept Theory

1. We differ in abilities, interests, and personalities.
2. Every occupation requires a characteristic pattern of abilities, interests, and personality traits. Within each occupation are workers with varying degrees of these characteristics.
3. Each of us is qualified for a number of occupations.
4. Vocational preferences and skills, the situations in which we live and work, and our self-concepts change with time and experience. These factors make choice and adjustment a continual process based on our maturity and lifestyle.
5. Selecting a career involves the following stages. As we discuss later in this chapter, many people experience these stages more than once in life. Thus, although Super discusses the stages in a more traditional sense, remember that you may return to the stages discussed here at various times in your life.
 - a. **Growth.** This includes both physical and emotional growth as you form attitudes and behaviors that relate to your self-concept. What did you learn about yourself from childhood games or family roles? For example, "I am a team player," "I am an individualist," "I am a mediator," or "I would rather read than play games." A child begins having fantasies during this period (e.g., a dream of becoming a doctor).
 - b. **Exploration.** This is divided into *fantasy* (e.g., a child's dream of becoming a doctor), *tentative* (e.g., high school and post-high school periods of exploration in which ideas are narrowed down), and *reality testing* (e.g., in high school or early college, working part time or volunteering in a hospital, taking math and science classes, or raising a family). You start learning about the kind of work you enjoy and the kind of worker you are. For example, "I am good with detail," "I enjoy working with people," "I enjoy working alone," "I take criticism well."
 - c. **Establishment.** This includes initial work experience that may have started only as a job to earn a living but that offers experiences for growth so it becomes part of the self-concept. For example, "I am an assistant manager, I am responsible for the bookkeeping, and I look forward to becoming the manager," rather than, "This is just a job, and I will be doing

bookkeeping until I can finish my bachelor's degree and get into law school." Very often several changes in jobs will occur over a few years.

- d. **Maintenance.** This is a time when we maintain or improve in our career area. Advancement can be to higher levels or laterally across fields. For example, you may start thinking, "I am extremely competent," "I can compete with others," "I can cooperate and share my knowledge," or "I can train others."
 - e. **Disengagement.** Super defines disengagement as the stage just before retirement or one when we see no new challenges or chances for mobility. Traditionally, it is a period during which there is a shift in the amount of emphasis you place on your career; you may even seek a reduction of the hours you work. Disengagement may also occur some time before retirement. You may think, "I have many things other than this job I want to do," "I want to spend more time at home," "I want to work on my hobbies," "I want to travel more," or "I want to make a living from my leisure pursuits." Job or career changes are a form of disengagement, whether prompted by personal choice or circumstances beyond your control (a layoff, for instance).
6. The nature of any career pattern is influenced by parental socioeconomic level, mental ability, personality characteristics, and opportunities to which the individual is exposed. Both limitations and opportunities may be apparent as a result of these factors. People are affected by the realities of everyday life. A teenager living in an affluent suburb may have unlimited opportunity to focus on schoolwork because of ample financial support. A teenager living in the inner city with several siblings, in contrast, may work 20 hours or more each week to help out with the family finances and thus have limited time and energy for schoolwork.
 7. The process of career development is essentially that of self-concept development and implementation. All of us try to maintain a favorable picture of ourselves.
 8. Work satisfaction and life satisfaction depend on the extent to which our work and our life provide adequate outlets for our abilities, interests, personality traits, and values.



SUCCESS strategies

Relevance of Super's Theory of Career Development

Theories are helpful in understanding and putting into perspective what we are experiencing in our own lives. In terms of career choice, you might feel confused, lost, alone, different, and concerned about your current status; however, after you have become familiar with Super's theory, you understand that it's normal to feel this way. Whether you are in a particular stage of career development or you are in a transition and between stages, knowing about Super's theory helps you deal with the anxiety that accompanies any stage of development.

What has influenced your self-concept? Have you assessed your likes and dislikes, desires, attributes, limitations, needs, wants, and values? An accurate and current self-assessment will enable you to make better career decisions by increasing your personal awareness and understanding. Self-awareness improves your ability to seek and select jobs that fit your unique self-concept or to shape whatever job you have, given your own unique assets. Super's theory applies each time you make a career change: You will reexperience the stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement.

Our discussion of Super's theory briefly mentioned the general career stages that many people have experienced: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. Because you are probably somewhere between the stages of exploration and maintenance right now, it is useful to understand that you are also experiencing the transitional stages that relate to your age and affect your career planning. To start the critical step of personal assessment, complete Exercise 1.1.

EXERCISE

1.1 First Impressions

Here is your first chance to think about yourself and record your responses. Fill in each blank carefully and honestly. Be true to yourself; don't try to please anyone else with your answers. Try to be spontaneous; the longer you think before answering, the more likely you are to censor your answers.

1. I am _____
2. I need _____
3. I want _____
4. I would like to change _____
5. If all goes well in the next five years, I will be doing the following things:

6. If things go poorly in the next five years, I will be doing

7. Reviewing past jobs or volunteer experiences I have had, what did I like best/least about each one? Is there a pattern?

UNDERSTANDING LIFE STAGES

Many authors, including Gail Sheehy, have explored how people change as they age, and they have found that as longevity has increased, so have concepts and definitions of career and retirement. There is no longer a clear-cut point when we end our training or move into retirement. Finding challenging or rewarding employment may mean retraining and moving from a stale or boring job in order to find your passion and pursue it. The idea is to think long range and anticipate an active lifestyle into later years—perhaps into one's 80s or 90s. Being personally productive may now mean anticipating retiring in stages. This might indicate going to an alternate plan should a current career end by choice or economic chance.

Because we are living longer, we have longer to grow up and grow old. We need to constantly review and renew the meaning of our existence and be open to new experiences. These can include hobbies, learning, nonprofit ventures, volunteering, hobbies turned into businesses, or part-time work to help others and increase earnings. Taking risks to supplement and expand our personal horizons can help us at any age to avoid becoming vulnerable, feeling stuck, or being directed by unforeseen events. In essence, our later adulthood will be a time of renewal, discovery, leisure, service to society, adventure, and productivity.

Remember that life stages are based on social norms that are in constant flux. People are changing careers and employment frequently, and the world is changing at such a pace that social norms will surely continue to adjust. For example, two-career families, single-parent households, later marriages and/or alternative lifestyles, longer life spans, and in addition, fewer good entry-level jobs and the need for lifelong learning, will all influence the direction of people's lives and will lead to more fluidity and ambiguity between life stages. Decisions will vary greatly, with some people still choosing early marriages or delaying career and professional plans or decisions regarding childbearing for more education or training. A future scenario may incorporate more fully a flexible and adaptive work schedule both permitting and addressing leisure, longevity, and family.

APPRECIATING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Never before in the workplace have so many different generations worked side by side. Each generation is defined by a time frame in which they were born. As a group, each of these populations live through specific periods in time that affect the way they see life and develop their value systems. Their values, perceptions, attitudes, and expectations have been formed as a result of historic events, wars, politics, and economic and cultural influences. By looking at each of the four generations currently in the labor pool, we can better understand ourselves and our fellow employees and thus be more effective and productive. The birthdates and population of each group varies slightly depending on the research.

As you look at each group, remember that not every descriptor applies to every individual in the group. We are not trying to label or pigeonhole people but to provide some generalizations that may be useful in understanding yourself and those with whom you work.

MILLENNIALS: GEN Y (BORN 1982–2000)

This generation is composed of the newest members of the workforce. They are called *millennials*, *gen y*, *gen next*, *the google generation*, *the echo boom*, and *the tech generation*. Because their numbers are similar to those of the baby boomers, their impact will be significant. They have been raised with three other generations and they feel comfortable with all age levels, often texting parents and grandparents regularly to keep in touch. They are the digital natives who have grown up with technology and the Web. Gen Y is a generation of multitaskers who value flexibility and freedom as much as money. They want a job on their own terms with the opportunity to make a difference, learn, grow, and have fun. They will often choose meaningful work over high-paying work if pushed to make a decision based on those factors. These young people are well educated, globally aware, civic minded, polite, and tolerant of authority. They are natural team players who are eager and confident about making a contribution despite being the youngest on the team. They value and learn from their peers and are more inclusive and group oriented than any other generation.

GEN X (BORN 1961–1981)

The Gen X generation represents almost a third of the workforce, and they will take over as the baby boomers retire. Because they are smaller in numbers than are the boomers, they will have multiple options, as evidenced by their comfort in job hopping. They bring a breadth of experience with a strong independent spirit; they are unimpressed with authority and titles and might come across as cynical. These employees are loyal only as long as they get what they want from the job or company. If not, they are comfortable moving on. Unlike their parents, the motto of Gen X is “Work to live.” They insist on a life and work balance and are willing to leave a job to get it.

(BABY) BOOMERS (BORN 1943–1960)

According to *FutureWork Institute/Society for Human Resource Management*, boomers are 46 percent of the current workforce and as such they make up the largest population within the workforce. Because of the current economic situation and the satisfaction they derive from working, this group intends to stay in the workforce in significant numbers. Boomers’ focus has been on personal goals and achievement. They have been willing to sacrifice for success and worthwhile causes and are often labeled workaholics whose motto is “Live to work.” They have been called the *me generation*, and they sometimes view the two younger generations as unwilling to “pay their dues” to succeed. They excel in teams and make decisions by consensus. These employees are currently beginning to retire from one career; but a recent AARP survey reports that 70 percent will keep working, and they will most often be reporting to the two younger generations.

SILENT: MATURES/TRADITIONALS (BORN 1925–1942)

There are 34 million people in this generation, often called *traditionalists* or *matures*. This group values history, work experience, the company legacy, and a strong tradition based on loyalty, hard work, and conformity. Matures/traditionalists are civic minded and help oriented. They are sometimes perceived as authoritarian and unwilling to accept new ideas or change. They are also valuable mentors to the younger generations and will continue to fill in the gaps in the labor pool. This generation wants respect and the opportunity to continue to make a contribution.



FACTS & FIGURES

Generations in the Workplace

According to generational historians Neil Howe and William Strauss, the following defines the generations:

Silent (Traditional /Mature)	born 1925–1942	34 million
(Baby) Boomers	born 1943–1960	76 million
Generation X	born 1961–1981	41 million
Millennials (Gen Y)	born 1982–2000	75 million

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- As you consider some of the defining differences in each of these generational groups, think of yourself. What is your generation called?
- How closely do you resemble some of the descriptors?
- If you are currently working, think about your boss and supervisors as well as your fellow employees. How closely do they fit the descriptions? Does this help you understand and work better alongside each other?
- You will undoubtedly have to work on a team or perhaps you will hold a leadership position at some point in your future career. Why do you think it would be beneficial for you to understand the generational makeup of your colleagues, subordinates, or managers?
- How might this help you become a more effective supervisor or boss?
- How might this information affect your choice of employers?



SUCCESS strategies

Identifying Generations by Their Behaviors

For each workplace scenario, identify which generation might be represented and why. Then think about how an employer from each generation might be likely to respond to the scenario. Finally, how would you personally react to each scenario if the person was a colleague? How about if you were managing this person? Would you have any advice to share if this person asked, "How can I get ahead in this organization?"

- In an interview, when a candidate was asked what questions she had, her first question was, "How much vacation do I have and when can I start taking it?"
- An employee refuses the opportunity to work from home, stating that he's always put in his time at the office and he isn't about to change his routine at this point in his career.
- A professor on a college campus started bringing her dog to her office and to class without asking for permission. She was the only one on campus to do so.
- An employee regularly leaves work to attend his son's soccer games.
- A salesperson offers to brief a colleague about a meeting with a prospective new client. The colleague declines, certain that all will go well.
- After working for a year, an employee asks for a two-month leave to take advantage of a unique travel opportunity.
- Someone who has been at the company for a while offers to show a new employee around and fill her in on the office politics.
- Although not part of the company culture, an employee requests working from home three days a week.
- An employee volunteers to stay late and close up for the night when the rest of the group is attending a training session.



Differentiating between a Job and a Career

We will be using the words *job* and *career* throughout this book, so let's define them. There is an important difference between them. Basically, *a job is a series of tasks or activities that are performed within the scope of what we call work*. These tasks relate to a career in that a career is a series of jobs. But more than jobs, a career is a sequence of attitudes and behaviors that are associated with work and relate to our total life experience. *A career is the integration of our personality with our job activities*. Therefore, our career becomes a primary part of our identity or our self-concept.

In the past, people chose their careers early in life, and they stayed in those careers most of their lives. Farmers worked on their farms, bookkeepers stayed in the office, and teachers taught until retirement. Today, the trend in the United States has shifted toward multiple careers. We can now expect to have four or more careers in our lifetimes. Furthermore, with the rapid changes in society as well as in economic conditions, jobs, and technologies, many traditional jobs are becoming obsolete. In fact, William Bridges in his book *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* suggests that jobs as we know them will evolve to meet the current needs. He means that a person hired to take a particular job can be certain the job tasks will change rapidly. Even if the job title remains the same, new and different skill sets will continually be required. The original position may become dramatically different or even disappear altogether.

A career is the integration of personality with work activities.

Follow intuition, not trends.

TIPS FROM THE PROS

Today, a phrase like "that's not my job" will never be uttered by anyone who wants to keep their job! The most valued employees are those who are flexible and do what is required regardless of job title or job description.

This is markedly different from the world in which the Silents and Baby Boomers worked. Thus, the expectation that once you find a job, you are home free, secure, or set for life is no longer realistic. The traditional employee contract, although unwritten, implied an honest day's work for an honest day's wage, employee loyalty in exchange for job security, and raises and promotions in return for seniority. Today's new employee contract simply implies continued employment for individuals who possess skills that continue to meet a business need.

More than ever it is important to give considerable thought to what you want to do and to structure your training and education to be relevant both to your interests and to trends in the job market. Knowing yourself and developing a plan of action based on your needs as well as the needs of the job market will help you embark on the career most satisfying for you rather than just following the latest trends in one field or another.

Demands in the job market rapidly shift. Some time ago, teachers were in great demand. Then, for about a decade, a glut of teachers was on the market. Now, although there is a need for teachers, they are being furloughed because of economic issues, and this is happening in many other fields today. If you base your career decision primarily on current trends, by the time you obtain the training necessary to get into the hot field, it may well have cooled down. This strategy leaves you with slim prospects for a job that can lead to a career, and quite possibly with skills and training in a field that you weren't terribly excited about in the first place (except as a quick opportunity).

Each of us has the potential to be satisfied in any number of occupations. Getting to know yourself better through personal

Be prepared to manage your career.



▲ Teamwork across generations makes for success.

assessment will help you identify careers that are best suited to your personality. People who are not prepared for change allow that change to influence their decisions. They are often frustrated and unhappy because they are forced to work at jobs they don't enjoy. They may never have realized they have choices, or perhaps they never took the time or energy to become aware of their preferences. They settle for less than what might be best for them. Dad says "get a job in business," even though his child has a special talent in art. The high school adviser recommends engineering because scholarships are available. The employment department directs an unemployed applicant into a computer training program because there's an opening. Granted, in tough economic times, you might be forced to take a job for pure survival on a temporary basis until more possibilities open up. But, by knowing your own preferences, you will be ready to manage your career and get back on your path instead of merely following others' suggestions. Complete the following exercises to jump-start your personal assessment by thinking about your current preferences in Exercise 1.2 and by describing yourself in Exercise 1.3.

EXERCISE

1.2 Identify Your Interests

1. What subjects in school do I like most / least?

2. What books or magazines do I read? What kinds of music, art, theater, and cinema do I like? What are my favorite websites?

3. What do I like to do for fun? How do I spend my spare time?

4. What jobs have I had (including volunteer work), and what did I like most and least about them? _____

5. What interests do I have that reflect my generation? _____

EXERCISE

1.3 Describe Yourself

Circle those adjectives that best describe you. Place an "X" in front of those adjectives that are least like you.

REALISTIC (R)

___ practical ___ persistent
 ___ athletic ___ conforming
 ___ rugged ___ down to earth
 ___ stable ___ self-reliant
 ___ frank

INVESTIGATIVE (I)

___ careful ___ introverted
 ___ achieving ___ confident
 ___ curious ___ analytical
 ___ precise ___ intellectual
 ___ independent

ARTISTIC (A)

___ emotional ___ impulsive
 ___ expressive ___ flexible
 ___ imaginative ___ idealistic
 ___ unordered ___ original
 ___ creative

SOCIAL (S)

___ helpful ___ understanding
 ___ insightful ___ popular
 ___ kind ___ cooperative
 ___ friendly ___ responsible
 ___ tactful ___ flirtatious

ENTERPRISING (E)

___ energetic ___ adventurous
 ___ driving ___ powerful
 ___ ambitious ___ persuasive
 ___ assertive ___ competitive
 ___ enthusiastic

CONVENTIONAL (C)

___ conscientious ___ moderate
 ___ persistent ___ orderly
 ___ organized ___ efficient
 ___ obedient ___ detailed
 ___ dependable ___ thorough

Next, review the adjectives you circled. Note the list is divided into six clusters: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). This is called the Holland Code. Which groups of adjectives best describe you? Also note that most of the words are positive personality traits. This exercise gives you a chance to acknowledge your positive attributes.

From which three of the six groups do most of your adjectives come? Rank the groups from which most of them come as 1, second most as 2, and third most as 3.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

This three-letter code is your preliminary Holland Code. It helps you organize information about yourself so you will be in a position to make informed career decisions. Each group of adjectives describes a certain kind of person. What kinds of people do you like to be around? Rank the top three types here using the three-letter code.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

How similar are the letters you selected for people you like to be around to those you selected to describe yourself? Dick Bolles, author of *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, suggests the code you selected for people you like to spend time with is a good indicator of the code that relates to occupations you would also enjoy the most. You will have the opportunity to further analyze and use this code in your career fitness program as we go through the process.

STRIVING FOR CAREER SATISFACTION

Survey after survey on job satisfaction among American workers indicates that well over 50 percent are dissatisfied with their jobs. In a study for *U.S. News & World Report*, people were asked to name the three things that contribute most to their quality of life. The top categories for men and women were “job/career satisfaction,” “relationship with family,” and “money.” Because you will likely be changing jobs and careers several times in your life, it is more important than ever before to have accurate knowledge about yourself and the world of work.

The Gallup Poll organization analyzed its massive database and determined that 55 percent of employees have no enthusiasm for their work! In another Gallup survey, two-thirds of a group of adults said if they were starting all over, they would try to get more information about their career options. In Gallup’s annual worker satisfaction survey, job stress has consistently ranked near the bottom along with other factors, including job security, and health and retirement benefits. The largest decline in overall satisfaction was from 35- to 44-year-olds. Interestingly, people in this age group were once among the happiest group in the American workforce.

You will face the need to continually evaluate yourself and your career path. It is useful to know about the changing world of work and which occupations in which industries allow you to best express yourself and best use your strengths and talents. When analyzing your personal assets, it is to your advantage to think ultimately about the total job market. Search for jobs that will lead you into a career. You will benefit greatly from identifying a variety of alternatives that allow you to express your personality. Once you have looked within yourself and identified what you want and need in a job, changes will be easier to make because you’ll know when you have outgrown one job and need a new one. You will develop the personal insights to help you make decisions about career changes and transitions with greater ease and confidence. For most of us, career planning is not a simple, straightforward, linear process in

Be prepared to revise your career plan continually.

There is no single “right” career.

which we follow certain prescribed steps, end up at a specific destination, and live happily ever after. It is instead a feedback loop that continues to self-correct as you add information about your changing self and the world around you. We are constantly revising our career plan as we grow and change. This means there isn't any one "right" career. Instead, there are many careers in which we could be equally happy, equally successful, equally satisfied.

We are looking, then, not for the *one* right career but for the series of alternatives and career options that seem to make sense for each of us given our background, our personality, our career and life stages, and the changing world.



REAL stories Meet Sandra

After graduating from high school, Sandra didn't know what she wanted to do. Many of her friends were enrolling in college, but Sandra wasn't interested in continuing with her education; she was tired of going to school and wanted to experience the "real world." Because she did well in her high school business classes, she thought that administrative assistant work might be interesting. With the help of a friend, Sandra put together a resume and went on the Internet to search for jobs. There were many administrative assistant positions, but Sandra didn't know the type of business she might find interesting, so she decided to go back to her high school counselor for some help. The counselor said that to make a career or job decision, it was important for Sandra to determine her interests, values, and goals. Once she had an idea of "who" she was, she could then investigate the kind of business that would be right for her. The counselor suggested that she make an appointment with the career counselor at the local community college.

The counselor at the community college gave Sandra several assessments, and they revealed an interest in the legal field. Sandra went back to the Internet, but she soon discovered that the jobs that interested her required special skills. Sandra had a decision to make: return to school or look for work in a different field. Because Sandra thought she would really like the legal field, she decided to do both. She began looking for general office positions and enrolled in a community college to begin a legal secretary certificate program. Sandra found a job as a receptionist with Transamerica Corporation. She learned the work quickly and found the hours allowed her to attend school and study. Although the pay did not allow her to live

on her own, she took advantage of the opportunity to live at home and save money for her own apartment. After two years, Sandra was close to receiving her certificate.

One day at work she was reading her legal terminology text when one of the executives walked by. Sandra liked Mr. Owens; he was always interested in her opinions and she enjoyed talking to him about her studies. When she told him her career plans, he indicated that he knew several attorneys and perhaps he could be of help when she was ready. Over the next few months, Sandra worked hard, and in early April she felt ready to make a move. She called Mr. Owens and said, "I wanted you to know that I will be completing my legal secretary certificate in May, and I remember you mentioned to me that if I needed any assistance in finding employment you might be able to help. I was wondering if I could meet with you to discuss my qualifications." Mr. Owens told Sandra how proud he was of her and that he would be happy to meet with her.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Do you think Sandra made a wise choice by not attending a four-year college? List the pros and cons of her decision.
2. If Mr. Owens had not offered to help Sandra, what other resources could she have investigated?
3. While Sandra was attending college, what organizations could she have joined that would have given her networking connections?
4. What other types of jobs or careers could Sandra have selected based on her high school diploma?



Choosing and Changing Careers

Preparation = short-term and long-term goals

Each one of us, regardless of our stage in life, is in some phase of career development. You may be starting your first job or looking for a job. You may be planning for your first career, reentering the job market after some time at home, considering your next career, planning for part-time employment, or looking for meaningful volunteer experience.

Because there is no crystal ball that will predict the one right career for you, you will want to consider several options as you explore career development. The examples in the

“Real Stories” box describe people who reassessed their needs and made satisfying changes. It is also possible to survey your needs, values, interests, skills, aptitudes, and sources of information about the world of work to create a broader career *objective*. Some careers do have established or common career paths. In teaching, one often starts out as a tutor, works up to student teacher, and then becomes an assistant teacher before becoming a full-time teacher. In the marketing profession, people often start in sales. Therefore, we need to think about career goals in the sense of their being both short term and long term. A short-term career goal is one that can be rather quickly attained. For instance, in the process of career planning, you may discover you want to be a lawyer. We would normally consider law a long-term career option because it generally takes many years of study and preparation. However, a short-term career goal related to law might be obtaining a job as a legal secretary or a paralegal. Either of these would give you the opportunity to work in an environment that excites and energizes you long before you actually achieve your final and ultimate career goal. In addition, relevant experience enhances your appeal to future employers.



REAL stories Career Changers Across Generations

Here are some examples of the kinds of career decisions we've been discussing:

PROFESSOR NGUYEN had reached his life goal, or so he thought. He was one of the few professors of religion at a small college in the San Francisco area. One day he woke up with stomach pains and body aches and had little energy. He dragged himself out of bed. When the pains lasted longer than three days, he visited his family physician only to find there was no medical reason for his discomfort. He then began some soul searching. His pains and nightmares continued over a period of months and seemed to occur only during the workweek. On weekends, when he was with his family or volunteering at a hospital, he felt energetic and healthy. Soon he took a leave of absence from his job and devoted more time to his hospital avocation. The physical ailments mysteriously disappeared. He spent a year examining his needs, consulting with a career counselor, and talking things over with friends. He found that his real satisfaction came from helping people in the hospital rather than from teaching religion.

Shortly thereafter, a friend told him about a job opening as an ombudsman in a hospital. He was selected for the job and now lectures to local classes in career development on the hazards of keeping a job that is making you ill! Professor Nguyen needed to reexamine his original goals to discover why his career as a professor wasn't meeting his needs.

DAVID CHAN spent two years at a state college with a major in prelaw but a love for art. He wished to choose a career with strong financial potential that would be acceptable to his parents. During his junior year David realized he constantly daydreamed about a career in art. So he enrolled in an evening community college class and then transferred full time to a technical art school where he specialized in drawing and sketching. David completed his degree, sought career counseling, and decided to try for his dream job. Within two years, he had a part-time job with an animation studio. He is now a full-time animator, creating characters for feature films. David was able to find a career that used his artistic talents and surpassed his financial goals.

If you examine enough options during the career-planning process, you may be able to use career experiences such as job shadowing, part-time jobs, and internships to move into related areas.

There is a final, very important reason that this effort at personal assessment is crucial as the first step in your career-planning process. Once you know who you are and what your preferences and talents are, you can better make sense of the information that continually bombards you regarding the world of work. It's almost impossible to read a headline, listen to a news broadcast, visit a website, or watch a television show that does not have some implication for you and your career. In fact, you may feel you suffer from information overload. Surfing the Web, looking at the classified ads, and reading about employment projections and trends can cause confusion, frustration, and often discouragement about what place you might have in this elusive job market.

One of the best ways to achieve a sense of control of and perspective on this constant stream of information is knowing precisely who you are. Then, when you are surfing, listening,



REAL stories

More Career Changers Across Generations

TAYLOR JORDAN is a sophomore at a community college. For the past two years, largely on the advice of her parents, she has been preparing to transfer to the local university to complete a degree in business. Taylor now realizes she wants to follow her true talents and interests, and pursue a career in interior design. Although she has spent much time and effort accumulating credits toward a bachelor's degree in business, she knows that many of her core courses will apply toward her associate's degree in interior design. She is determined to do what is necessary to achieve her new goal. To prepare for her discussion with her parents, Taylor has researched local job opportunities with furniture and home improvement stores, home builders, and interior design firms. She has talked to a college adviser about possible internships and volunteer work. Most important, she believes her decision is the right one and is determined to follow through with it.

JOSE MARCADO emigrated to the United States in the 1990s. In 2000, after improving his language skills by attending adult

school, he enrolled in a restaurant and hotel management program at a community college and began working as a parking attendant. Jose was very sociable and positive, often making friendly conversation with his customers. By the time he finished his schooling, he was the supervisor of parking facilities. One of his customers told him about a job possibility with a large hotel chain and recommended he apply. Jose not only got the job, but within three years was managing the hotel's restaurant. His ability to network, be friendly, learn on the job, and combine studies and work experience led him to a great job.

RHONDA SPEER spent five years in college completing a bachelor's degree program in teaching with an emphasis in special education. After two and a half years working in the field, she decided she needed a change. Working with children all day was making it difficult for Rhonda to concentrate at the end of the day on her own young daughter. She found a job as a stockbroker trainee. Within six months she was a full-fledged stockbroker. Now she's a corporate financial adviser.

reading, watching, and experiencing, you will have a means of processing information through your consciousness, through your personality and preferences, and through your values and skills. Eventually, you will be able to recognize and reject information that does not apply to you, and to internalize and add to your career plan information that does. If a group setting such as a career class is available to you, all the better! The opportunity to discover yourself and expand your horizons is multiplied by the added benefit of group interaction. Exercise 1.4 is best done in a group setting because it gives you the opportunity to compare your ideas on occupational status with others. There are no correct or right answers to these questions, but doing this exercise helps you clarify what societal bias may be influencing your career preferences. Bringing this information to light and discussing it may free you up to consider a wider range of options.

EXERCISE

1.4 Consider Occupational Status

Rank the following occupations in numerical order according to the *status* you attribute to them. Number 1 should be the occupation that in your mind is most significant. How you define *significant*, of course, is up to you. For example, a police officer could appear as number 1 on your list if you place most value on societal order and safety. Number 20 should reflect the occupation you regard as least significant.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| _____ administrative assistant | _____ engineer | _____ plumber |
| _____ auto technician | _____ farmer | _____ police officer |
| _____ barista | _____ hairdresser | _____ psychiatric nurse |
| _____ computer operator | _____ lawyer | _____ public school teacher |
| _____ construction worker | _____ landscape designer | _____ restaurant manager |
| _____ dental hygienist | _____ movie director | _____ robotics technician |
| _____ doctor | _____ musician | |

Think about the aspects of these positions that impress you or seem of value to you. Next, think about how you define *status*. Is it based on probable income, amount of education required, societal standards? How individualistic do you think your rankings are? For example, was *musician* ranked in your top five because you appreciate music? There are no correct or incorrect answers in this exercise. However, your rankings may reflect some of your basic preferences. If most of your top-ranked occupations were higher-salaried or if your rankings were based on potential for high pay, you may be motivated by a need for security; if your highest rankings were for service-related occupations (e.g., doctor, public school teacher), your motivation might be different.

THE PROCESS

In many ways, the process of preparing to meet job and career challenges is much like the process athletes use to prepare to compete in their particular sport. It involves establishing a fitness program in which the competitor sharpens existing skills, adds needed skills, and, most importantly, develops a mental attitude of success.

Any good fitness program is a combination of theory and exercise, and our career fitness program maintains this balance. For each step of the planning process, we explain the theory behind that step, how it relates to the previous and next steps, and how it moves you closer to your final goal of identifying career options. We provide you with **Learning Outcomes**, **Facts and Figures**, **Success Strategies**, **Real Stories**, and **Tips from the Pros** to reinforce the relevancy of the material to your life.

The chapters include a series of exercises designed to bring each step of the process to life. These exercises will make you more aware of your strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes, and they will also help you summarize what you think is important to remember after each chapter. Each chapter ends with an activity called **Exercising Your Options**. This feature synthesizes the key points of the chapter and emphasizes the fact that no matter what the circumstances, we all have choices.

Note that the end of each chapter also contains a section called **WWWebwise**. These web links will build your skills in using the Internet to broaden your exposure to the information presented. Remember that reading a chapter or a book or viewing a website is a passive activity. However, responding to questions makes you an active participant in the career exploration process. We urge you to spend the time to think through and respond to the questions in the book. At the end of each chapter, we refer you to the Career Fitness Portfolio. This exercise asks you to review and record many of the most critical personal responses that you reported as you read through each chapter. You may find that some of your initial reactions have changed because of the new information in the text or other related activities. This summary section will afford you the opportunity to revisit your initial responses and pull together current and accurate information about yourself. We recommend that you catalog this information (either online or in a binder) and begin to collect supporting documents you may use to create a career portfolio. You can use this portfolio to assist you in your career planning process, as well as in your job search. As you go along in the process and begin to reflect on the content and exercises, you will find that it helps to share your answers with at least one other person; a classroom setting in which group discussion is encouraged is ideal because other perspectives expand your own awareness.

It is easy to sit back and read about career planning and simply agree with the text, theories, and exercises. *But until you make the commitment to actually get involved in the process, to actively participate, and to experience both progress and occasional discomfort along the way, you will not be able to reap the benefits of the process. No one ever “got fit” by sitting on the sidelines!*

THE CHALLENGE

Yes, we did mention the word *discomfort* just now. What do we mean by that? Anytime you begin a new exercise program, even if you start cautiously and sensibly in relation to your current level of activity, new muscles are stretched, and they let you know it. They feel awkward.

They ache. You become aware of parts of your body that you may never have noticed before. You can also expect this to happen in the process of career planning. Along the way, confusion and some discomfort may occur. We will ask questions to help you dig deep into yourself for answers. In this process of enhancing self-awareness, you will discover much about yourself that you like, as well as some characteristics you would like to change.

Because of this self-discovery process, at certain points along the way in our fitness plan you may feel a bit confused, a bit anxious, a bit impatient. All of these feelings are a normal part of the process. When you start out on a physical fitness program, you idealistically hope that in a week or two you will have the body that you visualize in your mind, even though you know realistically that developing a good physique is going to take a lot longer. Similarly, with your career plan you may begin to feel impatient and want things to move along more quickly or more clearly. Remember that any change or growth typically includes some discomfort, uneasiness, or anxiety. Frankly, if you begin to experience some of those feelings, it is a good sign! It indicates you are stretching, you are growing, and you are moving toward a newly developed awareness of who you are and how you relate to the world of work.

COMMITTING TO THE PROCESS

Whether you are taking the time at the beginning of your adult career to examine your options carefully and thoroughly or are finding at midlife that it is time to explore new directions, you will reap tremendous benefits in the future. The satisfaction you experience at “the finish line” will be directly proportional to your willingness and ability to deal with the anxiety and uncertainty you will experience at some points in the career-planning process. In essence, the more you put into any activity, the more you are likely to get out of it. Except for the short-lived fame of reality TV “stars,” stories we have heard and read about our cultural heroes and heroines, whether athletes, performers, scientists, or political figures, tell us that the results they achieve are not easily accomplished. Their triumphs, which look so easy and so glamorous, are always the consequence of tremendous sustained effort, commitment, and perseverance. A statement attributed to famed artist Michelangelo seems to say it all: “If people knew how hard I had to work to gain my mastery, it wouldn’t seem so wonderful after all.”

Your career search requires a similar commitment. It requires your willingness to go with the process, to seek out specialized assistance, and to move through points of frustration, uncertainty, and confusion in the belief that you will come out with more awareness and a good sense of the next steps to take along your career path. We invite you to participate in an adventure and endeavor that we believe is every bit as exciting and rewarding as preparing for the Olympics. You are identifying your own mountain peaks and are setting out to climb them. Among your resources is this career-planning textbook, which incorporates the insights and experience of successful career planners. Most of all, the important attributes of your own spirit, vitality, and intuition, together with the desire to improve yourself, will serve you well throughout your search. This career fitness program will help you master the inevitable changes that occur within yourself and are associated with your evolving career choices and the work world around you. It will help you identify options that are consistent with who you are. It will enable you to be the champion of your own career.



EXERCISE your options

Are you prepared to engage in the enterprise of your life, YOUR CAREER? What is one thing you can do today to commit to your career? _____



Summary

The best approach to the process of career planning is first to examine who you are, what you know about yourself, and what you need and want, and next to mesh that information with the world of work. You then have the distinct advantage of being able to choose training for a career about which you are truly excited and enthusiastic. These two qualities are among the most important to potential employers. Even if the job market for the field you have chosen is extremely competitive, you will have an edge because of your sense of commitment, your passion, and your enthusiasm for what you are doing.

PURPOSE OF EXERCISES

The exercises from this chapter helped you explore your current feelings and attitudes and thus better understand yourself. Exercise 1.1, “First Impressions,” assisted you in taking stock of where you are and what you are feeling. Exercise 1.2 asked you to begin thinking about your interests, and Exercise 1.3 asked you to iden-

tify your personal strengths. Exercise 1.4 encouraged you to identify job preferences by ranking occupations according to how you perceive their status. Next, you will find **WWWebwise**, a web-based research activity that will enhance your understanding. **Reinforcing Your Learning Outcomes** will reinforce what you learned in this chapter.

EXERCISE

1.5 WWWebwise

Go to www.careerjournal.com/. Choose one article that interests you to read and report on in class. Include in your report why you selected the article, information that was new and surprising or that confirmed something for you, and how you can apply that information to your own career fitness program.

(Note: Please be aware that websites can change without notice. If a link does not work, find a similar site to complete the activity.)

REINFORCING YOUR LEARNING OUTCOMES

Review and Rate Your Chapter Outcomes. Indicate in the right-hand column how well you do the following items (1 = very well, to 5 = not at all). If you rated yourself 4 or 5, review the material on the pages in parentheses to ensure your career success.

How Well Can You Do the Following?

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Differentiate between a job and a career. (pp. 9–10) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ■ Identify and apply Super’s theory to your career development. (pp. 4–5) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ■ Determine how generational differences affect the workplace. (pp. 7–8) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ■ Discuss why personal assessment is the key factor leading to career satisfaction. (pp. 11–15) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ■ Understand the process, challenge, and commitment necessary to exercise your career options. (pp. 15–17) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



Go to the Career Fitness Portfolio at the end of the book and complete this chapter summary to build and record your personal Career Fitness Portfolio.

Additional Opportunity: Your instructor may choose to assign the Career Fitness Portfolio for in class or online completion. If so, they will provide the handout or link for you to access.