

Career Decision-Making

Career decision-making is a process which you may be involved in throughout your life. In the 21st century the world of work is unpredictable and requires a flexible proactive approach. New careers are constantly emerging and existing careers are undergoing change. Your first choice however, remains crucial. It is certainly an advantage to your future career development to start off in a suitable field.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SHAPING UP YOUR OWN FUTURE

Tips for being a survivor in the 21st century world of work

Be flexible, adaptable and willing to gain knowledge and learn new skills.

Be prepared for lifelong learning.

Build up a valuable network of contacts.

Be prepared to perform tasks that may not be exactly what you want to be doing, but which could pave the way for future development.

Be constantly on the lookout for possibilities to develop yourself and your skills.

Don't expect to stick to the same job for your entire life.

Move around while you can. Gain fresh experiences.

Find yourself a mentor-someone who you can rely on to give you feedback, encourage you and help you to find opportunities to develop in your career.

Change the World

NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

Enquiries

Student Counselling, Career and Development
Centre
Nelson Mandela University

<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

counselling@mandela.ac.za



mandela.ac.za



CAREER DECISION-MAKING

THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION IN CAREER DECISION MAKING

1.1 The self: looking inward

The first step in making a career decision is to reflect on yourself. Think about your abilities, skills, interests, personality and values by reflecting on your past experiences with regard to your studies, work (part-time and full-time) social and recreational activities.

1.1.1 Abilities and skills

Abilities: What are you good at?

Skills: What have you learnt to do well as a result of your experience?

At which activities do you excel?

Consider your academic performance in various subjects at school and at tertiary level. Also take into account what friends and family tell you about your competence in certain areas. Additionally your life experiences, including extramural activities such as hobbies, sport, church and youth activities, cultural societies, voluntary and paid employment can give you feedback on your particular skills and abilities.

1.1.2 Interests: What do you enjoy doing?

To help you decide on what you are really interested in, you need to consider the following questions:

What activities do you enjoy most? How do you spend your free time? What is your passion - what really excites you and gets your full attention?

1.1.3 Personality: What are you like as a person?

Personality has been defined as the most stable and enduring characteristics about a person. What are your most prominent personality characteristics? How would others describe the kind of person you are?

The kind of person you are will also play a role in determining the type/s of careers to which you would be suited

1.1.4 Values: What is important to you?

Your values are those things that are most important in your life. They guide your decisions and determine what motivates you. They therefore will influence decisions regarding what type of work you would like to do and the type of people with whom you would like to work.

CAREER ENVIRONMENT

The Career environment refers to:

the world of work, the job market and job opportunities.

specific careers and what kind of work they involve.

the education and training required for specific careers.

Information about the career environment can be obtained from:

Career books, career computer programs and literature

The Internet

Talking to people working in the field and spending time in the particular work environment

Educational institutions

Department of Labour

Career exhibitions/talks

EVALUATING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

In gathering information about a work environment you will need to be able to answer the following questions:

3.1 Surroundings

What sort of environment would the occupation offer? i.e. indoors/ outdoors, office, own or shared office, lab; noise; cleanliness.

3.2 Prospects

What does the future hold for this occupation?

3.3 Entry and training

What training do you need for this occupation?

3.4 Effects

What effects will this occupation have on your lifestyle?

3.5 Description

What will you actually do in this occupation? What do you like and dislike about this occupation?

3.6 Conditions

What is the salary like? The hours? Holidays? Will there be another benefit such as car, housing or medical aid schemes, pension fund, annual bonus?

Are there any conditions you really want, or dislike?

3.7 Organization

Are there any employment opportunities in this occupation? How does the occupation fit the overall organization?

3.8 People

What role do people play in this organization? Does it involve: Working alone or with others? Dealing with the public? Meeting new people? Working with people in a helping /leading/ influencing role?

WEIGHING UP THE ALTERNATIVES AND THEN MAKING AN INFORMED CAREER DECISION

After you have carefully considered the information about yourself and the environment, you need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Only then are you in a position to make an informed career decision. Link what you know about each career to what you know about yourself.

N.B. You are likely to repeat this process at various points in your career development.

RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE SELF

The following resources are available at the Nelson Mandela University Student Counselling offices on your Campus: Assessment of interests, abilities, personality, life-roles, values Posters/Wall Charts (linking personality to occupational preferences and subject choices at the Nelson Mandela University)

Computer programs such as PACE

Individual Career Counselling (free! for registered students)

Other options:

Open day

Internet sites

Counselling units at tertiary institutions, private psychologists

Personal feedback from friends, family, teachers and/or lecturers

