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1.1 Introduction

“You will be inclined to produce something or to provide a service for which you receive recompense. Your work will earn you the food and shelter you need to survive and less essential things for your enjoyment. You may work many long hours each day or a much smaller time segment.

Your work may be an important component of your life task. Or, your work may ensure your physical survival or comfort, allowing you to fulfill the tasks you came here to do.”

William Blank (www.themeaningoflife.org)

In this workbook I will be discussing the process of Dynamic Career Development, a process that involves adopting a mindset that fosters continued development and advancement. This workbook will engage the student in a process of self-examination and equip them with the skills necessary to navigate in today’s dynamic world. In order to thrive in these changing times, we must use strategies that are flexible and not become restricted by rigid and outdated approaches to career development.

Work is a major driving force in our lives, therefore, the search for a fulfilling vocation is a central aspect of our existence. It involves much more than merely looking out at the world. It involves delving into the depths of our own psyche to discover what motivates us and ignites our passions. In the coming pages you will be invited to embark on such a journey of self-discovery.

There is no centralised place where we can find a job in our modern society. We are surrounded by centralised service provision (the supermarket, shopping centres etc.), yet amidst the plethora of ‘one-stop shops’ there is no one place that can give us a job or career. Therefore, we must approach this challenge with an innovative and creative attitude.

Howard Figler has identified four distinct aspects to job search.

They are:

1. self-assessment skills
2. detective skills
3. communication skills
4. marketing skills

I would add a fifth and that is to be able to successfully integrate these processes to achieve the desired outcome. In order to be successful in today’s elusive ‘job market’ we must master all of these skills. For during our lives we may change jobs many times and thus it is as important for us to acquire these skills as it is to become lifelong learners.

“The business world — and society in general — is not a meritocracy in which the wisest and most virtuous person will be sought out from obscurity and escorted to a position of leadership.”

We must make it happen.

Part 1 begins by taking the reader on a journey of self-discovery, introducing them to ground breaking ideas in positive psychology, and helping them to create firm goals. The participants are then encouraged to analyse their belief systems and challenge limiting belief patterns. The concept of visualisation is introduced to encourage students to have a vision of their future. Many successful athletes and business people use these skills to achieve outstanding results.

Part 2 moves on to discuss the world of work and the opportunities that exist in the current employment climate. The next section discusses the ways to succeed in the workplace, using active listening and by creating win/win interactions. The concept of lifelong learning is discussed and the different ways to achieve this. The final section discusses the future of work, looking at the impact of globalisation, the ageing population and technology.

Part 3 equips the participant with the practical tools to promote themselves in the workplace. This includes the techniques for creating effective résumé techniques, how to succeed in interviews, personal presentation and creating an effective job search strategy. There is, therefore, a clear progression in the series from the self, to the world and finally how to succeed in job search.

This workbook based program can be delivered over ten two and half hour sessions. Throughout the book there are quotations from some of the world's greatest thinkers which can be used to stimulate discussion and creative thinking.

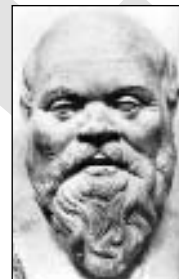
1.2 Self-Discovery

LEARNING GOAL

By the end of this chapter you should have an understanding of career, be more in touch with your strengths, and know how to maximise them through concerted mental focus.

“Know thyself”

Socrates (470-399 BC Greek Philosopher)



What is a Career?

The word career, like many words in the English language, is ambiguous. In the past it was generally used to refer to a single profession engaged in as a life work. It was usually associated with the professions like medicine, law and engineering.

We use the words ‘occupation’ ‘career’ ‘job’, and ‘vocation’ interchangeably, but in reality they do convey different ideas. The words ‘job’ and ‘work’ evoke different images to the term ‘career’. The phrase “it’s just a job” emphasises that the word ‘job’ is related to a specific task engaged in purely to supply the means to exist. Work is a practical output, it is visible, measurable and tangible. ‘Careers’ are a process, and as such they are an abstract concept. It is more than a job, it is who you are; we own our careers, for they are part of us and include the entirety of a person’s working life.

A career is the creation of the individual and represents the configuration of all facets of their life. The term ‘life career’ is now frequently used to acknowledge this integration. An individual’s interests, relationships, lifestyle, health and socioeconomic status will influence their choice of career. Therefore, when thinking about work, we need to take a holistic approach, considering all aspects of your life.

The word ‘career’ can be defined as “...the course of events which constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one’s commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development” (Super, 1976).

Exercise

What does the word career mean to you? What does it include? Do you have a career? Do your parents have a career?

In the past the word career conjured up images of professionals in suits advancing into the high echelons of society. The concept was strongly aligned with paid work. But this is an outdated perception of this concept. Today, it is applied to each and every individual, regardless of age or social class.

A career in the world today may be comprised of

- several different jobs,
- working for a variety of employers,
- experience across a number of industries,
- lifelong learning – retraining for new positions or ongoing professional education etc.,
- periods of underemployment or unemployment,
- varied work arrangements (contracts, casual, self-employment, part time),
- the development of a range of skills and abilities,
- responding to family duties,
- responding to labour market trends,
- recreation,
- volunteer or community work.

In essence your whole life!

In order to be successful in this dynamic world you will need to

- be committed to lifelong learning,
- know yourself – your abilities and interests,
- aim to develop *Kaizen*, a belief in steady improvement, and an awareness that small change can lead to profound growth,
- adopt a positive mindset; become the master of your own destiny,
- take the initiative – make things happen, don't wait for them to happen,
- be aware of the emerging trends in the world of work, and respond by learning a new skill or adapting your approach,
- take a holistic approach,
- embrace change,
- be open to serendipity – chance encounters may lead to career shifts,
- be aware that we live an interconnected world – synchronicity,
- develop employability skills.

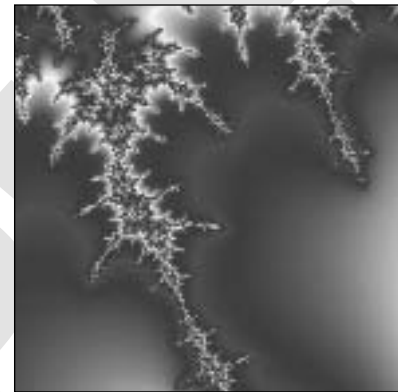
Career development is a lifelong process. It is developmental in nature in that it may proceed through various stages following a clear evolution (e.g. university ⇒ graduate studies ⇒ junior professional ⇒ senior professional ⇒ manager ⇒ retirement) or it may encompass a more ad hoc progression, including radical changes. Indeed this is a pattern that is becoming more prevalent today. Career development may be defined as the, “*complex process of managing life, learning and work over the lifespan*” (Miles Morgan, 2003).

Wendy Patton and Mary McMahon developed the *Systems Theory of Career Development* (Patton & McMahon, 1999). In this they discuss how a range of forces such as our parents, ethnic background, gender, history, geography, school and the media influences an individual's career. These various systems influence each other, change over time and are affected by chance

When thinking of the word career, we may have visions of a clear path of development that begins as soon as we leave school and continues until retirement. We see a clear linear progression that is secure and direct. However, in today's world, it may be more useful to see career development as a cyclic process, whereby you follow a certain path progress to a certain level, then change tack and begin a new cycle of learning and development.

Today an individual's career may encompass a variety of divergent and contrasting paths. It is now commonplace for people to make radical changes in direction during their careers. This is in part due to the impact of social, economic and technological changes. These changes have fundamentally altered the fabric of our society, and will continue to do so.

In a dynamic world we must be ready to change in response to the fluidity of our environment. Noted Canadian careers expert, Stu Conger, suggests that in these times, career counselors are "*chaos pilots*", as they assist people to make decisions in a world that appears to be chaotic but does indeed have an underlying order (i.e. fractals – complex and seemingly chaotic patterns with an inherent geometric precision that endlessly repeats).



We may engage in work that is fulfilling and utilises our talents or we may engage in work so that we may have the resources to enjoy our talents. Albert Einstein was employed as an office clerk while he worked on the Theory of Relativity. The mundane atmosphere of the office was a haven, for it allowed him to devote his energy to his passion. Or perhaps from your earliest memories you have cultivated a passion for a certain path, or you may plan to follow in the footsteps of your parents.

The fact is that few people actually have a definitive idea of a clear career path for themselves. Indeed, recent research in the field has shown that chance has a major impact on career development. Many people have chance encounters or meetings that change their lives. Until recently this sort of phenomenon was not acknowledged. However, with the application of Chaos Theory to career development, there has been an acknowledgement of serendipity as a factor. (Bloch, 2005)

Deborah Bloch, Jim Bright and Robert Pryor have applied some of the concepts of chaos theory to career development.

The key points they have noted are:

1. We live in an interconnected world.
2. Small changes can produce profound outcomes – the Butterfly Effect.
3. Early theories of career development focused on linear career paths – we know now many careers do not develop in this manner.
4. Constant change – in us and in our environment.
5. Chance encounters may lead to dramatic change.

"A consistent man believes in destiny, a capricious man in chance."

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881 – British Prime Minister)

Exercise

What factor has chance played in affecting decisions in your life?

Have you or a family member had a chance experience that has led to career or career goals changing? Do some research and find a famous person whose career was influenced by chance.

“Some things have to be believed to be seen.”

Ralph Hodgson (American writer)

In order to take advantage of chance we must be open to opportunity, and this is where a positive attitude is essential. If we are in a positive frame of mind, we are more likely to be aware of opportunity. Have you ever noticed that when you are in the kitchen and you are trying to find something in the cupboard and you are saying, the “tomato sauce is not here”, but your partner walks right up to the cupboard and pulls it out from directly in front of you. Your negative mental focus was contributing to your blindness. Indeed, this can happen in life. If we don't have an optimistic outlook, opportunity will pass us by.

“I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it”

Stephen Leacock (1869-1944 Canadian Economist and humorist)

When we talk about being open to chance, it is not a passive approach; it involves maximising your opportunities and increasing your encounters with people that will lead to chance interactions, and allow luck to take its course. This is quite different from sitting back and just waiting for something to come to you.

Exercise

Think of a time when you created your own luck.

“Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart...who looks outside dreams, who looks inside awakes.”

Carl Jung (1875-1961 Swiss psychiatrist and philosopher)



Exercise

Everyone has a career – think of some examples of careers that do not fit the traditional idea of this concept.

Our career is the basis of our sense of self and it will affect our status, power and social identity and nurture our sense of belonging to a greater order. Work is a reflection of our place in the world.

The word ‘vocation’, from the Latin *vocare*, means a calling, but you must be listening in order to hear. That is, you must be attuned to your strengths, abilities and talents in order for them to be utilised in your work. It is through the full expression of our potential we will find success and thus it is important to first know ourselves in order to find our place in the world.

The word 'education' comes from the Latin *educere* which means 'to draw out, to lead forth'. Therefore, the first step in careers education is to get in touch with yourself, answer the calling and decide what your strengths are and what you have to offer the world.

"Find a job that allows you to be who you are"

Anonymous

Most of us spend a great deal of time looking outward on the world to see what people would want from us. While it is important to know what the world wants it is also vital that we can find a good match between our goals and desires and our career. We need to start listening to ourselves and to get in touch with our strengths and interests. The fact is that our career is deeply related to our sense of self and thus, if we wish to have a successful and rewarding career, it is important that we engage in work that is congruent with our values, needs and abilities.

Exercise

What is your deepest desire? What do you dream of achieving?

Most people are all too aware of their shortcomings, but vague about their good points. As such, most people find that they struggle with this process. In Australia, where we have a self-effacing culture, the 'tall poppy' is cut down to size. In such an environment, people are not encouraged to compliment each other or to feel good about their successes, for in this environment such behaviour is seen as negative.

This contrasts with the American culture in which people are encouraged to compliment others and to acknowledge their strengths.

"Although men are accused of not knowing their own weakness, yet perhaps few know their own strength. It is in men as in soils, where sometimes there is a vein of gold which the owner knows not of."

Jonathan Swift (Irish writer 1667-1745)

Exercise

How does the tall poppy syndrome affect you? Are you comfortable talking about your strengths and successes? How do you feel when someone else is talking about their achievements? Why do you feel like this? Will this affect your career aspirations?

While self-awareness is important, career development of individuals can only be understood in relation to their environments. The social, political and economic climate will have an impact on the types of positions that are available and the level of competition in the job market. These factors will be discussed in detail in **Part 2**.