Your Career Fitness Profile

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Learning Objectives

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.

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, needs, interests, values, and vision of the future.

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

BIL KEANE
Part I Your Career Fitness Profile

**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. Once you begin to identify who you are and what energizes you about life, you can begin to incorporate those insights into a career. Self-awareness is the first stage of both the career choice and career change process. As you look for insights that will help you chart your career well into the 21st century, it is useful 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.

As you explore your abilities, your interests, and your personality, you will learn more about what kind of work you enjoy.

**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.

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.

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**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, once 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 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. Super’s theory applies each time you make a career change: You will reexperience the stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement.
Understanding Life Stages

Author Gail Sheehy has explored how people change as they age, and she 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 ultimately mean retraining and an early exit 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 may mean going to an alternate plan should a primary career end by either choice or economic factors.

Because we are living longer, we will have longer to grow up and grow old. We need to seek meaning to our existence and be open to new experiences. These can include 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, being stuck, or even being directed by unforeseen events. In essence, our later adulthood can 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 at a rapid rate, 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.
Understanding and 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. Remember as we look at each group to recognize 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.

Gen Y (born 1977–2000)

These are the newest members of the workforce. They are often called millennials. Because their numbers are similar to the baby boomers, their impact will be noteworthy. They have been raised with three other generations and they feel comfortable with all age levels. They are the digital natives who have grown up with technology and the web. They are 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 are well educated, globally aware, civic minded, polite, and tolerant of authority. They value and learn from their peers and are more inclusive and group oriented than any other generation.

Gen X (born 1965–1976)

They represent almost a third of the workforce, and they will take over as the boomers retire. Because they are smaller in numbers than 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. They 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, their motto 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 1946–1964)

They are 45 percent of the current workforce and as such they make up the largest population within the workforce. Their 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. They 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.

Matures (born 1933–1945)
There are 34 million people in this generation, and they are often called traditionalists. They value history, work experience, the company legacy, and a strong tradition based on loyalty, hard work, and conformity. They are civic minded and help oriented. They are sometimes perceived as authoritative and unwilling to accept new ideas or change. They are valuable mentors to the younger generations and will continue to fill in the gaps in the labor pool. They want respect and the opportunity to continue to make a contribution.

SUCCESS STRATEGIES

Identifying Generations by Their Behaviors
Consider the following scenarios:
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 fellow colleague? If you were managing this person? Would you have any advice to share if they asked, “How can I get ahead in this organization?”
1. 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?”
2. 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.
3. A professor on a college campus started bringing her dog to her office and to class without asking

A career is the integration of personality with work activities
Follow intuitions and not trends
Be prepared to manage your career

for permission. She was the only one on campus to do so.
4. An employee regularly leaves work to attend his son’s soccer game.
5. A salesman offers to brief a colleague about a meeting with a prospective new client. The colleague declines, certain that all will go well.
6. After working for a year, an employee asks for a two-month leave to take advantage of a unique travel opportunity.
7. 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.
8. Although not part of the company culture, an employee requests working from home three days a week.
9. An employee volunteers to stay late and close up for the night when the rest of the group is attending a training session.

Understanding the Differences 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 a career early in life, and they stayed in it most of their life. Farmers worked on their farms, secretaries stayed in the office, and teachers taught until retirement. More recently, the trend in America has shifted toward multiple careers. We can now expect to have four or more careers in our life. 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 be different in the future. 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.

This is markedly different from the world in which the Matures 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 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 both your needs and 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 there seems to be a renewed need for teachers in the workforce. 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 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 a job applicant into a computer training program because there’s an opening. By knowing your own preferences, you will be ready to manage your career path instead of merely following others’ suggestions. Complete the following exercises to jump-start your personal assessment by thinking about your current preferences in 1.2 and by describing yourself in 1.3.

### 1.2 Identify Your Interests

1. What subjects in school do I like?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

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

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

(continued)
Circle those adjectives that best describe you. Place an “X” in front of those adjectives that are least like you.

1. 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 about them?

____________________________________________________________________

1.3 Describe Yourself

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>REALISTIC</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>INVESTIGATIVE</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>ARTISTIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>practical</td>
<td>persistent</td>
<td>careful</td>
<td>introverted</td>
<td>emotional</td>
<td>impulsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>athletic</td>
<td>conforming</td>
<td>achieving</td>
<td>confident</td>
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<td>flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rugged</td>
<td>down to earth</td>
<td>curious</td>
<td>analytical</td>
<td>imaginative</td>
<td>idealistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable</td>
<td>self-reliant</td>
<td>precise</td>
<td>intellectual</td>
<td>unordered</td>
<td>original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frank</td>
<td></td>
<td>independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>ENTERPRISING</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>CONVENTIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>helpful</td>
<td>understanding</td>
<td>energetic</td>
<td>adventurous</td>
<td>conscientious</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insightful</td>
<td>popular</td>
<td>driving</td>
<td>powerful</td>
<td>persistent</td>
<td>orderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kind</td>
<td>cooperative</td>
<td>ambitious</td>
<td>persuasive</td>
<td>organized</td>
<td>efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>responsible</td>
<td>assertive</td>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>obedient</td>
<td>detailed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tactful</td>
<td>flirtatious</td>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
<td></td>
<td>dependable</td>
<td>thorough</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. You will read more about this code and how it can help you determine an appropriate career fit in later chapters. 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. You will have an opportunity to refine your code further and learn how the Holland Code will help you narrow down the selection of possible careers to those that will offer the best fit in Chapter 4. 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 of people you like to be around here using the three-letter code.

1. ____________________ 2. ____________________ 3. ____________________
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 people may be changing jobs and careers several times in their lives, 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. Most notably, a recent Gallup Poll indicated that 72 percent of the nation’s workforce is unhappy. The Conference Board, a business research organization, released a survey of 5,000 people in the United States indicating that, across different ages and income levels, workers were less satisfied with their jobs in 2002 than in 1995, despite good economic times during a majority of those years. The largest decline in overall satisfaction was from 60.9 percent in 1995 to 47.4 percent by 2002 among 35- to 44-year-olds. People in this age group were once 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 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. This text will enable you to 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 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 we add information about our changing self and the world around us. We are constantly revising our career plan as we grow and change. This means there

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.

**FACTS AND FIGURES**

**Greatest Contributors to Quality of Life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job/career satisfaction</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Job/career satisfaction</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with family</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship with family</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from *U.S. News & World Report*.)

**Discuss It**

1. Give an example of a satisfying job. Describe the type of work, a routine day, the location and commute time, and the workplace (including your work space). List the pros and cons of this job.
2. Describe your idea of a satisfying family relationship. Include the role of each participant.
3. Support or refute this statement: “Money is the root of all evil.”
4. Which of the three factors would you rate most highly as contributing to your quality of life?
5. How does your current situation support the factor that you selected?
6. Have you made career decisions based on the factor that you selected?
7. Are there any other factors that you consider most important to your quality of life?
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 clerical work might be interesting. With the help of a friend, Sandra put together a résumé and went on the Internet to search for jobs. There were hundreds of clerical positions, and 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 businesses 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 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 secretarial 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**

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 “Success 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.

If you examine enough options during the career-planning process, you may be able to use career experiences to move into related areas. Subsequent chapters in this book will help you identify your related options. 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 newspaper, 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

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**SUCCESS STORIES**

Sample Career Changers

Here are some examples of the kinds of career selections 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 painting. 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.

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Preparation = short-term and long-term goals
SUCCESS STORIES

More Career Changers

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 at an annual salary of $60,000. 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.

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 and perspective on this constant stream of information is, precisely, knowing who you are; so when you are surfing, listening, 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.

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  
________ lawyer  
________ agriculture supervisor  
________ movie director
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 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 joy in what you are doing. We elaborate further on these attitudes for success in Chapter 2 and identify and discuss the attitudinal components that will make you a success in whatever career you choose.

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 to take 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 identify your personal strengths. (In Chapter 4, when you are reading about the personality profiles of different careers, you can use this list as another piece to complete the “personality puzzle.”) Exercise 1.4 encouraged you to identify job preferences by ranking occupations according to how you perceive their status. At the end of each chapter’s exercises you will find WWWebwise, a web-based research activity that will enhance and reinforce the learnings in the chapter.
1.5 WWWWebwise

Go to http://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.*

Go to page 174 of your Career Fitness Portfolio and complete the chapter summary now, so you can continue building your portfolio as you complete each chapter.