

# A Useful Guide to Career Development



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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

**This Useful Guide will be of value to anyone who wants to ...**

- Assess or review their career to date.
- Consider, plan or manage their future career development.

**This will include people who ...**

- Are content in their current job and with their current employer, but wish to consider ways to progress their career in the future.
- Are unsure that they have chosen an appropriate vocational/professional area, and want to review their current position and consider future options.
- Are unhappy in their current job/vocational/professional area, and/or organisation, and want to make changes.

Depending on where you are in your career development, you might find it useful to go through each chapter in sequence completing all the exercises, or alternatively you might find it more useful to dip in and out of the Useful Guide picking out specific chapters, sections or exercises which are of relevance to your particular situation.

In this Useful Guide we will explore the following ...

- **Career development and its importance**  
Understanding what career development is and looking at individual and organisational responsibilities.
- **Career patterns and influences**  
Looking at different career patterns.  
Exploring factors which have influenced your career choices and decisions.
- **Career success and satisfaction**  
Exploring different models of career success and identifying what career success means to you. Self assessment exercise determining the extent to which your job satisfies your current needs, and assists you in working towards future career aspirations and your model of career success.
- **Career aspirations**  
Questions to help you clarify your future career aspirations and consider what you need to do to achieve them.

- **Skills and ability audit**

An exercise to help you identify and assess relevant skills and competencies already acquired, and to highlight any gaps or areas for development.

- **Promoting your career development**

Behaviours, approaches and strategies to promote career development.

- **Action planning**

A framework to help you plan and progress the actions you need to take to achieve your career goals

- **Making it happen**

Highlighting potential problems/blockages to implementing career plans and achieving aspirations, with suggested solutions.

There are several exercises in the Useful Guide. You can either print out the relevant pages and write on the printout or, if you prefer, you can download the MS Word toolkit from [here](#) and do the exercises on your computer.

## Chapter 2 - Career Development and its Importance

Career development is about defining, managing and controlling your career, so you need to start by clarifying your career goals and aspirations, and then working out and implementing a plan of action to make this a reality. But it's not as straight forward as it sounds, as you probably already know. Many people struggle to clarify exactly what they want to achieve and then to incorporate this into a realistic action plan. Maintaining motivation and momentum to implement action plans when faced with various problems and difficulties arising along the way can be equally challenging.

Professional advice and guidance should be available within your organisation to assist you, via management and the HR department. Hopefully you will also benefit from the information, questionnaires and assessment tools included in this Useful Guide.

So who is responsible for your career development? Well employers and managers have a responsibility to develop their staff and ensure they are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to do their job. Skilled and experienced staff are vital for the growth, development and competitiveness of any business, so when a company invests in the development of its staff, there are obvious benefits.

Individual companies have different attitudes and practices in regards to staff career development, investing differing amounts of time and resources. This is sometimes influenced by budgetary constraints, with some organisations having limited funds to invest in staff development. Where this is the case, individuals who want to progress and develop their skills and experiences may have to take more responsibility for their own career development, perhaps investing their own personal finances and/or time to achieve career goals. This may also be the case where organisations have a narrow view of staff development, restricting it to the specific role which an employee is currently undertaking, in the company, rather than also preparing the employee for future development and higher level roles.

Some companies like to 'grow their own' and therefore invest heavily in developing their future managers and leaders from within the company. Other organisations put more emphasis on bringing in 'fresh blood' and welcome the diversity of experience and approaches which they feel 'outsiders' bring.

Ultimately the responsibility for your career development lies with you. It's your life and it's your career, and it's up to you to make it what you want it to be! So it's pointless moaning about the company not providing the finances or time off you need to undertake a particular course or development activity, to get you further up the ladder. If the company is not able or willing to provide the money, you need to look at other options available to you, e.g. a loan from parents, friends, the bank, professional and [career development loans](#), using personal savings or going without a 'luxury' item. You need to see it as an investment in yourself and your future career. Wise investments can multiply your initial investment many times over. Similarly if your employer will not allow you day release or time off to undertake the training or development activity, you may have to look at ways to 'create' more time, by eliminating time wasters, delegating more, or perhaps reducing the time you spend on certain other activities.

Choosing the right time in your life to develop your career is also important, and this will be different for all of us depending on personal circumstances and responsibilities. There is no right or wrong time - it's very much an individual thing, and for some people they will have several stops and starts throughout their career history.

## Chapter 3 - Career Patterns and Influences

In this chapter will look at career patterns and factors which have influenced your earlier career choices and decisions. Exploring these patterns and influences will enable you to reflect on and understand how your career has developed to date, and it may be helpful in defining and focusing on future career priorities, aspirations and plans.

### Career Patterns

Your career pattern is based on the rate, level and type of movement you have made in your employment. Some people make these moves in a very strategic and purposeful way, whilst others take a more casual approach. Have a look at the following 4 common patterns and see if you can identify your own:

#### Drifters

These are people who drift into jobs, often because they are bored in their existing job or because an opportunity happens to come their way. They don't tend to think strategically about their job moves in terms of career direction or level. Some drifters make several job moves during their career whilst others make only one or two.

#### Regulars

These are people who have chosen or found themselves in a job area or profession, and stuck at it throughout their working lives. Their approach to their job may vary in that some regulars are very committed and passionate about their jobs, whilst others simply see it as a means to an end. They often stay in the same job or type of job and at roughly the same level, preferring not to progress up the career ladder into management for different reasons, e.g. they want to continue working with clients and wouldn't get the opportunity in a management post, or they don't want the added responsibility.

#### Steady ascenders

These are people who make steady ascent up a few rungs of the career ladder. This progress is usually the result of their concerted efforts, e.g. undertaking training and development and/or applying for higher level jobs, through their own volition or through encouragement. Their career progress may occur in one organisation, but they sometimes move to other organisations for development opportunities. The rate at which they ascend up the ladder may vary, i.e. some may make all their moves within a few years and then stop at that level for the

rest of their working lives, whilst other may take several years to move up 2 or 3 rungs. They can often be found in lower to middle management jobs.

### **Fast streamers**

These are people who make rapid progress in their careers and end up at the top or very near the top of their profession or organisation. They often take a very strategic approach to their careers, moving on to higher level jobs on a fairly regular basis, and often taking up positions in different organisations. They are usually very ambitious and focused on achievement.

*Did you identify with any of the patterns above?*

There is no right or wrong career pattern, and you may find that your career pattern changes at different points in your life depending on prevailing needs and priorities, as in Jenny's case below:

### **Example**

Jenny began her career in teaching as a *steady ascender*. In her late 20s she had a couple of children and decided to put her career on hold for a few years to bring them up. She then became a *regular* and worked on a part time basis. When her children reached their teens, she went back to full-time teaching and regained her ambition to progress her career. Having agreed with her husband that she would be the main breadwinner in the family, and he would take on the childcare responsibilities, she became a *fast streamer*, and in the following years achieved her ambition to become a senior education inspector.

Whichever career pattern you chose needs to be compatible with your career aspirations if you are to achieve success in this aspect of your life.

### **Influences**

Now let's move on to look at the things which have influenced you.

Have a look at the chart below and assess the extent to which the following factors have influenced your career choices and decisions to date. Rate each factor in terms of its level of influence using a sliding scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest level of influence and 5 being the highest.

This questionnaire is available in the MS Word toolkit which can be downloaded [here](#).

	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Level of influence</b>
1	Parental expectations or influence	
2	Professional advice or guidance	
3	Influence or pressure from peers	
4	Personal or family circumstances including health, responsibilities, work/life balance	
5	Financial gains	
6	Interest in the type of work/professional area	
7	Prestige/kudos of the company/organisation	
8	Social commitment/dedication to a cause	
9	Using your skills and strengths	
10	Level of confidence – including lack of confidence	
11	Job was available/easy option	
12	Good career prospects/opportunity for progression	
13	Job/career provided stability and security	
14	Limited opportunities in the job market	
15	Other factors - please specify	

Now you have completed the assessment, give some thought to the following questions on the next page ...

**Which factors have had the most influence on you?**

**To what extent have these factors/influences helped or hindered your career development?**

**To what extent were you in control of these factors?**

**Which of these influences are no longer relevant or helpful to your future career development and which ones are?**

Since each person's answers to the above questions will be different, you will need to draw your own conclusions from your responses, and consider how this might be helpful to you in moving forward with your future career development. Below is an example of how John found it useful to reflect on his earlier influences and then to take control and constructive action. This not only improved his career progression, but also made him a happier and more positive person.

## **John**

After completing the exercise, John became aware that his earlier career choices had been significantly influenced by others; family, peers, teachers, etc. He found himself in accountancy jobs which gave him some professional satisfaction, but working for organisations whose ethos and priorities were contrary to his own. This made him reluctant to progress further up the ladder even though he had the ability, and he started to become despondent, dissatisfied and disillusioned.

After doing the exercise, he decided that the corporate life into which he had been 'pushed' into by others was not for him. He realised that his existing skills and experience were transferable, and could be used to find work in very different types of organisations.

He successfully applied for jobs in the voluntary/charity sector, doing similar work in accounts/finance, but for organisations whose purpose and ethos were more in line with his own values.

Feeling happier and more motivated, he began to take a greater interest in his career development and is now progressing up the career ladder in that sector.

## Chapter 4 - Career Success and Satisfaction

In this chapter we will start to focus on your future career aspirations by looking at different models of career success, and identifying what career success means to you. You will then have an opportunity to do an exercise which looks at the job you are in now, and the extent to which it meets your current needs, your future career aspirations and your personal model of career success. The results of this assessment will help you to draw up a list of actions to promote further progress.

So let's begin by understanding that career success means different things to different people, and you should not feel pressurised into conforming to any particular model. Similarly, we also need to accept that career success may mean different things to us at different times in our lives, as our circumstances and responsibilities change.

Below are some models of career success for you to consider.

### Models of career success

#### Vertical progression

This is the traditional model of career success, which involves progressing up the career ladder to higher level jobs throughout your employment. Under the traditional model, ultimate career success would be reaching the very top of the ladder. But getting to the very top isn't everyone's idea of success, nor is it feasible. Some people may not want the level of responsibility or stress associated with these top jobs as they have other priorities, or they may not have the ability and skills to get to the very top. Career success under the vertical progression model could also mean any of the following ...

- Moving up one rung of the ladder to a senior grade in their job/profession.
- Moving up two or three rungs to supervisory/lower management positions.
- Moving up several rungs to middle/senior management jobs.

Some people progress very swiftly up the ladder, whilst others make slow steady progress. Similarly some people may take breaks in their progression when other personal issues take priority, e.g. bringing up a family or a period of illness.

### **Horizontal progression**

This model involves making sideways moves into a different job or profession, but at a similar level. Having made this move, some people then go on to vertical progression.

Examples of horizontal progression include the following ...

- People who enjoy their job or profession but want to do the same work in a different type of organisation, with a different culture, ethos or purpose.
- People who are in a job/profession they do not like and want to move into something else at a similar level. This may involve them using their transferable skills to make a sideways move, or retraining for a completely different job, e.g. a child social worker retraining to become a primary school teacher.

### **From temporary to permanent position**

For some people career success may be simply finding a permanent position in their chosen job or profession which gives them some financial and employment security and stability. This may be because they have worked in temporary positions for a number of years, either through choice, or because of a shortage of permanent jobs in their specific field.

### **Finding a satisfying job or career which provides ongoing development and challenge**

Some people may find themselves working in jobs or professions which they find routine, boring or lacking in opportunities for development and challenge. This may be due to a number of reasons including the following ...

- Poor management.
- Lack of innovation, dynamism or resources in the department or organisation they work in.
- The limits of the actual job they are employed to do.

People who find themselves in this position need to determine what their particular issue is in order to find a solution. For some the solution may be to apply for a similar job in another department or another company offering greater scope and opportunities. For others the answer could be to move into a completely different type of job or profession, which may or may not involve further training or retraining

### **Getting fulfilment out of your current position or profession**

Sometimes people find themselves losing interest or motivation in a job or profession which they really like. They may not wish to move out of their job/profession or the company they work for, but want to regain or rekindle some interest and motivation. Again there can be numerous reasons why people lose their interest and motivation, and this needs to be explored in order to find an appropriate solution. Sometimes the immediate answer to the problem may be outside their control e.g. ineffective manager, limited company resources, limited scope for development. But we sometimes have to look beyond these external factors and think about what we can do to change things, e.g. change our strategy, approach, attitude, or become more creative in our existing job.

There is more about this further on in the Useful Guide.

### **Finding a job or career in something which they love or are passionate about**

For some people career success is to find a job which enables them to work in or do something they are passionate about. That could include contributing to a valuable cause they feel strongly about, e.g. the environment or the protection of vulnerable young people, or it could be working in an area they have a great love or passion for such as football or fashion.

### **Achieving work/life balance**

Achieving work/life balance is more important to some people than others. Some people happily integrate work and life together with no clear division, whilst others like to achieve a clearer separation between the two, or allocate appropriate time to each. Some people do this quite easily whilst others struggle to get the balance right. Getting the right balance might require planning, adjusting or renegotiating contracts, patterns of work, or becoming more assertive, etc.

If you want to delve more deeply into work life balance check out A Useful Guide to Work Life Balance [here](#).

So what does career success mean to you? Did you identify with any of the models above? Hopefully you did and this will be helpful in clarifying your future career goals and aspirations and developing your action plan.

Now we will move on to an exercise which determines the extent to which your current job satisfies your needs, and assists you in working towards future

career aspirations and your personal model of career success. Some of you may be very clear about your career aspirations whilst others will just have a general idea. Whichever group you fall into, this exercise will help you to start clarifying or to reconfirm your career aspirations.

### **Self Assessment Exercise – Your Current Job**

Indicate your level of satisfaction in each area using a sliding scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least satisfied and 5 being the most satisfied. The exercise is divided into 2 sections ...

- 1. The company you work for**
- 2. The job itself and the opportunities, terms and conditions provided**

In each of the sections there are a number of headings, and under each of these is a list of factors in italics which relate to each heading.

In order to give a score to each of the headings you should consider the factors in italics.

If you find that one of the headings is an area of little interest to you, e.g. managerial /supervisory responsibilities, then you will probably give this a high score, indicating that you are satisfied with the level provided in your current job.

This questionnaire is available in the MS Word toolkit which can be downloaded [here](#).

	<b>SECTION A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Level of Satisfaction 1 – 5 points</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>The sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Private, public, voluntary, charity</i></li> </ul>	
<b>2</b>	<b>The business /industry area</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The specific nature of the business/ industry – e.g. housing, finance, retail, PR, childcare</i></li> </ul>	
<b>3</b>	<b>The size of the company</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Large, medium, small</i></li> </ul>	
<b>4</b>	<b>The reputation/level of prestige</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How your company is regarded by its clients/ service users, the wider community, industry/business sector</i></li> </ul>	
<b>5</b>	<b>The company culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Formal, informal or somewhere in between</i></li> <li>• <i>Attitude towards risk taking and progress</i></li> <li>• <i>Attitude and behaviour towards staff and customers</i></li> </ul>	
	<b>Score for Section A</b>	
	<b>SECTION B - YOUR JOB, OPPORTUNITIES, TERMS &amp; CONDITIONS</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>The content of your job</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The nature of your job and the tasks/duties involved</i></li> <li>• <i>The level at which you operate</i></li> </ul>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Level of autonomy and independence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Opportunities to make decisions and take action on own initiative</i></li> </ul>	

	<b>SECTION A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Level of Satisfaction 1 – 5 points</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Scope for creativity and challenge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Opportunities to be creative and innovative</i></li> <li>• <i>Opportunities to take on different projects/ areas of work</i></li> <li>• <i>Challenges and opportunities to be stretched professionally or personally</i></li> <li>• <i>Problem solving opportunities</i></li> </ul>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Sense of achievement , value, recognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feel that the job you carry out has a value or benefit</i></li> <li>• <i>Feel that you are appreciated and valued in the organisation</i></li> <li>• <i>Feel that the department/ organisation you work for carries out a worthwhile function</i></li> <li>• <i>Recognition for your ideas and achievements within the job</i></li> </ul>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Your management/supervisory responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Scope/opportunities/ responsibilities to organise develop and manage people and/or projects</i></li> <li>• <i>The number of people and/or functions which you manage</i></li> </ul>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>The way in which you are managed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The style and approach of your manager</i></li> <li>• <i>The type and level of support, encouragement and development</i></li> </ul>	

	<b>SECTION A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Level of Satisfaction 1 – 5 points</b>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Job stability and security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The level of security in your profession /area of work</i></li> <li><i>The security of your current job in the organisation</i></li> </ul>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Career development and prospects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Appropriate training and development opportunities available to you</i></li> <li><i>Opportunities to make sideways or upwards moves within the organisation</i></li> </ul>	
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Your working hours and conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The number of hours you work</i></li> <li><i>The level of flexibility in working patterns and hours</i></li> <li><i>Other terms and conditions e.g. leave arrangements</i></li> <li><i>Satisfactory work life balance</i></li> <li><i>Remuneration/pay</i></li> </ul>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Personal &amp; social satisfaction/enjoyment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The type and level of social interaction with colleagues and/ or clients</i></li> </ul>	
	<b>Score for Section B</b>	
	<b>TOTAL SCORE FOR SECTIONS A AND B</b>	

Now you have completed the assessment, what conclusions can you draw and how can you use this information constructively? Well if you work through the following paragraphs this will help you to draw some conclusions and identify personal actions to progress your general career aspirations, and work towards your model of career success.

First let's look at your scores for each of the 2 sections. The maximum score for Section A is 25, and for Section B is 50, giving a total score of 75. If you have achieved this figure, then it is likely that the company you work for and the job you are in are meeting your current needs and supporting your future career aspirations. Well done, you are on the right track, but you still need to think ahead and plan your future moves in order to achieve your ultimate career goals.

If your total score is below 75 which will be the case for most people, then it will be useful to go through each of the headings in the two sections and identify the specific issues you are less satisfied with, i.e. you have given them a low score. You then need to determine how important these issues are to you and to your career development. Any issues which cause real concern to you and/or hamper you achieving your career aspirations or career success will need to be addressed, even if it is only one item.

So, for example, you could have achieved a high total score of 71 overall, but given a really low score to question 8 in Section B, relating to opportunities for training and development. No matter how content you may be with other aspects of the organisation and the job itself, if there are limited opportunities for career development and progression and this is important to you, it is unlikely you will achieve career success, without addressing this point. You may need to do this by looking for another job with your current employer or with another organisation.

Alternatively you may need to take a proactive approach, talk to your manager or other supportive colleagues in the organisation, and look for ways to create opportunities in your current job, such as a secondment or initiating a special project.

There is more on this later in the Useful Guide.

Read the following **Points for Consideration** on the next few pages to help you analyse your assessment and draw up some useful actions.

## POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

	<b>Section A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Points for Consideration</b>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>The sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Private, public, voluntary, charity</i></li> </ul>	<p>Finding work in the right sector is crucial. It helps to create greater harmony between your personal values and ambitions, and the organisation's purpose and ethos. This is likely to lead to greater career and personal satisfaction in the long run.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>The business /industry area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The specific nature of the business/ industry – e.g. local government, banking, retail</i></li> </ul>	<p>Again this is similar to the point made above. If the fast paced commercial world is not for you, (or vice versa), it can affect the way you feel about the organisation, and impact on performance and commitment.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>The size of the company</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Large, medium, small</i></li> </ul>	<p>The size of an organisation often affects its culture and operation. It might also have an impact on the resources available to assist your development and career opportunities.</p> <p>Do these suit the way you work and your career aspirations?</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>The reputation/level of prestige</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>How your company is regarded by its clients/ service users, the wider community, industry/business sector</i></li> </ul>	<p>Would you feel more stimulated working for a prestigious organisation?</p> <p>Do the pace and demands of your high achieving organisation put you under too much pressure?</p>

	<b>Section A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Points for Consideration</b>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>The company culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>-Formal, informal or somewhere in between</i></li> <li>• <i>-Level of support and encouragement given to risk taking</i></li> </ul>	<p>Are you feeling frustrated with the strict formalities and bureaucracy, or do you find it difficult to work without clear structures and procedures?</p> <p>Is the anti -risk taking culture stifling your development?</p> <p>Is the lack of support hampering your career development?</p>
	<b>Section B - YOUR JOB, OPPORTUNITIES, TERMS &amp; CONDITIONS</b>	
<b>1</b>	<p><b>The content of your job</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The nature of your job and the tasks/duties involved</i></li> <li>• <i>The level at which you operate</i></li> </ul>	<p>Do you enjoy the tasks, duties and skills involved in your day to day work?</p> <p>Are you operating at a technical or professional level relevant to your experience and qualifications?</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Level of autonomy and independence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Opportunities to make decisions and take action on own initiative</i></li> </ul>	<p>Would you like to have greater opportunities to make decisions and work on your own initiative?</p> <p>Is the lack of opportunity limiting your experience and opportunities for progression?</p>

	<b>Section A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Points for Consideration</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Scope for creativity and challenge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Opportunities to be creative and innovative</i></li> <li>• <i>Opportunities to take on different projects/ areas of work</i></li> <li>• <i>Challenges and opportunities to be stretched professionally or personally</i></li> <li>• <i>Problem solving opportunities</i></li> </ul>	<p>Do you need or want more creativity and challenge in your job?</p> <p>How would this benefit your career development?</p> <p>Is this something which you could initiate yourself or are you totally reliant on others to provide these opportunities for you?</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Sense of achievement , value, recognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feel that the job you carry out has a value or benefit</i></li> <li>• <i>Feel that you are appreciated and valued in the organisation</i></li> <li>• <i>Feel that the department/ organisation you work for carries out a worthwhile function</i></li> <li>• <i>Recognition for your ideas and achievements within the job</i></li> </ul>	<p>Are you totally dependent on others to feel a sense of achievement and value?</p> <p>Is there anything you could do to promote this?</p> <p>Do you ask for constructive feedback and praise?</p> <p>Do you promote the work which you and your colleagues do?</p> <p>Are there any internal departments or external organisations that carry out work you consider to be worthwhile?</p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Your management/supervisory responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Scope/opportunities/ responsibilities to organise develop and manage other people</i></li> <li>• <i>The number of people and/or functions which you manage</i></li> </ul>	<p>Do you need management experience or a higher level of management experience to make your next career move?</p> <p>Is the lack of this hampering your career development?</p>

	<b>Section A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Points for Consideration</b>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>The way in which you are managed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The style and approach of your manager</i></li> <li><i>The type and level of support, encouragement and development</i></li> </ul>	<p>How would you like to be managed or supported?</p> <p>Have you communicated this to your manager?</p> <p>Are there others you can go to for support and help?</p>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Job stability and security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The level of security in your profession /area of work</i></li> <li><i>The security of your current position in the organisation</i></li> </ul>	<p>Could you find a similar position with more security in another part of the organisation or another company?</p> <p>Are there any growth areas in your profession?</p> <p>Is the insecurity affecting your performance and motivation at work?</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Career development and prospects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Appropriate training and development opportunities available to you</i></li> <li><i>Opportunities to make sideways or upwards moves within the organisation</i></li> </ul>	<p>Have you explored all possibilities including looking at ways to create development opportunities for yourself?</p> <p>If you stay in your current role with its limited opportunities, how will it impact on your career development?</p>

	<b>Section A - THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR</b>	<b>Points for Consideration</b>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Your working hours and conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The number of hours you work</i></li> <li>• <i>The level of flexibility in working patterns and hours</i></li> <li>• <i>Other terms and conditions e.g. leave arrangements</i></li> <li>• <i>Satisfactory work life balance</i></li> <li>• <i>Remuneration/pay</i></li> </ul>	<p>Are your working hours and conditions hampering your ability to do the job as effectively as you would like?</p> <p>Is the lack of flexibility preventing you from having opportunities to progress your career?</p> <p>Would there be better opportunities in a department or organisation with greater flexibility?</p> <p>Are you being paid an appropriate amount which reflects your level of experience and skills?</p>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Personal &amp; social satisfaction/enjoyment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The type and level of social interaction with colleagues and/ or clients</i></li> </ul>	<p>How important is this to you?</p> <p>Is it something which you like or prefer, or is it essential to your happiness and performance in the job and organisation?</p> <p>Can these desires be met outside the workplace?</p>

You may find it helpful to discuss the results of your assessment and your analysis with someone you trust e.g. a friend, partner or manager, before deciding what actions to take and completing the next section.

This questionnaire is available in the MS Word toolkit which can be downloaded [here](#).

<b>Heading/area to be addressed</b>	<b>Actions to be taken</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>

## Chapter 5 - Clarifying Your Career Aspirations

*“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll never get there”*

I was given this as a piece of advice many years ago, and how true it is of so many aspects of our lives including the development of our careers.

Clarifying career aspirations is something which many people find difficult to do, and we are often too busy or too preoccupied to give much time or serious thought to it.

Most of you will already have at least a general idea of what you would like to achieve in your career, and the previous exercises in this Useful Guide will have started the ball rolling by requiring you to give some thought to the following ...

- The importance of and responsibility for your career development.
- Your career pattern and influences.
- Your personal model of career success.
- The extent to which your current job supports your model of career success and future career aspirations.

So put some time aside to do the next exercise, as it will help you to clarify exactly what your career aspirations are. It will give you the opportunity to reflect on your past and present experiences, look ahead to the future, and identify some actions you need to take to work towards your career aspirations. It focuses on the following 4 questions ...

- Where have I been?
- Where am I now?
- Where do I want to be?
- How will I get there?

You should work through each of these questions on the following pages and answer them as fully and honestly as you can. You might find it helpful to talk through your responses with a friend, colleague or manager to help clarify your thoughts. Draw on some of the exercises which you have already done in this Useful Guide to help you to complete the following 4 sections.

## WHERE HAVE I BEEN?

*“We are today – a product of our past”*

In order to move on from where you are today you need to understand how your career has emerged and progressed over the years and what values, beliefs, needs, desires and influences have affected your career decisions and actions to date.

### Questions to consider

- *How has my career progressed to date?*
- *What have been my key motivators or influences?*
- *What if anything has prevented me from progressing my career further?*
- *What have I learned from my past experiences that will help me in the future?*

## WHERE AM I NOW?

This question focuses on your current employment situation and where you are now in your career.

### Questions to consider

- *What kind of employee, manager, professional am I?*
- *How do I feel about my current career situation?*
- *What are my key skills, abilities and strengths?*
- *What are my weaknesses and areas for development?*

## WHERE DO I WANT TO GET TO?

This section is all about your future career goals and aspirations. What do you **actually** want to achieve?

In previous sections you will have thought about your career aspirations in general terms, but this section is all about the specifics. The more detail you include in this section the more useful it will be to you.

You might also find it useful to think about your career aspirations in short term (1 -2years), medium term (2 – 5 years), and long term periods (5 – 10 years).

### Questions to consider

- *What are my career goals?*
- *What do I want to achieve?*
- *Where do I want to be?*
- *What type and level of job do I want to be doing in the short, medium and long term, and in what type of organisation?*
- *How do I want to be regarded or viewed by in my professional capacity?*

## HOW WILL I GET THERE?

In this section you need to identify what actions you need to take in order to close the gap between where you are now in your career, and where you want to get to. You might find it helpful to do the exercise in Chapter 6 before completing this section.

### Questions to consider

- *What experience, skills and knowledge do I need to acquire?*
- *What actions and steps do I need to take?*
- *What help and support do I need and how will I get it?*

## Chapter 6 - Skills and Abilities Audit

This chapter provides you with an opportunity to assess in more detail your current level of skills and abilities in areas relevant to your career aspirations. The categories including in the audit are very general and focus on core competency areas, many of which are transferable. Transferable means that they are skills and competences relevant to different types of jobs. So, for example, you could have acquired customer care skills through working as a box office assistant in a theatre, which would be equally useful and relevant to working as a council tax assistant in a local authority, even though they are two very different jobs.

Although the categories in this exercise are general, there is scope for you to include some specific technical categories relevant to your area of work.

You should assess your current level of competence in each category, (relevant to the level at which you operate in your job), and then compare this with the level required for the job, profession or career you aspire to. To assess your level of competence use a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high. If any of the categories are not relevant to your job or career aspirations then just ignore them.

After you have completed the exercise, discuss it with someone who knows you to get an objective opinion, as we can sometimes over or under estimate our own abilities. The assessment should help you to identify areas you need to work on to achieve your career aspirations, and these can be included in your action plan.

This questionnaire is available in the MS Word toolkit which can be downloaded [here](#).

Category/area	Current level	Required Level	Comments/Actions
<b>Communication</b> <b>Verbal</b> Fluency & clarity Assertiveness Presentation Negotiation			
<b>Written</b> Grammar & punctuation Report writing			
<b>Numerical</b> Calculations Interpretation Setting or managing budgets			
<b>Organisation</b> Prioritising Time management Administration Planning			

Category/area	Current level	Required Level	Comments/Actions
<p><b>IT Skills</b></p> <p>(Specify areas relevant to your job and aspirations)</p>			
<p><b>Customer care</b></p> <p>Appreciating the diversity of customer needs</p> <p>Meeting customer needs</p> <p>Dealing with complaints</p>			
<p><b>Working with others</b></p> <p>Contributing to the work of the team</p> <p>Supporting others</p> <p>Appreciating the contribution of others</p>			

Category/area	Current level	Required Level	Comments/Actions
<p><b>People management</b></p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>Developing /coaching others</p> <p>Employee relations</p> <p>Recruitment &amp; selection</p> <p>Respect and inclusion of all</p>			
<p><b>Problem solving</b></p> <p>Understanding/ interpreting</p> <p>Analysing</p> <p>Resolving</p>			
<p><b>Technical Skills</b></p> <p>(List specific technical skills e.g. marketing, engineering, catering)</p>			

For Head D&I and People - The Skills Gap Analysis

There are many on line assessments tools available via the internet which can help you to identify your personality, abilities, working styles etc. There are a few links below which you might find useful ...

- [www.open.ac.uk/careers/assess-your-working-style.php](http://www.open.ac.uk/careers/assess-your-working-style.php)
- [www.teamtechnology.co.uk](http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk)
- [www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_50.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_50.htm)
- [www.3minutemile.com/index.php](http://www.3minutemile.com/index.php)
- [www.ipersonic.com](http://www.ipersonic.com)

## Chapter 7 - Promoting Your Career Development

In this chapter we will look at some of the different behaviours, approaches and strategies you can use to promote your career development. But before we look at the positives, let's have a quick look at some behaviours and approaches which you should try to avoid, as they may severely limit or hinder your career development.

### Negative and limiting behaviours and approaches

- Strictly limiting yourself to your job description
- Being overly competitive
- Gossip and destructive criticism
- Failure to delegate
- Hogging all the credit
- Not getting to know and understand the values, priorities, preferences etc. of your boss/bosses
- Putting too much or too little in writing
- Saying **yes** or **no** to everything
- Being flattered or pressurised into accepting a job or position which is not a useful stepping stone or one which is a poisoned chalice
- Out of date thinking, ideas and jargon
- Taking criticism or rejection badly
- Getting in a rut
- Becoming over specialised
- Hitting a ceiling
- Poor and ineffective communication

Hopefully none of the above are relevant to you or the position you are in. But if any of them are, then you need to start taking some appropriate action to improve your situation. Some of the positive behaviours approaches and strategies outlined in the next section will be helpful.

## **Positive and constructive behaviours, approaches and strategies**

People who achieve success and reach their career goals and aspirations often demonstrate or use many of the following behaviours, approaches and strategies:

### **Demonstrating a high level of commitment to the organisation**

How do you demonstrate this commitment? Being prepared to do that little bit extra, staying late to complete the project, taking work home to meet a tight deadline, always giving 100% , always promoting the organisation and focussing on its priorities.

### **Being solution not problem focussed**

Having a positive attitude when faced with problems or difficulties. Looking for alternative ways to solve problems, even if they seem impossible. Applying problem solving strategies to find solutions.

Bringing in external resources and assistance where appropriate.

### **Having a can do attitude**

Being prepared to try different things to achieve success. Never giving up. Always being positive. Focusing on what is possible and achievable rather than on the negatives.

### **Effective communicators**

Able to communicate with people at all levels and in different and appropriate ways. Being able to demonstrate empathy. Always making sure that people are given the appropriate information and in a timely way. Demonstrating tact, diplomacy and assertiveness.

### **Showing integrity**

Being honest, consistent and reliable.

### **Being respected**

Delivering on promises. Giving acknowledgement, praise and thanks to others when appropriate. Being professional at all times. Demonstrating competence and expertise in everything you do.

### **Being willing to make personal sacrifices**

This might involve giving up some of your leisure or personal/family time to undertake a course, acquire skills or complete an important piece of work. Deferred gratification.

### **Working hard and doing a good job**

Working effectively and efficiently and producing good results.

### **Understanding organisational politics**

Understanding the culture of the organisation and the power dynamics. This includes questions like: How does the organisation work? How do things get done? Who has power within the organisation? How is that power used? How do the relationships work? You need to be able to answer these questions and to use the information effectively to achieve your goals.

### **Understanding and achieving company goals**

Have a clear understanding of the organisation's purpose and its general and specific goals. What are its priorities and targets? What is it trying to achieve in the short, medium and long term? Understanding how you and your team can contribute to these goals and targets. Demonstrating and communicating appropriately to others how you contribute to the company's goals.

### **Find or create opportunities**

Asking or letting others know that you want opportunities to develop your skills or make a greater contribution to the organisation. Looking for ways to raise your profile or develop your skills by initiating or volunteering to take part in new research or projects to benefit the company, e.g. improve efficiency or generate new customers.

### **Moving on**

It's important to move on and not become stale, whether that involves moving on to another job in the same organisation or moving to a completely new organisation. Most organisations these days value people who bring new insights and experiences with them from working in other companies, rather than someone who has been in the same job or with the same company for many years. High achievers often stay in one job for one to three years before moving on, and in many cases have experience of working in several different companies.

### Professional visibility

Your professional visibility is the extent to which people in your department, organisation or external organisations know of you, your skills, abilities and achievements as a professional. Those with good professional visibility are often more highly regarded and more likely to be offered opportunities for promotion or to work on interesting projects, than those who hide their light under a bushel. Some people are naturally very good at self marketing and promoting their achievements, whilst others feel uncomfortable with this, or don't know how to go about doing it. Sometimes your professional visibility might be promoted by others praising you or talking about what you've have achieved, but you cannot just leave it to others, you have to take some responsibility and action yourself. There is an exercise on page 40 to help you assess your professional visibility. There are also some suggestions on actions you can take to improve your professional visibility.

### Good networking skills

#### ***'It's not who you know but who knows you'***

Networking for professional or social reasons has almost become a necessity in today's society. It's about knowing people and people knowing you. It's about being of mutual benefit in some way or other, whether it be through your contacts, knowledge, skills, access to information or opportunities etc. Again some people are natural networkers and are always connected to a large pool of people, with whom they keep regular contact by letter, email, telephone calls or internet websites.

The exercise on page 45 helps you to look at your existing networks and think about ways in which you can expand and develop these further.

If you want to know how to network better check out A Useful Guide to Networking [here](#).

Before moving on to the next section it might be helpful for you to assess yourself against the 14 items above which we have just looked at. Give some thought to the following questions, right down your responses and make a note of any actions you want to take to help progress your career development.

**Which of the above items have I made good progress on?**

**Which items do I need to give more attention to?**

**What actions do I need to take to make further progress?**

## ASSESSING MY PROFESSIONAL VISIBILITY

This exercise gives you the opportunity to think about and assess your professional visibility.

After you have completed the exercise, seek the opinions of one or two trusted colleagues to get a more objective view.

This questionnaire is available in the MS Word toolkit which can be downloaded [here](#).

	Item	Scores/Comments
1	On a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being low and 10 being high) rate your professional visibility within your organisation.	
2	On a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being low and 10 being high) rate your professional visibility outside your organisation (e.g. other companies you work with, professional networks or bodies).	
3	What are your strengths in relation to your professional visibility?	
4	What are your weaknesses in relation to your professional visibility?	
5	What actions could you take to improve your professional visibility? See suggestions on the next few pages before completing this section.	

### **Improving your professional visibility**

Below are suggested ways to increase professional visibility. Have a look at the items and decide which ones are appropriate and appealing to you. Then make a note of the ones you would like to include in your action plan.

### **Volunteering to make presentations at events**

This could be at formal or informal events across different sections, departments or organisations. Ideally your presentation should be on a topic you know well and feel comfortable and confident about, but it doesn't have to be anything complex, particularly if you are just starting out.

### **Example**

In order to increase her professional visibility and build up her confidence in making presentations, Marie started giving informal talks about her work to small groups of pupils visiting her company as part of their careers education programme. She then started going out to schools to give more formal talks to larger groups, and this helped her to build up her confidence and ability to present information to more formal and professional audiences.

Preparation and practice will help you to build skills and confidence in giving presentations. The benefits of which are that people get to know who you are and what you do and it raises your profile and visibility significantly, particularly when the session goes well. If the thought of presenting information to others terrifies you, start with small groups and informal events like Marie did.

### **Representing your team or organisation at internal or external meetings**

Volunteer or ask to go along to meetings to represent your team, section, department or organisation. This provides you with the opportunity to get to know other colleagues or managers and to introduce yourself to them. It provides you with an opportunity to make an impression by contributing at the meeting; asking pertinent questions or putting forward useful ideas or suggestions. Staying around after meetings to talk to others can help to widen your networks and develop stronger relationships with other professionals.

### **Get involved and take on responsibilities in external professional organisations**

Getting involved and taking on responsibilities will take up some of your valuable time, but it can also help significantly to build up your confidence, skills, profile and networks. But be selective and strategic in terms of which organisations

you get involved in and what activities you take on. Make sure they are of personal or professional benefit to you and that they are worth investing time in. If you are not very confident, then start by taking on less onerous tasks, e.g. minute taking or organising the room bookings. As you gain more confidence you can then move on to tasks with more responsibility and a higher profile, such as committee member, chair, editor of the newsletter.

### **Talk to people with high profiles, don't avoid them**

Don't shy away from senior or high profile people at meetings or events. If you want to raise your profile let them know who you are. Go up and introduce yourself and engage with them as fellow human beings. Talk about what you do, ask them questions and find out about their interests as you would with others. But be aware of professional protocol and don't bore them or take up too much of their time!

### **When talking about what you do or your achievements focus on things which contribute to the business aims and priorities**

This is particularly relevant to professional situations and ones where you are talking to colleagues or senior staff about your work. It is an opportunity for you to highlight how valuable you are to the organisation and to make others aware of this. But make sure you come across as competent and confident rather than arrogant, and know when to stop or take a break to ask the other person questions about themselves, so that you don't bore them or come across as self obsessed.

### **Create, lead or contribute to projects which further business aims**

If there are limited opportunities for development or to raise your profile within your current job then seek out opportunities to create or initiate them, or volunteer to contribute to a valuable business project which is already underway, even if it means taking on more work.

### **Example**

Sandy had been in his job for 3 years and was frustrated by the lack of opportunities to move to a higher level post, both within his own organisation and outside. Realising he would have to stay in his current job for longer than he had hoped, he decided to try to create a development opportunity for himself which management would support.

He came up with an idea to minimise the number of enquiries his department received whenever notification was sent out to customers of changes in terms and conditions. His idea involved setting up a small research project with a

sample of customers undertaking telephone and face to face interviews. The project did create more work for Sandy and he had to put in some extra hours to undertake the research. But he felt it was worth it because of the extra stimulation it provided, the kudos he got from the success of the project, and the contribution it made to the aims of the business; to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

It also gave him some additional experience to add to his CV which enhanced his prospects of getting a higher level job.

### **Find ways to assist others, e.g. mentoring, giving advice**

When you use your knowledge, skills and expertise to help others they become aware of what you can offer and often share this information with others. Look for opportunities to do this in a more visible way to help raise your profile and professional visibility. Examples could include: offering advice sessions to colleagues in another department; writing information updates on the intranet for colleagues, or becoming a mentor in the company mentoring scheme, or a school or community mentoring initiative.

### **Introduce yourself to new people and those you don't know**

Get to know as many people as possible. So rather than sticking with the people you know at internal or external meetings and seminars, go up to people you don't know, introduce yourself and engage with them.

### **Listen and find out about others**

When you engage with others in business meetings and events don't just talk about yourself, ask them questions to find out about what they do, how they think and how they feel. When we listen to people it helps to build rapport and we get valuable information about them which may be helpful for business and professional purposes.

## **ASSESSING YOUR NETWORKS AND NETWORKING ABILITIES**

Building and nurturing your networks can contribute significantly to your career development. This includes all types of networks: formal and informal, professional, personal, social and community. Here are some of the ways in which these networks can be helpful ...

- Access to information about job opportunities
- Access to information to help you complete a job application or prepare for an interview

- Sharing of information, ideas and experience for professional growth and development
- Opportunities for work shadowing, work experience or secondments
- Links to other networks

This next exercise gives you the opportunity to assess your existing networks, consider if there are any gaps, and then identify ways to fill these gaps. You will need to build up your own list of network categories which are useful and relevant to the type of work you do and the level at which you operate. Below is a list of suggested network categories to give you some ideas ...

### **Network Categories**

- Different departments within the company you work for
- Public sector organisations
- Political bodies or groups
- Recruitment organisations and agencies
- Professional bodies/ organisations
- Community /voluntary organisations
- Family and friends
- Educational establishments – schools, colleges, universities
- Business organisations
- Press and media organisations

## AN ASSESSMENT OF MY NETWORKS

Complete the table below as fully as you can. To complete column 2 - the Assessment column, you might find it helpful to use a sliding scale of 1 – 5, with 1 below low and 5 being high.

This questionnaire is available in the MS Word toolkit which can be downloaded [here](#).

<b>Network Category</b>	<b>Assessment</b>  <i>What contacts do you have? Are they effective contacts? How well do you nurture them?</i>	<b>Action to be taken</b>  <i>Do you need to establish new contacts? Do you need to invest more in existing contacts? What action will you take to fill any gaps or address any shortcomings?</i>

### **A few useful tips to help you establish and nurture your networks**

- Approach people who would be of value to your network and establish contact.
- Effective networks are those which are of mutual benefit so highlight ways in which you might be of value to the other party.
- Always carry your business cards around and give them out appropriately.
- Always ask people you connect with for their business card. Make a note on the card of where you met them, and any particular points of interest for future reference.
- Find opportunities to maintain ongoing contact with people in your network through email, phone calls or on line networks. This might include informing them of things you have done which could be of interest to them, or following up on previous conversations. Try to personalise any contact you initiate with them rather than send 'round robin' correspondence, which many people ignore.

And finally before leaving this chapter on useful behaviours, approaches and strategies to facilitate your career development, let me add one final point which is about identifying role models. You can learn a great deal about achieving career success within your organisation or profession by looking at people who have already achieved this, and thinking about what it is that has made them successful. What skills and qualities do they have? How do they relate to others? How do they behave in different situations?

When you have worked out the answers to these questions you should end up with a list of qualities, behaviours and approaches, which might highlight some areas you need to work on to achieve your career success.

Of course you should only try to model the behaviours and approaches which are compatible with your own values, but you may sometimes have to push yourself outside your comfort zone to make progress.

### **Example**

Jamie was technically very competent at his job and got promotions up to middle management level with relative ease. However, he found it very difficult to get beyond this level, even though he was often praised for his work. His ambition was to remain with the same company but to progress up to a very senior management position. When he carried out the above exercise assessing the skills, qualities and behaviours of the head of his department and then compared himself to these, he realised that he needed to pay more attention to his ...

- interpersonal skills
- acknowledgement and inclusion of others
- networking and understanding of the organisation's political imperatives.

His solution was to undertake some presentation and communication skills training, including an NLP course, and to find himself a mentor from the company's senior management team.

## Chapter 8 - Career Development Action Plan

Throughout this Useful Guide you have had the opportunity to undertake exercises and reflect on questions relating to the topics we've discussed. Some of you will also have made a note of actions you want to take as result of this. You now have the opportunity to put it all together and produce a complete action plan to help you work towards your career aspirations and success. Make sure that the actions and time scales you put down are as realistic and achievable as possible.

This questionnaire is available in the MS Word toolkit which can be downloaded [here](#).

Goal	Actions to be taken	Completion date	Review date	Comments /progress

Congratulations on completing your action plan that was the easy bit!

The hard work starts now as you begin to carry out your actions, maintain momentum and motivation, overcome any obstacles and blockages, and meet your regular day-to-day responsibilities at work and home.

In the next chapter we look at some of the common problems and blockages which can hamper your career development or the implementation of your plan, and there are some suggestions as to how these might be overcome.

I recommend that you regularly review your career development action plan and revise it from time to time as your circumstances and needs change.

It's also recommended that you get a friend, colleague or mentor to provide you with ongoing support and help you to review and revise your plan.

## Chapter 9 - Making It Happen

*'Forewarned, forearmed; to be prepared is half the victory'*

In this chapter we will look at some common challenges and blockages which can hamper your career development or the implementation of your career development plan, and consider some possible solutions.

### Problem

There are no opportunities for promotion in my organisation, everyone holds on to their job and there is limited expansion in the company.

### Possible solutions

A very common problem which presents particular difficulties if you want to stay with the same company. The most obvious answer is to look for an opportunity with another company and move on. If you resist this option make sure it is for genuine reasons rather than because you are too comfortable or you don't like change. We often have to push ourselves outside our comfort zone, make sacrifices or take some risk to make things happen and achieve greater things.

If moving to another company is not an option at the present time because of other commitments then consider the following ...

- Expand your networks across the organisation and let people know what opportunities you are looking for.
- Apply for a secondment or acting up position which will enable you to acquire the additional skills and experience you require.
- If there are no suitable secondments try and create one. Approach managers in appropriate sections or departments and ask about possible opportunities, or suggest a mutually beneficial secondment e.g. setting up a project which would benefit the section you want to work in, whilst simultaneously giving you the opportunity to gain the skills or experience you require.
- Try to set up a work shadowing experience with an appropriate member of staff or manager, to observe, learn and understand more about their job.
- Try to set up a mutually beneficial exchange with an appropriate member of staff. This will provide an opportunity to learn and acquire additional skills and experience needed for your next career move. This might be for a day, a week or for several months.

- Find out whether it might be possible to gain the experience you seek through some kind of voluntary work, either through a company sponsored scheme, or something you do in your own time in the evenings or weekends. This might include things like becoming a mentor, assisting a voluntary organisation with its finances, helping adults to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, becoming a board member of a housing association, etc.

### **Problem**

I can't seem to find a suitable promotion opportunity

### **Possible solutions**

Make sure you are looking in the right places; publications, websites, employment agencies.

Some jobs are not even advertised, so if you are looking for an opportunity get out there and do some strategic networking. Let people know that you are looking for opportunities and what type of opportunities.

Send speculative letters with a copy of your CV to appropriate heads of department or HR managers to enquire about opportunities.

### **Problem**

I need some experience of project management, finance, training, etc to move up to a higher level job, but there is no scope within my present job.

### **Possible solution**

Ask about opportunities and look for ways to create them as highlighted above.

### **Problem**

I seem to get overlooked for higher profile projects and acting up positions.

### **Possible solutions**

Try and work out why this is the case. Are managers not aware that you are interested? Are you promoting your abilities and achievements sufficiently? Are you lacking certain skills, abilities, qualities? Do you need training or development in specific areas?

Talk to your manager and let them know that you are interested. If this is not effective speak to an officer in the HR department who may be able to help.

Develop your internal and external networks as there may be opportunities for you outside your section or even outside your organisation.

### **Problem**

I don't think I have the confidence to fulfil my career aspirations

### **Possible solutions**

Many people are held back by lack of confidence and belief in themselves, even though they have all the necessary skills, qualities and experience. If this applies to you, look back on all the things you have done and achieved in your working life to remind yourself of exactly what you are capable of.

Write down a list of all your skills, abilities and experience which are relevant to your current job and your next career move, or refer back to the skills and ability audit you completed in Chapter 6.

Speak to people you respect; your manager, colleagues, friends, and ask them for feedback about you and your abilities. Give serious consideration to their comments.

Read books or listen to CDs about positive thinking and then – just go for it! If you have the ability and determination it is highly likely that you will succeed. But if at first you don't succeed be prepared to try again and again. Always remember that some of the most successful people in the world, made several attempts before they achieved their success.

### **Problem**

I've come across a few stumbling blocks and I'm losing my motivation.

### **Possible solutions**

This is a common problem and one which may recur at different points throughout your journey. The following suggestions may help:

Look at each problem individually and try to understand the nature of the problem and how and why it occurred. Explore all the possible ways to address the problem and the likely outcomes. Then decide on the best approach and take action.

Tap into your support networks – friends, colleagues, mentor, partner. Ask for help and discuss your problems with them. They can support you by providing a listening ear and they can offer other perspectives, solutions and practical help.

Keep reminding yourself of your end goals and what you want to achieve – stay focussed.

### **Problem**

My personal circumstances have changed and I can no longer carry out my action plan.

### **Possible solution**

People's circumstances change for a number range of reasons which might include things like developing an illness, having a child, becoming a carer, etc. Often these things happen unexpectedly and we have to alter our plans to accommodate them. Everyone's situation will be different so you will need to find the right solution for you, which might include any of the following ...

- Can you get help and support from friends or family to take on some of the responsibilities and enable you to continue with your plans?
- Do you need to abandon your plans or goals completely or can they be modified or put on hold?
- If you have to put your plans on hold are there positive things you can do in the meantime to continue your development, e.g. a short correspondence course, or a few hours of relevant voluntary work, etc.

### **So now it's over to you!**

The very best of luck with your career aspirations and career development plans.

### **Feedback**

As we are always trying to improve our Useful Guides we would appreciate any feedback you can give us on **A Useful Guide to Career Development**. Please click on the link below to access our online feedback form ...

<http://www.pansophix.com/useful-guide-feedback.html>

If we use your feedback to improve **A Useful Guide to Career Development** we will email you a copy of the updated version.

You can access lots of free tips and tools at [247freetips.com](http://247freetips.com).

## About the Author



Eve Winston has been an independent training consultant since 1996. She began her career in education and training directly after completing her first degree, BA (Hons) English and History at Leeds University, by teaching English (TEFL) for the British Council in Finland.

After returning to England, she trained and worked in careers and adult guidance for a number of years, and then moved into research, policy and management jobs in education. Through this work she also developed an interest and expertise in equality and diversity.

Over the past 14 years as an independent training consultant, Eve has worked with a wide variety of organisations in both the public and private sectors, ranging from blue chip companies and government departments, to housing associations and voluntary sector organisations.

Eve is the director of Kairi Training and Development Ltd - [www.kairi.co.uk](http://www.kairi.co.uk) , a small training company which specialises in the following areas ...

- Equality and Diversity.
- Career Development.
- Workplace mediation.
- Various soft skills for staff and managers.
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In addition to her BA, she also has an MSc in Urban Policy Studies, a Diploma in Careers Guidance, a Diploma in Training Management and a Certificate in Workplace Mediation.

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When she is not writing or delivering training Eve enjoys exercising, being in the great outdoors and enjoying life with family and friends.