DEVELOPING A PERSONAL CAREER STRATEGY (PCS)

SMEAL MBA CAREER MANAGEMENT
AND
CORPORATE RELATIONS TEAM

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Companies no longer hire people out of high school or college and provide them with career security for the rest of their life. In some ways, career management has become an independent enterprise, something of a sole proprietorship, or as a recent book reflected in its title, “You Incorporated”. This trend is a clear indication that you must take full responsibility for your life-long career success and satisfaction. Thus, as with any successful business, individual career management should follow the same process that successful organizations use in creating their business plans.

Through various processes, successful organizations create strategic plans that provide a long-term vision of who they want to become. Subsequently, they specify goals and related objectives that, over time, will incrementally take them toward the realization of their vision. In this process, organizations analyze the realism of their vision, goals and objectives through a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis is a very deliberate assessment of the organization (internal) and the market (external) to identify internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This process enables the organization to fine-tune their vision, goals, and objectives, as well as develop their strategic plans for achieving its vision, by capitalizing on the internal and external strengths and opportunities, while also attempting to mitigate internal and external weaknesses and threats. This same process has become the paradigm for successful career management.

While entire books have been written on the topics of career development and career management, the Smeal MBA Career Services Team (SMCS) has developed this abbreviated version to assist you in developing a personally-defined career management strategy and plan. This process has been informed by the most up-to-date theory and research on career development. We will begin with an overview of the widely accepted model of the career development process, then present brief descriptions of each stage, and finally present relevant exercises and examples to assist you in developing your personal career strategy and plan.

THE 4 STAGES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The model below depicts the four stages that make up the career development cycle. By thoughtfully progressing through the stages of this process, you are able to develop goals and strategies for pursuing a satisfying career. Over time, you will recycle through this process as you, and the employment market, inevitably change. This implies that career decisions and strategies are not one-time events but are steps in an ongoing and life-long career development process. This point is made in research indicating that, on average, people will change jobs seven times, and careers (not jobs) three times. Thus, this information and process is presented as an educational experience rather than a simple map to help you get a job. As an old adage states: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for
a lifetime.” Our goal is to provide you with the knowledge and tools to manage your career over your lifetime.

Before proceeding to the details, a brief overview of the model will provide a useful context for understanding the individual stages in the process. As with any good decision, career decisions require accurate and realistic data. Career decisions are based on detailed data about you and about your occupational options. Thus, both an internal self-analysis and an external market analysis are necessary. This is the basis and process for the career exploration stage, or Stage 1 of the career development process. In Stage 2, or the option analysis and decision-making stage, you begin identifying potentially appropriate choices by examining the information about yourself and your occupational options. Essentially, you are looking to map relationships between particular aspects of who you are with aspects of your various work options. Thus, you begin making basic decisions about how your unique characteristics “fit” with particular functional roles (Finance, Marketing, Consulting, etc.), within certain industries, and within certain types of organizations. This is based on your unique interests, values, strengths, characteristics, needs, desires, and potential for adding value. Stage 3 incorporates the basic functional, industry, and organizational decisions of Stage 2 into a long-term career strategy and implementation plan. Based on your career strategy and implementation plan, Stage 4 is focused on turning the plan into action. Career implementation is fundamentally a marketing and sales campaign where, unlike any other marketing initiative, the product is you.

As we proceed, your first task is to determine at which stage you are in the process. This will allow you to put your time and energy into those exercises that are most relevant to your unique developmental needs. Ultimately, our goal is for you to complete Stage 3 and have a written strategy and plan that maps the next steps of your professional and career development. While at Smeal, this plan will enable you to strategically focus your time and energy on activities that will advance your career development, while also providing you with a significant advantage in your internship and job search. Since we realize that many of you are still clarifying your career goals, we will begin at Stage 1 of the career development process. Even if you possess some pretty clear goals and are tempted to jump directly to Stage 3, we encourage you to go through all of the exercises. The data generated in these exercises will later be used to
develop your key marketing materials (resume, cover letter and interview responses). Please be advised that, while this will be a very time consuming process, it is probably the most important project you will undertake in your MBA professional development. Just as no one would fund a business start-up that lacks a solid business plan, why would you risk your time and money to pursue your business degree without making the time to develop a solid plan. While it may sound cliché, “failing to plan is planning to fail.”
STAGE IA – EXPLORATION: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment is a systematic process that is essential for career decision-making and for ongoing professional development. Every leadership writer and guru highlights the vital importance of self-awareness. At various points in time, conducting an inventory of ourselves is necessary to identify performance and skills gaps that could potentially undermine our professional development. Perhaps more important, this inventory should also include the identification of knowledge, talents, strengths and skills, which can be leveraged in the pursuit of your goals. For these reasons, every management and leadership development program begins by having the candidate conduct a thorough self-analysis. It is only with good self-awareness that a future manager or leader can determine a course of action to enhance their performance potential and subsequent opportunities.

From a career development perspective, self-assessment is essentially aimed at identifying and inventorying the following career-related characteristics:

1. Strengths / Skills / Abilities
2. Interests
3. Values
4. Personality traits

The most commonly used self-assessment tools are psychological tests, various inventories, and 360-degree evaluations. We will be using three such assessments in this process. While these assessments can be vary useful, the most valid data is derived by simply reflecting on your past experiences and performance. This stems from the fact that, as research has demonstrated time and again, the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Therefore, the next step in your self-assessment is to reflect on your past. This process includes three successive steps: 1.) listing and organizing your past experiences, 2.) identifying accomplishments within each experience, and 3.) “de-constructing” each accomplishment to identify information about yourself, which you will inventory for later use in informing your career decisions and planning. As you de-construct your past, pay particular attention for clues regarding your interests, values, strengths and skills. While we all possess a variety of interests, we are searching for those interests that you not only find curious and engaging, but also find enjoyable. By identifying jobs and careers whose demands and requirements map directly to our core interests, we increase the likelihood of enjoying our work and, more importantly, are internally motivated to do it well. Similarly, we encourage you to use these exercises to identify and inventory your skills and strengths, particularly those that you enjoyed using in producing your achievements. Again, why not target a career path whose duties, roles, tasks, and responsibilities map to your natural interests, talents and skills. Please turn to Appendix A to complete the Past Experiences exercises for each of your previous work experiences.
As mentioned previously, additional means to increased self-awareness are various forms of psychological tests and self-assessments. A particularly useful tool for MBA’s is CareerLeader. This on-line business self-assessment program is designed specifically for graduate business students and is widely used by many top business schools. The Smeal MBA program has arranged access to CareerLeader for your entire class. Once you have created your own personal account, you will be able to:

- Complete 3 different assessments of your business related interests, values and abilities
- Obtain a personalized profile report of your interests, values and abilities
- Obtain suggestions regarding specific business related career paths that, based on your unique profile, you will want to investigate further in your market research. Please note that these are only suggestions and in no way represent “answers” or “recommendations.” This, nor any other test, can provide you with any “truth” that is more valid than your own self-awareness and good judgment
- Access information about 27 business careers, including information about the interests, values and abilities associated with each one
- Learn how self-assessment data and market data are integrated into well informed career decisions
- Obtain an evaluation of your entrepreneurial attributes
- Learn how to analyze corporate cultures and, based on your profile, obtain suggestions about which organizational cultures are likely to be a good fit for you

Simply follow the instructions below to access the resources of the CareerLeader web site.

**CareerLeader Instructions**

To access the Smeal MBA CareerLeader resources, go to the following URL (you will likely want to bookmark this page for ongoing use):

http://www.careerleader.com/cf/univ/smeal.html

On your first visit to the site, a “pop-up” box will prompt you for the “school” username and password. In lower case text (the servers are case sensitive), type **smeal** (our school username) and **quilt** (our school password). This will take you to the Penn State Welcome page. Once there, review the page, enter your first and last names and then click on the “Enter CareerLeader” link. The next several steps will assist you in creating your unique personal CareerLeader account. Step #1 asks that you select your name from the list of students authorized to access Smeal’s resources (if your name is not in the list, e-mail Paul Carozzoni (pjc5@psu.edu) and he will rectify the situation). Follow
the subsequent steps to create your account and specify your own unique username and password. Please keep a record of your username and password because you will need these to access CareerLeader on all future visits.

A word of caution: Even the most sophisticated and well-researched tests are inadequate in providing a definitive answer to complex decisions like choosing a career. The best you can realistically expect is a “tool” that will help you understand yourself a little better and provide you with some guidance in making your own decisions. Be advised that your CareerLeader results will include a section entitled “Your best career path matches.” Due to their correlation with your interests, values and skills, these “matches” are simply suggestions of career paths that may be worth further research and analysis. Their greatest value is as examples of how one can make rational sense of the data you accumulate from your self-assessment and market analysis.

An additional consideration in taking assessments is the issue of “validity;” referring to how valid, or accurate, the test results are for you. Keep in mind that any assessment is attempting to capture a “snapshot” of who you are. This means that you need to respond to questions in an open, honest and genuine manner. This also means avoiding answers based on how you want to be or on how you would like others to see you – these types of answers contaminate validity and essentially render your assessment results useless. As the old computer acronym GIGO indicates: Garbage In Garbage Out.

Once you have accessed CareerLeader, familiarize yourself with the extensive information and reference resources located in the CareerLeader website. When you are ready, you can begin taking the 3 tests. You are not required to take all three tests at one time. You can take each test, one at a time, and save your responses. Each test takes approximately 25 to 35 minutes to complete. Once you have completed all three tests, you can review your results, begin utilizing the interpretative and informational resources, and complete the exercises in Appendix B.

Assessing Personality

In addition to interests, values, and strengths, other aspects of your personality are important to consider in your career choices and planning. We all have some intuitive sense of who we are and, with a little self-reflection or input from people close to us, we can identify certain aspects of our personality that are important to consider in our career choices and planning. For example: If you are more of an extrovert, and have interests and skills in quantitative analysis, it would be career suicide to pursue a career as an analyst who sits in a cubicle day-in and day-out “running the numbers.” Although the position may be a good fit for your interests and skills, the lack of human interaction would be intolerable. In contrast, an introvert who possesses the requisite skills and knowledge could, nonetheless, be a poor fit in sales. Note: This example is not meant to imply that an introvert is not a good fit for sales. Quite the contrary, introversion could be a critically important personality trait for some types of sales roles. This apparent contradiction is simply a reflection of the complexity of career decisions.
Certain characteristics are also likely to be very important to a potential employer and in later promotional decisions. Having this self-knowledge will be critical in promoting these assets. In an employment decision, these characteristics may also differentiate you from other candidates who, in other regards, are similar to you. A common way to develop insight into the work-related aspects of personality is to assess personality styles.

*Please turn to Appendix C to complete the Analysis of Personal Styles exercise.*
STAGE IB – EXPLORATION: MARKET RESEARCH

The market research you will gather during your Stage 1 Exploration is used in each of the subsequent stages of the career development process. In Stage 2, the “market information” you gathered is used to inform your decisions regarding the functional (Finance, Marketing, etc.) and industry focus of your career. The same information is used in Stage 3 to inform the development of your short- and long-term career plan and strategy. For example, to achieve your long-term vision of becoming a CFO, you need to know the career progression one typically traverses following B-school. This “market information” enables you to develop a realistic plan that includes approximate timeframes for each of the promotional steps. This plan will also include an informed market segmentation strategy, allowing you to focus your search efforts on targets that will likely value someone like yourself. In addition, you are able to identify the requisite knowledge, skills, and experiences that will be required in your future roles; and subsequently plan experiences and additional training to fill any personal gaps that you identify. Finally, Stage 4 is enhanced by your possession of such strategic long-term goals and plans, along with a high level of insight into yourself and the realities of achieving such goals. This empowers you to promote yourself as a career-savvy, focused, realistic, and internally-motivated candidate.

There are two general categories of resources for gathering market information: published and people. You will find that published resources (including books, websites, professional associations, and on-line business databases) are valuable for gathering basic functional (Finance, Marketing, etc.), industry, and company information. At some point in your print research, your knowledge and insight will evolve to a point where you will find that these resources have diminishing returns for your investment of time. This is where people come in. There are people actually living some of the options you are considering and most of them are very willing to talk with a young professional about their experiences.

For example, if you really want to know the nuance of how one becomes a CFO, you need to talk to a CFO. Actually, it’s best to speak to several CFO’s and maybe even some professionals who are at different stages of development toward that goal, because there is no single path to any position. Each person will have unique experiences, perspectives and valuable information to offer. Similarly, if you are deciding between two target industries, talking to professionals in those industries will provide you with invaluable insights. If you want to know what it is really like to work in a particular company (beyond what the company tells you in their website), who better than someone who is actually working there, or just left? This “insider information” is invaluable in informing your career decision-making and planning. A further pay-off is that these “people resources” also become part of your growing professional network and future job search contacts. This is one way that professional networks are established, and these relationships can be initiated with low stakes information gathering through your basic market research.
When you are in the exploration stage of the career development process, your information needs are essentially related to data that will inform your career decisions and plans. Thus, your market research goal will be focused on gathering information about business functions, industries and/or organizations. From this perspective, various occupational or functional options can be differentiated by:

- Duties/Tasks – typical activities and projects requiring certain knowledge, skills and abilities
- Roles – leader, manager, supervisor, contributor
- Responsibilities – level of accountability for aspects of organizational function
- Rewards – anything from compensation to job security, prestige, challenge, etc.
- Culture – values regarding particular norms, behaviors and organizational processes

**USEFUL INFORMATION RESOURCES:**

**Vault** – The single-most useful MBA career information resource is Vault. **At this stage in the PCS process, we strongly suggest, encourage, and implore you to use the career information resources located on the Vault website.** Vault is commercial career resource vendor who provides materials developed specifically for MBA career development. Smeal has purchased full access rights for you, which enables you to access, download and print any of their books or manuals. Make the time to visit this site and expose yourself to this wealth of MBA career information. To access the Smeal MBA web page on Vault, go to the admitted students web page and click on the Vault link (our contract with Vault requires that we place the link in a password protected web site).

**CareerLeader** – This is another valuable web-based resource that provides career information regarding possible MBA career paths, industries, and organizational cultures. Your CareerLeader assessment results are also tied to this same information. Thus, these resources will not only provide useful career information, they will also help you better understand your CareerLeader results. Once you create your account on the CareerLeader website (instructions on p. 6), you will be able to access all of these resources.

**Web Resources** – Many career-related web sites offer information related to different business career functions, as well as specific industry and company information. The career sections of the web sites of most professional associations provide very useful career information.

**The Penn State Business Library** has purchased and organized many business specific information and data resources which will be useful in both your career
management and your academic pursuits. Our advice is to become very familiar with these resources AND the business reference librarians!!
http://www.libraries.psu.edu/business/

Career Management Functional Area Panels – Throughout the fall semester, the Career Services team has organized information sessions related to each of the core functional areas of business (marketing, finance, etc.). A panel of alumni and corporate representatives (typically 3–5) will present their individual perspectives and experiences unique to each of the functional areas. Each panel discussion will be followed by a Q & A period and, in some cases, you will have the opportunity to have additional interactions with the panel participants.

Alumni Database – The MBA Program will be paying your dues for membership in the Penn State Alumni Association. Your membership will provide access to the searchable database of Penn State Alumni, who are great sources of market information and networking contacts. More details will be made available during your orientation.

Professional Associations – Professional associations can provide you with resources that will give you a greater understanding of the scope and purpose of the particular industry and/or function. In addition, membership in a professional association can afford you access to a membership directory, which is often useful when conducting informational interviews and in the identification of potential networking contacts. Some association web sites (i.e., Council of Logistics Management) even contain information on student scholarships, internship and permanent job opportunities, or executive search firms. A quick Google search for “professional associations” along with a few other key words (e.g. marketing, finance, consumer products, retail, etc.) will reveal a surprising number of professional organizations focusing on very particular areas of business. A few sample sites include:

American Bankers Association www.aba.com
American Marketing Association www.marketingpower.com
Product Development & Management Association www.pdma.org
Association of Management Consulting Firms www.amcf.org
Business Marketing Association www.marketing.org
Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals www.cscmp.org
Institute for Supply Management www.napm.org
New York Society of Security Analysts www.nyssa.org
Society of Human Resources Management www.shrm.org
As you develop more detailed insight into yourself and your occupational options, you will begin to eliminate options that previously “appeared” to be appropriate for you. You will then begin to focus on options that are clearly more appropriate. Thoughtful career decisions are formed as one finds parallels between aspects of who they are (interests, values, skills, and personality) and particular characteristics of occupational options they have researched. Said another way, career “decision making” is the process of identifying occupational options that are a good “fit” for who you are. The goal is to identify a functional role whose duties, tasks, role and responsibilities are a good “fit” with your interests, skills, knowledge and experience, while also defining an organizational context (industry and company) whose culture is compatible with your personality and provides rewards that will satisfy your value system. For both you and a potential employer, a good fit increases the likelihood that you will enjoy your work and enhances the probability that you will perform at an exceptional level. By extension, this level of analysis and focus enables you to strategically segment the employment market and create a marketing campaign that specifically targets an audience that is very likely to place high value on what you have to offer, because you are able to articulate your fit with their needs.

As you assess your "fit" with various occupational options, consider the following:

- Which of your key interests are consistent with typical duties and tasks of the position?
- Which skills and abilities do you possess that map to the duties and tasks of the position?
- Which key interests map to the industry and/or the company products or services?
- Which personality traits and skills map to roles and responsibilities of the position?
- Which values are likely to be satisfied within the culture and reward system?
- Which personality traits are consistent with the culture of the organization?
- What of your knowledge and/or experience maps to the function, industry, company, product, or service?
- How do your long-term career goals fit with the experiences and opportunities that the option is likely to present?

As you assess the “fit” between the information details gathered in your market assessment with the results of your self-assessment, you are essentially making basic career decisions. These decisions are primarily related to specifying the details of a functional focus, industry preferences, and preferred organizational context/culture. Taken together, these basic decisions represent the key factors in developing a personally relevant career plan and strategy. Please refer to Appendix D, “Putting It
All Together,” which provides space to list the key elements of the basic decisions resulting from your “fit” assessment.
STAGE 3 – PLANNING

As referenced in the opening paragraphs, we now come to the strategic planning process. This is where your self-assessment, market research and career decisions come together in the formulation of a strategic plan that will lead you to the specification of your career development goals. By completing the previous exercises, you have already completed much of the detail work for your personal strategic plan. You have conducted an internal self-assessment and researched your external target market. You have probably also begun to identify some relevant internal and external SWOT’s. Now it is time to begin pulling this information together into a well-informed plan for creating the future you want. This includes developing a written document that includes the following:

- **Vision** – a long term statement (5, 10 or more years) of who you will be or become
- **Goals and Objectives** – identifying short-, medium- and long-term goals, and associated objectives, whose successful achievement results in the achievement of your long-term career vision.
- **SWOT Analysis** – An analysis of the **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities** and **Threats** that may exist with you (internal) and/or the employment market (external). An honest SWOT analysis enables you to analyze the realism of your vision and goals, and plan accordingly. In addition, this analysis enables you to specify additional goals and objectives that could mitigate weakness and threats (GAPS – refers to gaps between your current level and where you would like to be in the future), while also strategically leveraging personal and market strengths and opportunities.

For example:

**Strengths:**
You = Skills and experience in the industry and/or function
Market = High demand for people with your skills
**Weaknesses:**
You = No professional network in the industry and/or function
Market = Weak economy
**Opportunities:**
You = New contact has taken a particular interest in your potential
Market = A recent merger results in a demand for your offerings
**Threats:**
You = Poor interviewing skills
Market = Target industry hit particularly hard by economy
DEVELOPING YOUR PERSONAL CAREER STRATEGY AND PLAN

The exercise in Appendix E will assist you in translating the previous pieces of your career decisions into a long-term career vision and its respective goals. While you won’t know exactly what you will be doing in 10 or 15 years, you do need to take the information you currently have available and create an image of what you would like to have your career look like at some point in the future. It is only with a vision of a preferred future that you can create goals and plans that will enable you to efficiently and effectively allocate your time and energy. As we stated previously, any strategic plan is a living document that acknowledges that you and your environment will change over time and, thus, we expect that you will revisit this exercise periodically to reflect on how your vision and goals have changed and evolved over time.

Use what you have learned about yourself and market opportunities to formulate a vision and the associated goals that are personally meaningful and motivating for you. Keep in mind that your SWOT analysis may represent opportunities or constraints; and, as such, they need to be considered strategically in the plan. For individuals planning a shift into a new function or industry, an early and ongoing SWOT analysis is vital. This is particularly true if your aim is to break into brand management, management consulting, or investment banking because these are highly competitive fields. To gain entry over such competition, one must first understand their personal barriers to entry in order to ultimately explain to a potential employer why you are capable of such a transition.

While the previous decision-making exercise represents the key components of your ideal career description, it may be necessary to formulate a strategy that specifies steps that will successively more you closer to your long-range goals. These alternative steps may also be needed if conditions preclude your ability to directly achieve your goals, or if personal or external weaknesses or threats make your plan unrealistic in the short-term. For example, the current competitive job market, along with insufficient functional or industry experience, may necessitate seeking an intermediate-level job to obtain the experience (step), which later enables you to pursue your larger goal. In addition, your GAP analysis may indicate that you may need to pursue an alternative step for other developmental experiences (training, skill development, etc.) that will be necessary for the pursuit of your larger goal. In this way you are establishing realistic and well-informed short- and long-term goals that, over time, take you closer to your vision.

A written strategy document begins with a clear statement of your career vision, a description of your immediate-, short-, medium-, and long-term goals and objectives, as well as a detailed marketing plan and timeline for the steps and activities you will implement to achieve your goals. Please refer to Appendix E to complete your Personal Career Strategy and Appendix F to detail your plans for achieving your vision and goals.
STAGE 4 – IMPLEMENTATION

From a career management perspective, implementation is all about marketing and sales. Remember that even the best plans are worthless unless they are well implemented. This means that your plan needs to include an honest GAP analysis of your implementation skills (resume, interviewing, etc.), as well as steps you will take to fill those gaps. You also need to understand that your consumers have extremely high expectations of your performance. There is no better indicator of your professional attitude and behavior than how you manage your job search. Since this is your MBA job search, their assumption is that everything about your search, from your resume to your shoes, is a reflection of your best efforts. If any element of your presentation, behavior, or performance falls short of their expectations, their consideration of you as a viable candidate is compromised. In addition, your performance, whether positive or negative, will also influence their opinion of Penn State, the Smeal MBA program, your classmates and alumni.

Think about it. If you are a recruiter and a candidate is promoting his or her well developed written communication skills and there are typographical or grammatical errors in their resume, cover letter or e-mail communications (be especially careful of this one). What would you conclude? What if you were looking for someone who would have extensive contact with your hard-earned clients? What would you think if an otherwise skilled and knowledgeable candidate also had bad breath, body odor, a poor fitting suit, poor posture or an unprofessional attitude. You could have the best grades, experience, skills and resume, and yet these intangibles would eliminate you from consideration. And you would never know because no one would ever tell you. You would just receive the form letter thanking you for your time and interest.

The final component of successful implementation is developing, and using, methods to track the information you gather in your career development activities, while also developing metrics intended to evaluate your performance. Some examples include:

- Developing a system and process to track and monitor each of your activities:
  - File system for all career management materials
  - Networking database and contact management process/system
  - Interview tracking and debriefing process

Ultimately, your career success is contingent upon developing a personal career strategy and taking immediate action on your promotional plan, while utilizing any and every resource at your disposal. We in Career Services have a strong personal commitment to our chosen careers, which is to support you in your career success. The best moments in our careers occur when, through hard work and effective planning, the career aspirations of a student become reality. We hope and expect to have many such rewarding moments with you, the Penn State Smeal MBA Class of 2011!
APPENDIX A

PAST EXPERIENCES

For the purposes of career decision making and planning, the most relevant past experiences to examine are our previous jobs. In addition, it is also important to examine our experiences in college (classes, projects, etc.), practicum's, community service, and/or internships. For each of these experiences, you will copy and complete a worksheet, which is located at the end of these instructions (if you had multiple positions with the same employer, copy and complete one worksheet for each position). For each position you will complete three steps: 1) in the job history you will describe the position, including details of your role and activities, 2) you will then identify specific accomplishments you achieved in that role, and 3) you will “deconstruct” each accomplishment to identify important career-related information about yourself. Below, each of these steps are described in more detail, with the worksheet following at the end. Please take the time to thoughtfully complete this exercise because it is the most important one in the PCS manual.

Step #1

JOB HISTORY

The job history represents basic information about the company, position and activities of each job you have held. The worksheet includes instructions and notes to assist you in completing this portion.

Step #2

IDENTIFYING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The next step in analyzing your past is to identify accomplishments you achieved during each of your previous work experiences. There are several reasons why we begin our self-assessments by reviewing our accomplishments:

• By identifying and “de-constructing” our accomplishments, you begin the process of uncovering your personal career-related characteristics. Accomplishments represent a clear demonstration of interests and skills. We typically produce our best work when we enjoy the activity (interests) while applying the skills we enjoy using. In turn, your core interests and skills are the primary components that inform your decisions about what you would “like” to do in your future career.

• Analyzing your accomplishments also provides insights into those things that are important to your career satisfaction and fulfillment (values), as well as insight into personality traits that either served or detracted from your success. Not only is this information important to decision making, but it is also the basis for identifying personality or performance gaps that allow you to create career plans
that include components for making changes or improvements (courses, experiences, etc.) necessary for achieving your career goals.

• By becoming familiar and comfortable with your inventory of accomplishments, you develop increased confidence in your abilities. This translates directly to increased confidence during your networking and interviewing activities.

• Employers view your past behavior as the best predictor of future behavior. For this reason, your resume bullets and interview responses will be constructed around your previous accomplishments. Thus, this assessment will not only inform your career decisions and planning, but is also an inventory of the data you will later incorporate into your marketing plan and communications (resume, cover letters, interviews, and networking).

Because we all have different levels of difficulty reviewing our histories, or viewing our work activities as accomplishments, the list below is intended to provide you with some insight into what constitutes an accomplishment, to jog your memory about what you have done, and to begin the process of analyzing each accomplishment. Remember that your accomplishments do not have to be directly related to a job. They could also be demonstrated while you were in college, working in your community, or during a volunteer experience. Have you ever:

• Been promoted or given increased responsibility? (Why? Result?)
• Been given an award or received special recognition? (Why?)
• Managed, supervised or trained employees? (How Many? Who? Results?)
• Managed some type of work group or department? (How Many? Who? Results?)
• Increased the efficiency of something? (Of what? How? Results?)
• Enhanced the effectiveness of something? (Of what? How? Results?)
• Improved the quality of something? (Of what? How? Results?)
• Increased production? (Of what? How? Results?)
• Met or exceeded goals? (What? How? Results?)
• Solved difficult problems? (What? How? Results?)
• Created, developed, or designed something? (What? How? Results?)
• Decreased expenses? (Of what? How? Results?)
• Increased revenue or profits? (Of what? How? Results?)
• Increased production? (Of what? How? Results?)
• Increased sales? (Of what? How? Results?)
- Reduced downtime? (*Of what? How? Results?*)
- Developed a new process, system or procedure? (*What? How? Benefit?*)
- Identified opportunities overlooked by others? (*What? How? Benefit?*)

**Step #3**

**De-Constructing Your Accomplishments:**

By going through the process of de-constructing your accomplishments, you achieve several important outcomes:

- You develop insight into the knowledge, skills, and abilities that enabled you to achieve these notable performance achievements.
- You identify the core interests that previously engaged and motivated you.
- You begin to identify themes in your activities that will inform your choices about what you would be motivated to do, and enjoy doing, in your career.
- You inventory data about yourself that you can incorporate into marketing yourself as a future achiever (resume bullets, networking introductions, and responses to behavior-based interview questions).
- You develop compelling and persuasive “stories” to use in response to behavior-based interview questions that demonstrate how you have added value in the past, which also incorporates specific information about you that is vital in hiring decisions.

As you review your stories, you are likely to begin identifying themes or patterns in your past successes. You are likely to see that there are certain types of activities, tasks, or projects that you found particularly engaging (interests), motivating (values) and/or enjoyable (interests, skills, and/or values). Knowing your career interests, skills, and values is vital in focusing your studies and job search on particular business functions (Finance, Marketing, etc.), and/or targeting particular industries. “Non-business” interests may also be crucial in targeting particular industries. For example, a strong interest in automobiles may be a sufficient basis for focusing your career in the automotive industry. In addition, this personal interest in the industry is also likely to differentiate you from other viable candidates for a position. The same may be true for interests in entertainment, consumer products, fashion, manufacturing, technology, and so on. In each case, you are simply a better “fit” for the product or service of the organization because this is a personal motivator.

In your review, you are also likely to see that there are certain skills and abilities that you not only applied successfully, but also enjoyed using. In contrast, we all possess skills that we have developed and successfully applied in our previous activities, but we
no longer enjoy using. What you are searching for in this exercise is to identify the overlaps that exist between your interests (that which you find engaging and motivating) and the skills that you enjoy using. This point of overlap between interests and skills is variously labeled as areas of strength or key competencies. For example: Based on your interests and personality, you find other people very engaging and you enjoy interacting with them. In addition, you see a pattern in your achievement analysis that demonstrates that you have well developed interpersonal, communication and management skills, which you also enjoy using. Clearly, this represents one aspect that you would like to be present in your future career and also represents one of your key competencies or strengths. And once you have targeted particular positions that interest you, you now have a compelling story to tell about why this activity is important to you, as well as how you have been successful in applying those skills to add value in a previous experience. As you can see from this simple example, this exercise can assist you in identifying your interests and skills, help you to identify particular duties, tasks, roles and responsibilities that you would like to be part of your career future. This will assist you in focusing your career goals and aid in preparing you to persuasively market yourself in the job search.
APPENDIX A

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS MONDAY, JUNE 15TH

STEP #1
JOB HISTORY WORKSHEET

POSITION TITLE: __________________________________________

EMPLOYER: __________________________________________

LOCATION: __________________________________________

SUPERVISOR: __________________________________________

INCLUSIVE DATES: From: _____________ To: _____________

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION (Product, Service, Industry, # of employees, Sales volume):
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

FUNCTIONS SUPERVISED, MANAGED, DIRECTED:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

SCALE & SCOPE OF POSITION (# of reports, Sales/Production volume, Budget size):
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

DAILY TASKS & ACTIVITIES (It is important to identify and inventory each and every task and activity that were part of this position because we tend to view our past work experiences in very general terms):
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

SPECIAL PROJECTS:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
STEP #2
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

For each of the position worksheets created in the previous step, and referring to the previous list of questions as a stimulus, complete the form below for each experience. Take the time to thoroughly analyze each experience and identify several things you accomplished in each one. Be sure to include answers to the questions that follow each of the accomplishments (What? How? Benefit? Result?).

Accomplishment #1:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Accomplishment #2:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Accomplishment #3:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Accomplishment #4:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Add more if needed:
STEP #3
DE-CONSTRUCTING YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Copy and complete this portion of the worksheet for each of the accomplishments listed in the last step. One-by-one, copy each achievement into the following space and de-construct each using the following series of questions:

Accomplishment # __:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

• Fully describe the situation, problem, task, project, or need (this is the basis of a good response to every behavior-based interview question)

• Be very specific in describing what action you took, and who or what was involved.

• Describe any obstacles, problems and/or challenges you had to overcome.

• Be very specific in specifying personal qualities, knowledge, interests, skills and/or abilities you demonstrated or utilized. (remember that this is the information that will inform your career planning and the “product information” you will market in your job search)

• What were the qualitative and/or quantitative results of your efforts? (remember a recruiter is attempting to develop a prediction of how you will add value to his or her organization and this is based on how well you can communicate how you produced results in previous experiences)

• What was the most important lesson learned during this effort?

The deadline for submitting all Appendix A worksheets, steps 1 through 3, is Monday, June 15th. Please send them as Microsoft Word e-mail attachments to Paul Carozzoni pjc5@psu.edu. The deadline for submission of the remainder of the completed appendices is July 31st.
APPENDIX B

CareerLeader Summary

1. What are your strongest business interests (BCII)?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. Would you include other interests that were not identified by CareerLeader?
   ____________________________________________________________

3. What are your three most highly valued work reward values (MPRP)?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. Include additional values not identified by CareerLeader, which are highly motivating to you?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. What are your strongest business abilities (MPAP)?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

6. What additional abilities or transferable skills do you possess?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL STYLES

The list below contains words that describe various personality styles. As you read through the list, underline those items that reflect aspects of your personality. It is important to be honest and realistic in your choices. This is an inventory of who you actually are, not who you would like to think you are or how you would like others to perceive you. (As a useful point of comparison, you might consider asking a recent co-worker to complete a duplicate form and identify your top five styles from their perspective.) This level of honesty also provides you with insights into areas of needed change that you can incorporate into your planning, thus, enabling you to more effectively achieve your developmental goals. After underlining your selections, go back and select the 5 that are most accurate of you and rank-order them in the spaces provided below the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodating</th>
<th>Cautious</th>
<th>Determined</th>
<th>Instinctive</th>
<th>Patient</th>
<th>Self-Confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>Dignified</td>
<td>Introvert</td>
<td>Perceptive</td>
<td>Selfless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-oriented</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>Diligent</td>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>Perfectionist</td>
<td>Self-motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Clever</td>
<td>Diplomatic</td>
<td>Inventive</td>
<td>Persevering</td>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptable</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Discreet</td>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>Persistent</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>Serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>Pioneering</td>
<td>Sincere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>Compliant</td>
<td>Easy-going</td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Poised</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruistic</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>Solitary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciative</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Methodical</td>
<td>Precise</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Principled</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Curious</td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Tactful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astute</td>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>Extrovert</td>
<td>Motivating</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Thorough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Dedicated</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold</td>
<td>Disciplined</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Observer</td>
<td>Reserved</td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Deliberate</td>
<td>Influential</td>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>Resilient</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candid</td>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Resourceful</td>
<td>Versatile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Inquisitive</td>
<td>Outgoing</td>
<td>Retiring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My top 5 personality traits are:

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________
Primary job function (Finance, Marketing, etc.) (think interests, skills, experience):

________________________________________________________________________

Possible job titles (think skills, experience and your market research):

________________________________________________________________________

Level of responsibility (Supervisor, Assistant Manager, Manager, Director, VP, etc.) (think skills, styles, experience, as well as different career trajectories):

________________________________________________________________________

Industry (Manufacturing, Banking, Consulting, etc.) (think interests / experience):

________________________________________________________________________

In an organization whose products or services are (think interests, values, experience):

________________________________________________________________________

In an organization of this size (# of employees or dollar volume) (think values, styles):

________________________________________________________________________

In an organization that values (competition, collaboration, etc.) (think values, styles):

________________________________________________________________________

In an organization located in (Region, State, City, etc.) (think values, styles):

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX E

Personal Career Vision & Goals

As you begin to pull together the information you have accumulated about yourself, it is important to begin using the data to inform and develop concrete plans for your future. While you may not have a crystal clear picture of your future, you do have enough information to establish some general direction. Similar to an organizational vision, your current vision will serve as the basis for lifelong refinement. Keep in mind that any “living” vision statement is constantly in need of feedback and re-vision.

My long-term career vision is (in 5, 10 or more years):

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

To achieve my vision, I need to achieve the following intermediate goals:

In 5 years:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

In 2 years (first post-MBA job):

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

In 1 year (MBA summer internship):

_____________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX F

PERSONAL CAREER PLAN

The final step in the process is to articulate an implementation plan to achieve your short-term career goals and objectives, while working toward your long-term career vision. This begins with specifying your immediate marketing (job search) strategy and plans. Keep in mind that the job search is like any other marketing campaign. The only difference is that the product you are marketing is you.

By managing your job search as a marketing effort, you can leverage one of the fundamental models of marketing, which has demonstrated its business value for years. Commonly referred to as the 4 P’s of marketing, this model makes clear what needs to be done to successfully bring your product (You) to market:

**Product** – “Know your product” – “You.” The data from your self-analysis will enable you to develop your “Brand Statement” and “Value Proposition”

**Place** – The distribution channels for your product or how you will bring your product to the target consumer (on-campus interviewing, networking, answering want ads, applying on-line, job fairs, etc.). Based on your market research, Place also includes a description of the market segment you will target, an understanding of their needs and a strategy for how you will position your product to appeal to their needs.

**Promotion** – Marketing/Sales Activities necessary to bring the product to market. This includes planning attendance at certain events (job fairs, employer info sessions, etc.) developing written promotional materials (resumes & cover letters) and verbal marketing pitches (brand descriptions, interview responses, networking introductions, etc.)

**Price** – Formulating a competitive price structure for your product. This includes salary, bonuses, vacation time, and other aspects of an employment agreement. The Salary Negotiation Workshop, along with one-on-one negotiation coaching, will provide you with tools and strategies to determine a package that is based on labor market data.

Refer to the previous decision making exercise to complete the following marketing plan for implementing the next step in your career development.
MARKETING PLAN

(JOHN Q COLLEGE EXAMPLE follows)

Statement of Target Position/Goals:
______ (from your career vision and goals in Appendix E) ____________________________

Your “Brand” Statement: A concise description of primary work values, cultural and environmental preferences (from values and personality styles), core strengths (overlap of interests and skills), leading to statement of short- and long-term goals specifying positions, functions, and industry. This is a “snapshot” of who you are, what you stand for, and what you will deliver to employers, clients and colleagues.

Your Value Proposition: A brief narrative of the unique value you offer the MBA marketplace. Your value proposition should illustrate how your experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities will add value to an organization, while also communicating what differentiates you from other candidates. The content from this and your Brand Statement later becomes the content for networking conversations (your “elevator speech” or “2-minute drill”) and interview responses (“Tell me a little about yourself”).

Product Characteristics: A listing of essential product characteristics which, based on your market research, are vital to successful performance in the position. This is not a “laundry list” but a listing of the key skills, knowledge, values, and traits that will be valued by your target market.

Place: Characteristics of your target market. This includes specifying industry, geographic preferences, organization size, organizational culture and values, products/services, and a listing of preferred companies.

Price: Specification of employment compensation range, bonus options, benefits, and other aspects of the employment agreement that are important to you (the Salary Negotiation Workshop will provide you with tools and strategies to determine a package that is based on labor market data).

Promotion (Action Plan): Specifying and planning the actual day-to-day activities that, over time, will result in identifying, pursuing and securing product placement opportunities (the job). This includes developing the career management skills (resume, cover letter, networking, interviewing and negotiations) necessary to be successful at the MBA level. It is critical that you understand what recruiters/employers are looking for in an MBA candidate, and you must be realistic in your SWOT analysis of your career management skills. You must then plan activities (workshops, coaching, mock interviews, etc.) that will assist you in closing any gaps that may compromise your ability to successfully market yourself.
EXAMPLE

Marketing Plan
(from John Q. College resume)

Target Positions: Assistant Product Manager, Assistant Brand Manager

“Brand” Statement: In my work I value challenge, prestige, and opportunities for advancement and financial gain. I thrive in an organization that values creativity in solving problems and identifying opportunities, where I can be a key contributor on a product development team. My talent for understanding customer needs, combined with strong team and communication skills, has enabled me to successfully bring products to market. In the next step of my career I would like to become known as an innovator whose customer focus and business savvy is always focused on results that positively impact the bottom line. Long-term, I would like to be a senior marketing executive (possibly VP) with responsibility for brand strategy of an international consumer products organization, preferably in consumer electronics.

Value Proposition: I have experience in all phases of the consumer product life cycle. This has included involvement in market research, new product feasibility studies, product development, product launch and distribution logistics. My recent internship with IBM included oversight of the development and launch of over 20 new product concepts. I would now like to apply my skills and experience in a product management role for an international consumer electronics company.

Product Characteristics:
- Key skills: Quantitative analysis, communications and product development
- Knowledge: Consumer package goods, consumer electronics and product life-cycle
- Traits: Collaborative, action- and results-oriented, and consumer focused

Place (Target Market):
- Geography: Northeast but willing to consider anywhere for right opportunity
- Industry: Consumer electronics preferred but willing to consider CPG
- Organization: Fortune 500 with strong international presence and a team-based culture that values innovation and rewards results
- Possible companies: IBM, Dell and HP.

Price:
- $65 – 85K (ranging from minimally acceptable to ideal)
- 3 weeks vacation
- $2K training budget
Promotion (Action Plan Example):

- Join MBA Marketing Association (attend first meeting and meet president to learn what’s involved in pursuing a leadership role)
- E-mail past IBM colleagues and update them on current activities and plans
- Check Career Services calendar of activities (workshops, alumni events, career fairs, company information sessions, etc.) and add relevant ones to daily schedule
- Engage in career management workshops (Resume, Cover Letter, Networking, Interviewing and Salary Negotiation)
- Post-workshop, edit resume and have reviewed by Career Services team members
- Create cover letter for internship search and have reviewed prior to the recruiting season
- Register for MBA Association mock interview
- Register for Fall SIP interview(s). Research the company that employs my interviewer. Go to career services to address any developmental feedback regarding interview skill development.
- Attend IBM Information session and meet representatives (get date and register)
- Identify and meet current students who previously worked for, or interned with, IBM, Dell, HP and other target companies
- Identify and contact alumni (3-5 a week) who work for IBM, Dell, HP and other target companies. Use alumni database, faculty and staff as resources to identify alums. Request a phone conversation to discuss their company and my career plans, and follow-up as necessary to maintain connection
- Submit resume for on-campus interviews with consumer electronics and CPG companies (attend any respective information sessions)
- Attend PSU Fall Career Fair at the Bryce Jordan Center and focus on consumer electronics and CPG companies (research companies before attending)
- Use target companies/industries for academic assignments
APPENDIX G

YOUR STORY

Note: Along with your resume, your story will be provided to your MBA Alumni Mentor so that he or she can prepare for your mentoring meeting at the end of the third week of classes.

The very first step in implementing your plan is to synthesize and summarize the results of the previous exercises. The end product of this step is “your story.” Your story is the core of all your marketing and self-promotion communications. It contains the essential information that anyone would want to know about you, whether in a networking interaction or in an interview. In fact, some people may actually ask you, “what’s your story?” Parts of your story will also populate your “elevator pitch” or “2-minute drill” (we will discuss these in our networking workshop). Your story is also the organizing framework, or outline, to which you add other information, examples and details in an interview. As you provide this additional information, you provide depth and dimension to your core story. Thus, in an interview, it provides you with a tool to build consistency and continuity as you provide successive pieces of information resulting in the final impression you intended.

You have been through an interview and know that you can’t simply sit there and tell the interviewer your life story. The interviewer does want to learn a great deal about you but this is accomplished by asking particular questions that will elicit the information they want to know about you. In the end, the impression they form about you is informed by the series of responses you provide to their questions. In order to achieve your goal of providing a clear, concise and coherent picture of yourself, it is imperative that you have your story prepared, polished and firmly imbedded in your brain. With your story at hand, you are empowered to connect your response to any question back to the core framework.

In essence, your story is a distillation of all your career information regarding your past, present and future. An interview or a networking conversation could start at any of these three places but you will be prepared to tie them all together as the conversation or interview progresses. As you begin thinking about writing your story, the following is provided to give you a sense of what you might want to include -- depending on your unique story.

Your past – This could include any activities or experiences that have influenced who you are today. Your past is also the context in which you developed the value or potential you have to offer (your value proposition). This can include education, work experience, skills, accomplishments, personal traits, elements of character, roles and responsibilities. It might also include developmental milestones, formative experiences or people. It could also include how events, people or experiences have influenced your thinking or career decisions.
Your present - What are you doing now and why? Motivation to return for an MBA (this may also be tied to past influences or future goals – a good example of how you can weave together the past, present and future). What brought you to Smeal? Why Smeal? Your area of study and academic activities.

Your future – What are your short- and long-term goals? Here they want more than ‘I want to be a senior leader.’ They want specifics: what specifically do you want to do, where do you see your entry level, how do you see your career progressing, in what kind of company (product, service, culture), in what industry and, for some of these questions, why?

In capturing the essence of your story on paper, your goal is to concisely describe the experiences, knowledge and skills that reflect your development and future value. Keep in mind that you don’t need to tell everything…just tell those parts of your story that you believe would be important to hiring managers, and help them understand you and what you have to offer. Again, what you have to offer is part of your value proposition. In this regard, select 2 or 3 factors that you think are differentiating characteristics. Said another way, when compared to your competition, what 2 or 3 things make you uniquely qualified for the role you seek.

Please limit your story to one single-spaced page, or two double spaced pages.