



The 'Right' Career Path



So, you're coming to the end of your course or you've already left the cosy shelter of university life for the 'real' world. What now? Dr Clare Beckett-McInroy EdD gives you some solid career advice.

Lead your Own Career

Although you need to have an end in mind, how you get there and how it finally manifests itself may be different than what you anticipate. Your learning, experiences and outlook will also develop and change along the way. The main thing is to keep heading in a direction, moving towards a destination, but with recessions and other surprises, you need to be flexible. Keep your options open and an eye out for unusual, unanticipated and exciting opportunities that come your way. Open-mindedness can really do wonders for your self-esteem as well.

Think Medium-term

The concept of career has changed and will continue to change due to technological and other advances. Same goes for the way we 'work' and our desire for increased amounts of more focused leisure time. So consider your medium-term plan as your priority. There's nothing wrong with a long-term vision but a career for life tends to be something of the past. Some would even say that committing yourself to a small or medium size enterprise is more beneficial than a corporate graduate training scheme as you will be more hands-on and develop a greater breadth of knowledge.

Stand Strong - Be Bold

You may be scared of making a career mistake but if you weight up the pros and cons for too long or wait for the perfect position to appear, you will be losing out. We all have to start somewhere so learn as much from an opening you have been offered as you can. If you are in a job, you have statistically more chance of getting another job. Remember, people move around a great deal these days so if you are unhappy after a reasonable amount of time, move on!

Keep Moving Forward

Do something, do anything! Any energy expanded upon networking, charity work or joining a society - and being active - will not only provide you with contacts, but also enable you to show people what you can do. You don't want a gap in your CV that you need to explain, if at all possible. Any experience is good experience so by taking up short-term, part-time or even internships, you are keeping yourself on the right track. This also enables you to get a 'feel' for what's available in different careers if your degree did not lead you directly into a certain profession.

Re-brand Yourself

Don't look merely at your qualification; consider your skills and personal interests as well when searching for a career. Think about what you can offer, what you enjoy and what you are good at. You are then opening up your chances of being chosen for a position and, ideally, working in a career that you love. Good interpersonal skills and other generic/transferable skills are needed in this changing world of work as is interdependence and self-awareness. Keep abreast of who you are and what you value.

Examine your Wants and Options

You need to be realistic about what career opportunities are out there considering geographical location, the economic climate and personal circumstances, amongst other factors. When you are invited for an interview or when you meet people in networking situations, look for good people - not the 'perfect' job. Although you don't want to lower your expectations, when starting out, the best learning experiences can be sought by working with excellent people. You can be inspired and educated all at the same time.

12 Top Tips

- Start planning early - six to nine months before you graduate.
- Consider a psychometric test to match your abilities and your personality to your career.
- Check out the options considering geographical restrictions, economic conditions etc.
- Practice authentic networking.
- Be active - do charity work, join committees and societies, consider internships if the right job has not come along - it gets you noticed, can be great fun and is good for the CV.
- Invest time in searching vacancies in different places. Register online with key companies for vacancy updates. Keep your eyes and ears open.
- Apply to post-graduate courses to keep your options open.
- Follow potential employees (on Twitter etc.).
- Attend careers fairs.
- Keep an open mind.
- Get talking to professionals in your desired field and seek their advice.
- Think about being self-employed if you have good business acumen and an entrepreneurial flair.

Dr Clare Beckett-McInroy EdD is an Assistant Professor at Bahrain Teacher's College, University of Bahrain. She has completed extensive research into careers education and guidance both in the UK and the Gulf and is also a qualified psychometric tester. *For more information contact her on cbeckett@btc.uob.bh*