

## Chapter 4

### Preparing for a Job

#### Basic Job Skills

You make decisions every day. Some of them may be small or minor decisions, such as deciding what to wear or what to eat for breakfast. You also make major decisions, such as deciding whether or not to attend college or what career to pursue. All decisions, minor or major, require similar thinking or problem-solving skills. To understand the decision-making process, consider the following example of deciding which career to pursue.

**Step 1: Define the problem.** First, identify the exact problem. This is stated in the form of a question. In this example, the problem would be: "Which career should I pursue?"

**Step 2: Gather all the facts or data.** Once you have defined the problem, gather all the information necessary to make a decision. In this example, facts or data might be:

- You want to earn a lot of money
- You are willing to get further education or training
- You enjoy working with people
- You do not enjoy repetitive tasks
- You enjoy the out-doors
- You like working regular hours

**Step 3: List possible solutions.** Ideas may occur to you through brainstorming, or jotting down whatever occurs to you. Usually you consider many different solutions and list two or three of them for further consideration. To continue with this example, several solutions might be:

1. To go to college to become a teacher
2. To attend the police academy to become a police officer
3. To apply for training as a park ranger

**Step 4: Choose the best solution.** After considering several solutions, decide on the one with the least number of negative consequences, or unwanted results. You may have to write down the advantages and disadvantages of each possible solution, sometimes referred to as "pluses" and "minuses."

In the example, if four years of college seem too long, eliminate solution 1, teaching. If being a park ranger requires moving far from home and you don't want to do that, then eliminate solution 3, park ranger. The remaining alternative, solution 2, police officer, may be the best one for you because it satisfies most of

your needs. There is rarely a perfect solution. You attempt to select the best solution.

It is at this point that you “go for it,” and act on your best solution. But the job isn’t over. There is one more step.

**Step 5: Evaluate.** After you act, evaluate, or assess, the decision. Did it meet your needs? Are you happy? Was it a good choice for you? If so, give yourself a pat on the back. If not, go back to Step 2 and start over again. Evaluation is an ongoing process, since you generally review your progress as you proceed through the decision-making steps.

To summarize, the steps of the decision making process are:

- Step 1: Define the Problem
- Step 2: Gather All Facts or Data
- Step 3: List Possible Solutions
- Step 4: Choose the Best Solution
- Step 5: Evaluate

Besides problem-solving skills, certain other basic skills or competencies are needed in almost all jobs.

- You must be able to read well enough to understand printed instruction, safety rules, and other written matter related to your job.
- You must be able to write effectively. Without this skill, you couldn’t even fill out a job application form. Once on the job, you may have to write memos, business letters or reports.
- You must be able to listen well in order to understand and follow spoken instructions and explanations. Good listening skills are especially important if your job requires you to deal directly with customers.
- You must be able to speak clearly and understandably, especially in jobs requiring you to communicate with customers or your fellow workers.

All four of the preceding skills are called the communication skills.

A master key to success in the workplace is education. As work in our society shifted from the agriculture to industry and then to technology, workers needed more and more years of education. In school, your general communication skills are developed and strengthened. You also learn the basic skills in mathematics and science, two subject areas essential in the workplace today.

Different kinds of jobs require different levels of education. In many high schools, you can receive specialized education and training to prepare you to work as an electrician, draftsperson, cosmetician, or one of the many other

interesting and profitable jobs. If your goal were to become a schoolteacher, engineer, or librarian, you would need a college education. To become a lawyer, physician, psychologist, or social worker, expect to spend some years beyond college in postgraduate education. Whatever your job or career goals may be, education is the road you must travel to reach them.

Many workers acquire the skills needed for a particular trade through an **apprenticeship**. As an apprentice, you work full-time, usually at reduced wages, while being trained by an experienced and skilled worker on the job. Once you have learned the trade, you become a **journeyman**, who knows the trade. When you become experienced and an expert, you are considered a **master** tradesperson.

## Looking for a Job

After you have received the training or education required for a job or career, the search for an **entry-level position** starts. What sources should you investigate during your **job search** to secure the position that you want?

- **Word of Mouth:** by speaking to your friends and relatives, you may learn of available positions. This word-of-mouth process, some times called networking, can be a helpful way to learn about career and job opportunities.
- **Classified Advertisements:** All major newspapers have employment sections, or classified advertisements, which list available jobs. These job openings are usually listed in alphabetical order, according to job title. They provide the reader with data such as salary, experience requirements, job descriptions, and where to apply. People seeking employment may also place classified ads.
- **Employment Agencies:** Public and private employment agencies have listings of many jobs. Employers seeking to fill jobs sometimes use employment agencies initially to find qualified applicants. Private employment agencies get a fee for this service, usually paid by the employer; state or local governments operate Public employment agencies. There is no fee for their service.
- **Guidance Counselors:** In most schools and colleges, guidance counselors offer job-search and placement services. They can tell you about jobs listed with the school or college.
- **Letters or Personal visits:** you could write to or visit businesses for which you may like to work. You could also watch for "Help Wanted" signs in business windows.
- **Books, Publications, Trade or Industrial Publications:** the library has many publications on careers and job opportunities. They can be a valuable source of information, including lists of entrance-test requirements and dates.

As part of your job search, you should think about future employment opportunities. What kinds of jobs are growing? How can you find out? Newspapers and magazines often contain charts or graphs predicting future trends in employment. Seeking and finding the right job for yourself takes time and effort. You should investigate as many sources as you can. Approach the job-search process as a "job" itself, making sure to evaluate all possible factors. A thorough search should lead to a successful career.

Sometimes it can even be beneficial to take a job that does not meet all your immediate desires or needs. One job can lead to another in the same field or can even lead to a position in a related field. Once you are working, many other opportunities become possible.

## **Job Classifications**

There are literally millions of possible job titles. In order to provide some order, a classification system has been devised. The system groups jobs by their similar characteristics. For example, it gathers all those jobs that deal with medicine together in one group and those jobs that deal with farming in another. These groups are called **career clusters**.

Within each career cluster are many types of jobs. For example, the health cluster would include jobs such as doctor, nurse, dentist, physical therapist and nutritionist. Many of these jobs can be further divided into registered nurse or licensed nurse practitioner. As well as pediatric nurse or geriatric nurse.

Using all the resources available to you should make your job-search process efficient and successful.