

Career Ahead: Where Do You Want to Go?

You may be looking for a job, a promotion or an entirely new career. Whatever the situation, you need a plan.

As the Cheshire Cat explains to Alice with impeccable logic: "If you don't know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take." Here are a few things to keep in mind as you plan or revise your career path:



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1. Identify your dream career: Many times we make career decisions based upon an immediate need for money. It's easy, quick and available but not what you really want to do. It often is possible to build a career in a field you love, even if it isn't the perfect job starting out. Working the drive-through window may help pay the bills, but it won't help you develop into the great musician you dream of becoming. Working the register at FYE, however, will expose you to the industry and many of the industry publications. That WILL help you develop by keeping you informed of industry trends and marketing.

2. Draft your plan of action: "Draft" is the key word here. Your plan of action can be written in an electronic file or a 50-cent notebook. Just write it down! Start first with where you want to be. Then list the steps that will be required to achieve that goal. Does the list appear overwhelming? Good. You have a great

challenge ahead of you. Many of the items will meld together as you work toward your career.

3. Start small: You can't achieve it all in one week. This is going to take time. Get a calendar, a free one from the bank or an expensive one from the office supply store; it doesn't matter. Set your realistic milestones at three, six, nine months and one year. Understand that you may have to make adjustments as time passes. You may be stalled because you can't get into a particular training class until later. That's OK. Review your plan at each of your milestone dates and make adjustments as needed.

4. Work your plan: Many people defeat themselves at this point and stick the plan of action on a shelf or

in a drawer, taking it out on occasion to look at it, sigh and put it back. Don't be that person. Taking the first steps putting the plan to work can be the most intimidating part of all. We tend to be afraid of change. Do it. Work your plan. Sometimes the first step is just to tell someone about your plan. Some will be supportive; others won't. Either way, telling others helps to set your mind to moving forward.

5. Hang on: Plans are sometimes magnets for tests of patience. Things will go wrong, and you will have to revise your plan routinely. The key is to keep the primary goal the same. You may deeply desire to become the greatest pianist since **Billy Joel**, but an accident may leave you with a disability that keeps you from performing. How-

ever, you still have the ability to write music.

In the end, it's up to you to plan your career and make it successful. Whether you choose to be a famous musician or not-so-famous office manager, a tangible plan that you can refer back to is one of the many keys to success. Pig-headed determination is another. Don't wait for someone else to open the door for you. Grab the handle and walk on through!

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