

every
woman
WORKBOOK

CAREER PLANNING

CONTENTS



About this workbook	3
Section 1. Taking control	4
Who am I?	5
Section 2. Choosing the direction	10
Talent exploration	11
External factors	13
Section 3. Ladder or jungle gym?	16
Section 4. Considering all the options	18
Your personal advisory board	21
Section 5. Making a plan	23
Section 6. Putting your plan into action	25
Reviewing your progress	27

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

ESTABLISHED IN 1999, everywoman works to advance all women in business. We produce a series of workbooks designed to propel women through the most challenging aspects of their careers.

Why career planning?

Congratulations! In starting this workbook you've taken the first step towards taking control of your own career.

Challenging, fulfilling and enjoyable work is an important but sometimes elusive goal for many of us. Often we slog on, doing the best we can and hoping our commitment and diligence will be recognised and rewarded. Sometimes it is. But sometimes, the promotion goes to someone else, and we become bystanders to watching a colleague move on and up to a new opportunity.

Don't be the person who looks on in confusion and regret – develop your own career plan and make your own career dreams come true. It is perfectly possible – regardless of where you are in your career and which industry you work in.

Career planning is not just for high-flyers or those already halfway up the ladder; it's essential to invest time in career planning whether or not you consider yourself a candidate for the board room. Career planning is as much about fulfilment as it is meteoric progression.

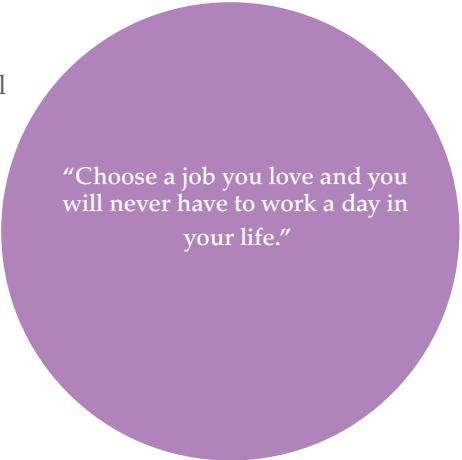
If you are starting out in your career, you may simply want to take a long-term

overview to create a general direction in your mind's eye. Or you may have a time-based goal – to be a director by age 35, for example. Even if your ultimate goal is unclear, or two different paths beckon, you can develop a plan to guide you in your exploration of the opportunities that are out there - so you can be ready to seize opportunities when they arise, rather than just stumbling along.

Your career is a lifelong journey. You may take different twists and turns along the way; you may take a detour at certain life stages; but ultimately it will be a more fulfilling journey if you have a map.

In this workbook you will find knowledge and learning about career planning, tools and exercises to put the learning into practice, motivational quotes and information on further resources.

Remember, a goal without a plan is just a dream. Seize the day.



"Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life."

SECTION 1. TAKING CONTROL



Who am I?

THE FIRST STAGE of taking control and planning your own career is to understand yourself. What sort of person are you? What motivates you? How do you like to spend your time? What were you doing when you had your greatest career successes to date? What do you enjoy?

This process is all the more effective if you can step outside yourself and view yourself as objectively as you can; almost as a third party would, or as if you were a product you were tasked with promoting. Become your own Talent Manager!

The first question to answer is:

Who am I?

Take a long, hard and honest look at yourself and complete a SWOT analysis. In each section, address the questions and add any other points that come to mind. At this stage, we'll just consider your personal strengths and weaknesses and we'll come back to opportunities and threats later.

When you think about how others perceive you, don't forget to consider the views of your boss. Look up your most recent review or appraisal or think about current feedback you have received about your performance. If you have done a psychometric test within the last six months, review the results.

If modesty kicks in and you have trouble identifying your strengths, write down a list of your personal characteristics. Many of them will be strengths – and some may inform the weaknesses column as well!

Be as realistic as possible about your weaknesses. It makes sense to face up to them right away and make a plan to address them.

"One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation."

ARTHUR ASHE (US TENNIS CHAMPION)

Some questions to ask yourself:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are your educational achievements? What qualifications, degrees, certificates, diplomas or skills• What would others say are your strengths?• Have you had any positive feedback that came as a surprise?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there any gaps in your education or training?• What do you avoid doing and why?• Do you bring negative habits to work, e.g. poor time-keeping, disorganisation, moodiness?• Is there anything your peer group does well that you do not?

Let me introduce a fictional character. Jane Douglas is the Manager of the fashion accessories department of a major retail store. She is 25-years-old and engaged to be married next year. She loves her work and is ambitious to move up the ladder. She enjoys the finer things in life and loves to travel. She is stylish, outgoing and confident, well liked by her colleagues and customers. She did well at school and went on to university where she achieved a degree in Humanities. She also has an aptitude for numbers. In her spare time she is a member of an amateur dramatic society.

To fulfill her ambition to become a buyer, Jane embarked on a career-planning exercise and started with a SWOT analysis, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses that directly correlated with her goal.

Jane Douglas

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 GCSEs and 3 A levels, including English and Maths• BA in Humanities• London College of Fashion summer school course on Fashion Marketing• Internal courses on leadership and employment law• Good eye for style and display techniques• Ability to switch sell and upsell• Good relationships with customers• Excellent sales results in my department; percentage improvements higher than colleagues in similar roles• Outwardly confident, good with people• Competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to learn more about fashion buying and merchandising• Not always as tough as I should be when colleagues get things wrong• Need to insist on a tidy stockroom• Hate stocktaking• Not always 'brave' enough to ask for what I want

Now have a go at filling in your own strengths and weaknesses:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES

This is not an exercise you can do in one sitting. Answer the questions, fill in the boxes, add anything else you have thought of and put it away for a day or two.

Arrange to discuss it with people who know you well, who can add to your strengths and be candid with you about your weaknesses.

What have you learned from the exercise?

The second questions to answer is:

How will I harness my strengths?

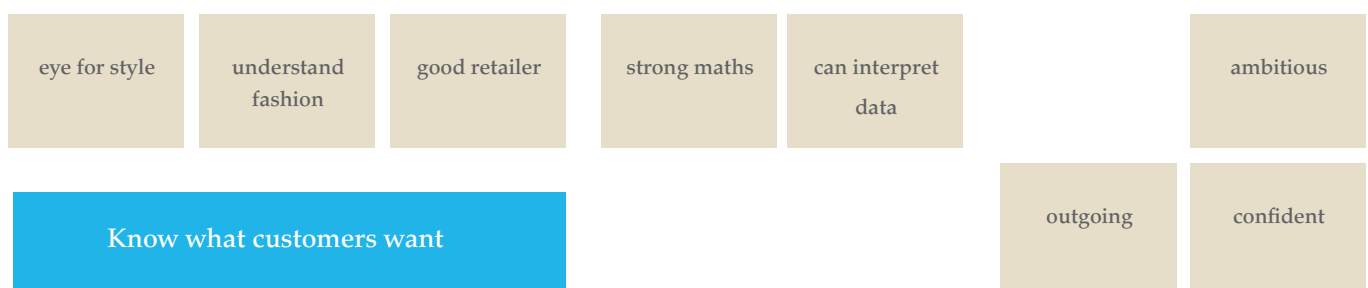
Once you have a list of your strengths and perhaps some ideas that flow from them, you can use an affinity diagram (see below) to organise your information and see how it's all connected.

Sometimes when you try to think through a number of seemingly random ideas or amass a lot of information, it can be overwhelming. You may struggle to make sense of it, feel you may be missing something or you just can't see the wood for the trees.

Japanese anthropologist Kawakita Jiro originally developed the affinity diagram as a means of grouping unorganised ideas into meaningful themes, so that you can see the connections between them.

This is how you go about it:

- Grab a pack of Post-it notes and write one strength or idea on each, in random order, just as they come to mind.
- Group them into themes, as shown below. Jane's might look like this:



- Give a title to each group of notes. Jane's might be: good retailer, analytic, personality traits
- Think through how you can use those strengths
- Identify any gaps and consider how you can fill them

From the affinity diagram and the list of strengths you have drawn up, pull together the key strengths that emerge from all your thinking. Link them together into a cohesive statement of your strengths.

Jane Douglas' statement might look something like this:

"I am an instinctive retailer with a strong eye for style and fashion trends. I am good at displaying merchandise to attract customers and draw attention to poor-performing lines, which then sell. I know what our customers want because I talk to them daily. I am a good salesperson and frequently upsell. My customers come back to me often and I know them by name. I can feed back to our buyer what works and what doesn't work on the shop floor."

Identify how you can play to your strengths in your current role. The statement will help you later when you come to update your CV or fill in a job application. It will also help you to be clear about what you bring to the table at your appraisal, in meetings and when networking.

Apart from anything else, when you feel low, reviewing these strengths will revitalise your confidence and we all need that from time to time.

Completing this exercise will give you a good picture of who you are. The next question is what would you like to be doing?

Your statement of strengths

SECTION 2. CHOOSING THE DIRECTION



Talent Exploration

BEGIN BY CONSIDERING your talents and areas of interest. What do you most enjoy doing and why? What activities do you get the most satisfaction from? What type of activities are you drawn to do?

If you look back on your career to date, you will see that the jobs and work you have most enjoyed have been those that played to your strengths and where your own values were best reflected. The jobs in which you could be your true self, authentic in your behaviour and performance.

Talent Exploration

Take some time to consider the questions below.

- When have you been most committed, passionate and enthusiastic?
- When have you been most creative?
- When have you been most sure of yourself and your decisions?
- What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment?
- When have other people considered you to be most successful?
- When have you enjoyed your work most?
- What talents were you relying on, and using, in these situations?
- For what would you take a very strong stand?
- What about the world puzzles or disturbs you that you could make an impact on?
- What jobs do you like to do at work when you have a choice?
- What activities are you drawn to outside of work?
- If money was of no concern, what would you be doing?

“Find out what you like doing best and get someone to pay you for doing it.”

KATHERINE WHITEHORN
(BRITISH JOURNALIST AND
FEMINIST)

Once again look carefully at what these answers are telling you. Do any clear themes or patterns emerge?

Do another affinity diagram and work out from that what the key components of fulfillment look like for you.

If your passion is working with children in a creative environment, think about exploring the opportunities of a kid's theatre group. If you pine to be out of doors with mud under your fingernails, look for a job in a nursery or train as a landscape gardener. If technology is your thing, see where you can apply it in your field or work out how you can broaden your horizons. If you are a qualified lawyer or accountant who feels constrained by professional practice, how can you use your knowledge and training in a wider field?

You may find you are already in your ideal job but that your ambitions can be fulfilled in another way or at another time.

External Factors

TAKE A LOOK OUTSIDE YOURSELF, at your business and the wider world and consider the opportunities and threats that apply in your current situation. Ask yourself these types of questions:

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your industry growing and if so, what does that mean for your job opportunities? • Are there new developments in your field and how can you get involved? • Can you see any opportunities for your company, division or department that are not currently being addressed? • What is happening in your company and what does that mean for you? • Do you have contacts who can help you get ahead? • Do your personal strengths open up any specific opportunities, e.g. speaking a foreign language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the external factors affecting your company or industry? • What problems do you currently face at work? • What is changing in your own field e.g.: technological impact? • What are the obstacles to your career ambitions? • Who are your key competitors for the next project, promotion or opportunity? • Are any of your weaknesses threatening your career progression?

Jane Douglas might fill hers in like this:

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store expanding as part of new retail development in city centre • Larger ground floor space will mean larger department area • I could research opportunities for new lines in fashion accessories and suggest them to my boss • Reach out to contacts from my summer school course • Maths skills will help me propose a viable business plan to my boss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the external factors affecting your company or industry? • What problems do you currently face at work? • What is changing in your own field e.g. technological impact? • What are the obstacles to your career ambitions? • Who are your key competitors for the next project, promotion or opportunity? • Are any of your weaknesses threatening your career progression?

Now have a go at filling in the Opportunities and Threats that apply to your situation.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

If you do not feel sufficiently aware of external factors affecting your work sphere, think about who you know within your organisation, industry or network who does have this information. Ask them what they think the opportunities are, for your company and industry.

Consider the headings Political, Economic, Social and Technological. These might raise the following questions:

Political: Are there regional or local government policy changes coming? If so, will they impact your company and if so how? Are there pending legislation changes that may impact your business?

Economic: What is happening in the economy at the moment and how does it impact your company and industry? Do exchange rate changes affect your business?

Social: Are there generational changes in attitude that impact your product or your marketing? What social attitudes and opinions could have an effect on your business? What opportunities do social media channels create?

Technological: What is the impact of new technology or technological advances on your business? Are any of your company's competitors ahead of the game in this field? Are there any technological developments that will affect your industry for good or ill?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions. Talk to your colleagues, contacts and network members to gauge the views of others, in order to form your own opinions over time.

Next, put the opportunities and threats together with your personal strengths and weaknesses.

Take time to reflect on what you have discovered. You will have a good picture of who you are and the environment in which you are operating. You should draw confidence from your strengths and, having considered your talents and the direction in which they take you, have an idea of where you want to go next.

The opportunities and threats will also help you determine your direction and highlight any gaps in your knowledge and experience that you need to address.

Dig this workbook out every twelve months and do the exercise again.

The next step is to put all this knowledge to work.

"Chance favours the prepared mind."

LOUIS PASTEUR
(FRENCH CHEMIST AND
MICROBIOLOGIST)

SECTION 3. LADDER OR JUNGLE GYM



Ladder or Jungle Gym?

THE TOPICS RAISED by Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, in her book 'Lean In' published in 2013, generated a lot of discussion. One nugget resonated for many women in today's world: "It's better to think in terms of a career jungle gym than a career ladder."

If you visualise a jungle gym set-up, it usually has a ladder but at the top of that ladder, there are options: to move sideways before going on in a different direction, to take a pause at that level or to keep climbing. There are also options to slide down - all or part of the way.

Susan Gambardella, Central Region Vice-President for Coca-Cola FoodService, is also an advocate of taking what she calls lateral and stretch assignments to achieve breadth or cross-functional experience. She recommends looking for opportunities for personal growth, not just vertical progression.

An example of this might be taking a new job that offers an opportunity to learn a new aspect of your discipline, but doesn't offer a higher salary or increased responsibility. If you are a financial specialist, for example, you might want to learn about marketing or e-commerce in order to ensure you are more suitable for a general management position in the future. This is where having a career plan which highlights future goals comes in handy - you can work out where you may need to develop sideways as well as vertically in order to nail that future promotion.

What you want right now depends where you are in your life. At one stage, you may be focussed on achieving promotion, at another, making a career change or even navigating life changes - taking time out to have children or be with elderly parents.

If any of these statements apply to you, it may be time to consider making a change, whether within the company you currently work for or externally.

- I don't feel challenged or excited in my work
- Opportunities for promotion or development in my current role are limited
- I feel that I am wasting my skills and talents
- The task has become routine and I am not learning any more
- I don't feel appreciated
- I am no longer having fun

"Careers are a jungle gym, not a ladder."

SHERYL SANDBERG

SECTION 4.
CONSIDERING ALL THE
OPTIONS



Considering all the options

AS WITH ALL PROJECTS, taking control of your career requires a research phase, in which you gather and analyse your information in order to plan your approach.

Analysis of opportunities

Work out what you really want to do
This will help you base your plan firmly in reality
Keep this as wide as possible in the initial stages



Identify goal

A clearly defined goal will give focus to your plan
Start with a broad statement and narrow it down using open questions to yourself:
what, how, why, where, when, how?



Explore options

At this stage spend time generating as many options as possible, even though you may be tempted to seize the first one that comes to mind. By exploring many different scenarios, you may come up with a less obvious but better solution



Select the best

At this stage spend time generating as many options as possible, even though you may be tempted to seize the first one that comes to mind. By exploring many different scenarios, you may come up with a less obvious but better solution

If you're thinking of changing direction, your research should include:

- Exploring opportunities within the company you currently work for
- Reading industry/career magazines and trade papers to judge the mood of the industry and what the issues and problems are. Find out who the major players are and look at job vacancies to see if the career is in demand

The next step is to put all this knowledge to work.

- Joining special interest groups on social media; first observe the conversation and learn from it, then participate
- Understanding what talents and personalities make people successful in your chosen career and compare this with your own talents and personality traits
- Attending professional and trade shows
- Participating in job fairs or networking events
- Visiting company websites, and monitoring what is said about your target companies in the press via Google alerts
- Finding out where organisations are based, deciding if you're prepared to travel to interviews or even to relocate
- Volunteering to gain experience in a relevant field
- If possible working part time or seasonally in the industry you want to break into
- Taking further education classes or attending conferences

Your personal ‘advisory board’

HEATHER MCGREGOR, better known as Mrs Money Penny of the Financial Times, says: “*What you know* represents the foundations of your career. If you want to achieve your goals in life, you need to be both good at what you do and good at building relationships with people that matter.”

In business, as in life, we all have a group of people whose opinions we respect and whose advice we value. These could be formal relationships with coaches, mentors, previous colleagues or superiors with whom we still maintain warm contact; or new relationships, developed through mutual business interests and based on a spark of empathy.

All of us need to build a network of people with whom we have a mutually useful relationship. The explosion of social media, as a result of which we all have hundreds of supposed contacts that we hardly know and cannot recall independently, makes the need for face to face contact more important than ever.

There is an acid test for true contacts. Would they take a phone call from you or agree to see you? If not, do they even know who you are and if that is the case, what is the value of having them in your network? One proficient networker never accepts a LinkedIn request unless it has a personal message that reminds her where and when they met and gives good reason for maintaining contact. Networking is a two-way street. It is all about what you can do for the other person and therefore by extension, what they can do for you.

Don't neglect your contacts close to home. Does your immediate boss know what your ambitions are? It may well be that they can and will help you. To get on in business, you need both sponsors and advocates: people in a position of influence in your organisation and/or industry. They need to be close enough to your career to know and advise where you should be focusing your efforts. They can influence the opportunities to which you have access and will actively help you by putting your name forward. Their reputation will enhance yours.

Spend a little time deciding who these people are in your business life and list them here:

NAME	POSITION/COMPANY	RELATIONSHIP	HOW MIGHT THEY HELP?

Most people who have achieved a certain status in business have been helped by others along the way and are therefore willing to 'pay it forward' and help others to achieve career success.

Most people who know you, and anyone who respects you, will give some time to advise and help you make new connections. The secret is to ask for just 20 minutes and be clear what you want to talk about.

If, filling in the form above, you cannot describe your relationship or you realise it is too far removed, work out how to get closer: Who do you know who knows them better than you do; who can introduce you; and how can they best help you?

Now is the time to use these resources. Discuss with them your ambitions, your SWOT analysis and options. Consult them but make decisions yourself.

SECTION 5. MAKING A PLAN



Making a plan

THINK ABOUT YOUR BIG PICTURE GOAL and break it down into a series of more detailed steps. You may have more than one project within your overall plan. For example, if you decide to relocate to Europe, you may first have to plan to learn a new language to the stage of business proficiency.

Work backwards from your end goal to work out the steps that are needed to get you there. Take a SMART approach:

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACTION-ORIENTATED	REALISTIC AND RELEVANT	TIME BASED
Appointed buyer within the fashion division	Make sure I am selected to manage the expanded accessories department as a first step	Discuss my goal with HR and my boss	Manage expanded accessories department	September
	Achieve promotion to buyer status	Sign up for the London College of Fashion evening course on fashion buying and merchandising	Deepen my knowledge on evening course	Oct/Nov
		Discuss commitment to evening study with fiancé	Ask for and achieve promotion	Spring next year

Once again, stimulate your own thinking by working through this process to make your own career plan:

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACTION-ORIENTATED	REALISTIC AND RELEVANT	TIME BASED

SECTION 6.
PUTTING YOUR PLAN
INTO ACTION



Putting your plan into action

THE SECRET OF PLANNING IS to have a clear end goal in mind and to keep your eye on it throughout the execution process. It is easy to get bogged down in detail or get sidetracked.

There is a great story about a rowing team in the London 2012 Olympics, which is often quoted. The goal was obviously to win the race and the strategy to achieve that was to make the boat go faster. Every aspect of the plan – the tactics employed – had to pass the acid test: Will that make the boat go faster? If yes, do it. If no, discard it. Be equally ruthless as you implement your plan.

Once you have a robust plan, tackle it step by step and put it into action. You may draw up several smaller tactical plans within the overall strategic plan. Jane, for example, knows she needs to ensure she gets to manage the expanded accessories department en route to her overall goal of promotion to buyer, so she will need to make a separate ‘plan within a plan’ to achieve that.

To test your plan, imagine you are explaining to a third party how it will work to achieve the overall goal. Are the stages detailed enough? Is the progression logical? Have you left out any important steps? Discuss it with a member of your personal advisory board.

There is huge satisfaction in ticking off each action as it is achieved. Determine precise individual steps, which represent milestones along the way, but be realistic. Challenge yourself but be flexible if circumstances so dictate. There is a reason why the cliché endures: Rome wasn’t built in a day!

There will be setbacks but these are best regarded as bumps in the road. Slow down to identify them and negotiate them safely. If they are major, you may need to reconsider your route. If the answer is no, ask what would have to happen to make it yes?

Be determined, never give up!

REVIEWING YOUR PROGRESS



Reviewing your progress

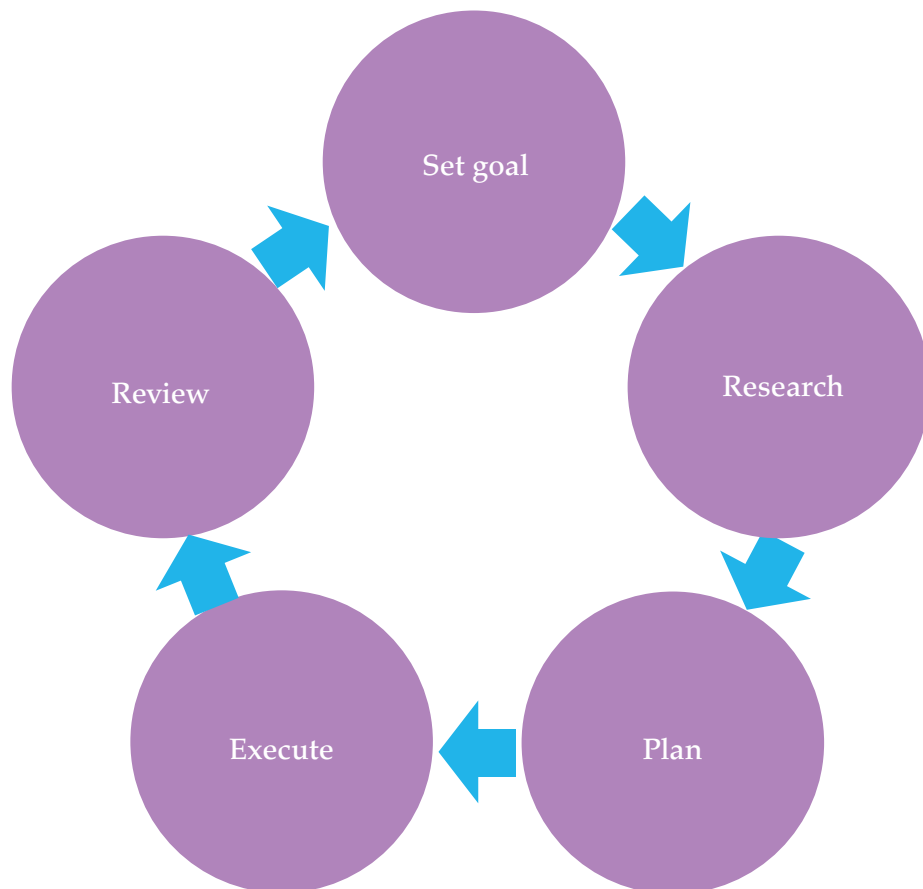
REMEMBER, NO PLAN IS SET IN STONE. Circumstances change, different opportunities arise, you may even change your mind about things as you advance towards your end goal.

There is no shame in changing direction if you discover that the goal, once achieved, is not as fulfilling as you expected it to be. No experience is ever wasted. Just regroup, review your progress and start another plan.

Your career plan is a living document, something you work with on an ongoing basis. It's not a piece of history, completed and stashed away in a drawer. Look at it frequently, tweak it as new information becomes available, and review it regularly to see if and how it needs changing.

Ask yourself if it was strong enough and how it can be improved. What can you do differently another time and what was good about the process that you can use again.

Remember, it's an ongoing process.



This is not the end. Just like destinations on a travel wish list, by the time you've visited one place, others that interest you are added to the list. You will find that your career experience leads you onwards and upwards to new horizons, goals and ambitions.

Enjoy the journey!

"All our dreams can come true,
if we have the courage to pursue
them."

WALT DISNEY

every
woman

This workbook has been produced and edited by everywoman, with content commissioned from associate expert Pippa Isbell. It is part of the everywoman portfolio of resources that have been specially created to support and develop women as they advance their careers and businesses.

everywoman Expert



Pippa Isbell has been an everywoman Club member and supporter for many years. Throughout her career, spent mainly in communications in the travel industry, running her own business and with famous brands such as Orient-Express Hotels, she has been passionate about working with women to help them get the best from their careers and their businesses. A qualified trainer, she also has a Practitioner Diploma in Executive Coaching awarded by the Academy of Executive Coaching. She is certified to implement the leadership development and coaching tools EQ-i 2.0 and EQ 360, which focus on Emotional Intelligence at work.

Further reading

Mrs Money Penny's Careers Advice For Ambitious Women

Mrs Money Penny and Heather McGregor, Portfolio Penguin

What Color Is Your Parachute? 2014: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers

Richard N. Bolles, Ten Speed Press

Get The Job You Really Want

James Caan, Penguin

Go to everywoman.com/development for more personal development workbooks, tools and a schedule of our online seminars.

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