



every
woman
WORKBOOK

CAREER
PLANNING
FOR THE YEAR
AHEAD

Define
success on
your own
terms, achieve
it by your
own rules,
and build
a life you're
proud to live.”

ANNE SWEENEY, PRESIDENT OF WALT DISNEY¹

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About this workbook

At everywoman, we deliver a range of innovative products and resources that unlock the potential and talent of women in business globally. Whether you're just starting out, looking to progress your career, or even to build and develop your own enterprise, the everywomanNetwork provides a wealth of personal development resources, advice and inspiration to address the challenges you face at key stages in business. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to propel you through your life's work, at a time and place that suits you.

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, leaving us as mere bystanders while a colleague moves on and up to a new opportunity.

Don't be the person who looks on resentful and in regret. Rather than waiting on the patronage of others, develop your own career plan and make your 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 it, whether or not you consider yourself a candidate for the boardroom. It 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 – becoming a director by 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 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 can take different twists and turns along the way; you may even take the odd detour at certain life stages; but ultimately it will be a more fulfilling journey if you have a map. Remember, a goal without a plan is just a dream. Seize the day.

By undertaking this workbook, you will gain a greater understanding of how to plan your career and how to put your goals into practice. We'd love to know how you get on – email us at karenmax@everywoman.com or tweet us @everywomanuk.

Maxine & Karen

and the everywoman team

Taking control of your career

Before you start plotting your career, it's very important to know 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?

——— “ ———

*WHAT WOULD HAPPEN
IF WE ENCOURAGED
ALL WOMEN TO BE A
LITTLE MORE AMBITIOUS?
I THINK THE WORLD
WOULD CHANGE.”*

REESE WITHERSPOON, ACTOR, FILM PRODUCERⁱⁱ

This process is all the more effective if you can step back and view yourself as objectively as you can; almost as a third party would, or as if you were a product that you had been tasked with promoting. Imagine you were watching yourself in a TV show or in a movie, then you can become your own agent.



EXERCISE

WHO AM I?

The first thing to think about is who you are – and that’s easier said than done.

1

Take a long, hard, 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.

2

Think about how others perceive you – in every area of your life. Friends, family, your team and your boss.

To consider the views of your boss, revisit your latest appraisal or think about any recent feedback you have received about your performance. If you have done a psychometric test within the last six months, review the results.

3

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.

4

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 as part of your year ahead.



EXERCISE

Use this guide to help you do this exercise

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>What are your educational achievements?</p> <p>List your qualifications, degrees, certificates, diplomas or skills</p> <p>What would others say are your strengths?</p> <p>Have you had any positive feedback that came as a surprise?</p> <p>How impactful is your social media presence?</p>	<p>Are there any gaps in your education or training?</p> <p>What do you avoid doing and why?</p> <p>Do you bring negative habits to work, eg poor time-keeping, disorganisation, moodiness?</p> <p>Is there anything your peer group does well that you do not?</p> <p>Are there any recurrent problems that you could have played a part in?</p>

Sara's SWOT analysis

Let me introduce you to a fictional character. Sara Lewis is a paralegal in a London law firm. She is 27 years old and shares a flat with two friends. She loves her work and is ambitious to progress her career by getting a training contract which will allow her to qualify as a solicitor.

Sara likes travelling and watersports but no longer has as much

time to enjoy either due to work commitments. But she does socialise regularly with her colleagues and friends after work and at the weekends. She is a very fashionable person and well loved by her family and friends, as well as being popular at work.

She did extremely well at school and, with a dream to follow in her father's footsteps in the

world of law, she went on to university where she achieved a law degree.

Before securing a training contract at the law firm where she works, Sara embarked on a career-planning exercise. She started with a SWOT analysis, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses that directly correlated with her goal.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>9 GCSEs and 3 A-levels, including English and Maths</p> <p>LLB (Hons) in law</p> <p>Internal courses on leadership, contract and employment law</p> <p>Good attention to detail</p> <p>Good relationships with clients</p> <p>Outwardly confident and good at networking</p> <p>Competitive</p> <p>Hardworking</p> <p>Interested in technology sector</p>	<p>Needs to learn more about the business of law</p> <p>No experience of drafting agreements</p> <p>Hates staying up late to read law books</p> <p>Often finds senior people intimidating</p> <p>Not good at face-to-face interviews</p> <p>Struggles to speak up during group activities at assessment days</p>



EXERCISE

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 about your weaknesses.



EXERCISE

Now have a think about what you have learned from the exercise and how you will harness your 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 is 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 that you just can't see the wood for the trees.

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

This is how you go about it

1. Grab a pack of post-it notes and write one strength or idea on each, in random order, as they come to mind.
2. Group them into themes and then give a title to each group of notes.
3. Think through how you can use those strengths.
4. Identify any gaps and consider how you can fill them.
5. From the affinity diagram and the list of strengths you have drawn up, pull together the key strengths that emerge from your thinking. Link them together into a cohesive statement of your strengths.

THEME ONE

THEME TWO

THEME THREE

Sara Lewis's statement might look something like this:

"I am an instinctive learner with a strong eye for legal and business trends. I am good at negotiating with clients and gain their respect by being extremely hardworking. I know what our clients want because I maintain good working relationships with them through work events and networking. I believe I have developed the right skills to go on to get a training contract and eventually make it as a solicitor in the firm."

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.



EXERCISE

STATEMENT OF STRENGTHS

Write your statement of strengths here



TAKE AWAY

Before you can properly plan your career it's important to really know yourself. Outline your strengths and weaknesses – be honest and seek feedback from people who know you well, both personally and professionally.

Which direction?

Now you have identified your strengths, it's time to work out which direction you want to take in your career. It may be continuing along the path you are already following, or it may be that you want to try something different entirely . . .

——— “ ” ———
*EACH JOB REQUIRES
A CONSCIOUS
CHOICE OF CAREER
PATH, AND A
DIFFERENT PLAN OF
DEVELOPMENT.”*

AULIQ ICE , AUTHOR, ENTREPRENEUR,
PHILANTHROPISTⁱⁱⁱ

Begin by thinking about your values, talents and areas of interest. What matters to you? What do you most enjoy doing and why? What activities do you get the most satisfaction from? Which activities energise you?

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.



EXERCISE

TALENT EXPLORATION

Take some time to consider the questions below and write down your answers to each.

1. When have you been most committed, passionate and enthusiastic?
2. When have you been most creative?
3. What has given you the most energy?
4. When have you felt that you couldn't wait to start work in the morning?
5. When have you been most sure of yourself and your decisions?
6. What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment?
7. When have other people considered you to be most successful?
8. When have you enjoyed your work most?
9. Which talents were you using in these situations?
10. For what would you take a very strong stand?
11. What about the world puzzles or disturbs you, but which you feel you could make an impact on?
12. What jobs do you like to do at work when you have a choice?
13. What activities are you drawn to outside of work?
14. If money was of no concern, what would you be doing?

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



EXERCISE

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



*FIND OUT WHAT YOU LIKE
DOING BEST AND GET SOMEONE TO
PAY YOU FOR DOING IT."*

KATHERINE WHITEHORN, JOURNALIST, AUTHOR^{iv}

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Take a look at yourself, at your business and the wider world and consider the opportunities and threats that apply in your current situation. Have a wider think about social, political, economic and technological changes that may affect your job or your industry over the next 12 months.

Ask yourself these questions

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Is your industry growing and, if so, what does that mean for your job opportunities?</p> <p>Are there new developments in your field and how can you get involved?</p> <p>Can you see any opportunities for your company, division or department that are not currently being addressed?</p> <p>What is happening in your company and what does that mean for you?</p> <p>Do you have contacts who can help you get ahead?</p> <p>Do your personal strengths open up any specific opportunities, e.g. speaking a foreign language?</p>	<p>What are the external factors affecting your company or industry?</p> <p>What problems do you currently face at work?</p> <p>What is changing in your own field, e.g. technological impact?</p> <p>What are the obstacles to your career ambitions?</p> <p>Who are your key competitors for the next project, promotion or opportunity?</p> <p>Are any of your weaknesses threatening your career progression?</p>



EXERCISE

Now have a go at filling in the opportunities and threats that apply to your situation.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS



EXERCISE

1

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

2

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.

3

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

4

Dig this workbook out every 12 months and do the exercise again.

5

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



TAKE AWAY

To complete your SWOT analysis, outline your opportunities and threats. Are you in a growing industry? Do you have the skillset to adapt to new times and new challenges? Do you feel fulfilled at work?

Career ladder or jungle gym

Back in 2013 Sheryl Sandberg's now legendary book *Lean In* sparked much discussion and debate. 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.

Coca-Cola's Susan Gambardella is a fan of taking what she calls "lateral and stretch assignments" to achieve breadth or crossfunctional 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 on where you are in your life. At one stage, you may be focused 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, for example.



EXERCISE

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.

1

I don't feel challenged or excited in my work

2

Opportunities for promotion or development in my current role are limited

3

I feel that I am wasting my skills and talents

4

The task has become routine and I am not learning any more

5

I don't feel appreciated

6

I am no longer having fun



TAKE AWAY

Seeing your career as a jungle gym means embracing lateral opportunities as well as vertical ones. Sometimes to move upwards it is necessary to move sideways first.

Career reconnaissance

Strategic career planning requires a research phase in which you gather and analyse your information in order to plan your approach.



EXERCISE

Write down your thoughts about the following

Analyse opportunities

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

Identify goal

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



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

Now having outlined your options, it's time to choose the one that suits you best. Analyse both how desirable and how achievable the alternatives are.

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

1

Exploring opportunities within the company you currently work for

2

Reading trade magazines and websites to judge the mood of the industry, its issues and its problems

3

Finding out who the major players are and examining job vacancies to see if the career is in demand

4

Signing up to industry newsletters and following key thinkers on social media

— “ —

*THERE IS NO MAGIC TO ACHIEVEMENT.
IT'S REALLY ABOUT HARD
WORK, CHOICES AND PERSISTENCE.”*

MICHELLE OBAMA, LAWYER, AUTHOR^v

Now put all your knowledge to work

1

Join special interest groups on social media. First observe the conversation and learn from it, then participate.

2

Do you have a blog and good social media presence? If not think about it seriously, as both are PR that you can control.

3

Understand what talents and personalities make people successful in your chosen career and compare this with your own talents and personality traits.

4

Attend professional and trade shows and join in relevant LinkedIn discussions.

5

Participate in job fairs or networking events.

6

Visit company websites, and monitor what is said about your target companies in the press via Google alerts.

7

Find out where organisations are based and decide if you're prepared to travel for interviews or even to relocate.

8

Volunteer to gain experience in a relevant field.

9

If possible, consider working part time or seasonally in the industry you want to break into.

10

Take further education classes or attend conferences.

11

Listen to podcasts relevant to your career plan.

YOUR PERSONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Heather McGregor, better known as Mrs Moneypenny 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.



IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF OR NO ONE ELSE WILL."

SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR, ACTOR, PRODUCER, ENTREPRENEUR^{vi}

Networking

All of us need to build a network of people with whom we have a mutually useful relationship. The explosion of social media, through which we now all have hundreds of supposed contacts whom 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 your industry. They need to be close enough to your career to know 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 for suitable roles. Their reputation will enhance yours.



EXERCISE

Think about 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, when filling in the form, you cannot describe your relationship or you realise it is too far removed, think about 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 your ambitions, your SWOT analysis and options with them. Consult them but make decisions yourself.

“

*I DIDN'T GET THERE BY WISHING
FOR IT OR HOPING FOR IT,
BUT BY WORKING FOR IT.”*

ESTÉE LAUDER, ENTREPRENEUR^{vii}



EXERCISE

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. Work backwards from your end goal to work out the steps needed to get you there. Use the SMART approach.

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACTION-ORIENTATED	REALISTIC & RELEVANT	TIME-BASED



TAKE AWAY

Explore your options, then set about improving your opportunities by seeking advice from those well placed to give it. Networking is essential and nothing to be afraid of – just be open about what you want and don't make unreasonable demands.

Cue action! Kicking off your plan

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.

“
*ALL OUR
DREAMS CAN
COME TRUE,
IF WE HAVE
THE COURAGE
TO PURSUE
THEM.*”

WALT DISNEY, ENTREPRENEUR,
ANIMATOR, PRODUCER^{viii}

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 as ruthless when 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.

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 that Rome wasn't built in a day endures!

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?

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, to be 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 is 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. Like destinations on a travel wishlist, by the time you've visited one, you've added other places of interest to your list. You will find that your career experience leads you onwards and upwards to new horizons, goals and ambitions.

Enjoy the journey!



TAKE AWAY

Review your plan constantly and don't be afraid to change course if you have a change of heart. But don't be sidetracked – it's important to know the difference between a change of course and a change of destination.

Your personal action plan



1 Think back to when you started your career and make a note of how you got to where you are today. Is it where you want to be? If not, what do you need to do to get to there?

2 Looking at the results of your SWOT analysis, were there any gaps or points that surprised you? If so, make a note as to why, and how you can change them or use them to your advantage.

3 Who would you have on your personal advisory board? Make a list with a note between each name outlining what they could do to help you develop your career.

4 What is your end goal? Think about where you want to be in five years' time and make a plan as to how to get there.

Further reading

TED talks

TED Talk: *So We Leaned In... Now What?*, Sheryl Sandberg
https://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_so_we_leaned_in_now_what

TED Talk: *The Career Advice You Probably Didn't Get*, Susan Colantuono
https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_colantuono_the_career_advice_you_probably_didn_t_get

BOOKS

What Colour Is Your Parachute?, by Richard Nelson Bolles (Ten Speed)

So Good They Can't Ignore You, Cal Newport (Platkus)

Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges (Kindle Edition), by Amy Cuddy (Little Brown)

Mrs Moneybags's Careers Advice For Ambitious Women, Mrs Moneybags and Heather McGregor (Portfolio Penguin)

Endnotes

- i <https://addicted2success.com/quotes/26-of-the-worlds-most-powerful-quotes-from-successful-women/>
- ii <https://stylecaster.com/inspiring-career-quotes/>
- iii <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/career-path>
- iv https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/katharine_whitehorn_392393
- v <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/561739>
- vi <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/527202700113181028/>
- vii <https://verilymag.com/2016/08/i-didnt-get-there-by-wishing-for-it-or-hoping-for-it-but-by-working-for-it-estee-lauder>
- viii https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/walt_disney_163027

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Any topics you'd like to see covered on the everywomanNetwork?

We'd love to hear from you: contact@everywoman.com

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