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Introduction

This book has been written to help those people considering or committed to a career change. The skills and concepts discussed will apply to any career changer, but the book has been written with UK based graduates in mind. Each career change is different - as well as the specifics of different jobs, sectors and skills. Each career change occurs in a unique context, with a particular motivation, particular difficulties and particular outcomes. Given this, this book does not presume either to cover every situation that you may encounter or to sort out every problem you will face. Our aim is to talk through the major processes that people usually go through when they are planning a career change. The way each person makes their career decision will be different, and we hope that this book will strike a chord whether you are a practical, just-get-on-with-it type, a thinker and planner, or a more spontaneous go-with-the-flow type of person. We hope that you will use this book as best suits you. Some people may like to read it thoroughly from beginning to end. Others will feel that only certain sections are relevant and may dip into it as and when they feel the need.

A good decision-making process involves a number of stages:

- Identifying requirements.
- Identifying possibilities that may satisfy those requirements.
- Gathering information about these possibilities.
- Imagining and predicting outcomes.
- Evaluating alternative outcomes.
- Rejecting less favourable options.
- Taking action.

This book will cover each of these stages.

Section One will help you look at your current situation and analyse the pros and cons of your current role. This awareness of what you like and don't like in your current or previous situation will allow you to be more focused when it comes to choosing your next step.

In Section Two, self awareness is taken one step further, with the provision of some tools that you can use to understand your own skills and values more thoroughly and to express them more concretely.

One of the most difficult questions for career changers to answer is, "What other jobs could I do?" In Section Three, some ways to generate options are suggested.

Having worked out what sorts of jobs are out there, you need more information before you can make a decision on which would suit you and which you might be able to get. Section Four gives some tips for researching occupations.

For some, the decision at this stage may be quite clear — perhaps there is one option that stands out as the obvious one, but for many the decision making process is the most difficult stage. Section Five gives some techniques for helping make a final choice.

In Section Six, you will find some practical ideas on your next steps — how to actually get to where you want to go.

Section One

Assessing your situation

Key points

- *Analyse your current situation.*
- *A minor job change will be easier than a major one.*
- *Focus on the positives as well as the negatives.*

Career change is a big deal

When you are changing direction, the stakes are high. Your financial commitments are probably greater and more inflexible than they were when you first chose a job — perhaps children, a mortgage or a car. You also may have a lot to give up — perhaps a job that is secure and involves a regular pay packet. You are also in a situation where you are planning to give up something you know in favour of something that you don't know. This all spells RISK.

The bottom line is that you're not going to know whether something is the right move until probably several months into your next role, but there are a number of things that you can do to minimise the risk and to maximise your chances of making the right choice. This section will help and encourage you to assess two things; first to think about the things that are right in your current situation, and secondly to consider the things that are not right in your current situation. Armed with this information you will then be able to ensure that your next move is an improvement.

Slight shift, or all change?

Job changes can be major or minor. A change could be as slight as a re-focus of your current role, or doing the same sort of job but in a different organisation,

through to completely re-training in an altogether different job.

Judy had been working as an accountant with one of the Big Five firms since she graduated. She was not happy with her job, and worked out that it was not the actual role she disliked, but the nature of the organisation and the clients she worked with. She is now working as the Assistant Head of Finance for a major National Trust property in London, and is absolutely loving it. She still enjoys the basic financial work, but now loves the atmosphere and ethos of the organisation as well. For Judy, this was a fairly simple transition to make.

Caroline's career change required more time and effort. Caroline had been working for Amnesty International since she left university, but after three years had become disheartened with the role she was doing and the Charity sector altogether. She decided to retrain as a solicitor. She spent two years studying at evening classes to get her law conversion degree, and then gave up work altogether to study full time for her solicitor's exams. She is now fully qualified and finds her work fulfilling, satisfying and well paid!

The less you need to change, the easier it will be to make the move. To find out the least that needs to be changed in order to make you happy, you need to spend some time analysing what exactly is wrong with your current position. Being dissatisfied with your current situation uses up a lot of energy and thought. It can become the case that you are putting so much energy into being miserable, that there is not much left over to analyse the situation. These points might help you to assess what is not quite right

about where you are now.

where you are given a chance to really specialise in one area.

Start positive

A good place to start is to think about all the positives. This will make sure that your analysis is objective and constructive. If you are very unhappy at the moment in your role, it can help to try to think back to a time when you enjoyed it more. Focusing on the positives will also ensure that you are realistic about what you are giving up. It can be easy to take positive things for granted, and people sometimes find that it is only when they leave a job that they realise how much they enjoyed it.

And the negatives?

There are a number of factors that might be worth considering:

The organisation

- **Size** Some people like the idea of a small organisation, where everyone knows everyone else, whereas others might find this claustrophobic and limiting.
- **Culture** It could be something to do with the culture of the organisation or the ethics. Organisations, like people, have their own personalities, and can therefore be party to a personality clash. Working in human resources is going to feel very different, depending on whether you work for a large corporate multi-national or a small Non-Governmental Organisation.
- **Structure** It could be to do with the structure of the organisation, in terms of the potential for different work in the future. You might relish the fact that your organisation expects you to work on different projects and to gain expertise in different fields, or you might prefer to work somewhere

The people

- **Your team** The size of the team you work in can have a great influence over your role, and the personality of the other members must be one of the most significant factors in determining happiness at work. Teams can vary in nature — from working extremely closely together, to all having clearly defined individual roles.
- **Your boss** If you have a personality clash with your boss, or if your working relationship is not effective, it is extremely difficult to be happy in your role.
- **Your clients** The client base that you deal with may not suit you. You might find it more fulfilling working with one certain age group than with another. Or you might prefer working with people from a certain background or from one type of organisation.

The job itself

- **Elements of your role** This is one of the most common and significant difficulties that people have. Most people would not expect to enjoy every element of their role, but if you do not enjoy the primary function of the role, or a large proportion of the secondary tasks that you have to do, this is bound to make you less satisfied with your job. Roles can change over time, and the focus of your job now might be quite different from the job you were first employed to do.
- **Your level of responsibility** A high level of responsibility can bring a certain amount of stress with it, and this can lead to an unpleasant work life. It is also the case that if you have less responsibility than you would like,

this can lead to your feeling unsatisfied, unchallenged and perhaps undervalued.

- **The skills you use** If you are not using the right skills in your job this can make your job more difficult. Not being able to use your particular strengths can be frustrating, and having to rely on skills that do not come naturally to you is hard work.
- **The amount of work you do** Too little and you end up bored; too much and you may end up feeling stressed and unable to do a good job.

Practical conditions

- **Shift patterns** Long hours, erratic work patterns or night shifts might suit some people well, but there are others who would find this a strain.
- **Travel** Even if you enjoy the job itself, a long commute at either end of the day can be exhausting. Travelling around the country or around the world may sound glamorous and interesting to some, but others may find the novelty soon wears off.
- **Environment** You may not feel that a Michelin-starred canteen, views of rolling hills from your window and a Chippendale desk are essential criteria, but if you don't have your own desk, and a reasonable environment to work in, it will be hard for you to keep cheerful.

The future

- **Promotion prospects** The job may once have been a challenge and may have allowed you to develop many new and useful skills, but promotion is not always easy to get. It may be that you need to leave in order to progress your career.
- **The future of the organisation** Organisations change. Since you joined the company, it could have

expanded, contracted, diversified or focused in such a way that has made you less comfortable there. It could be that there are indications of a future change that you think will not suit you, or indeed that the project you are working on has a fixed end point and that your role will inevitably change at that point.

- **Your personal plans** As things change within your personal life, you may find that a role that you once enjoyed does not suit you any more. For example, people sometimes accept working long hours at the beginning of a career, but some years down the line start to resent spending too much time at the office.

Changes in you

- **Self awareness** Working in a particular role or environment may have led to an increased self awareness. You may have a clearer idea of the skills that you enjoy using and those that you don't. You may also have learnt more about the type of environment that you are most suited to working in.
- **Personal circumstances** Things may have changed in your life that mean that you are no longer suited to working in a particular role or organisation. You may have had a baby or become very involved with an activity outside work, or perhaps now have a need to earn more money than before.
- **Priorities** Things that mattered to you when choosing your first job may now be less important than they once were. Money is a common example of this. Many graduates are seduced by the vast starting salaries in certain fields, and gradually come to realise that money is no substitute for job satisfaction. Others leave university believing that salary does not matter as long as they feel they are doing

something worthwhile, only to find that job satisfaction is no substitute for money!

Individuals and individual circumstances

vary tremendously. This list may have started your thought process, but there could be other significant factors that are influencing the way you are feeling about your job.

Case notes: Simon

From harassed teacher to legal information specialist

Simon is a modern languages graduate. He wanted to use his languages and do something useful for society, so on graduating he took a PGCE course and became a teacher. After a year in a comprehensive school, he moved to London with his partner and took a post in a small private school. After several years at this school, he was feeling dissatisfied. He thought he might be doing something more worthwhile if he moved to a job back in the comprehensive sector, so he found a post at a school on the outskirts of London. This was a disaster. The teacher he was replacing had left following a nervous breakdown (a fact they forgot to reveal at the interview). After a couple of months of dealing with unruly and abusive pupils with little support, he was in danger of suffering the same fate himself. After consulting with his partner, he resigned from the job and managed to get some temporary administrative work through a recruitment agency.

This was an important period for Simon. He needed some time doing reasonably mundane work to recover from the emotional turmoil of his recent experiences. The variety of jobs he tried also gave him a chance to experience different working environments and activities. One of the jobs, information officer in an advice centre, he found particularly interesting. He enjoyed researching and finding out about things as well as dealing with enquiries from staff and clients. He found that his teaching skills enabled him to explain his findings effectively to people.

He began to investigate information work and found out about careers and training courses from the Library Association (now the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals). He obtained a one year placement in a law firm library and then went on to do a Masters course in library and information management. He didn't get funding for the course and he had to use savings and loans from families. He and his partner lived very frugally for that year. After the course, the law firm where he had done his placement invited him back to cover someone's maternity leave. After that he obtained a permanent position in another large law firm. In his job he got involved in organising and delivering training, which enabled him to use his teaching skills.

Section Two

Analysing your values and skills

In Section One you reviewed the positives and negatives of your career. In this section you will have the opportunity to further analyse the values that are the most important to you, and the skills you wish to use at work.

Values

Key points

- *If your values do not fit your job then job satisfaction is unlikely.*
- *It is hard to find a job fitting all your values. So what are the values that are non-negotiable?*

If you are working, but no longer feel motivated, it may be that something needs to change. If you are in a role you previously enjoyed but now find you are unhappy in, think about your values.

If you have been made redundant, use this section to think about what you valued in the job you have lost. Answer the questions as though you were still in work, and use the answers to inform your job search.

You may no longer be motivated, or may have lost your job, because your occupation, or the sector you work in, has changed. In this case you may need to consider a new career. Alternatively, it may be just your particular organisation has changed, in which case a change of employer may be enough to satisfy you. And of course it could be that you yourself have changed, and have different values from when you started working.

On page 10 there is a table to record your values. This may help you to clarify what it is you want from your career.

The function

Think about what you do on a day-to-day basis. Do you enjoy the actual tasks involved? Is there enough variety? Are you able to use the skills you want to (see second part of this section)? Do you see yourself becoming an authority in a specialist area or are you more of a generalist? Are you getting the training and development opportunities you need to take your career in your chosen direction?

What impact is technology having on your work? It may mean that your role now involves more telephone and electronic communication and you miss the face-to-face contact you once had. You may find that skills you enjoyed using are no longer required in your occupation. Automation may mean that machines are now making and recording measurements, or that computers are now used for design or analysis. It may be that the old techniques are no longer needed in any area of employment and it is time to re-skill. Alternatively, they may still be valued in a less cutting-edge environment, for example in a school or college.

The reason

Many people go to work for the financial rewards. How do you feel about your salary? Are you satisfied with the rest of the package? You may feel that your current commitments require a higher income. Conversely, you may feel in a position to accept a lower salary when you have paid off a loan or mortgage, or come into some money.

Other people choose a career to acquire status. How important is it to you what

other people think about your career? Do you need to belong to a recognised profession or to have “manager” in your job title? Would you value working for a well-known or well-respected organisation?

Some people are driven by the need to compete. They go to work to be the best. Do you strive to beat targets? How would you like to be the first to bring a new product to the market or to publish your research? Would you value earning the biggest bonus, winning “sales executive of the year”, being the youngest Board member ever? Do you crave recognition from others, or can you sustain yourself knowing you’ve done your best?

To what extent does the final outcome of your work matter to you? Do you want to work for a vision you share? How important is it that you respect your employer and that the organisation recognises behaviours you value, such as honesty, or intellectual pursuit? Which gives you more satisfaction — providing a service, or making a profit? Would you prefer to steer clear of certain regimes, or would you sell products wherever there is a market, because if you don’t, someone else will?

Reduced public funding, privatisation, takeover or merger may all change the nature of your work. League tables may force teachers to concentrate on the borderline students at the expense of the academically most and least able. When two pharmaceutical companies join forces, some staff may have to start working on different diseases. If you are unhappy about why you have to do what you do, it may be time to move organisation. Alternatively, it may be that the whole sector is changing, and you need to consider leaving it all together.

The people

The people you work for and with, can

have an impact on how much you value your work. You may be uncomfortable working for a manager you don’t respect, or whose style is markedly different from your own. You may feel resentful about a new manager, especially if he or she has replaced someone you liked, or has blocked your promotion. Your work may be less attractive if many of your long-term colleagues are made redundant. You may want a change of client group; career-changing teachers often say they want to work with adults, hospital workers with people who are well. You may feel that a change of department or organisation will allow you to make a fresh start with new people.

The timing

Do you feel that the hours you give to your job are reasonable? Are they sufficiently flexible? Do you get enough leave? Are there restrictions about when you can take it? Is booked leave honoured? Are you able to retire before the statutory age? Do you have to work evenings, weekends, shifts? Do you mind? Nearly everyone has commitments outside work. And these can vary through your career. Your needs are different when you are young and want to go out with your friends, when you have small children, when you have dependent elderly relatives, when you have a demanding outside interest. If your present career doesn’t allow you the time you need, and you cannot renegotiate, you may need to move within or outside the organisation.

The location

Do you enjoy working where you currently do? Do you prefer to be surrounded by countryside, so you can walk the dog at lunchtime, or in the heart of a city, so you can get your shopping done? Is your daily journey from home acceptable? And what

about travelling for work? Do you love it or hate it? Want to see more of the world, or sick of living out of a suitcase? Do you resent hot desking? Enjoy working from home? Love the buzz of an open-plan office or crave a room of your own? Wish your manager were just down the corridor rather than the other side of the world? Where you work can become an issue following re-location. And again your priorities can change as you go through life. You may be happy to work full time and travel when you are young and unattached, but feel differently when you have the ties of a partner, children or other dependents.

The style

And lastly, how will you go about whatever it is you want to achieve? What sort of organisation would suit you best? Do you enjoy the political aspects of working life, or see them as a distraction from getting the job done? Would you prefer to work within an established hierarchy, or in a flatter organisation? How would you feel about working for a start-up rather than a corporate giant? Do you want to dress formally or casually for work? To what extent are you a risk taker?

What about interaction? How much autonomy? What is your preferred working style? Do you favour working in an analytical and systematic way, or do

you want the freedom to be creative or aesthetic? Some people like to concentrate on one thing at a time, others relish multi-tasking. Do you find it easier to work proactively or to react to events?

Recording your values

The questions above will not have covered every area of value to you, but will hopefully have stimulated some ideas. The clearer you are about what you want from your career, the more likely you are to make a good decision (see Section Five). The “Your values” table may help you to capture your thoughts. Try to be honest with yourself. You may find discrepancies between what is important to you, and what matters to those whose opinions you respect. Make a note of these too.

In an ideal world, you could use the wish list you have just created to find the perfect career. In reality, you will probably have to settle for the “good enough” career. So which are your top five wishes? Label them 1 (highest priority) to 5 (lowest priority) in the table. Refer to this list when you are considering different occupations or particular posts. It may indicate the kind of information you will want to gather during information gathering (see Section Four) or job interviews.

Your values

What tasks would you like your career to include?	
What purpose would you like your career to serve?	
What sort of people would you like to work with?	
When would you like to work?	
Where would you like to work?	
How would you like to work?	

Case notes: Sujata

A clinical scientist hesitates between industry and NHS

Sujata had been working as a clinical scientist in the National Health Service, but felt she had got as far as she could. There was a lot of routine work, and the only chance of promotion was if someone resigned or retired.

So she decided to make the move into industry. Funds were more readily available, and she was able to develop her people management skills. Her problem-solving abilities were still put to good use, and she enjoyed the opportunity to visit different laboratories.

Sujata, however, was not comfortable with her career change. She analysed her situation and realised that working in a profit-driven environment did not fit her values. She decided to transfer back to the National Health Service. She rediscovered the satisfaction gained from knowing that even routine tests were benefiting patients directly.

Case notes: Catherine

A masters degree helps her reassess and renegotiate her career

Catherine graduated in 1987 and joined the Civil Service Fast Stream. Ten years on, with a series of interesting, varied and challenging posts under her belt, she had progressed to a responsible and demanding position within a Government Department. While she very much enjoyed her work, the high-pressure, 12-plus-hour days were beginning to take their toll.

Each year, Government Departments sponsor a small number of staff to undertake an MBA (Masters in Business Administration). Catherine leapt at the chance of this year out, to learn new management ideas, to regain some perspective on her busy existence and to spend some time learning from private sector counterparts. She found the course very interesting — and it gave her plenty of opportunity to find out about different types of job and industrial sectors from visiting speakers, lecturers, fellow students and project work. The more she learned, the more she realised that her skills, knowledge and experience would be in demand in the private sector. However, she also realised that she greatly valued her job in the Civil Service. It was unlikely that she would find such variety, responsibility, and a sense of doing something worthwhile with any other type of employer. If only she could reduce her workload to a reasonable level, she would have the ideal job.

Armed with her new qualification, Catherine returned to her Department. At first, the same old pattern looked likely to reassert itself — a fascinating job, but with overwhelming workload and little outside life. This time, though, Catherine had a much clearer idea of her own priorities — and a much more realistic sense of her own worth — and fought to correct the work/life imbalance. It wasn't easy, but eventually it worked: Catherine now has a job she loves, a life worth living and three people now covering what had been half of her job alone.

Skills

Key points

- *Think about your own skills. Be positive, but be objective.*
- *Concentrate on skills which are transferable.*
- *Find ways to develop new skills.*
- *Use the skills audit exercise to write your CV and match yourself to a new career.*

Considering your values is one step towards deciding on a career change. Equally important is identifying the skills you have and would like to use. Career changers do not always think positively about this and careers advisers often hear the following responses to a "skills" question.

- "I don't really have any skills."
- "My skills are related to my job, another kind of employer wouldn't be interested in them."
- "I hate the idea of having to sell myself, it all seems so false."

If you have been in the same field for a while it is easy to take the work that you do for granted. It also becomes difficult to differentiate the skills that other employers might be interested in from the specifics of your job, in other words, the transferable skills.

Transferable skills can be viewed as the key to a successful career change. They are the tools that will allow you to look at yourself and analyse what you have to offer. Knowledge of your skills will allow you to search for a good fit in your new career. Providing evidence of skills will help to convince a prospective employer that you can do the job.

Analysing your skills

Looking at yourself is never easy. First

there is the problem of modesty. A teacher with ten years experience might say, "All I do is teach children." Secondly, it can be difficult to measure the level to which you use a particular skill, for example who is likely to have more experience of negotiation - a Human Resource Manager, Solicitor or Accountant? The first action you need to take is to dissect your daily work and think about what you really do. Then compare what you do to other people you know. Below are some tips on how you can do this.

- Read through any old references, job descriptions, applications forms and appraisals. It is sometimes surprising to remember how your job was described or the way you wrote about yourself on an application form.
- Keep a log of everything you do at work for a week. Note what skills are used and to what level. What did you enjoy, what was difficult?
- Ask for a colleague's or friend's honest perspective, how do they see you? Compare how you rate each other in some of the skills mentioned below in the skills audit.
- Sell yourself in four bullet points to the employer of your dreams.
- Think about the things you do outside of work. What kinds of skills do these activities develop?

Once you have done some, or all of these, complete the skills matrix on pages 14–16.

The skills audit

This skills audit exercise should take about half an hour to do. It is worth devoting some time to auditing your skills for three reasons:

- It will help you to see how much you have to offer a new employer or career.

- You will find it easier to match your experience with job advertisements and job descriptions.
- Writing your new CV will be a breeze.

Ask the following questions for each skill.

Who or what do you use this skill with? Presenting to a sceptical audience of 50 experts will require a much higher skill level than presenting at an internal training session.

How do you compare to your peers? Are you seen as someone who is very ordered and organised? Do you find some of your colleagues chaotic? This might indicate that you score highly for organisational skills.

Completing the skills audit

Grade each skill on a scale of 1–10 for the following:

Column A: The level to which you have developed this skill, where 1 = low and 10 = high.

Column B: Is this a skill you want to use in your new career? Where 1 = not at all and 10 = a lot.

Column C: Tick if this is a skill you would like or need to develop.

NB: The list is not exhaustive. Include any further skills you feel are relevant to you. You should also think about the more specialist skills you have developed.

When you have completed the table, use a sheet of paper to write down the best example you have for each skill. Keep this list and refer to it to help match your skills to vacancies or information on careers. You can also use it to compile your targeted CV.

The skills matrix

A - Skills developed
 B - Skills to use
 C - Skills to develop

Communication:			
Conveying information/concepts in writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Presenting to an audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explaining complex information in an understandable fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questioning to find out information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Actively listening to others, understanding relevant points	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engaging others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influencing/persuading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making an impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with people:			
Collaborating to achieve goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking with new people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adapting to needs/styles of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-ordinating your work with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessing needs/personalities/abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diagnosing problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selling goods or ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training/helping others to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acting on behalf of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing people:			
Setting clear direction and objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resolving conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confronting problems with staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delegating tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing and motivating staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeding back/appraising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving constructive criticism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A - Skills developed
 B - Skills to use
 C - Skills to develop

Innovation & problem solving:			
Analysing numerical/graphical information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Analysing spoken/written information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making quick decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identifying options and gathering information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding creative solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing practical solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluating alternatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Devising and developing ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organising:			
Prioritising your own workload	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-ordinating events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arranging data or information in a logical way	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working through things methodically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information technology:			
Word processing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Databases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet/email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Desktop publishing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Numerical:			
Managing a budget	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making financial forecasts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Analysing figures/statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making realistic estimations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modelling and predicting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A - Skills developed B - Skills to use C - Skills to develop

Research:			
Absorbing new information quickly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Investigating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thinking laterally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using a variety of resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business acumen:			
Able to think strategically/see the wider picture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluating performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding customers/clients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generating entrepreneurial ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other skills:			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Case notes: Timothy

Filling the gaps in his experience

At 31, Timothy was working as a Training Officer in the British army. He had never worked at the same location for more than two years, and now that he was married with children, and with a growing interest in gardening, was disenchanted with this domestic upheaval.

Timothy also felt he was unlikely to progress much further in his army career. He had taken the opportunity to study full time for an engineering degree, and as a result, had less management experience than others of his age.

He really enjoyed designing and delivering training courses, and hoped to move straight into such a role on leaving the army. He had a number of interviews, but the feedback was always the same — he lacked commercial experience. A recruitment consultant suggested he gain experience as a financial planner, effectively a salesman, to increase his street credibility. Timothy found it easy to get this sort of work. The industry welcomed the self discipline of ex-Forces personnel, and since the pay was commission only, was prepared to recruit on the basis of potential rather than experience.

Financially, this was a difficult time. Timothy's earnings had to be supplemented by his army resettlement grant and personal savings. He persevered for 22 months, treating the period as an apprenticeship.

His next move was to the regulatory body, where he worked as an enforcement officer. This job brought in a good salary, and as it entailed visiting companies, gave him opportunities to network. He realised how much he enjoyed working on a number of finite and discrete projects.

After a number of years, several large companies invited him to join as a compliance officer. But there were takeovers afoot, and Timothy was attracted by the idea of working for a smaller, entrepreneurial concern.

When a small consultancy approached him, he was tempted. In some ways this was a riskier path, because part of the remuneration would be as stock options. Timothy checked out the consultancy's credentials through his networks. He also met all four directors before accepting, and felt the combination of two entrepreneurs and two "completer-finishers" could be very successful.

Timothy's role, eight years after leaving the army, involves advising financial companies on their training strategy. His skills in training, and knowledge of the regulations, are being put to good use. Clients appreciate his selling experience, and it helps him generate new business for the consultancy. He's glad he left the army when he did, rather than accepting retention bonuses, or staying until he could start drawing a pension.

Section Three

Generating ideas

Key points

- *To give yourself the best chance of generating good ideas, get to know the job market.*
- *Use vacancies, directories, matching systems and other people to find out about job possibilities.*
- *Start by generating as many options as possible (even unlikely ones) before trying to narrow them down to what is realistic.*

Once you have worked out what your priorities are, you have constructed your picture of an ideal job. There may, or may not, be a real job that fits your picture exactly. But there is likely to be a large number of jobs that fit reasonably well. You need to find the job that fits best to what you want. In order to do that you need to track down as many possible “fits” as you can. This section looks at ways to generate ideas for potential jobs that may match up to your ideal job.

The problem

Imagine you were trying to generate ideas for your ideal holiday. You know that you want somewhere not too hot, full of history and culture. Because you have never heard of anyone taking a holiday in Mongolia, it may never occur to you as a holiday destination even though it could fit your criteria. The same difficulty occurs when you are trying to generate career ideas. Even if you were to list all the job titles you had ever heard of, there would probably be an even larger number of jobs that you had never encountered.

It is obvious, therefore, that the biggest hurdle to generating career ideas is a lack of knowledge. To give yourself the best chance of coming up with the ideal

career option, you need to do a fair amount of research. You can then use brainstorming and creative thinking techniques to make the best use of that knowledge in coming up with feasible options.

Knowledge = ideas

Before choosing a holiday destination you might visit a travel agent, look in brochures, contact a tourist board, search the internet or ask people for recommendations. The same principles apply when attempting to generate ideas for career options. Don't worry. You don't need to become an expert in the whole of the job market. Many different employment sectors contain jobs which are fairly similar. See “Mix and match” in this section for more information.

Broaden your knowledge

Try to be alert to information about jobs at all times. Whenever you see or hear or read about an unfamiliar job, store the information away. You may find it useful to keep notes on the jobs you discover, rather than trying to keep all the information in your head. Below are a few ways of broadening your knowledge. Everyone finds some methods of gathering information more comfortable than others. Think about which methods will work best for you.

Vacancies

Read vacancy publications widely. Don't just stick to the usual places you look for jobs, otherwise you'll only see the jobs

you already know about. See Section Four, "Researching new careers", for information on where to find other vacancies.

When you look at vacancies, don't just pay attention to the vacancies you could apply for. Look for jobs that sound interesting or appealing even if they require something you don't have, such as a relevant qualification or several years experience. Make a note of these interesting jobs. How do they relate to the preferences and priorities you identified in the previous sections? Think of these jobs as long-term options. The asked-for qualifications and experience are the things that you may have to gain over the next few years in order to be able to apply for this type of job in the future. You could write to the contact address on the advert requesting a fuller job description. You could even try writing to or calling the organisation to ask questions. You could enquire about the sort of experience they would consider relevant, the backgrounds of ideal candidates, the types of qualification looked for, etc. You can always use the excuse that you are thinking of applying but you need more information so that you don't waste their time.

Career directories

Using vacancy publications can be a bit hit and miss. For certain jobs in competitive sectors you may never see an advert, because the vacancies are often filled before the employer has to bother advertising. There are various dictionaries and directories that list a wide range of jobs. They usually include a brief description of the work, entry requirements and an indication of how competitive it may be to obtain work in a particular field. They may also include lists of typical employers, indications of where vacancies may be advertised and

details of organisations that you can contact for further information.

- A series of occupational profiles for graduate careers is available at www.prospects.ac.uk and at www.graduatemcareers.hobsons.co.uk
- *The Penguin Careers Guide*, Penguin Books.
- *The A-Z of Careers and Jobs*, published in association with The Times.

Matching systems

Various systems have been designed in order to generate career options based on an inventory of an individual's preferences. They include psychometric questionnaires and computer matching programs. At a simple level, they all work the same way. Someone has analysed a large selection of jobs to decide which skills, qualities, motivations and interests would make someone good at that job and enjoy it. They then devise questions to find out if you have skills, qualities, motivations and interests that closely match any of the jobs they have analysed.

It's all very simple and systematic and it sounds like such systems should have made careers advisers obsolete years ago. The reason they haven't is that human beings are not simple, systematic things. No system can take into account every factor that might possibly be important to every person without becoming impossibly complex and unmanageable. Such systems work with the factors that seem to be most important to the most number of people, but the factor that they leave out may be the factor that is most important to you. Another complication is the constantly changing and subtly varying nature of the job market. The nature of jobs change over time, and the same job may be slightly but significantly different in a

different context or organisation.

These systems should be seen as another way of generating some useful ideas, which could be used as starting points for investigation rather than a finished result.

- Prospects Quick Match, available at www.prospects.ac.uk, is a simple online matching system. The fuller version, Prospects Planner is available in most university careers services.
- Self-Directed Search® can be taken online at www.self-directed-search.com. You have to pay for the results.
- The Career Interest Game at www.career.missouri.edu is free but rather basic and has a lot of non-graduate jobs with American job titles.
- The Career Quiz at www.princetonreview.com/cte is free but you need to register. Again it is American.
- *Which Way? Self Help Career Guide* is available from SHL Group plc at www.shldirect.com

People

Jobs are performed by people. The job market is a vast network of people. Another way of finding out about job possibilities is to tune into that network. There is a theory that you could link everyone in the world to everyone else with a series of connections which includes only six people. So, you probably know someone, who has a link with someone else, who has worked with someone else, who...and so on. If this is true, then you are only six people away from every single job there is. Talking to a few people, therefore, could be a way of broadening your knowledge of the job market.

You could start by making a list of all the people that you know or converse with,

such as friends, family, colleagues, former colleagues, clients, fellow commuters, etc. Do you know what they all do at work? You could talk to them and find out. Who do they know? What do their friends, family, etc. do? What jobs do they know about or have come into contact with?

This technique can be useful for finding in-depth information about what a job is really like (see Section Four, "Researching new careers") and can even be the first move in getting a job.

Keep an open mind

Librarian, accountant, civil servant, social worker, investment banker — each of those job titles probably inspired certain images in your mind. Unless you have worked in a particular job, how do you know that those images are real? Where have they come from? Preconceptions and stereotypes can limit your ability to generate options. For example, the word "librarian" hides a range of jobs, from archivist to researcher, in a range of organisations, from universities to management consultancies.

For every job you hear about, be honest with yourself. Do you really know what it involves? See Section Four for some reliable sources of information about occupations.

Generating relevant ideas

Once you have broadened your knowledge you need to start focusing on those careers which are likely to be worth investigating more thoroughly. During this process you should still be open to the possibility of other options being generated.

A good way to start reducing the number of options to a manageable level is to

think in broad groupings. For example, ask yourself the question, "Are my values more aligned with the public sector or the private sector?" By answering that question, you may have halved the number of options to investigate. Below are some further techniques for generating relevant ideas.

Four questions

First, express your requirements in a sentence beginning, "I want..." For example, "I want to work with people", "I want to use my degree", "I want to develop my management skills", etc.

For each of your statements, ask four questions:

- **WHERE?** In what setting do you want to do this? What location? What sector? What organisation?
- **HOW?** In what way do you want to do it? What specific skills, knowledge and experience do you want or need to use?
- **WHY?** For what purpose do you want to do it? What do you want to produce, achieve or change?
- **WHO?** What people do you want to do it for or with? Will you have clients, customers and stakeholders? Who will be your colleagues and your bosses?

Brainstorm

Once you have increased your knowledge of the job market you can try to link jobs to your career preferences. One way to do this is to use one of the matching systems mentioned above. Another method is to perform a series of brainstorming exercises. Write on a piece of paper the factor that is most important to you in obtaining satisfaction in your next job. Now write down as many jobs as you can think of that satisfy that criterion. This usually works best

with skills that you want to use or develop. However, if your most important priority is an interest or a value, e.g. human rights or physics, you could brainstorm possible work connected to it under the following headings:

- do it
- help others do it
- teach or speak about it
- write about it
- create products related to it
- organise it
- contribute to it
- sell or promote it

For example, try to think of all the jobs that involve writing. Don't edit what you put down. Record whatever comes into your head. If that makes you think of something else, write that down too. If you think of something and you're not sure why you thought of it, write it down. Even if you know you would never do that job in a million years, write it down anyway. It may prompt you to think of something else. When you get stuck, try rephrasing the question to see if that sparks off any further ideas. Sticking with writing, you could ask, in what careers do you:

- deal with written information
- express ideas in written form
- persuade people in writing
- draft
- compose
- express
- explain
- educate
- inform
- report
- edit, etc.

What sort of writing do you see around you? Somebody must write it. What ideas does that suggest?

If you get stuck, put it away for a while and come back to it later. If you get stuck again, show it to someone else. They may

think of more ideas. See the example brainstorm on the next page for an illustration.

Once you have done this for one criterion, you can carry on and do it for other criteria. You can then see if there are any job areas that overlap. These jobs would be good ones to research first.

Mix and match

Similar jobs exist in a variety of sectors. The skills and qualities required in the jobs are the same but the content of the jobs is different. For example, if you ignore the subject matter, the job of an IT trainer is very similar to the job of a personal development trainer, which is very similar to the job of further education lecturer, etc. Once you have an understanding of a large number of job types, you can imagine those jobs in other settings, even if you have never heard of anyone doing it. If you enjoy writing and training you could imagine a job which involves training people in writing. You may never have come across such a job but now you can try to find out if such a job exists.

In your investigations you may not come across the ideal career. However, you may find that you are attracted by some aspects of one job and different aspects

of a second job. Before you settle for one or the other, it may be worth finding out if there is an ideal third job which contains both aspects. For example, you may like the analytical, problem-solving nature of management consultancy but prefer the ethos and values of the public sector. You could spend some targeted time trying to find out if consultancy-type jobs exist within the public sector.

It is sometimes useful to think about three headings:

- Sector (the general field of employment).
- Setting (your paymaster, the organisation you work for).
- Job function (the actual job you are doing or the skills you are using).

You don't have to change all of these elements in one go. Try changing one or two and leaving the rest the same.

What next

Once you have generated some ideas and have decided which ones to focus your attention on, you need to find out as much detail about those options as you can. The next section will look at sources of information and strategies for gaining useful insights about jobs.

Brainstorm on WRITING

- lawyer — contracts, agreements, terms and conditions
- careers adviser
- sub-editor
- advertising
- author — books, booklets, including textbooks, fiction, biography, history, science
- journalism — newspapers, news, reviews, features, travel, finance
- comics, annuals, graphic novels
- magazines — agony aunt, articles, quizzes, crosswords, competitions
- websites
- reports — company annual reports
- technical author
- brochures — holiday, tourist, guidebooks, hotel, company publicity
- catalogues — auctions, exhibitions, mail order
- museum exhibitions
- manuals — video, computer, equipment
- instructions — drugs, garden chemicals, cooking, knitting patterns
- recipe cards
- programmes — theatre, arts, cinema, race meetings, football matches
- public relations/publicity — press releases
- civil service/local government — policy documents, government reports and white papers, legislation, codes of conduct, briefings
- scripts — theatre, television, film, radio, documentary, drama
- dictionaries, thesaurus, encyclopaedia, reference works
- forms — membership, surveys, questionnaires, market research, benefits
- letters — customer service, marketing
- human resources — recruitment literature, training materials, appraisals
- greetings cards

Case notes: Steve

Finding a solution in an unexpected place

At 30, Steve was working as European Operations Director for a large retailer. He felt he needed an MBA to progress further in his career, but couldn't afford to do one full time.

While looking through teaching vacancies for his wife, he noticed an advertisement for a lecturer in retailing. Intrigued, he requested further details, and found that although the salary would be about half what he was then earning, the person appointed would be sponsored to work towards an MBA. Steve seized the opportunity, fully intending to return to industry once he had gained his qualification.

Instead he found that academic life had definite attractions. He relished the continuous learning opportunities. He had never before had such autonomy to make decisions, such flexibility to organise and prioritise his own work. He enjoyed helping the students develop, as he had enjoyed developing his team in industry.

On the negative side, lecturing could be quite lonely. The results were less tangible than the creation of a new superstore, and Steve missed the satisfaction of meeting defined targets.

Just as he was considering the return to industry, Steve was given the chance to take over running an MBA course himself. As course manager, he has much more contact with his colleagues, and has regained responsibility for his own profit centre. The pace, however, is less frenetic than in the retail sector, where "everything needs to be done by tomorrow, and people's jobs depend on it."

Although he could attract a higher salary in industry, he feels he could turn to consultancy if he needed to increase his income. For the present, he appreciates being able to work in a location of his choice, and being better able to balance work and life commitments.

Section Four

Researching new careers

Key points

- *Reflect back on your skills, values and needs.*
- *Know what you want to find out.*
- *Think laterally.*
- *Use a variety of sources.*
- *Build up your contacts.*

Once you have identified some new careers you are ready to start researching those areas in earnest. This can present the potential career changer with a hurdle to overcome. If you have worked as a social worker for the last ten years, you will know where to find out about social work. What do you do now you want to become a computer programmer? You could start by listing the sources you would use to find out about social work. Do you read a professional journal or a national newspaper on a particular day? Is there a directory listing all the social services departments? How much of your knowledge is “insider”, picked up from discussions with colleagues? Do you attend professional conferences?

OK, now transfer this list to computer programming. Chances are there will be the same kinds of resources for that, or any other career area you choose. In the previous section you will have started to gather some ideas about where to go to for further information and vacancies. This section will help you to expand that knowledge.

In order to start researching it is important to have some idea of what you want to find out. You can use the work you did earlier on values and skills to help work out what jobs and employers will meet your requirements. The list of questions below will help to get you started.

- What are the suitable jobs?
- What does the work involve?
- What is the salary range?
- What experience, qualifications and skills are needed?
- Are these jobs restricted to certain geographical locations?
- What types of employers offer these positions?
- Who are the specific employers?
- What’s going on within the industry?
- How many vacancies are being advertised?
- Which organisations are growing (and which are shrinking)?
- How should you apply?

How to research

Most of you will have already have used research skills. This might have been during your employment, degree or in your personal life, for instance, when deciding on a holiday. Remember that any kind of research is a process. It is unlikely you will get all of the information needed from one source. Rather, you will start with one book or conversation and follow leads from that. What you find out will help your career change in lots of different ways. For example, vacancy pages will give an idea of the range of jobs and salaries in your chosen field. Directories will provide you with a list of organisations. Networking will bring you into contact with people who can provide an “insider’s view” and keep you in mind for vacancies. Be alert at all times for information that could assist your career change — even when listening to the radio or watching television it is possible to pick up tips.

Listed below are the main resources for

researching careers. They fall into two main types, print (including electronic formats) and people.

Print

Careers libraries

An Aladdin's Cave of careers information and one of the best places to start your search. You will find that most will hold some of the paper-based resources mentioned here. Public libraries can also hold a good stock of careers literature. The excellent Careers Group, University of London *Online Careers Library* has over 3000 links to careers related websites and can be found at www.careers.lon.ac.uk/ocl

AGCAS booklets

Written by careers advisers, these booklets are a good introduction to career areas that also contain suggestions for further research. Also available online at www.prospects.ac.uk.

Professional organisations

In the UK there are professional bodies or trade associations for everything from astrology to zoology. Many of these produce careers information. Some have monthly or weekly publications providing industry information or vacancy bulletins. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, for example, produces excellent free information on careers and training in Human Resources, as well as a fortnightly journal. Others have lists of members that will help to identify specific employers in the field. *The Directory of British Associations* lists details of the majority of these organisations.

Specialist publications

These publications often contain a lot of up to date information on industry issues and gossip. This is helpful when making applications. Most importantly, many contain job advertisements. Find out if there is one that is relevant to your area by talking to people in the field, reading careers literature, contacting the professional body, or try the *Writer's and Artists Yearbook* which lists newspapers and magazines by subject area.

Don't forget that employers will sometimes advertise in less obvious places. For example an organisation with a commitment to helping the homeless may advertise in *The Big Issue*.

Newspapers

National and some regional newspapers advertise for different sectors on different days of the week. Remember that some vacancies may have a domino effect creating other opportunities within an organisation. If an advert for a managing director appears and results in an internal promotion, that may mean a vacancy for a second in command. The general business pages are a useful source to find out about company activity and don't overlook local newspapers.

Industry directories

The minimum that industry directories will contain is names and contact details of organisations. Many have information about an organisation's size, clients, products and services, specialisms, locations and names of partners and directors. Directories can be used to identify suitable employers to approach speculatively for a job or information interview.

Yellow or business pages

An obvious choice often overlooked by the job hunter. Use as a first port of call to find contact details for employers in a particular field. Once you know the names of relevant organisations, search the Web for more information. Don't forget the name of the organisation when reading industry news. Call them up to find out if they produce any information for potential clients or to get a copy of their annual report.

Internet

Increasingly the Internet is becoming an invaluable source for the job hunter. A large number of companies, professional associations and even publications are now on the Web. Whilst there is a lot of good information out there it can be a very time consuming process trying to find it! Starting with the *Online Careers Library* www.careers.lon.ac.uk/ocl will help you to keep on track.

People

There is only so much you can learn by reading and there is no substitute to incorporating the human element into your research plan.

This will allow you to find out more subjective information and build up a network of individuals working in your chosen career area. To be successful, be prepared! Follow the five golden rules of networking:

- Know about the organisation: who are its clients and what are its products or services.
- Know the type of role you want.
- Make sure you note your contact's name and keep in touch if appropriate.

- Think laterally and follow any leads.
- Prepare some informed questions.

Bear in mind that this is your chance to find out information that is unavailable from any other source. Think about your values, fears and reasons for career change. What would be helpful to know before you take the plunge?

- What is enjoyable about this job?
- What are the frustrations?
- How did they get their job?
- What opportunities for career progression are there?
- Is the sector ageing?
- How will a recent career break be viewed?
- What are the challenges for this sector?
- Who are their main rivals? (Good for knowing who to approach next!)

These are just some ideas to start you thinking about your own set of questions. Below you will find some suggestions for how to approach networking.

Information interviewing

It would be wonderful (and unlikely) if all your friends and relatives worked in your desired career area. Chances are none of them do. "Information Interviewing" serves two purposes. It enables you to build up a network of contacts in your chosen field and provides you with another way of gaining tips about the jobs, organisations and industry. The concept is simple. Make contact with people who are doing the job you would like and talk to them about it. This may sound daunting but many people are happy to give up a short amount of time and are flattered to be asked. Think about how you would feel if someone approached you.

To do this effectively you need a strategy. First start with any warm contacts you

have through friends, family and social activities or try some of the avenues listed below, such as fairs or alumni associations. Secondly, look at the research you have gathered. Are there any leads? You might have come across a company you would like to work for or have a name of someone in the job you would like to do. Think creatively, for example, have you read an article or an interview with an individual you found interesting? Could you use this as a route to speaking to them?

The way you make initial contact will depend on your personal style and also the type of sector you are focussing on. Email might be the best way to contact someone within IT, whereas for law a formal letter might be more appropriate. The personal approach of a quick telephone call might suit you more. It doesn't matter how you do it as long as it works.

When you make contact with an organisation, know who you want to speak to. Know what you want. For example is it a 15-minute chat covering their role and the skills and experience needed. You might want to send them your prepared questions beforehand so it feels like a more formal interaction. Don't ask for a job but do ask for further suggestions of others you could talk to in the field.

Work shadowing

In some ways this is an extension of information interviewing except that rather than talking to someone for 15 minutes, you spend a day or two in the workplace, with an employee, gaining an insight into the job. This will help you to see if the job is what you want and helps to convince employers you are serious about your career change. It also gives employees of that company a chance to

form an opinion of you which could help should a vacancy become available. In fact, one of the authors of this book got her job in this way.

Careers fairs

A good way to meet employees of organisations face to face. Careers Fairs vary in size and focus. Some will be general fairs, others aimed at particular sectors or people. Keep your eyes out for adverts in the press. Even though fairs are less personal than the two examples above the golden rules of networking still apply.

Trade fairs

Although not a recruitment event, a trade fair will help you to get a real feel of a particular industry. Go early in the day when representatives are more likely to give you their time.

Alumni associations

Most universities have alumni links, possibly a magazine with a "where I am now" section. If someone is part of an alumni association it normally means they wish to maintain links with their university. It means they are a warm(ish) contact. So if you find someone in a career that interests you, why not try and link up for a chat.

As you can see there are many ways to plug that information gap. Some will reap more rewards than others for your particular career choices. Keep going. It is really satisfying to see a seed of knowledge grow into something substantial. By the end of your research you will be ready to make a decision; read the next section for ideas on how to do this.

Case notes: Jack

Building the freelance option

At 41, Jack was bringing up his own children, and working with families who had children with disabilities as a part-time Local Authority social worker based in a National Health Service clinical setting. He was getting more and more frustrated by this role. There was less and less time for proactive work, putting in the necessary support to avert crises. The budgetary constraints were ill defined and there were very limited funds for staff training. He was increasingly involved with reactive work such as child protection.

Jack knew he wanted to go on working with children with disabilities, so considered other careers that would allow this. These included special needs teacher and occupational therapist, but he wasn't keen to study for yet more professional qualifications. He started to investigate the voluntary organisations he used to secure support and information for his clients, consulting people who worked in this sector. His research allowed him to explore the ethos of the various organisations, to find out which were investing in their staff, and to discover which were recruiting.

Jack made speculative applications to a number of potential employers. A trust invited him to join their team of assessors on a self-employed basis. He could fit this in around his work for the Social Services department, so was able to see if he was making the right decision without giving up his existing career. When the part-time position of regional co-ordinator became available within the trust, he took it, reducing the hours he worked for Social Services.

As Jack made more contacts outside the statutory sector, he became aware of diverse opportunities. When a manager he did not trust or respect was brought into the Social Services team, he finally resigned from that post, confident that he could build his own portfolio career.

He has since been involved as an interviewer in a number of university research projects. He has also been able to continue working with health professionals, winning a contract with a child development centre to facilitate a group for parents. He still finds it difficult negotiating fees and contracts for freelance work, and readily admits he could have made life easier for himself if he had notified the tax office sooner, and applied for exemption from National Insurance payments. But overall he relishes the flexibility of his work, which he can arrange around caring for his children, his elderly dependants and his garden!

Case notes: Cathy

From science to jewellery making

All Cathy had ever wanted to do, from when she was a little girl, was to make jewellery. She planned to go to Art College after her A-levels, but did well in biology and was encouraged to read botany at university. She subsequently qualified and worked as a biology teacher. This gave her the chance to do practical work and to have contact with children, both of which she enjoyed.

When she was expecting her first child, she and her partner moved, so there was no question of her returning to her previous position. Cathy took a number of part-time teaching jobs to fit in around her growing childcare commitments, but found she was always given the slots that the full timers didn't want. With the introduction of the National Curriculum, she had less freedom to develop her interests, and found herself having to teach chemistry and physics, which she disliked.

In her own time, Cathy was developing her skills as a silversmith. She used the equipment at an Art Centre, where she met another silversmith who recommended books for her to read, and encouraged her to exhibit, advising where her work would be well received. When her youngest child started school, she decided to concentrate exclusively on her jewellery. She is still sought after as a science teacher, and although flattered, has stuck to her resolution. Instead, she has accepted an offer to teach jewellery at the local college.

Cathy is satisfied in her new career. Her work is very practical, and she still has contact with children — she has four of her own! She relishes the freedom to pursue her own interests, and to work flexibly alongside her family responsibilities. Her scientific training means she is not daunted by book-keeping, or by the meticulous records needed to keep track of her stock, and she gains inspiration from plant structures for her creative work.

Cathy's career change involved minimal financial risk, since her partner's income supports the family, and she could always fall back on her teaching qualification. She sometimes regrets that she didn't take her degree in art, and feels that her work would be different had she received formal training. When she first started sending photographs of her work to art galleries, she was anxious that she might not be taken seriously. However, to her surprise and delight her work has always been accepted alongside that of art graduates.

Section Five

Making decisions

Key points

- *Learn from decisions you have made in the past.*
- *Work out a decision-making approach that is comfortable for you.*
- *Think about the future consequences of your decisions.*
- *Bring to light hidden reasons for reluctance by applying formal decision-making exercises.*

In many cases, if you have done the preliminary work of identifying your priorities, generating options and gathering information (covered in previous sections), the right decision can be obvious. For those tricky situations when it's not obvious, it helps to understand your own decision making style and to have a few useful exercises up your sleeve to kick start the process.

Know your style

There is a variety of methods and styles of decision making. When you are contemplating making a decision it is worth being aware of which methods work best for you.

How have you done so far?

Spend some time making a list of decisions you have made and how you made them. What distinguishes the good decisions from the bad ones? Was it because you spent time researching or thinking about it? Was it because you made a quick decision without getting bogged down in information? Did you go with your head or with your gut feeling?

Do you want to do it?

People can be divided into those who like making decisions and those who don't.

Both types can be bad at decision making. Those who like making decisions can be so keen to finish the process that they fail to consider all the options carefully. In their haste to make a decision they miss the best option. Those who don't like making decisions can get so involved in the fascination of looking for and examining new options that they never reach a conclusion.

To which temptation are you most likely to succumb? If you tend to make snap decisions, you can consciously make an effort to explore alternatives. Perhaps by deferring the decision point for a fixed time. If you tend to put off decisions, you can give yourself a deadline by which time you have to tell someone what decision you have made.

If you prefer not to make decisions, but are forced to choose an alternative, you may feel more comfortable if you choose one that allows you the most flexibility and keeps as many options open as possible.

The word "decision" derives from a Latin word meaning "to cut". When you make a decision, you cut out the alternative decisions you could have made. It is worth identifying the point of no return. Is there a stage beyond which you can no longer unmake the decision? Can you pull out of a course before a certain date and get your money back? How long can you temp without damaging your CV?

Another possible reason for indecision is fear. You may be afraid of failure, of losing control, being proved wrong, of hurting someone, etc. Explore the fear. You may take some action before making the decision, for example testing out the likelihood of success more thoroughly,

giving more weight to safer options, practising justifying yourself, talking over the implications with people who may be affected.

How do you do it?

When it comes to the process of decision making, there tend to be two approaches:

- **The objective approach** looks at any situation from the outside. Individuals making a decision in this way look coolly at the factors and examine the outcomes almost as if they were not involved in the situation. Maximum effectiveness is an essential requirement of any decision. Decisions tend to be right or wrong. This can also be called the “analytical” approach because it involves breaking a situation down into its component factors.
- **The subjective approach** looks at any situation very much from within. Individuals making a decision in this way will identify strongly with the people involved. The most significant consideration will be the impact on their core values and beliefs, or those of other people involved. Maximum harmony is the desired outcome of any decision. Decisions tend to be more satisfying or less. This can also be called the “holistic” approach because it involves getting a feel for the overall impact of a situation.

People can use both approaches, but tend to prefer one or the other. Both approaches can produce equally effective results, although most books written on decision making tend to emphasise the former approach. Because of this bias towards the analytical approach you may have adopted a way of making decisions that is not natural to you.

Think about decisions you have made without too many outside constraints. What approach best describes the process you went through?

Looking into the future

Thinking ahead

Every decision has consequences. An important part of decision making is to imagine yourself into the future to explore what those consequences might be. The more exhaustive your information gathering (Section Four) has been, the more accurately you will be able to imagine future scenarios. It can be useful to break consequences down into those that affect you, and people around you, internally and externally. For example, you might switch to a better paid, more demanding job. This might affect you internally by making you feel you are using your talents more. It may affect you externally by eating into your free time. It may affect others internally in that they

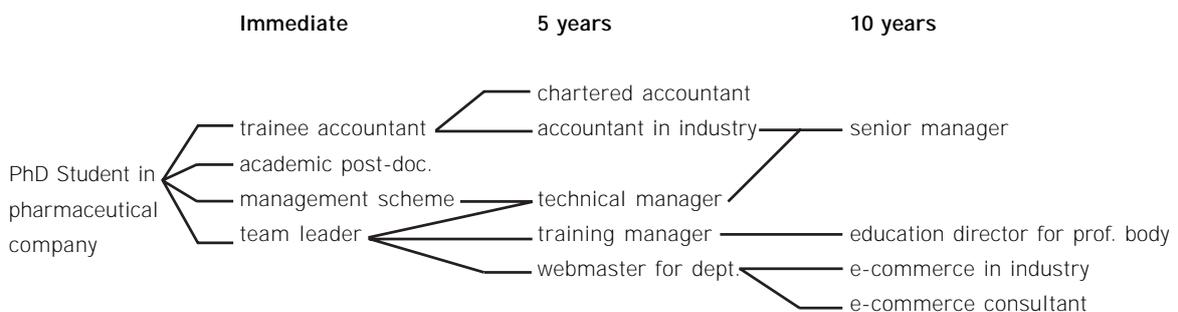


Figure 1 - Option tree for assessing future career path

have greater respect for you, and externally in that they don't see you as much socially.

For each option you are considering, try completing the Analysis of Consequences Table. Give yourself plenty of time for imagining and discuss your thoughts with the people concerned.

Analysis of consequences table

	Positive consequences	Negative consequences
You (internal)		
You (external)		
Others (internal)		
Others (external)		

Thinking further ahead

When exploring outcomes it can be illuminating to extend your speculation further into the future rather than immediately after the transition. When you are investigating a particular career route, think about what options will be available to you one, five and ten years into the future. You may wish to choose a path that leads to a particular option or a path that leaves open as many options as possible. Decisions you make early in a new career may open or close doors further down the line. It may help to draw an option tree, which plots all the possible paths from a range of choices.

Figure 1 on the previous page gives an example.

What if?

You can examine a decision by speculating about different circumstances that may arise which will affect the appeal of the outcome. For example, if you are considering a job that involves relocation, you could speculate about the possible conditions that would make it difficult. What if you were unable to sell your old house? What if the people you rented your house to became difficult? What if you were unable to make new friends in the area? What if the job fell through after you had moved? This form of controlled worrying enables you to anticipate problems and can identify crucial factors in the decision-making process.

Useful exercises

The random method

If all of the options seem to be equally attractive, try picking one at random by tossing a coin, rolling a dice, picking a piece of paper out of a hat. This sounds mad but can be a valuable exercise.

If you genuinely would be equally happy with any alternative, and each alternative is equally feasible, then it's as good a method as any for choosing an option. Whichever one comes up will be equally good, so just get on with it and get used to it.

However, if you're not happy with the random choice, it could be that there are subconscious factors or factors which you haven't admitted to yourself. If these factors were recognised, acknowledged and applied, it would mean that all the options are not equal and a more reasoned decision could be made. For example, you could have two options which you claim are equally attractive, but one of them is only there because it

is the sort of thing you think you ought to be considering. When this one comes up in the random method, you feel a little disappointed because the other option is the one you were hoping would come up but you are afraid that it will appear frivolous. Other people's opinions of your choice may have been an unacknowledged factor. Now you have acknowledged it, you can work out if it's really important or not.

The test drive method

Take each option in turn and imagine that you have chosen it. Now imagine that you are describing to someone else why and how you made that decision. For each scenario present all the justifications for this being the most suitable choice. Which one sounds the most convincing? Which one feels right?

A variation of this method is to explain why you didn't choose each option. Take each alternative and criticise it. Point out all the negative consequences. Following this method may make it easier to say goodbye to the rejected options when you eventually make the decision.

For example, if you are considering a career in advertising or the Civil Service, your deliberations may look like the table below.

Advertising	
For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a trendy field. • It's creative. • You get to see an end result. • You can boast about projects you have worked on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's very shallow. • It's badly paid. • It's hard to get into. • You may end up advertising nappies or dog food.

Civil Service	
For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's plenty of scope for development and progression. • It would be doing something worthwhile for society. • There is reasonable job security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's considered a bit boring. • It might be bureaucratic. • You have to work for whichever government is in power.

The SWOT method

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. For each option that you are considering list your strengths and weaknesses relating to the job. The figure below shows a SWOT analysis compiled by someone considering whether to accept a job offer from a small technology company.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a good product. • The team seems lively. • They seem to have good contacts in their customer base. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There only seem to be two C++ developers. • They work out of a warehouse. • There is no pension scheme or health insurance.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I could make a real difference. • If the company is successful, my share options would be really valuable. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a very competitive market. • They might go out of business.

The calculation method

First, list the things that you are looking for in a new job. Now give each factor a *need score* out of 100; this indicates its importance to you. A criterion that is absolutely essential scores 100, something which is completely optional scores 1. Examine your first career option, rating its ability to satisfy each of your needs. If the need is completely satisfied then give the job a *satisfaction rating* of 100 for that criterion. If the need is not satisfied, give the job a *satisfaction rating* of 0 for that criterion. Multiply the *need score* by the *satisfaction rating* for each criterion. Add all the resulting numbers to get the overall score for that career option. Repeat the process with your other career options. Now look for the option with the highest overall score.

From the calculation method table below you can see that, although Option 1 has lower satisfaction ratings, it scores more highly than Option 2 because the more important factors are satisfied. If you are not satisfied with the result of the calculation, there may be other factors that you haven't included in the calculation, or you may have misrepresented the importance of some of the factors.

Dealing with the decision

Hopefully, the advice and exercises above will give you some assistance with difficult decisions. Once the decision has been made, it is time to take action and deal with the transition. These subjects are covered in the following section.

The calculation method table

Need	Need Score (NS)	Career Option 1		Career Option 2		Career Option 3	
		Satisfaction Rating (SR)	SR x NS	Satisfaction Rating (SR)	SR x NS	Satisfaction Rating (SR)	SR x NS
Variety	80	85	6800	55	4400	100	8000
Writing	65	90	5850	60	3900	0	0
Regular hours	20	40	800	100	2000	80	1600
Promotion opportunity	30	15	450	90	2700	70	2100
Total score			13900		13000		11700

Case notes: Alex

You are packing in your job to become a novelist

Alex had been working in PR since she graduated five years ago. She enjoyed it, but was beginning to feel that she had learnt as much as she could. She still loved the writing and ideas, which were the aspects of PR that first attracted her, but no longer saw it as a challenge. She had also begun to itch for a more flexible working environment — no boss, and no fixed working hours. Alex gave up her job two months ago and is just finishing her second novel. She has had considerable interest from an agent, and has recently made the decision that even if she doesn't get a publishing deal with this novel, she is going to continue with writing as a full time job.

About a year ago she started on her first novel. She was still working full time at this point and spent about three evenings a week plus some time at the weekends writing. It took about six months to finish this.

Alex picked out ten agents, more or less at random and sent them a synopsis of the novel together with the first few chapters fully written. She got rejections from all ten, although one of them said that she liked her style and would be interested in reading her next novel.

Alex started straight away on the second novel, taking on board the comments of the agents who had rejected her first one.

This took six months, and two days after sending it off to an agent, she got a letter saying that they were interested and wanted the rest of the novel to read through. At this point Alex decided to resign from her job.

She is extremely happy with her decision. She misses having people around her all day, but is excited to be doing a job that she loves, and not being constrained by an office or a boss. She now works far longer hours than she ever did in her PR job, but can choose how and when she works and doesn't have to make compromises.

Section Six

Taking action

Key points

- *Beware of being too afraid or too enamoured of change.*
- *Carefully plan strategy and tactics to bring about what you want.*
- *Be prepared for the shock of the new and take measures to minimise it.*

You may have analysed your current situation, assessed your aptitudes, generated and investigated options, and decided on the best course of action. You still have to do something about it. Perhaps you should say to yourself, "Just do it!" But if you are still hesitating, this section aims to provide some help. It won't necessarily deal with the specific change you have to make, but it should help you to look at your attitude to change, and give you tips for bringing about change and coping with the consequences.

Your attitude to change

What is your instinctive attitude to change? Some people have a tendency to anticipate change as a good thing. They are enticed by the possibilities of new experiences almost irrespective of what those experiences might be. New experiences are seen as more likely to be exciting than what is familiar and stale. Such people are often proactive in bringing about change and may be drawn into making large, drastic changes. The dangers for people with this attitude may be that they want to change too often or to change too much. If you think you may be this sort of person, you may find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions.

- What do I need to preserve from my

old situation?

- What needs to be done now in order to lay a foundation for the future?
- Have I skimmed over necessary details?

Other people tend to place more value on what is familiar. They don't necessarily object to change, but are more likely to welcome it if it is gradual and builds on what has already been established. Such people are liable to implement change meticulously. The dangers for people with this attitude may be that they resist change or try to hold onto too much of the past. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I thought drastically enough or far enough ahead?
- What am I holding onto that may be holding me back?
- Have I missed the big picture?

Fears

Any transition can hold fears. Here are a few common fears encountered by career changers:

- **I might not be any happier** If you have done your homework, examining yourself, generating and researching possibilities, then you have boosted your chances of improving your job satisfaction. You could always try to obtain work shadowing or placements to "try before you buy".
- **I'm too old** At the time of writing there is no UK legislation against age discrimination, however the UK has committed itself to legislate against age discrimination in employment and is currently consulting widely on the issue. The legislation will come into

force by the end of 2006. The issue of age discrimination is a complex one, employers sometimes have concerns, which may or may not be valid. They may worry that you will be more expensive or less easy to train than someone younger. The organisation may have a low average age and they might have concerns about your ability to fit in. What evidence can you volunteer to assuage these concerns? For some occupations, age and experience are an advantage, social work, counselling, careers advice, etc. The Campaign Against Age Discrimination in Employment may be able to help you. You can find information on their website at www.caade.net.

- **I might fail** It's possible. Often the most important factor determining success or failure is your motivation. If you are convinced that this new job is right for you and you have got what it takes, then you will have the determination to overcome obstacles and setbacks.
- **I haven't got what it takes** It is common to feel ill equipped and lacking in appropriate skills (Section Two may help you to evaluate your skills). If you don't have everything asked for in an advert, don't worry. It's worth checking what is "essential" and what is "desirable". Even if you only have 80% of the essential requirements, it could be worth having a go. You never know, the other candidates may only have 70%.
- **I might not be able to afford it** If a change of career involves retraining, a drop in salary, or relocation, it can be an expensive business. It may not be enjoyable but it is usually helpful to sit down and go through the figures in detail. What exactly are the costs? What resources can you draw on? Careers Services and Citizens' Advice Bureaux often have information about funding sources and allowances. Can you change aspects of your lifestyle? It

is easier to make sacrifices if you are confident that they will be worth it in the end. This comes back to research and testing.

- **Employers might not take me seriously** Lack of credibility can be a problem when you are making a switch into an area where you have no relevant experience, especially if you are coming from a well-paid job to a more lowly position in order to get a foot in the door. Employers may be afraid that you are a "job hopper", that you will leave them in the lurch, that you will be too expensive, etc. Anticipate their concerns and be prepared to explain why what you are hoping to do in the future is more suited to you than what you did in the past.

Making it happen

In this section we will provide some specific tips for particular changes. But first, it may be worth looking generally at how you can plan and implement changes. When embarking on any project, it is sensible to consider the following factors:

- **Objectives** What you want to achieve?
- **Stages** The steps you will have to go through in order to get to your objective from your current situation.
- **Risk** The chances of success or failure. What are the consequences of failure? Is there anything you can do to increase your chances of success?
- **Requirements** What you will need in order to achieve the objective, e.g. skills, experience, training, contacts, funding etc?
- **Resources** What you have that will help you to succeed?
- **Methods** How you will go about using your resources to meet the requirements and complete the stages?

- **Review** How you will assess your levels of success?

It may be worth examining your objectives to see if they are SMART:

- **Specific** Break large, complex objectives into smaller, more manageable ones. For example, "Getting into advertising" could be broken down into "finding contacts in advertising", "gaining relevant experience", "making applications to advertising agencies".
- **Measurable** Work out how you will know when you have achieved your goal.
- **Achievable** Investigate the likelihood that what you want to achieve is actually possible.
- **Realistic** Make sure that it's possible for you, with your resources.
- **Time-limited** Have a realistic deadline by which you should have achieved each goal.

If the thought of all this organisation makes you go weak at the knees, don't panic! Some people instinctively prefer being structured and organised and some prefer being adaptable and responsive. If you tend more towards the latter approach, you may want to try a few things and see what happens. But bear in mind, a little bit of planning can help you to be better prepared to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. For those of you who like to be structured and in control, be prepared to adapt your plans if something unexpected crops up.

You may be able to benefit from the support and assistance of other people. Think about your support network. Who can provide practical help? Who can provide wise counsel? Who is a good shoulder to cry on? Who can distract you from your difficulties? It may be worth warning them in advance that their services may be required. And think about how you will repay them.

Changing the terms and conditions

You may have concluded that you enjoy your current role but need to change some aspect of your working conditions to make it bearable or to give you an opportunity to pursue outside interests. Before you talk to your boss, prepare. Work out exactly what you want.

- **Time** Do you want to reduce the number of hours you work each day? Do you want one day a week off? Do you want to job share?
- **Responsibility** What specific responsibilities do you want to take on and where will they come from? What specific responsibilities do you want to get rid of and where will they go?
- **Money** Exactly how much more do you want? Can you prove you are worth it? (Comparisons with colleagues or offers from competitors may help.)

Think about what you are asking for from your employer's point of view. What will be the benefits for them and what can you offer them in return? You may be more motivated. You may be able to do your job more effectively. You may be willing to stay and save them the expense of recruiting and training a replacement.

Establish your negotiating position. Imagine your employer is feeling very generous and make a list of all the changes you would like to obtain in an ideal world. Rank these demands in order of importance. Now establish the absolute minimum change in circumstances you could put up with. This should give you a range of options within which you are able to compromise. It is always worth having a few demands that you can relinquish as long as you achieve what you really want.

Although it can be a very nerve-wracking experience, try to remain relaxed, patient and polite. This will usually achieve

better results than hostility and defensiveness. During the negotiation process you should aim to listen as much as you talk. Be prepared to emphasise the areas of agreement before trying to tackle the disagreement. Don't rush the decision. You and your employer may need to go away and consider the proposition before reaching a final deal.

Changing the organisation

Be clear about why you are changing. Is there a wider range of opportunities or the possibility of more varied experience? Are the culture and working conditions more suitable? Are potential colleagues more like-minded? Is the location more convenient? Does the workload have better balance or a more satisfying emphasis? Is the pay better? Do enough research to make sure that the place you are moving to is really going to satisfy your requirements. If you are asked to explain your reasons for moving by the old employer or the new one, be positive rather than negative.

Changing the job

There are various resources that deal with the issue of job hunting. Use the appropriate job hunting methods for the type of work you are seeking. Here is a very brief summary (refer to Section Four for further useful information):

- **Advertisements** Know the right places to look for the type of position you are seeking. Read through the advert, the job description and the person specification carefully several times. Make sure you know what they require off by heart. Now look for evidence in your past experience that proves that you can do what they want.
- **Agencies** For some occupations you may find the majority of jobs through recruitment agencies, for others they

will be no use whatsoever. Make sure you pick the right agency. Bear in mind that employers mainly use recruitment consultancies to find workers with directly relevant experience. You shouldn't have to pay to use a recruitment agency.

- **Speculative applications** Sending off a CV and covering letter to a selection of appropriate organisations to enquire about possible vacancies can produce results if your details arrive in front of the right person at the right time. You will increase the rate of positive responses if you do some research beforehand. Make sure the organisation you are targeting actually employs people in the type of role you want. Companies that are starting up, expanding or have just won new contracts are more likely targets than those who are static or downsizing. It is better, if possible, to send your CV to named individuals with specific requests.
- **Networking** According to the Office of National Statistics, 25% of vacancies in the UK are filled through advertisements and 12% are filled by speculative applications, but 30% are filled by word of mouth. Contacts and personal recommendations may get you a job, increase your chances during a conventional recruitment process, or just keep you well informed about opportunities. The basic principles of using people to research jobs apply here.

Re-draft your CV so that it is appropriate for the new occupation. You need to be ready to convince the employer that you have the appropriate skills for the job and are motivated to do it. As a career changer you may find it helpful to produce a skills-based CV, listing all your pertinent skills with the evidence to back them up.

You may need to invest in some training. Here are some options:

- **Short courses and evening classes**
Useful for learning particular IT packages and other specific skills.
- **Vocational courses** From NVQs, through undergraduate degrees, all the way up to PhDs, these courses are sometimes essential to enter particular professions and are often accredited by the relevant professional body. Information from AGCAS Vocational Courses Surveys at www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Work-related-courses/plelmfe, professional bodies, UCAS at www.ucas.ac.uk, Prospects Postgraduate Directory at www.prospects.ac.uk/pgdbase

Don't just do a course in the hope that it might help. Make sure that it will definitely boost your chances of gaining access to your chosen field. If in doubt, before you start, solicit the opinion of the employers to whom you are hoping to market your qualification.

Have a realistic expectation of your success rate. If you apply for six jobs and get six rejections, you may start to feel discouraged. However, if you know that for the industry you are targeting you are likely to have to make 10–50 applications per interview, you may feel motivated to persevere a little longer.

Going it alone

If you are considering some form of self-employment such as consultancy, freelancing, franchising, or contracting, you need to plan carefully. It is a very good idea to have a business plan, especially if you want to obtain start-up finance. Remember you will have to deal with your own tax, National Insurance, indemnity insurance, pensions, etc. Get the *Working for yourself* leaflet from your local tax office or the Inland Revenue website at www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup/

[working-for-yourself.pdf](#)

It is sensible to nurture a collection of contacts who can provide you with future business, before you leave your job. Don't just rely on work from your old employer.

Think about the differences between working for someone else and working alone. How will you cope without social interactions with colleagues? Will working from home mean that you find it harder to separate work and home life?

Further advice and information is available from the Better Business website at www.better-business.co.uk and from the government's Small Business Service at www.businesslink.gov.uk. Talk to someone who has made a success of self-employment and learn from his or her mistakes.

Dealing with change

The process of transition from one role to another can be an uncomfortable experience. Even if you have initiated the change you will need to be able to adapt to your new circumstances by going through various stages.

Anticipation

The ease with which you make the transition depends on how well you have been able realistically to imagine what it will be like in your new situation. Gather as much information as you can. Talk to as many people as you can. Gain as much experience as you can through work shadowing or paid and unpaid placements. If you are moving to a new department or organisation, try to arrange a visit before you start.

Realisation

The first few weeks are a time of uncertainty in which you are brought face-to-face with the realities of your new circumstances. Even if your decision was the right one, you may feel like you have made a mistake at first. The effort required to learn new tasks, build relationships with new colleagues and adapt to a new environment can be draining and make you feel like a failure. Additionally, it's not uncommon to experience a sense of loss for the stable, familiar features of your old situation.

Large organisations frequently try to ease the shock of this stage by appointing existing staff to mentor and support new recruits. If your new employer doesn't do this automatically, you could ask them to, or find someone you can trust in the organisation to do it informally. Don't be afraid to ask questions in order to clarify others' expectations of you, and seek constructive feedback on your performance.

Make a conscious effort to watch and listen to everything that goes on around you. Take opportunities to socialise with new colleagues. This is a good way of finding out about organisational culture and office politics, which can hold hidden traps for the unwary newcomer.

Make sure your friends and family are ready to support and encourage you through this stage.

Acclimatisation

Normally, after a while you will become

used to your new environment. You will start to gain confidence in your ability to perform your duties and will start to make the job your own.

If this doesn't happen there are three possible explanations. It may be that, despite all the care you have taken in analysing your requirements and investigating the job, there is a mismatch. You may need to start the process again by working out exactly what is causing the problem.

An alternative explanation is that the job has a very long learning curve, in which case you may have to be patient and persistent. Try finding out if anyone else had similar difficulties.

The next possibility is that the job keeps changing or growing as soon as you start to get used to it. You have to decide if you enjoy continually adapting to an environment of constant change and challenge. Again, try to get comparative views from others.

Summary

By reading this book you should have gained an insight into the process of managing your career. It may not have answered all your specific questions or dealt with all your individual concerns but, hopefully, it will have given you some ideas of where to start and some tools to use along the way. These career management skills are not just things you use when you are unhappy in your job. They should be something you can use throughout your career in order to make the most of your future.

Case notes: **Fiona**

Getting the work-life balance right

Fiona was working four days a week, in IT support and development, when her children's nanny handed in her notice. Now that one child was at school and the other at playgroup, a nanny was really an unnecessary expense, so Fiona asked other parents about childminders in the locality. The one she liked most was only prepared to mind during school hours in term time.

Fiona realised that if her partner took the children to school/playgroup, she could start work earlier. If she then spread her hours over five days instead of four, she would be able to put in the same number of hours, but finish in time to pick the children up after school.

Fiona thought about the consequences for her work. Users often needed support when they first arrived in the morning, so starting earlier would benefit them. They currently had no support on her day at home, because the person who used to cover her absence had been recently relocated. So her presence on five days a week would also be an advantage. Fiona approached her manager, and offered to adjust her hours.

Fiona felt confident about her new childcare arrangements, and was pleased to reduce her childcare costs. She did, however, find it difficult to educate colleagues about when she was available for meetings — especially for tele- or video-conferences with staff based in the USA.

Case notes: Anne

The unfolding story of a career change

Before she had children, Anne worked for a consultancy that helps small businesses access grants and loans from Europe. While the children were both pre-schoolers, she did some work for the consultancy from home, keeping open the possibility of returning full time at a later date. When her employer re-located, she decided it was time to leave — she did not want to continue working from home indefinitely because she missed working with colleagues, and it was now too far to commute from the university town where she lived.

Anne had been interested in the deaf community since she was an undergraduate. Her degree in Linguistics had included a brief introduction to the grammatical structure of British Sign Language (BSL), which had not long been recognised as a language in its own right. She was also aware that as a result of their imperfect access to spoken English, many deaf people have difficulties understanding written English and are thus denied a wide range of educational opportunities. She had taken an evening course in BSL and had spoken to two friends employed as communication support workers with deaf students. They had both taken a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) and then qualified as Teachers of the Deaf, before moving into this role.

Anne tested her aptitude for teaching by working as a volunteer at the local adult college, supporting students with dyslexia or with English as a second language. She was provided with a free crèche place, and encouraged to start a qualification in teaching adults. She also took a test designed for dyslexics to discover how she processes information. She was not surprised to find that she learns best through hearing, and that she has a good short-term memory for things she has heard. She realised these skills would be useful in working with deaf people.

However, she still had reservations about training as a Teacher of the Deaf. With two young children, she did not want to commit to such a long training period, and, in order to gain a PGCE, she would have to convince the University that she had adequate German to teach it at secondary school.

Anne provided post-natal support through the National Childbirth Trust, and in this way got to know a neighbour with a deaf child. When the neighbour arranged to take BSL classes at home, Anne agreed to join her and split the cost.

It was this same neighbour who told Anne about a project at the University, piloting a new one-year postgraduate diploma in Deaf Studies and Sign Communication in Higher Education. Anne decided she could afford the (subsidised) fees, asked the college tutor responsible for dyslexia support for a reference, and made childcare arrangements. The course helped her to reach an intermediate level in signing, and to appreciate that her real strength is working with lip-readers.

Since the course, Anne has continued to study, qualifying as a lipspeaker and note-taker. She gives communication support to deaf students, provides a lipspeaking service to deaf workers attending meetings or training courses, and is always in demand. As a freelancer, she is able to choose her hours to fit in with the children.

continued...

She finds her career interesting, and enjoys working with such a wide range of people.

Anne is pleased she made the change. She is particularly glad that she seized the opportunity to take the Diploma — the project was abandoned after just one year.

Further reading

Assessing your situation Analysing your values and skills Generating ideas

Back to work: a guide for women returners

Wolfin, D & Foreman, S, Robson Books, 2004

Brilliant career finder: how to find the right career for you

Monroe, J, Prentice Hall, 2003

Build your own rainbow: a workbook for career and life management

Hopson, B & Scally, M, Management Books 2000, 1999

Changing direction: employment options in working life

Ward, S, Age Concern England, 2002

Do what you are: discover the perfect career for you through the secrets of personality type

Tieger, PD & Barron-Tieger, B, Little Brown and Co., 2001

Gap years for grown ups

Griffith, S, Vacation Work, 2004

How to analyse and promote your skills for work

University of London Careers Service, 2000

The art of building windmills: career tactics for the 21st century

Hawkins, Dr P, Graduates into Employment, 1999

Perfect career

Eggert, M, Random House Business Books, 2003

Taking a career break

White, J, Vacation Work, 2001

The career change handbook

Green, G, How To Books, 2004

The Which? guide to changing careers: tackling the challenge of finding a new career

Bennett, S, Which? Ltd, 2003

What color is your parachute? A practical manual for jobhunters

Bolles, R, Ten Speed Press, 2005

Reinvent your career

Clarke, S, Hodder & Stoughton, 2005

Returning to work: a guide to re-entering the job market

Longson, S, How To Books, 2004

The career adventurer's field book

Coomber, S et al., Capstone Publishing, 2002

Researching new careers

Careers Un-Ltd: how to choose a career that deserves you

McConnell, C & Robinson, J, Momentum, 2002

Second chances: a national guide to education and training for adults

Lifetime Careers (Wiltshire) Ltd, 2005

The ECO guide to careers that make a difference

Island Press, 2004

The Penguin careers guide

Widmer, J, Penguin, 2004

The Times A-Z of careers and jobs

Hodgson, S (ed.), Kogan Page, 2005

Making decisions

De Bono's thinking course

De Bono, E, BBC Books, 2004

Taking action

The ultimate guide to successful networking

Stone, C, Vermilion, 2004

Great answers to tough interview questions

Yate, MJ, Kogan Page, 2005

How to complete an application form

University of London Careers Service, 2004

How to succeed at interviews and other selection methods

University of London Careers Service, 1998

How to write a curriculum vitae

University of London Careers Service, 2000

Job hunting on the internet

Bolles, R & Bolles, M, Ten Speed Press, 2005

Successful interviews every time

Yeung, Dr. R, How To Books, 2004

Perfect CV

Eggert, M, Random House Business Books, 2003

The ultimate CV for managers and professionals

Bishop-Firth, R, How To Books, 2004

Personal networking: how to make your connections count

Cope, M, Pearson Education, 2003

Specialist career change

Alternative careers in science

Robbins-Roth (ed.), Academic Press, 2005

Moving on in your career: a guide for academic researchers

Ali, L & Graham, B, Routledge Falmer, 2000

So what are you going to do with that?: a guide to career changing for MAs and PhDs

Basalla, M & Debelius, M, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001

What else can you do with a PhD

Secrist, J & Fitzpatrick, J Sage Publications, 2001

Beyond the classroom: alternative careers in education

AGCAS Teaching Profession Sub-Committee, 2004

Further Reading on the Internet

There is a vast and constantly growing array of resources that could help in any or all of the sections of your career change. The Careers Group, University of London maintains a website that creates and updates links to the best of these resources. It is called

The *Online Careers Library* is at

www.careers.lon.ac.uk/ocl

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