



The Career Planning Guide

Success is a word used in many aspects of our life. Success is a word we use to measure our career, our family, relationships, learning outcomes, business, happiness, and more. However, success is a subjective and very personal concept for every individual. The way in which a person measures success, or the specific measurements we use, varies from person to person, and from event to event. At least they should.

For the most part, we are raised to think “*success*” is one point or one sided. You reach it or you don’t. In my experience, I have come to realize “*success*” in family, in career, in education, in life are all different and are defined in different ways. For example, my definition of career success and my definition of family success are separate and different. Albeit, they do overlap in some instances, however, my success as a mom has no impact on my career success and vice-versa. Technically, I could reach my success definition for motherhood and not ever reach my defined career success.

This workbook was created to help individuals define and reach their desired career success. Although I get asked about help in other areas, I am not a counsellor. Just someone who has helped thousands curate their desired career journey and put them on their way to reaching career success.

Throughout my career, I have interviewed thousands of people from all different income levels, “*success*” levels, and educational backgrounds. I have always asked them the same question, how do you measure success? I ask this question to see what is truly important to the person. Some say money, relationships, feeling good, accepting god, working out daily. I have heard all kinds of answers to the question, but rarely do I hear the same response from two or more people. I also rarely hear anyone say “it depends on what we are talking about.”



Why are the responses always different? Because success is defined differently to everyone. My sister and I are extremely close. We have been our entire life. We have the same parents, same upbringing, and same cultural experiences (for the most part) yet we have two very different definitions of career success: neither right nor wrong, just our own definitions.

As you set out on your journey of mapping your career success, using this workbook, know that your definition of success is unique to you. You must be true to how you define success. I hope you will use this guide to define what is important to you, create your definition of success and then cultivate a career plan that meets your desired results. Don't let others influence your definition. The only way to reach "success" is to be true to what you want your career to be.

Your definition of success is what will motivate you to continue implementing, tweaking, and living your tiered success plan.

****Side Note:** It's ok for your definition and your plan to change. It's normal, but do try and create a definition that truly represents what you feel success is and then change as needed.

The more honest you are about how you define success, the more likely you are to create a plan that will work.

With all that being said, congratulations on taking the first step in planning your career. It doesn't matter what stage of your career you are in. It doesn't matter your age, or educational background. I created the tiered approach, outlined in this guide, after years of helping thousands of individuals reach their career goals. Everyone had a different age, work experience, cultural background. I know it can help you get to where you want to go too.



A few words of advice to utilize this guide successfully:

- Be honest with yourself, your ability and
- Your desire
- Know that the plan can and will change
- Never beat yourself up
- Celebrate your wins for no less than 24 hours
- Forget about your loses in less than 24 minutes.
- Although ignorance may be bliss, it is very dangerous.
- Do research. You don't know what you don't know.
- Research is the only way to know and to make informed decisions.
- Reach out via email if you have any questions.

I am here to help. This is not a get rich quick plan. This guide is designed to help you define your own level of career success and work your career plan for up to ten years.



The Evolution of Career Success

In the 1950s, 1960s and all the way up to the early 1990s, staying put or company loyalty was the way to a “successful” career, per societies standards. It was well known that to make it up the corporate ladder you needed to stay put at one company, learn the culture, be known as the best at whatever job you were doing, and make sure you were liked by all. Company politics played a key role in career success throughout this time. It was possible to make it pretty far up, if not all the way up, the corporate ladder starting at a company at 18, with no outside work experience or education. Today, you will be hard-pressed to find these same opportunities.

So, what is the modern secret to career success?

How can you plan to be successful, if loyalty no longer buys career success?

First, let’s look at what happened. What caused the change?

By the 1990s, a lot had changed in society and in pop culture, which was affecting the workplace. Technology and computers were now widely accepted and seen in every office.

Generation X, the generation born roughly from the early 1960s to mid-1970s, often perceived to be disaffected and directionless was coming out of high school and/or college. They were the first generation that had really grown up with computers and the newly adopted widely spreading technologies, found in the vast majority of workplaces.

Generation X had computers in grade, middle and high school; many had computers at their houses, the Internet was now openly available to the masses through dial-up technology, AOL had made chatting with others from around the world a possibility.

Generation X had so many changes happening in the world around them. Being known as “directionless” staying at one company was no longer a reality for this generation.

They craved new, they were risk-takers, not really wanting the security their baby



boomer parents needed and craved. Remember this is the generation they invented “Head Bangers Ball” for. They wanted new things, different things, new directions, new technology, job-hopping, as a result, became the new norm.

Something interesting happened through Generation X and the job-hopping scenarios... the Gen X employees were learning new skills at each company they hopped to. They were taking the good, and the bad, and implementing and applying what they were learning at the various companies they were hopping to and from. Up to this point, staying put at one company was the key to career success. However, we learned through the job hoppers they were able to improve workplaces by applying different cultural mindsets, the things they learned along the way. Also, technology jobs were very popular, and job-hopping became the way to make more money in the tech sector.

Which brings us to today. As a result of Generation X and their lack of ability to focus or stay put, job-hopping became the norm. It is now seen as socially acceptable, and studies show there is a direct effect on career success from changing jobs. Forbes magazine did a study, and on average workers stay at their companies for 4.4 years.

Since job hopping is now part of how we move up the ladder and hit our desired career milestones, it is more important than ever to have a plan and changing jobs, when it makes sense, for your plan.

Changing jobs, just to change is still seen as taboo in the workplace and will hurt your career.

Before we move on, let’s be clear. I advocate changing jobs with a purpose, not hopping because of boredom or for any other nonsensical reason.

As a result of this knowledge, I created the tiered approach to career success. Using the tiered approach to success planning, you should include multiple specific career moves that all have a purpose in your plan. Over the years the clients I have worked hardest for,



were the ones who showed up at my office and had stayed with one company for 15+ years and were then laid off, no warnings, no thank you, just goodbye. They were often the hardest hit emotionally and had to work the hardest to get their careers back on track.

Why? Because other companies now saw them as one-sided, not dimensional enough. They were now perceived as “the slackers.” Many never willing to invest in themselves and seen as wanting job security, therefore unwanted by other companies.

What a change!

Understandably, when writing your plan today, you may not know what companies to move to by name, or even what department within the same company, if you choose. The plan doesn't need to include the name of the company, just the timeframe for when you will move and a reason for the move. That reason can be more money, new job title, different responsibility, etc.

For example, if you were interested in being a Project Manager and your long-term goal is to make \$100,000 / year, you would want to take the tiered approach to achieve this overall goal. You would start as an Associate Project Manager or Project Coordinator – tier one. You would need to write out the skills you would want to obtain, project types you would want to work on, volunteer projects, etc. to move up to Project Manager – tier two, and then you could have the goal of within five years to be a Senior Project Manager making more than \$100,000 / year. Within each step you will write out the skills you need, the certifications and continued education you will need to plan for, the types of project or budgets and if you can the desired companies or industries you would want to work in. At each level you want to write your career statement or career goal using the SMART Goal writing techniques. Make your career goal Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Based.



An example of a career goal for the above Project Manager example would be. *By year three, I want to manage projects with a total value of 20% more than what my current job manages. Thus giving me the ability to apply for jobs making \$65,000 - \$80,000 / year.*

Let's break down the goal using SMART.

Specific – The goal has a specific job title and salary range desired.

Measurable – The goal is measurable because you will be able to determine if you are making this move within 3 years with a new salary.

Attainable – This goal is attainable if you are currently a Project Coordinator and working on the projects and skills you need to move up to Project Manager. This goal would not be attainable if you are not willing to invest in new skills or continue your project management skills.

Realistic – This goal is realistic because it falls within the range of what Project Managers with three years experience make. Depending on where you live you want to be sure your current job market supports your goal.

Timely – This goal is timely because it says within three years. We can mark a date on the calendar and set milestones to achieve this goal.



The Tiered Approach to Career Planning

Throughout our childhoods, we are told some form of “Grow Up and Become Successful,” “Study Hard and You Will Succeed,” or “Make Smart Choices.” Very few people get the guidance they need to learn how to become successful, how to study hard or how to make smart choices.

Think about it . . . did anyone ever help you define success? We surely use the words “become successful” all the time. We see it in school advertisements, articles in magazines, and on the covers of books, but what definition of success is being used? The definition of success is different for every person. The definition of success also changes depending on the stage in life you are in.

What about teaching you how to study? In school, you were probably told to “study hard,” but did anyone ever teach you study techniques? We even have “study hall,” but rarely are we taught study strategies. And when is the last time someone taught you how to make a smart choice? Many people learn these things through the school of hard knocks or by watching others. Sometimes we just “keep trying” because that is what we are told to do. However, most of the time, we have no real concept of what we are doing. Only a lucky few have stumbled upon really good guidance.

The Tiered Approach to Success

Over the years, I noticed the difference between people who were able to achieve success and people who just couldn’t make it happen. Many were ordinary people, with the same education and the same opportunities and living situations – seemingly equal in just about every way. So what was the difference? To sum it up, the successful ones knew two things. First, they knew how to start. I’m going to share with you the basic steps to getting started on reaching your path to career success. Second, they had a realistic definition of what I call “tiered” success. Basically, this means that your



definition of success has to change over time. If your definition of success doesn't change, you will either never reach your goal, or worse, you will start to move backwards.

My very first customer used the tiered approach to reach his ultimate career goal. He was a retired military professional who went back to school to get a bachelor's degree in Information Technology (IT); he had been laid off from a service company and decided to move to a new area. He took advantage of his layoff and decided to change careers. He had no formal IT experience; he was just what we call a "home hobbyist" with a degree. Together, we came up with a realistic tiered plan for success. First, he started off making less than what he eventually wanted to make. He continued to work his plan annually, being sure to change his definition of success as he went until he was finally making the amount of money he ultimately desired in the industry he wanted to be in. It didn't happen overnight; he put in a lot of hard work. But he did reach his final career success goal because he had realistic definitions of success along the way and used the tiered approach until he achieved the level of career success he wanted.

One of the advantages to the tiered approach is that you have time to figure out what tactics and strategies are needed along the way, depending on the situation you are in at any given moment. By not taking advantage of the time that a tiered approach affords, you may find yourself setting unrealistic goals, like the truck driver that called me once about a program I was teaching. The average salary in this field was \$50,000 a year, and most of the graduates had experience. When I explained it was unrealistic to start in this industry with no experience at \$50,000 a year, he hung up on me. He had an unrealistic definition of success and wasn't willing to take the tiered approach to reach his goals.

Do Your Research

If you are new to an industry, changing careers or just starting your first career, you may not know what is truly realistic or where to start. I suggest starting with online research. Just be sure you are using valid and reliable resources when online. It's important to differentiate between someone's biased opinion and facts. A reliable starting point for



valuable career path information is the industry association in your field. The Department of Labor and your local workforce centers will also have information that will point you in the right direction.

Next, interview people in the industry you think you want to be in. Don't just interview the person in the ultimate position you want. Interview people all the way up the ladder. Learn from their experiences. Using social media, LinkedIn, and your own personal and professional networks, you will be surprised how many connections you will be able to make with people who will take the time to speak with you and share any information they have, including their career successes and failures.

Remember, you can sometimes learn more from failure than from success.

When interviewing people, be sure you are considerate of their time. Interviews can be scheduled via online chat, Skype, traditional phone, email or in-person. Always keep your interview to the amount of time they agreed to. Have a list of pre-planned and printed questions and take notes quickly, so you can get a lot covered. Ask about their education, their career path, what they would have done differently, and what their suggestions are for getting into a position like theirs. Keep in mind that times change. Depending on how long they've had their position, the path to that position may be very different now. Don't forget to ask about this.

During the interview, be sure to ask about their daily tasks. Think about if those daily tasks interest you. I have had several clients come to meet with me, tell me they want to do a particular job, but when I ask them what tasks a person in that job does, they are way off. I have had several clients over the years who have in-demand medical credentials. When I ask them why they don't want to work in the medical field, I hear things like, "I don't like blood," or "I am very introverted, and I don't want to work with people." If they had done the step-two research phase, they would have uncovered that this was not a realistic career path.

It would have saved them time and money.



If you receive conflicting information from your research, I suggest you look at why you received conflicting reports. Do the interviewees have up-to-date information? Are they out of touch with their industry? Was one of them just being nice and trying to sugar-coat the path to success? Ultimately your research from associations, the Department of Labor, and your local workforces should help you get a clear picture.

Breaking it Down and Putting it on Paper

Defining career success begins with breaking down your ultimate goal into smaller goals. Achieving smaller goals is always easier, and you tend to stay motivated because you are actually achieving and having wins along the way. Start with clear, concise and realistic career goals and then move on to strategies and tactics to help you achieve them. If your ultimate goal is to make \$80,000 a year, be sure you are realistic. Your industry must present that opportunity, you must have a clear career path, and you must be willing to invest in the education and skills training required to get to that level. Also, be realistic about whether you are willing to work the hours and do the tasks required. Most often making more than \$50,000 a year comes with longer work hours and hard work. If you know you want to spend ample amounts of time with friends and family and work forty hours per week, then make a realistic plan that accommodates this definition of success. I once had a customer move from New England to Tampa, Florida. He wanted to make the same salary for the same job in Tampa as he did in New England. This just isn't realistic, so he ultimately didn't achieve his first definition of success. We did work together to come up with a clear, concise and realistic career goal for his current situation, which I am happy to say he achieved.

Once you feel comfortable with the path and the skills you will need, it's critical to put your plan on paper. Remember the plan can change, and it will need to change, but having it written down will make it easier for you to take the first step. Depending on where you are in your career, you can write out one-year, three-year, and five-year goals. If you are new to your career, then write out seven- and ten-year goals too. Your written goals should include approximate salaries and approximate job titles. If you know the



company you would like to work for, write that down too. The more detailed the written plan is, the easier it will be to execute it.

Skills and Education

Now that we have talked about a written plan of where you want to be, it is time to be realistic about what it will take to get you there. Make a list of the skills you have today and the skills you will need to achieve at each milestone. Remember, you should be gathering skills along the way. For example, your seven-year plan should list all the skills you need to acquire to reach your seven-year goal. You're probably not going to have every skill or credential you need at the beginning. That's okay. Even if you have a college degree, you most likely will be missing some skills required or desired for the field you've chosen. Education and training is usually a major part in achieving career success.

You may need certain skills that aren't taught in high school or college to accomplish a certain task. Acquiring additional skills doesn't mean you need another degree, a new degree, or even any degree at all. Continuing education or training may be the missing link for you. Get all the information you need to make a decision regarding the training classes, seminars, degrees and educational opportunities that will allow you to obtain the skills you need for the opportunities outlined in your plan. Be sure the skills are in line with the research you have gathered and are needed to take the next step.

If you determine that you need additional education, taking the time to do additional research when selecting a school is key. Don't rely on the recommendation of a friend or family member. They may have different needs than you when it concerns education. This choice is important for reaching your goals. Go and visit all the schools, training centers, and seminar facilities in your area that teach the skills you seek. Take a list of questions to ask when you're meeting with the school representative. School representatives should be familiar with the job opportunities you're pursuing and have some information about how the skills they teach will help you achieve your goals. You should never be asked to sign up on the same day unless the class is starting that day.



Take the information you gathered home, think about it, compare your options and make an informed decision.

If you have trouble making a choice, I suggest going with the school that seemed more knowledgeable in your field or will let you sit in on a class before signing up. Education is a very important decision, and you shouldn't feel pressured. And finally, remember to reinvest in learning new skills every year, even if you are at the level of success you desire. Obtaining new skills every year will help you reach or keep you at your defined level of success.



Career Planning Activities

I would like to make a career plan for:

1 year 3 years 5 years longer

List 5 characteristics of career success for you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What job title do you ultimately want to have?

What industry do you want to work in?

What type of education do you need to achieve your goals?



Do you want to pursue self-employment?

How many hours per week are you willing and able to work, without sacrificing your happiness?

What are your current strengths as they relate to your career?

What are your current weaknesses as they relate to your career?

What opportunities are there in your desired career path?

What threats are there in your desired career path?



Can you convert any of your weaknesses to strengths?

What should you avoid in your career path?

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Weaknesses

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Opportunities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Threats

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



Using the answers on the previous page, and any others you think of, write out your ultimate career goal.

My ultimate career goal is:

My ultimate career goal is SMART: (make sure all are checked)

Specific Measurable Attainable

Realistic Timely

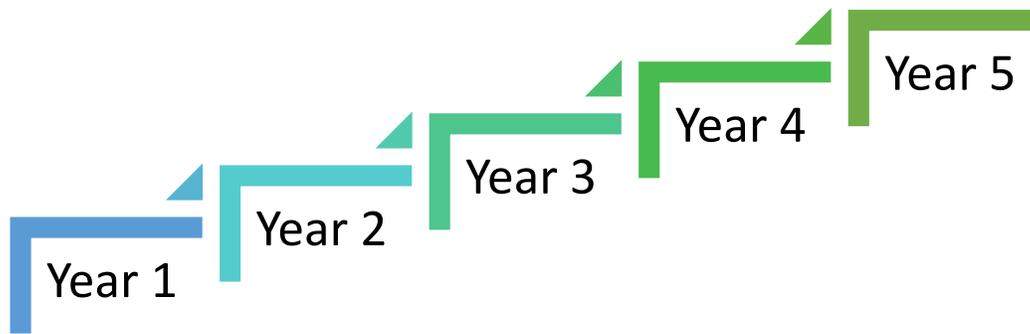
What are the names of jobs or career positions in between where you are now and your ultimate career goal?

Using the ultimate career position and the positions between now and your ultimate position create career goals for the years between now and how long you think it will take you to reach your ultimate career goal.

1 Year Career Goal:

3 Year Career Goal:

5 Year Career Goal:



What skills will you need to obtain between now and year 3 to be successful in landing the types of jobs you desire?

What education or training will you need to be successful in meeting your year 3 career goal? Remember hard and soft skills.

What certifications or credentials can you add on that will make you stand out and help you achieve your goals?



What skills will you need to obtain between now and year 5 to be successful in landing the types of jobs you desire?

What education or training will you need to be successful in meeting your year 5 career goal? Remember hard and soft skills.

What certifications or credentials can you add on that will make you stand out and help you achieve your goals?

What skills will you need to obtain between now and year 7 to be successful in landing the types of jobs you desire?

What education or training will you need to be successful in meeting your year 7 career goal? Remember hard and soft skills.



What certifications or credentials can you add on that will make you stand out and help you achieve your goals?

With the above information you should be able to create a plan that you can reflect on and work at. Remember, it is ok to change your plan, just keep planning on working on your plan. This guide is written by Suzanne Ricci. Suzanne is the Chief Success Coach at Computer Coach Training Center. She has coached 1000's of IT and Business professionals to their desired career success. To reach Suzanne send a connection request through Linked In or email her at: Suzanne@ComputerCoach.com.