

THE SKILLS YOU NEED GUIDE TO JOBS & CAREERS

# CAREER MANAGEMENT



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# **CAREER MANAGEMENT**

## **Skills You Need**

**This is one of a series of eBooks by Skills You Need  
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# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	4
<b>Part 1.</b>	
Core Career Management Skills	9
Chapter 1. Building a Personal Brand	10
Chapter 2. Discovering Your Values	17
Chapter 3. Developing Your Super-Strengths	22
Chapter 4. Improving Your Confidence	27
Chapter 5. Networking	36
Chapter 6. Creating and Exploring Possibilities	47
<b>Part 2.</b>	
Other Career Management Skills: Managing Your Job	54
Chapter 7. Negotiating Within Your Job	55
Chapter 8. Job Crafting and Job Enrichment	61
Chapter 9. Choosing and Changing Jobs	66

# Introduction

## **An Introduction to Career Management**

Fifty years ago, most people expected to leave school or university, join an employer and stay there for most of their working life.

Now, however, working life is much more flexible and few expect to have a 'job for life'. At the same time, recognition has grown that individuals have to do far more to manage their own working life, and their career journey.

Generally, people no longer need skills to rise through a single employer. Instead, they need skills to create a meaningful, fulfilling career for themselves, and plan their own personal and career development. These are often known as *career management skills*.

## **Using This Book**

This book describes these career management skills, and explains how you can develop them and then start to use them. It complements our eBook *The Skills You Need Guide to Personal Development*, which provides useful input on how to identify skills gaps, and then develop the skills to fill them. To take advantage of your newfound career management skills, you may then want to read the next two books in this series, on getting a job and becoming self-employed.

## **Defining Careers and Career Management**

What do we mean by a career? And what exactly is career management? These are not always clearly defined concepts, but in this book, we will use the definitions in the box and section below.



## Career, Job or Gig?

What is the difference between a career, a job, and a gig?

*A career is the broad type of work that you do: how you define yourself when someone says 'So what do you do?'. You might, for example, say that you are an architect, software developer, business owner, entrepreneur or freelance writer.*

*A job is the work that you do for a particular employer. Generally speaking, when we talk about 'jobs', we mean full- or part-time employment, which by definition is usually at just one organisation.*

*A gig is a project for a particular organisation or individual, often on a contract basis. Gigs may be short- or long-term, but those working on gigs are usually independent contractors or self-employed, rather than employed by the organisation.*

Career management skills are all the skills needed to control and manage your career journey.

Traditionally, these skills were considered to include those needed to:

- Plan your career, and set goals and objectives;
- Develop a strategy for your career and your working life more generally;
- Develop an action plan to deliver on it, including developing any necessary skills;
- Evaluate your progress against your goals; and
- Reassess and adjust your goals and action plan to reflect new priorities and changes in your life.

This sounds straightforward—and, indeed, this process is likely to be familiar to anyone who has ever done any kind of formal learning, especially involving a personal development element. A process of this type is outlined in our eBook [The Skills You Need Guide to Personal Development](#) and on our [website](#). The broad skills involved would include planning in the short and longer term, setting goals, and evaluating progress against those goals.

*However, careers are anything but straightforward in practice.*

Few of us rise up steadily through a career. Indeed, few of us stay in the same career or even line of work throughout our working lives—and given that our working lives may now span four or five decades, that should not be a surprise. Priorities change, and our skills and expectations develop. New opportunities open up, and we want to be able to take advantage of them.

*However, this does not mean that career management skills are not important.*

Quite the opposite, in fact. You can drift through life and hope to take advantage of the opportunities that are offered to you. However, without some kind of focused look at your skills and particularly the gaps in them, the opportunities are likely to become fewer and fewer. What's more, you may reach a point where you start thinking "*I wish I'd been able to do x...*".

In life, you make your own luck to a certain extent.

**"No one cares about your career as much as you do."**

Helen Tupper and Sarah Ellis, *The Squiggly Career*

Thinking about where you want to be—planning, setting goals, and working out how to deliver on them—enables you to take advantage of more opportunities. However, career management is also more complicated than this statement suggests.

## **What Influences Your Career Path?**

There are many things that may influence your career path or journey. These include:

- *What interests you*, because we are often told to follow our dreams, turn a passion into a job, or do what interests us most.
- *The kind of lifestyle you want*, because this influences what work is possible and desirable. There is growing understanding of the importance of a good work–life balance, but this is still harder to achieve in many areas of work than others. It is also more possible to work flexibly in some locations and jobs than in others.
- *Where you want to live*. This may affect what jobs are available to you. Even with the rise of working from home, not all jobs can be done remotely.
- *What you want to earn*. Obviously, not all types of work are paid the same—and you may find that you cannot afford to do the work that you wish. You may, for example, find that you cannot afford the training, or that the income from the work is simply not enough to sustain your preferred lifestyle.



## Having It All? The Importance of Compromise

Your career path may well turn out to be a question of compromise. What you really love may not give you the lifestyle you want, or allow you to live in your preferred location. You may also change your mind about what you want from life, or your priorities may change with life changes such as marriage or children.

The real question is what matters most to you. Hold onto that and compromise elsewhere—and don't be afraid to change if your priorities change, or if you find that a particular factor is more or less important than you thought.

## A New Concept of Career Management

If the traditional concept of career management no longer quite fits, what do we need instead? The answer is perhaps to think about careers differently.

In their book *The Squiggly Career*, Helen Tupper and Sarah Ellis argue that the concept of a 'career ladder' is long gone. Nobody is 'climbing a ladder', with every step of their career mapped out ahead of them.

Instead, a map of a career actually looks more like a squiggle than a ladder.

We move around a lot more than our parents ever did. We change companies, roles and industries. Moves are not necessarily upwards, but may be sideways or around, because we follow our interests.

*Tupper and Ellis argue that to take full advantage of the world of squiggly careers, you need to work on five areas:*

- *Values*: what makes you into you, and particularly what motivates you.
- *Super-strengths*: the things that you are really, outstandingly good at doing, which help you to stand out from the crowd.
- *Confidence*: your belief in yourself, and also your ability to 'cage your confidence gremlins', the things that stop you achieving and believing in yourself.
- *Networking*: building effective relationships with other people based on what you can give, not what you will gain.
- *Future possibilities*: the ability to create options for the future, and explore them in the present.

Using this approach is more flexible than traditional 'career planning'. However, it still looks at where you might want to be in life, and why—and then helps you to consider how you might best get there.

## To Plan, or Not To Plan?

*It is not essential to have a rigid plan for every last move in your career.*

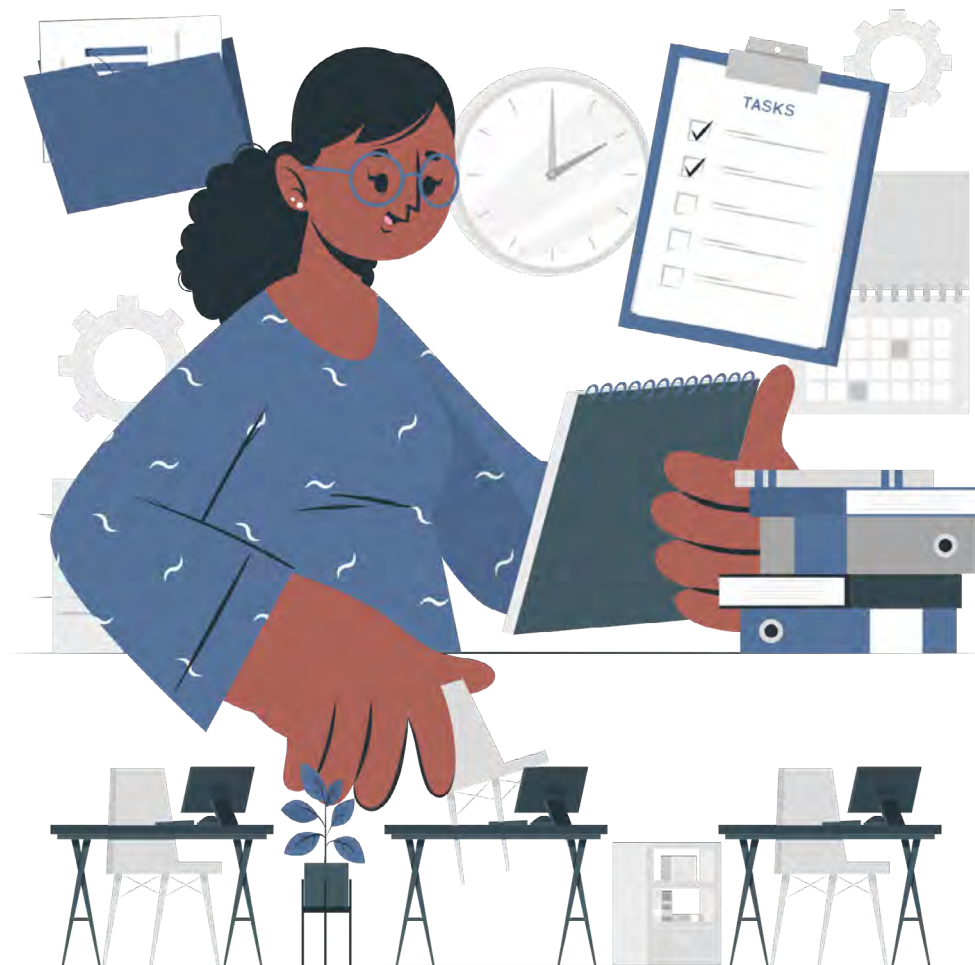
Sometimes the most successful career moves are those that arise spontaneously, from a chance meeting or conversation, perhaps. It is important to have sufficient flexibility to be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

However, to enable you to take advantage of those opportunities, you need to have done sufficient planning to have the necessary skills in place.

**It is, therefore, helpful to think ahead from time to time about the opportunities that you would like, and what skills you would need to get there.**

Of course, as you develop in your chosen career, you will also learn more about yourself, and what you like to do. Your vision of your preferred opportunities may change, and therefore so may your development needs.

Career management needs, above all, to be relatively flexible. This book is designed to help you to develop the skills that will enable you to manage your career more flexibly and effectively.





# Part 1. Core Career Management Skills

The first part of this book describes the core skills needed to manage your career under this new philosophy or paradigm. They are therefore those skills needed to understand what motivates you, and identify and then take advantage of the right opportunities for you, as they arise.



# 1

## Chapter 1. Building a Personal Brand

*The starting point for your career is you.*

The career that you choose, and what you subsequently do within that career, will depend on your interests, your skills and values, your ability to learn, how you present yourself and any number of other factors.

It therefore follows that the first step in developing your career management skills is to improve your understanding of what makes you into you: *your personal brand*.

### **Developing Your Personal Brand**

Branding is a marketing concept, designed to help people identify and distinguish one product, service or concept from another. One of the earliest brands, Kellogg, was simply the signature of the company owner, reproduced on every packet. This approach was designed to show that the packet contained genuine Kellogg's breakfast cereal.

Your personal brand, therefore, is what distinguishes you from other people: what you want people to think and say about you. Broadly speaking, it is a combination of your skills and expertise, how you behave and appear to others, and the values that underpin your actions and choices. This chapter describes how to build and understand your personal brand, so that it is an accurate reflection of you and your values.

**The full eBook  
is available at**

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