

ACTION PLANNING

Breaking down your goals into more manageable objectives makes planning easier, allows you to monitor and evaluate your progress and is likely to help you stay on track.

Try to identify and prioritise short, medium and long-term goals. Don't be caught out by objectives which need to be addressed now because you are focused on long-term goals or the future.

Questions you may want to ask yourself are:

- What is it I want to achieve?
- How do I plan to get there?
- What are the steps I first need to put in place?
- What barriers do I need to overcome?
- Are there people/organisations that can help me?
- What and where are these resources which can help me?
- Do I need to complete a task by a certain time to succeed?
- How will I know when I get there?

The eight steps to action planning...

[Adapted from *The Art of Building Windmills: career tactics for the 21st century* by Dr Peter Hawkins]

Step 1 – Identify your overall goal

Try to pinpoint the target you're aiming at and understand what drives you.

It's not essential to focus on a precise job – the main thing is to understand the kind of success you want and identify the direction you need to take. For example, this might be:

Short-term –to secure a new job as an IT trainer within three months.

Medium-term – to explore opportunities of setting up my own small IT training consultancy.

Long-term – to create innovative IT products within the education field.

Step 2 – Set SMART objectives

Map out ways of targeting your actions to achieve the key objectives that will help you reach your goal.

Avoid being vague by making your objectives **SMART** – Specific, Measurable, offering Advantages, Realistic, and within a Timescale.

SPECIFIC	Is my objective clear and focussed?
MEASURABLE	Can I measure progress and know when I've reached my objective?
ADVANTAGES	What's in it for me?
REALISTIC	Is this achievable?
TIMESCALE	When will this objective be achieved?

Step 3 – Manageable objectives

Your objectives may seem daunting at first. Make it easier by breaking them down into stages e.g. if aiming to gain improved career focus in patents or regulatory affairs, aim to:

- Contact Management Consultancies Association or BOND (professional bodies)
- Read professional journals
- Identify some local employers and contact for information
- Seek advisory interviews with friends and contacts

Step 4 – Understand your own personal constraints and challenges

We all have traits, and often personal circumstances, that stop us developing new skills or experience. Some people are too busy or too negative to do anything – some too lethargic and others may just lack the vital degree of self-promotion, assertiveness or self-confidence.

The first positive step is to understand what your own constraints are and think of positive strategies to deal with them.

Step 5 – Find help

Pinpoint key people, and identify how they can help you achieve your objectives. For example:

- *Previous colleague who has contacts in the field.*
- *Family friend who is an experienced regulatory affairs officer in a pharmaceutical company can give me advice.*
- *Partner for personal support and encouragement*

Step 6 – Map out opportunities and resources

Think creatively about all opportunities and resources available to you at work, socially, past university within the community and through further learning. For example:

At work:

- My department/colleagues
- Attend networking events

Step 7 – Create realistic timescales

Assign a completion date to every objective and task. Start by setting lots of easily achievable targets (it's always rewarding ticking off the list) – then try to stretch yourself. It's amazing what you can achieve if you simply set yourself challenging, but realistic, targets. You may want to set daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly targets.

Step 8 – Review your progress and evaluate outcomes

Against your identified targets, measure progress, review your learning from experiences (good and bad) and evaluate the impact of this. Keep reviewing your action planning and thinking as Career Management is an on-going process.

Your own action plan


Keep a log of some sort, recording your goals and action-plans and key outcomes. The sample action-plan and blank pro-forma on the following pages are one way you can do this. Use this to record your own plan, or adapt it to suit your own needs.

Reappraise your planning regularly. Revisit your personal priorities and the opportunities available to you, along with your strategy for achieving your next career goals.

Example Action Plan – *Implementation Stage*

Action Plan					
My Long Term Goal	Short and Medium Term Goals to Achieving Long Term Goal	Actions Required	Constraints	Who or What Can Help Me	Target Date for Action
To develop a career in international development	Build background knowledge of sector and roles available within organisations	Find resources to give information quickly and systematically review	Time-consuming	LSE Careers website section (info under 'Employment Sectors including 'Getting into Development' case studies from LSE alumni, organisation websites, informational interviews with contacts	Within next 2 months
	Review personal priorities (<i>e.g. preferred environment, work styles, roles etc</i>)	Build self-awareness	Need to remain objective	Self-reflection exercises, discussions with those who know you well, books and LSE Careers (see list of 'Resources')	Within next month, then ongoing
	Work out which organisations to target and identify potential contacts	Develop short-list of organisations of particular interest	Time-consuming	LSE Careers website, fellow students and colleagues, contacts, internet	Within next 2 months immediately following above
	Check how organisations usually recruit. Decide on job search strategy (<i>methods, timings, approach</i>)	Check for job adverts and recruitment timescales, make speculative approaches to contacts where appropriate	Fitting into recruiters timescales	Contacts, people in organisations, web sites, LSE Careers (CareerHub opportunities board)	Immediately following above
	Assess employers' technical & personal requirements. Demonstrate how you match requirements and would add value to the business. Then make applications	Research employer/role. Identify how to market yourself and draft well targeted applications – (CV/letter/form)	Lack confidence in marketing yourself effectively	LSE Careers website information on applications and one to one appointments to review applications, friends/ colleagues/ contacts (esp. industry based) may give useful feedback	Make applications within 4 months
	Prepare for interviews & other selection processes	Practice interviews, tests etc	Lack experience. Unsure what to expect.	LSE Careers interview resources online and practise interviews	Following applications
	Evaluate progress	Reflect on experiences, (reappraise approach?)		Can use LSE Careers	Monthly

My Action Plan

 Set your long term goal, then break this down into SMART goals or objectives (*i.e. Specific, Measurable, Advantageous, Realistic, Timebound*)

<u>Action Plan</u>					
My Long Term Goal	Short and Medium Term Goals to Achieving Long Term Goal	Actions Required	Constraints	Who or What Can Help Me	Target Date for Action

Regularly review your action plan to measure your progress and reflect on what you have learned and achieved.