Creating A Successful Career

Strategies, Techniques, and the Big Mistakes You're Going to Make

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Who am I and why am I here?

Who am I?
• MIT ’95 (BS 6, BS 8, MEng 6)
• Software engineer, manager, executive, entrepreneur
• Startups, Fortune 500’s, Academia
• Working with others:
  – Seen thousands of resumes
  – Interviewed hundreds people
  – Hired and directly managed 100+ people
  – Mentored hundreds

Why am I here?
I’ve watched many talented people languish in their careers

Including many MIT alums!
Common Failure Modes

- Drifting aimlessly
- Little or no network
- Limited job prospects
- Picking the wrong job/project
- Dead ended
- Not fitting in at work
- Waiting for recognition
- Wasting time
- Not preparing for what’s next
- Poor negotiator
Agenda

1. Career Plans
2. Job Management
3. Career Skills
4. Q&A

Topics not covered:
× How to create a resume
× How to interview for a job
× Where to find a job

Who are you? Why are you here?
Caution: I’m not you

Discount all advice given to you.

Only you can live your life.
Career Plan
Sailing the Seas: A Model

What happens to a ship adrift in the ocean?

Your career is your voyage, so you better learn to navigate!
What is a Career Plan?

A *Career Plan* is a set of guidelines, rules, principles, desires, goals, and values you create to help you manage your career.

*It’s navigation for your life!*

What goes into a Career Plan:

• Personal goals
• Needs & desires (financial, familial, geographic, and other responsibilities and constraints)
• Impact on the world
• Cultural preferences
• etc.
Questions for your plan

**Personal Needs**
- What are my life goals?
- What would make me happy in life?
- What do I like doing?
- What don’t I like doing?

**External Impact**
- How much community impact should my job include?
- Are there any ethical or moral considerations?

**Lifestyle Options**
- Do I want a family? When? What family obligations will I have?
- Where do I want to live and what industries are supported there?
- How much money do I want?
- What lifestyle do I want?
- What hobbies do I wish to support?

**Job Requirements**
- What do I want to do?
- How many hours a week do I want to work?
- How much travel do I want?
- Do I want to manage people? be managed? be independent?
- How flexible does my career path need to be?
- What skills do I want to leverage? to avoid?
- What type of corporate/industry culture do I want?

*Warning: Values may change over time!*

...consider your answers not just today, but 5, 10, 20, 30+ years into your career.
Career Planning

“Always have a plan, even a bad plan is better than no plan at all.” –Prof. Jason Rosenhouse

Create a career plan:
• 20 year
• 10 year
• 2-5 year
• 1 year
• 6 month

Guiding Principle: Follow your passion!
Developing & Executing Your Plan

Who
• YOU!
• Manager
• HR
• Peers
• Board of advisors
• Family
• Industry (e.g. articles, reports)

When
• Every 6-12 months
• At company reviews
• New projects
• Changing jobs
• When new opportunities come along

How
• Set goals and track (knowledge, skills, tools, experience)
• Choose opportunities by how they meet your goals (jobs, projects, training)
• Use career development tools (e.g. Hermann Brain Dominance Test, Myers-Briggs, “What Color is Your Parachute?”, StrengthQuest)
WARNING: Career Ownership

No one is more committed to your career than you!

Managers, co-workers, HR, recruiters, even friends and family may have their own agendas
Job Management
Which job/project is right?

• Follow the plan!
  – Optimize for long term goals
  – Don’t be unduly influenced by others
    *(No one cares more about your career than you do!)*

• Make sure you enjoy it
  – People are usually more critical than products
  – Always work for people smarter than you

• Project out the job lifecycle and consider job duration versus alternatives

*When in doubt follow your gut!*
Manage Your Role

• Learn everything you can about your role
• Manage your manager
  – What does your manager want?
  – What are your managers goals
• Learn your industry
  – Who are your customers?
  – Who are their customers?
• Be proactive, not reactive
Navigating a Company

• Build relationships within a company
• ...and its larger ecosystem
• Find a rabbi
• Understand other roles, learn the big picture
• Watch for signals
• Build your personal brand
Career Skills
What is Networking?

“Business is about trust” – George Chacko

Networking is

• Natural for humans
• Creating relationships
• Karmic:
  Give before you receive

Networking is NOT

• A four letter word
• Collecting facebook friends
• To be done only when you need help
Networking: What To Do

**Basic**
- ✓ Get business cards *(even as a student)*
- ✓ Use networking tools *(e.g. LinkedIn)*
- ✓ Join professional groups

**Advanced**
- ✓ Cultivate relationships
- ✓ Keep track of everyone you meet
- ✓ Join non-professional groups
- ✓ Attend (non-)professional events *(come early, stay late)*

**Master**
- ✓ Host your own events
- ✓ Create relationships for others
Personal Brand

• Create your brand  *(both inside and outside a company!)*
  – Who are you?
  – What are you known for?
• Communicate
  – Writing and general communication
  – Public speaking skills
• Get noticed
  – Publications/Talks
  – Trade Groups
  – Leadership

(Appearance counts, too!)
Negotiation

• *You must learn to negotiate!*

• Job Offers
  – Negotiate your job offers
  – When is the best time to get a raise?

  *When you get the job offer!*

• Other decisions
  – Decision making, buy-in
  – Office politics
  – Conflict resolution

  *Many things in life are a negotiation*
Appreciate Time

A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be. –Wayne Gretzky

• Plan for change
  – What is valuable 20 years from now?
• Take risks now, while you can
• Education pays dividends
  – Formal (e.g. classes, HR training)
  – Informal (reading, watching)
• Opportunity Cost
• Don’t focus on your first job/next job
Conclusion
What to take away?

• Walk away with 1-2 new ideas
• File this away for later
• These are skills, not knowledge, so continue to develop (and learn from masters)
Next Steps

• Create a career plan—short and long term (and revisit often)
• Build relationships (start today)
• Develop skills (e.g. public speaking, negotiating)
• Learn from others
• **http://www.LinkedIn.com**  
  (professional social networking)

• **http://www.askolivia.com**  
  (networking tips)

• **http://www.toastmasters.org**  
  (public speaking)

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