

Robert Schmidt's Career Plan

Career Plan - Key Strategies and Actions

In your ePortfolio you must complete a career action plan. Use this worksheet and complete the following sections. The prompts are here to assist you with thinking through your key strategies and what actions you can undertake to help you towards achieving what is needed for your future career. The aim is to help you to think and consider strategies for what might help you to prepare for future employment.

1. Be self-aware

What actions can you take to really understand your interests, values, skills, personality and strengths?

Self-awareness is a fundamental component of any effective career plan, as it enables individuals to make informed and intentional decisions about their professional development. To cultivate greater self-awareness, I engage in weekly journaling, recording my thoughts, emotions, and sources of frustration, and systematically reflecting on the questions of what, why, and when. This process encourages more profound reflection on my behaviours and motivations. I also actively seek feedback from colleagues to obtain external perspectives on my strengths and weaknesses, as well as on my workplace conduct.

In addition, I have completed several structured self-assessment tools, including the Holland Code, Values in Action, the Big Five, and CliftonStrengths. These instruments provide valuable insights into an individual's interests, values, personality traits, and capabilities. For me, they confirmed that I enjoy helping others, value personal growth, and possess strong problem-solving skills, strategic thinking, calm leadership, and effective communication. They also highlighted delegation as an area requiring further development. Collectively, these reflective practices and assessments deepen self-awareness and create a strong foundation for continuous personal and career growth, enabling individuals to refine their skills and pursue opportunities that align with their strengths and values.

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2. Explore your options

What do you need to research to be clear about your options? What could you do to learn more about career options in your areas of interest?

Conducting systematic research into a broad range of career options is essential for identifying an appropriate professional pathway within a chosen field of interest. Such research should include detailed information on typical roles and responsibilities, as well as the routine day-to-day tasks associated with each position. It is also essential to investigate the characteristics of the work environment, including organisational structure and culture, typical working hours, flexibility, and the overall implications for work-life balance. In addition, prospective professionals should clarify the educational requirements, accreditation or certification processes, and expectations for ongoing training or professional development necessary for both entry into and advancement within the field. Consulting reviews, testimonials, and reflective accounts from individuals currently employed in these roles, together with labour market statistics and reputable industry reports, can further refine one's understanding of the profession. Collectively, these forms of evidence enable individuals to evaluate how effectively different career options align with their interests, values, competencies, and long-term goals, thereby facilitating a more informed, strategic, and confident career decision-making process.

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3. Gain experience and insight

What actions could you take to help you learn more about your industry or find opportunities to develop your skills or find work experience opportunities?

As I am interested in policy development in the fields of national security and foreign affairs, it is crucial to recognise that these domains fall primarily within the Federal Government's remit and are therefore highly competitive and sought after. To be a strong candidate, it is essential to undertake detailed research into the relevant departments, agencies, and policy areas to gain a nuanced understanding of their priorities, structures, and recruitment pathways. Because traditional work experience opportunities are limited in these sectors, aspiring practitioners must be proactive in developing their skills through alternative avenues. These may include targeted university coursework, postgraduate study, short courses, and professional training programs focused on security studies, international relations, or public policy. Participation in internships with related organisations, research institutes, think tanks, or non-governmental bodies can also help build relevant capabilities and networks. By strategically combining academic preparation with practical skill-building opportunities, one can gradually position oneself as a competitive applicant for policy roles in national security or foreign affairs.

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4. Evidence your skills (knowledge, skills and attributes)

What action can you take to find out more about what skills you might need to develop in your future career? How might you document/record these?

To effectively develop my policy development skills, I must adopt a proactive, strategic approach to my professional growth. A key component of this will involve systematically researching relevant job opportunities and carefully analysing position descriptions to identify the specific capabilities, qualifications, and experiences that employers prioritise. This process will help me clarify the technical, analytical, and communication skills expected in policy-related roles. In addition, I will seek constructive feedback from professionals currently working in the policy field, as well as from academic staff and colleagues. Their insights will help me identify gaps in my knowledge, skills, and experience and guide my selection of appropriate learning activities. Based on this feedback, I will engage in targeted professional development, including relevant coursework, workshops, short courses, and industry events, to build the competencies required to be a strong, competitive candidate. I will document this ongoing development in both my curriculum vitae and my LinkedIn profile, ensuring that my progress, achievements, and emerging expertise in policy development are clearly visible to prospective employers and professional networks.

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5. Develop networks

List three things you could do to start building your professional networks.

Professional networks are an essential mechanism for developing the competencies required to build a sustainable career within a chosen field. They provide structured opportunities to interact with individuals who are already employed in the area of interest, thereby facilitating access to insider knowledge, mentorship, and ongoing professional guidance. A first step in cultivating such a network is to establish a professional online presence on platforms like LinkedIn, where you can showcase your skills, experience, and aspirations. In addition, attending industry conferences, seminars, and networking events helps you deepen your understanding of current trends, expectations, and challenges. It allows you to engage directly with representatives from the agencies or departments where you hope to work. Finally, active participation in relevant professional bodies and associations offers access to up-to-date information, professional development resources, and a community of practitioners with whom you can exchange ideas and opportunities. Collectively, these strategies significantly enhance both employability and long-term career progression.

Word count: 158

Source: Griffith University Careers and Employment Service (2020)