

How to Find the Right Career Path for You!

By Melissa Martin, The Clarity Group, 2003

Do you know what you want to do when you finish school? For many students deciding upon which career path to follow can be challenging. There are so many options. How do you know which one is right for you?!

The reality is most people change careers a number of times within their life. The notion of a job for life, which your parents are more than likely used to, no longer exists. As you grow and experience different things your interests change, your needs change, your reasons for working in a particular job change, even jobs themselves change – so why put unnecessary pressure on yourself to make the right 'long term' career decision?

Having said that however, you do need to make a decision about which way you want your career to head now. Make an informed choice. To do so you need to do your research much like you would be doing at school for an assignment.

That all sounds great, but where do you begin? Well, there are two major steps in the process – self exploration and researching.

Self Exploration

Think about the following and make notes:

- What are you good at? Write down your skills.
- Think about your people skills such as your communication ability, attitude etc. These skills are fast becoming more important than your technical ability. The world needs many different people. You don't need to be a brilliant student to have a great job and be successful.
- What interests you? Make a list. Think about the subjects you enjoy at school, or the topics you enjoy. What do you enjoy doing outside of school?
- Do you want to work with people or products?
- What lifestyle are you after? The world of work has changed and more and more roles are becoming part time or casual, particularly in certain industries eg hospitality. You may need to consider having a few part time jobs.
- What sort of work environment are you best suited to? Do you work best in a quiet environment, or a buzzing environment?
- Does a specific field of work interest you? Eg working with the elderly or youth.
- Does a specific industry appeal to you? Eg Retail or finance.
- What is your personality like and what jobs suit you? Visit www.careerkey.org to complete a quick personality test and discover suitable jobs.

Researching

- Make a list of the jobs that interest you, even those that spark a little interest. The Job Guide website will provide you with some ideas: www.jobguide.com.au
- Rank them in order of interest with your favorite at the top of the list.
- Spend some time researching each job one at a time.

- Visit www.myfuture.edu.au to learn about the requirements of each job, the personality characteristics required, the study requirements etc
- Think about who you know working in the job. Who does your parent's know? Cousins? Neighbours? Talk to these people about what is really involved in their job. You need to know the good, the bad and the ugly! It is important for you to have a good understanding of what each job really involves, and what you would be required to do as a new person to the job. You need to be realistic. When starting a new job in a new field you need to expect to have to start at the bottom and work your way up as you gain experience. Even the 'glamorous' jobs include administrative tasks that can be boring.
- Most jobs nowadays have a professional association which people working in that job can become a member of. Find out the professional body. They should be able to give you some information about the actual tasks involved in the job, the study requirements, the job prospects etc.
- Speak to Universities or TAFE's for the study requirements or visit the VTAC website: www.vtac.edu.au
- Make a list of the positive points and negative points for each job.
- Look over your lists. What do they tell you? Do any of the jobs jump out?
- If yes, great!
- If not, don't worry. This process can be very daunting. Perhaps speak to your school career counsellor for assistance, or a professional career coach which you can find through the Career Development Association of Australia (www.cdaa.org.au)

The most important thing to remember is that only you can decide what future job is best for you! You are the only person who knows you best, and with some research you will certainly be in the best position to make an informed decision.