Career Self-Assessment & Developing a Four-Phase Job Search Strategy

Career Self-Assessment
Clarifying Your Passion
Ideally, you are basing your career goals on your passions and deepest interests. Studies have demonstrated that you will be most fulfilled and happy in your career if you choose a vocation based on your interests (passions), values, and skills, in that order. The “great question” is “What is your passion?” If you don’t know, now is the time to figure it out. Both the answer, and the process of searching for the answer, is unique to each person.

There are plenty of books you can read and assessments that you can take to help you think about the answer, inventory your personal strengths and attributes, and begin narrowing or focusing your target. You will start this work with the surveys you will complete for Organizational Behavior (HADM 7711). Often, there won’t be just one career for you, but numerous opportunities that would allow you to express your passions and interests.

Finding the Right Job
Once you know what your goals are, you will begin looking for the career that will allow you to express your passion. This can sometimes seem like searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack. Talk to as many people as you can about yourself, your passions, and your interests—and then follow the leads that open up from those discussions. You may need to go back and do further self-assessment, you may hit dead ends and need to head down different paths. This is a perfectly natural part of the process. Accept now that finding your ideal path may be hard work, and begin right away! Be diligent and serious in your search, and utilize all the resources available to you.

Consider your job search process as similar to the marketing process for any product or service. (A good article discussing this is The Brand Called You by Tom Peters.)

- First, you must thoroughly understand the product – you.
- Next, you must research your potential markets – industries, functions, and employers.
- Once you have identified your target markets, you must position yourself— the product— to be appealing and attractive to that market.
- Finally, you must develop and execute a strategic marketing plan for your product.

Each of you will come to the Hotel School in different phases of knowing where you wish to end up, post-MMH. The four-phase job search that follows in the next section offers detailed steps to guide you through this process.
Developing a Four-Phase Job Search Strategy

Phase I - Understand the Product

Self-Assessment
This first phase of the job search is critical. You will be building the foundation upon which you will plan your entire job search strategy. If you haven’t done so already, spend some time reflecting on and identifying your key assets and liabilities and deciding what is most important to you in the workplace. The following tips and tools can help you in this exploratory phase:

1. Narrowing Your Focus
   - Take inventory of your interests, values, and skills
   - Realistically consider your past experiences, strengths and weaknesses
   - Identify segments of interest in the hospitality industry
   - Consider your desired lifestyle and geography
   - Educate yourself about your options
   - Identify your obstacles

2. Tools to Help You Focus
   - Attend Company Presentations & Atrium Company Showcases
   - Consult with faculty and staff
   - Consult with fellow students
   - Perform library and internet research
   - Participate in student organizations and join professional organizations
   - Secure informational interviews

3. Positioning Yourself
   - Determine your Career Track
   - Inventory your work experience
   - Emphasize relevant aspects of your past experience

4. Timing
   - Never too early to start exploring career options and information interviewing

5. Job Search Expectations
   - Recognize you are responsible for your own job search; no one can place you in a job or career
Make use of job search methods such as information interviewing/networking and reviewing full-time job postings in addition to participating in On-campus interviewing; multifaceted approach works best

Realize that experience is the key (not money)

6. Plan A (Your Ideal Plan)

- Build on past experience OR bridge a gap to a new area of interest if you are a career switcher
- Considers geographic preference and other personal factors

7. Plan B (Your Safety Plan)

- Kicks in when Plan A dwindles
- Bridges a wide gap between experience and career target

8. Stay True to Yourself

- Your job search is all about YOU
  - who you are
  - your life goals
  - your values
  - your priorities
  - what YOU want to accomplish in your career/life

Phase II - Understand the Marketplace

Needs Assessment

Once you have taken the time to really understand yourself and your motivations, it is time to research your target markets. Start by identifying your prospective markets in terms of function and/or Career Tracks. Then, investigate those fields through networking, informational interviews, and market research in hospitality industry periodicals and publications available through the Nestle Library databases. Become a relentless networker! Talk to everyone, including friends, neighbors, colleagues, and members of professional associations about your desire to learn more about a particular field.

- Draft needs/marketplace assessment
- Identify prospective markets/list
- Investigate those fields through library research and networking

In conducting your research, your goal is to identify the market’s needs—the types of skills and experience they value, how they identify and evaluate candidates. You should also be assessing your fit—your specific assets that meet their needs—and identifying weak areas that might reduce your probabilities of success. This will help you assess a position in a reasonable amount of time.
Phase III - Position the Product

Resume & Presentation

Once you have completed your market research, develop a “sales pitch” that highlights your positive attributes and draws a connection between you and your targeted position. Develop your story—briefly describing your career progression and how it led you to the position you now seek. The story needs to be succinct and credible.

If you are making a significant career transition from, for instance, finance to revenue management, be sure to put your story in words and concepts that people in your target field will understand. Developing an effective positioning statement is an exercise in identifying and highlighting transferable skills. For example, an information technology person might understand the importance of maximizing revenue, but how do you translate your technical abilities into skills that will be of value to a revenue management position?

Your “sales pitch” should be reflected in every facet of your presentation - your resume, your cover letters, and your presentation in an interview.

- Develop positioning statement
- Devise 30-second sales pitch
- Tailor resume to target market
- Draft or fine tune your cover letter

Phase IV - Develop and Execute the Strategy

Job Search & Networking

Put together a plan of action for yourself. You must be prepared to commit a reasonable number of hours per week, or better—per day, to your job search. Outline, in writing, your marketing strategy. Include specific target dates for contacting potential employers, following-up with and keeping networking contacts alive. Be sure to budget time for networking events such as industry seminars and investigative/informational interviews.

This is where the rubber meets the road in terms of your preparation through the first three phases of this four-phased job search. If you have done a thorough job in your self-assessment, needs assessment, and positioning, you will find that developing and executing your market strategy is relatively simple — however, it does require some devotion of time and energy. By planning out a strategy, you will be focused on your goals and will not spinning your wheels interacting with people who cannot provide the information you seek or wasting time interviewing for jobs that are not a reasonable fit for you at this point.