

Get Specific

When it comes to setting goals for your professional life, you need to be very specific about what you want. Make sure that when you set a goal for yourself that it is something positive, not something you are trying to avoid. Include a specific timeframe to reach your goal. Here's an example: "In six months I want to be working for a different company and earning at least X dollars per year" as opposed to "I don't want to be stuck in this dead-end job forever". You should break your career plan down into short- and long-term goals. This breakdown will make your plan easier for you to follow. Consider your goals for both education and training. Your occupational goals and your educational goals should correspond to one another, since reaching your occupational goals will usually be dependent upon reaching your educational goals.

Set Short-term and Long-Term Goals

You should set your goals on several levels. Once you identify the large-scale goals that you want to achieve, you can break these down into the smaller, more immediate goals that will serve as stepping stones to the larger objective.

- Short-term goals: these are goals that you should be able to reach in about one to three years.
- Long-term goals: these are goals that you should be able to achieve in about three to five years.

Use the following list to ensure you are creating SMART goals

SMART	Check that your goal...
Specific	Identifies a clear outcome that you want to achieve. Are there parts that are too vague?
Measurable	Has progress that can be measured. How will you know when you've done it?
Achievable	Is feasible within your time frame. Can it actually happen? Are you motivated to complete it?
Realistic	Is practical and possible. Is your goal compatible with your skills and abilities?
Timed	Has a specific target date of completion. What day of what month in what year?

Barriers to Reaching Goals

As you try to reach your goals you may face some barriers. If you want to pursue your goals, you will have to get around these barriers. Identify all the obstacles, or barriers, that may get in the way of being able to reach your goals. Then identify the ways you can deal with them. For example you may be the primary caregiver for your children or elderly parents. This may interfere with your ability to complete your degree. You can deal with this barrier by enlisting the help of your spouse or another relative. Perhaps you can arrange for child or adult daycare. Sometimes barriers are due to your own lack of motivation or procrastination. By and creating achievable goals, and taking small steps, you can overcome any personal barriers that may be in your way.

Set Yourself Up For Success, Not Failure:

Be realistic in your goal-setting. There is nothing wrong with having ambitious goals for yourself, but you do need to make sure that your goals fit in with your talents and abilities. For example, you might want to get a promotion to a management position in your company but do you have the education and experience necessary to take on that challenge? If not, what do you need to do to get the education or add to your experience?

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