

## Mind Your Own Business: Create an Impactful Career Plan

Written by Julie Desmond  
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Business owners usually begin their million dollar futures with a great idea and, soon after, a business plan. Entrepreneurs sometimes skip over the formal planning stage in their rush to bring in those first few dollars. However, with or without a plan, the business eventually will flounder, grow, require financing or face an opportunity to sell. Imagine staring at elevator doors that never open. It's the business plan that opens those doors. To truly succeed, a written document mapping out all aspects of the business eventually becomes mandatory.

Planning your career is no different than launching any other enterprise. You start your million dollar future with a unique and amazing concept: you. You can float along for a while, just traveling where the opportunities take you. But eventually, your career will flounder, grow, demand additional investments or you might face an opportunity to retire. At each crossroads, a career plan is invaluable.

An effective career plan can follow the template of a straightforward business plan. Think through these sections of a typical plan and your career path will become clear, wide and infinitely more satisfying than it was when you were wandering aimlessly from job to job.

What business are you in? Describe where you have had the most success, and why you chose the job you have now.

Mission statement. In two or three sentences, explain what motivates you. What principles guide your actions? For example: My life's work is grounded in my service to others. The person who shared this with me said this single line frames every decision he makes regarding his career.

Goals and objectives. A goal is glimpse into the future. Create a music video or PowerPoint presentation in your mind featuring you and where you are in two, five and ten years. The narrative should be visual: It is a steamy summer afternoon in 2017 and my ice cream stand at the State Fair has never been busier.

Objectives are specific, measurable items that get you to your goal. These could be annual ice cream sales targets or a series of promotions that propel you to Director of Mint Chocolate Chip Sales.

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Impact statement. Be specific. How many dollars do you want to earn? Or how many home runs will you hit in your career?

Marketing. Who values what you do? List potential mentors and professional associations and start planning to connect.

Strengths and weaknesses. No plan is complete without a nod to core competencies. What sets you apart? Where do you add the most value? Which key skills do you need to acquire to succeed in your life's work? Include in your career plan ideas for developing necessary new skills, learning new technologies, and frequently upgrading the quality of your product (yourself).

A quality Career Plan is useful when it gets used. Refer to your plan when your career stalls, or when you sense a new opportunity. Fine tune the details to accommodate changes in your long term vision. Your Career Plan is unique and personal, and as simple as it is, it can tremendously impact the course of your career.

Julie Desmond is a recruiter with Express Employment Professionals in Minneapolis. Write to [julie@insightnews.com](mailto:julie@insightnews.com)