TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW YOU WILL BE MORE DISAPPOINTED BY THE THINGS THAT YOU DID NOT DO THAN BY THE ONES YOU DID DO...

EXPLORE. DREAM. DISCOVER.

MARK TWAIN
FOREWORD

“The global employment landscape has become much more volatile and uncertain, with employers increasingly placing a premium on skills. These trends affect Singapore too, as we are an open economy that benefits from international trade, foreign direct investments and tourism. We know that such disruptions are not easy for Singaporeans and their families to deal with, and we are committed to supporting Singaporeans in their career planning and skills development. This career transition guide is part of a range of resources and programmes developed by WDA to assist Singaporeans in their career transitions. I encourage all Singaporean professionals – both employed and unemployed - to consider making use of the tips and links to better plan their careers and lifelong learning journeys.”

MR NG CHER PONG, 
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SINGAPORE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (WDA)

“NTUC is happy to partner WDA in efforts to better meet the needs of PMEs through the 4Ps of Placement, Progression, Protection and Privileges. Even as more resources than ever before are provided and we work together to support each other, it is vital that every individual takes ownership of their own career decisions.”

MR PATRICK TAY, 
ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL, NATIONAL TRADES UNION CONGRESS (NTUC)

“The strong tripartite partnership among employers, the government and the labour movement has steered Singapore on a path of industrial and economic progress despite an increasingly challenging economic landscape. SNEF is happy to support this guide because an employee who is continually learning will be more resilient and motivated and will contribute more to his organisation and advance in his career in the process.”

DR ROBERT YAP, PRESIDENT, 
SINGAPORE NATIONAL EMPLOYERS FEDERATION (SNEF)
INTRODUCTION

When was the last time you took a serious look at your career direction? Where are you now? Where do you want to be? Are you ready for change?

Global competition and rapid changes in technology have brought economic progress but also changed our employment landscape. The possibility of one’s employer or industry relocating or shrinking, or resorting to contract style work arrangements are realities that many Singaporeans are increasingly needing to come to terms with.

Whether unemployed or still working, having a career plan can provide a systematic way to navigate your way through this complex and changing environment by matching an individual’s career goals and capabilities with available opportunities.

A career plan has a few key elements. First, understand yourself – what are you interested in, what are you good at, and how your work is aligned to your life purpose e.g. providing for one’s family. Second, identify the opportunities you should target – what is the demand for your skills, where are opportunities growing. Third, update your job search approach – how do you increase your chances of successfully connecting to your target position.

This guide presents a number of tips and links to resources to assist Singaporeans in their career journey. There are activities and space to record your reflections, action plans and progress. While you are encouraged to complete all sections beginning with Section 1 on ‘Understand Yourself’, you can also jump straight to the more relevant section(s) for your journey.

For those seeking to acquire or refresh their work related skills, there is a wide range of choices and support available. Section 4 on ‘Refresh Your Skills’ provides information on how to select and make use of the support currently available.

The career transition journey can be tough. It can be lonely. It can be discouraging. Having a break in steady income affects not just the individual but his or her family as well. It is important to stay positive and resilient. Section 5 covers tips for handling some of the more common issues that can arise during a career transition.

This guide and the tips have been drawn from WDA’s experience assisting thousands of Singaporean professionals in their career transitions. However this guide is not designed to be comprehensive. Each individual’s journey and issues are unique. If you need to speak to a career coach or make use of coaching and other resources available to assist Singaporeans at WDA Career Centres, contact us or our partners at e2i or uPME. Their contact details are at page 60.

ALL THE BEST!
The journey to career success starts with the traveller. You. Understanding your strengths, talents and skills makes identifying your career path a whole lot easier, and rising above the challenges at work, a cinch.
SELF AWARENESS
Where am I at now? Where do I want to be? What do I want out of a job or career? What do I like to do? What are my strengths? What is important to me? Before stepping outside to start your job search, look in the inside, be honest and ask yourself some ‘me’ questions.

Understand your skills and interests, values and motivations, likes and dislikes, temperament and personality. Finding a job that aligns with the person you are, will not only not only make you happier, but increase your chances of doing well in it.

READ UP AND REFLECT ON SELF-DEVELOPMENT
Look for books and online tools on self-development and career exploration, and complete the exercises. Keep a notebook to jot down ideas and capture your thoughts as they occur; set aside some time each day to write in your journal and get to know yourself better.

ATTEND A COURSE OR WORKSHOP
Attend courses on personal growth and career change strategies that are offered online, via video conferences, webinars or even conference calls.

SEEK FEEDBACK
Ask your current or former bosses or colleagues for feedback on where you can improve or areas they think you are good at. This is not always easy to accept. Resist the temptation to defend yourself if something negative is said. Instead focus on whether there is something to learn and improve. Like removing a piece of dirt on your face, we need a mirror or the opinion of others who are honest enough to tell us what we cannot see by ourselves if we really want to improve.

MAKE TIME FOR REFLECTION
Spend time alone and connect with your inner voice. Do a stock-check on where you are at, what is important to you and be clear about how this fits in with your personal objectives. It helps to write things down.

If you are considering a break from work, be aware that some employers may not view long breaks favourably – especially in fast changing industries.
ACTIVITY 1: KNOW MYSELF
Understand your purpose, your own strengths and barriers, as well as individual factors which will determine your career options moving forward.

MY PURPOSE
Work provides an income. Most individuals rely on this income to provide for themselves and their dependants. However for many, what we work as also provides a sense of identity. As work is where most of our waking time is spent, do you know how the work you plan to do aligns to your purpose? Even if there are parts of the work you dislike, understanding how it supports your purpose, for example helping others or providing for your family, can help sustain you.

Many organisations have mission statements. If you have a personal mission statement, what would it say? List it here:


MY SKILLS
Domain Knowledge

Core Competencies

Transferrable Skills

MY PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
Understand your personal characteristics.

For more details on the Holland code personality test, download a QR code-reader to access this link or visit http://goo.gl/gultwl.

Holland Code | Characteristic
---|---
R | A
I | S
E | C
R | I | A
S | E
C
R | I | A
S | E
C

MY INTERESTS
Interest | Tasks associated with this interest
---|---


MY VALUES
Value | How it affects your choice of work
---|---


MY LIMITATIONS


Finding sustainable and fulfilling work is about finding the sweet spot where your interest and ability overlap with your ability to earn an income.

Focusing only on what you like to do and are able to do may not generate enough of an income to meet your financial needs.

You can increase your sweet spot by increasing your ability through training, widening your interests and becoming more aware of income-generating opportunities.

WHO ARE YOU

Note: All results are not 100% reflective of an individual’s personality or the types of jobs that he/she should do.
Every one of us is special. Our talents, skills and abilities are unique to us. What is yours? To rise above the countless other candidates vying for the job, work out your Unique Selling Point, or USP. Sometimes known as your transferrable skill, your USP can be specific, technical or personal skills, industry knowledge, market experience, problem-solving skills or any talent you possess.

WHAT ARE YOUR SKILLS?
What you think of yourself may not be what you are. There is more to know about yourself. You may also find that a skill that you excel at but consider to be routine, is highly regarded and desired by others. Try to find at least two colleagues or former colleagues to give you honest feedback on what they think you may be good at.

WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?
Employers do not just buy skills, they need solutions. By thinking more deeply about your skills and abilities, you may realise that you are, for example, especially proficient at solving complex problems in your skilled role as, perhaps, a project manager. So your USP will be something along the lines of:

“Competent project manager who excels at identifying and solving problems”

HOW CAN YOUR USP BENEFIT YOUR PROSPECTIVE NEW EMPLOYER?
Next, a benefit needs to be added to this USP. Using the role of project manager as an example, your USP thus becomes:

“Competent project manager who excels at identifying and solving problems and has saved the employer more than S$300,000 while completing S$1 million worth of projects during the past four years.”
DEVELOP YOUR PLAN
You have a better understanding of your interests, your purpose, strengths, and limitations. Now identify the steps you need to take to start moving towards your goals. Prepare an action plan and chart your course.

Whether encompassing a few short paragraphs or a few pages, a career action plan will often identify a number of factors connected with the pursuit of your professional goals. Features of a career action plan could include:

• detailed action steps and a proposed timetable for achieving your career goals
• a list of factors in your life that both support and oppose your goals
• a list of obstacles that you must overcome
• a list of resources that you can use to achieve these goals

A systematic identification of a goal, skills/strength and barriers to success are required before a career action plan can be implemented. The more specific the plan, the more effective the plan will be in supporting the achievement of the career goal.

Begin by writing down your goals. It helps you to internalise them and check if you are making progress over time.
ACTIVITY 2: SET MY GOALS
Define and set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-based) short and long term goals.

Start by defining your long term goals and then plan out the short term goals / milestones which will help you move closer to your long term goals.
PILLARS OF SUPPORT

Who or where can you turn to for support during your job search?

Inspirational figures:

Instructors / mentors:

Books and reference materials:

SHARE YOUR GOALS
Make your goals known to those who matter to you to help you stay motivated to achieve them.

BE PRAGMATIC
Give your goals a realistic time frame. For example, do not expect to achieve a complete industry switch within the short-term, as new skillsets take time to acquire.

PRACTISE POSITIVE AFFIRMATION
Self-talk is the best form of encouragement. Write down brief, inspirational “I am…” statements affirming your goals, then place them prominently in your bedroom, on your mirror, computer or desk.

STAY THE COURSE
Persevere in pursuing your goals. Sometimes you just need to dig your heels in until you get there.

CHART YOUR PROGRESS
As simple as it seems, a long series of check marks on a calendar or a wall chart can actually motivate you by providing a progressive sense of achievement.

RE-ASSESS YOUR GOALS
Evaluate your development from time to time to see if your goals need to be revised. Experiment with new approaches especially if you are not getting the results you were expecting.

REWARD YOURSELF
As you make progress towards your goals, treat yourself to things that you enjoy.
IDENTIFY TARGET AREAS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Once you have an idea of your job preferences you can find out more about the specific skills and qualifications required for those jobs. Make use of the resources found in Section 6 to explore opportunities.

EXPLORE JOBS THAT INTEREST YOU AND ASK YOURSELF HOW YOUR SKILLS AND INTERESTS MATCH UP WITH THESE OCCUPATIONS?

WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

WHAT OPTIONS DO YOU HAVE TO GAIN THESE SKILLS OR QUALIFY FOR THESE JOBS?

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU NEED?

WHERE IS THE WORK?

It is also important to understand whether the jobs you are targeting are areas of demand. Read industry journals, trade publications, analyze reports to understand what is happening to the industry and the companies you are targeting.

For the bigger listed firms, beyond the information on the company websites, reading their regulatory filings can also yield insights on the risks and competitive outlook for the sector and company. Locally, reading the reports and speeches from the championing economic agency (if any), can also help you be aware of the companies that are expanding and the key industry trends that may impact your choice. For example, how will the rise of driverless cars or the rise of transport apps like Easy Taxi or Grab Taxi change taxi driving in a few years’ time?

While there are more opportunities in expanding areas, do not exclude the niche opportunities in the less dynamic areas and less competitive for the available openings. Employers in these areas will also be more appreciative of the contribution you can make.

Be aware of employment trends. The average lifespan of Fortune 500 employers has shortened from 75 years half a century ago to 15 years today. To expect a company to provide lifetime employment is less and less likely. With shorter business cycles, even companies which expand may do so by outsourcing work, offering contract rather than permanent jobs or using freelancers. This affects different industries differently. Do you know how these trends are affecting your target industry sector? Are there any adjustments needed to your expectations?

Some individuals have responded to these changes by building a portfolio of skills and careers that gives them the flexibility to respond to changing market opportunities.

The increasing ease of international travel and the opening up of new markets can represent attractive alternatives especially if you are currently in an industry that is reducing its footprint in Singapore.

While the online freelance market is still relatively small, the global nature of operations and the rise of the internet mean that Singaporeans can just as easily bid online for work originating outside Singapore. As portal like e-lance enhance their feature, familiarise yourself with the possibilities of an alternative income stream from taking on such freelance projects originating locally or from anywhere in the world.
LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Do your groundwork! Read up on available information on jobs, occupations and employment prospects to help you explore your career options, and make informed and calculated decisions about the type of work which suits you.

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION INCLUDES:
• job descriptions
• wages
• employment requirements
• trends or outlooks
• unemployment or labour shortages

Look up the career alternatives you identified using the suggested resources. Compare the information provided to your skills, interests and values.

Do not overlook people as a source of information. Once you have narrowed down your interests, try to talk to people who work in the jobs in which you are interested. This is called informational interviewing, which is a great way to get first-hand information and a chance to ask questions. If you do not have any contact, this is where networking comes in useful. Do not hesitate to ask around; who knows you may even land yourself in an occupation of your interest through this. For networking tips, go to page 36.

KNOW THE EMPLOYMENT MARKET

While you go about devising your career plan, keep in constant touch with the trends and opportunities in the job market.

Whether you choose to remain in the same industry, or intend to delve into a new one, it is crucial that you find out what the key trends are, how the particular sector is evolving, which companies are thriving, and what are their key challenges and competitors.

If you are switching to a new industry, think carefully about how you can demonstrate the transferrable skills that you can bring to the new company.
DECISIONS
It is time to make a decision. After discovering what your career objectives are and understanding your unique selling point (USP) better, explore and compare your options. Narrow down your choices and think about what suits you best at this point in time.

START BY ASKING YOURSELF:
• What are my best work/training options?
• How do they match with my skills, interests and values?
• How do they fit with the current labour market?
• How do they fit with my current situation and responsibilities?
• What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
• What will help and what will hinder me?
• What can I do about it?

Decide which step is most apt for you right now and start from there. If the decision is that you need to acquire or refresh your skills, go to Section 4 on ‘Refresh Your Skills’.

LABOUR MARKET HIGHLIGHTS
SCAN the QR codes for some useful links to help you understand the Singapore job market:

Labour Market Highlights
http://goo.gl/bhjZ7r

Industry Information
http://goo.gl/WemwGp

Skills in Demand
http://goo.gl/06KLmm

Manpower Resources Guide
http://goo.gl/7RdneQ

Benchmarking of Employers
http://goo.gl/76EQQm
YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE PHYSICAL ABILITY IN THE WORLD, BUT YOU STILL HAVE TO KNOW THE FUNDAMENTALS.

MICHAEL JORDAN

SECTION 3
NAIL THE BASICS
Make sure you cover all the basics when looking for a job!
A GOOD COVER LETTER

Keep your cover letter clear and concise. Provide details on how your skills and experience qualify you for the job that you are applying for, and explain why you are keen to be part of the organisation.

Remember to:
• Address it to a named individual
• Grab attention in the first paragraph
• Present your Unique Selling Point (USP)
• Focus on job position’s requirements
• Focus on your accomplishments (NOT your duties/responsibilities)
• Show knowledge of the company you are applying to
• Use impactful words, such as accomplished, spearheaded and strategised

A CUSTOMISED RESUME

Besides adhering to the basics of a good resume - clean look, free of grammatical errors and clearly presenting your skills and experiences, follow these tips to make it an outstanding one.

• Create a professional profile that shows the value you bring to the table
• Have a digital version
• Send it to the right person for example, HR and hiring manager
• Add your social media profiles as it encourages employers to see how you showcase your expertise online. Do you know that LinkedIn is the most popular site for recruiters by far? Recruiters also indicate that they checked candidates’ LinkedIn profile for professional experience, length of professional tenure and specific hard skills

ELEVATOR PITCH

Work out a short, personal selling statement that makes a good first impression – that is your elevator pitch. Use it in cover letters, email introductions, meeting employers at career fairs, and other informal social settings. Your elevator pitch should be centred on what you can do for your prospective employer. Keep it between 150 to 250 words, and include the following:

• Who am I?
• What do I do?
• What I can do for you?
• Why should you hire me?
• How to contact me?

BRAND ‘YOU’ ONLINE

Potential employers can access a lot of information about you online, especially on social media. Make use of this fact to project a positive impression of brand ‘you’.

SHOW WHAT YOU ARE GOOD AT

Give an honest take on your strengths and weaknesses, and share your interests, skills and what you are passionate about.

MY STRENGTHS

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

MY WEAKNESSES

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

CREATE A MEMORABLE BRAND NAME

If you have got a unique name, make the most of it. Your brand name can also be a short form of your name, which is easier to remember.

OWN YOUR BRAND NAME ONLINE

Buy the domain name that matches your brand name and secure the Facebook page, Twitter account, Google+ account as well. Think of another option if your desired name is taken. Feature your brand name upfront in LinkedIn, where you are required to use your real name.

SHARE USEFUL CONTENT REGULARLY

Share helpful tips relating to yourself, relevant news, and personal updates that convey your personality in a positive way, or connects on an empathetic level.

GET FEEDBACK ON BRAND “YOU”

Seek advice and encouragement from trusted friends on how your brand is coming across – this will help you tweak and finetune your brand-building efforts.

HAVE AN AUTHENTIC VOICE

While extreme views are a no-no, a little opinion online is good because it highlight your personality which can be a draw for the employers.
START YOUR SEARCH
You are your best search party. Make sure you widen your search to include the following avenues.

- Job Fairs or Recruitment Campaigns
- Job Advertisements in Newspapers
- Networking Events
- Online Job Portals
- Recruitment Agencies

RESEARCH
The best way to impress an interviewer is to show that you have done your homework. Read up on key developments and emerging trends in the industry, know who are the main players, competitors and have a point of view about the company’s challenges and opportunities in the competitive landscape.

Use informational interviews to understand how positions are sourced and filled for your target positions. Do they advertise? If so, where? Are the positions advertised online on their websites? If the openings are on online portals, which are the key portals? Are they general portals or specialist industry portals for example www.efinancialcareers.sg?

SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING
Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are good sources of first hand information or leads on openings and opportunities. Various networking websites can link you up with specific companies or with a group of specialists in a particular industry. Keep your finger on the pulse for these sites.

NETWORK EFFECTIVELY
Make it a point to consciously build and maintain relationships with people you meet in the course of your education or work. This includes past and present co-workers, bosses, friends with similar interests, colleagues from business associations, university mates, or acquaintances via online networking services. Treat others with respect and reciprocate to help them where you can. It is often through leads in your network that news of vacancies are received and your professional reputation is enhanced.

KEEP TRACK OF MOVEMENTS
Stay updated on your personal career network. Whether it is electronically or on paper, make sure you know who is who, where they work, and how to get in touch.

ATTEND NETWORKING EVENTS
Make it a priority to be at networking events for example alumni get together. Participants will likely have the same intentions and will be glad to know you as well. To network in person will provide others an opportunity to know you which could get you you a foot in the company that you are interested in.

WDA’S JOBS BANK IS A FREE JOB PORTAL THAT FACILITATES JOB MATCHING BETWEEN LOCAL JOB SEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS. REGISTER AND EXPLORE SUITABLE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS SINGAPORE. SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT WWW.JOBSBANK.GOV.SG FOR MORE DETAILS.
CREATING CONNECTIONS AT NETWORKING EVENTS

Try to relax, make a connection with your eyes, smile and approach with a confident handshake. Think of it as just making new friends, so be yourself and people should be drawn to you accordingly. If you see someone standing alone, go up and introduce yourself. Others will feel just as nervous as you do so a friendly smile and saying “Hello” will not go wrong.

Be open-minded and take a long-term view. Ask yourself what you would like to get out of the networking meeting. Some meetings are based more on learning or gaining encouragement rather than on career opportunities and openings alone. Networking is all about relationship building. Keep your exchange light and informal – you do not need to hard sell when you have just met someone. The idea is to get the conversation started and keep the conversation going even after the meeting. Remember it is better to make three good contacts rather than twenty rushed ones.

Do not be a hit-and-run networker! Do not just build connections to get what you want, then proceed to vanish into thin air until the next time you need something. Invest in your network by following up and providing feedback to those who had offered you their assistance. Thank them for their referral and help. Update them if you got the interview or the job, or minimally, use the opportunity to report on the lack of success or the need for additional help.

Develop your elevator pitch. This is essentially a short summary of who you are and what you do to be delivered within the time span of an elevator ride. Be able to describe who you are professionally and the benefits you might bring. The intent behind this is to engage and show your value add, with the hope to attract interest for the conversation to continue or future dealings.

Create a conversation, not just talk! Remember that networking is not supposed to be aggressive. Just as you can not stand an overbearing sales person nagging at you, be careful that you are not pushy to others. Look people in the eye, repeat their name, listen to what they have to say, and suggest topics that are easy to discuss.

Ask Questions. This is your chance to learn as much as you can so take advantage of the opportunity - you will only get out what you put in. Have some questions ready to ask like “What do you see as the main challenges for your industry right now?” or “What is your advice for someone thinking of entering this profession?”

Be a good listener. Encourage others to participate in the conversation and make sure that you are alert throughout their responses. Act as a sponge and attempt to soak in everything that is being said.

Vary the networking events you attend. This way you are able to mingle with a wider spectrum of individuals and gain knowledge from various sectors and professions.

Follow-up is key! If you say that you will call or be in touch, make it your priority to do so promptly. If you have had a great exchange, ask for the best way to stay in touch. Some people like email or phone; others prefer social networks like LinkedIn. Get in touch within 48 hours to show you are interested and available, and reference something you discussed, so your contact remembers you.
WORK WITH RECRUITERS
Besides relying on your own efforts, you can link up with a headhunter, who may have access to job openings that are not advertised. Here is how you can maximise your relationship with recruiters:

MAKE CONTACT EARLY
Start a relationship with your recruiter, instead of waiting until you are desperate for a job.

CONSULT YOUR NETWORK
Find out from sources in the industry who are the recruiters they use. Look through recruiter directories, career-networking sites or trade or industry groups.

IDENTIFY THE RIGHT RECRUITER
Instead of linking up with every recruiter you can find, zoom in on those who specialise in your field. If a recruiter is not interested in your case, or you feel uncomfortable with him/her, look for another one.

DO NOT LEAVE THE SEARCH ENTIRELY TO YOUR RECRUITER
A recruiter is part of your job search, but continue your own ground work. They are NOT employment agencies, so finding you a job is not their sole purpose.

BE STRAIGHTFORWARD
Come clean about the extent of your job search efforts, preferences and expectations. The clearer both parties are about your requirements and what you can do, the better a fit the recruiter can match you with.

Be polite and patient with your recruiter. They convey their impression of their correspondence with you to the prospective company.

GET UPDATES FROM YOUR RECRUITER
Call to see if there are any leads once a week. Avoid daily calls or emails unless you are actively negotiating on a certain job.

If the recruiter says the vacancy is a no-go, do not take matters into your own hands and apply for the job. This is unethical and disrupts the recruitment process.

GIVE FEEDBACK
After an interview, share your thoughts about the meeting with the recruiter, as they are the ones who will liaise with the hiring manager. If you are not keen on the opportunity, let your recruiter know why, so he or she can narrow down on your requirements.

LOOK SHARP
First impressions can make or break the interview. This is why the rule of thumb is to dress appropriately and professionally. Here is a guide on what to wear, whether you are applying to a big organisation or a start-up company.

PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW

MEN’S ATTIRE

* Suit (solid colour - navy or dark grey)
* Long sleeve shirt (white or coordinated with the suit)
* Belt and tie
* Dark socks, conservative leather shoes
* Neat, professional hairstyle
* Neatly trimmed nails
* Limit the aftershave
* Little or no jewellery
* Portfolio or briefcase

WOMEN’S ATTIRE

* Suit (navy, black or dark grey)
* The suit skirt should be long enough so you can sit comfortably
* Coordinated blouse
* Conservative shoes
* Neutral pantyhose
* Professional hairstyle
* Light make-up and perfume
* Neatly manicured clean nails
* Limited jewellery (no dangling earrings or arms full of bracelets)
* No jewellery is better than cheap jewellery
* Portfolio or briefcase

IMPORTANT TIPS

* Before you start sending out applications, it is good to have your interview attire ready.
* Prepare what to wear the night before, not on the day of the interview.
* Polish your shoes.
* Pop a mint to freshen your breath as you enter the building.
ACE THE INTERVIEW

EXUDE CONFIDENCE
Go into an interview with your key strengths at the fore of your mind. This way, you will be able to weave them into your answers in a self-assured and convincing manner.

SHOW YOUR STRENGTHS
Show how your strength, for example, in efficient work or effective project management can benefit the company to boost its productivity, improve sales or grow its customer database.

GIVE SPECIFIC EVIDENCE
Show specific examples of how you have either helped gain more business from existing customers, strengthened a customer relationship, or build the customer database. This demonstrates your competencies and sound understanding of the company’s products and services.

KNOW DETAILS ABOUT THE ORGANISATION
If you know the nitty gritty about the company you are applying for, it shows that you have done your homework and are passionate about joining them.

GET AS PHYSICALLY FIT AS YOU CAN
Exercise. Stay fit. Show you have energy to contribute.

KEEP YOUR COMPOURSE
Walk in confidently, give a firm handshake, smile sincerely, be at ease and engage the interviewer by maintaining good eye contact.

GIVE A 10/10 PRESENTATION
Expect yourself to deliver a top-notch performance. Whatever question you are fielded, bring it back to your key strengths. And focus on customers, profits or achievements, depending on the nature of the company.

YOU ARE ON THE LOOKOUT
If you are exploring other opportunities, let your interviewer know. That signals to them that they may need to act fast if they are interested in hiring you.

KEEP TALK ON PAY AT BAY
Discussing compensation and benefits during the first round of interview is inappropriate. Instead, convey your deep interest in the vision and achievements of the company, especially to higher management.

“I wish they’d focus less on their experience and more on how they can contribute to the company…”

“I have a hard time persuading the line manager to take them as they come across less as a solution and more of a potential problem because of their attitude and unrealistic expectations…”

- Comments by employers that WDA have worked with.

SWITCHING CAREERS – CHANGING INDUSTRY SECTORS OR OCCUPATIONS
There are times when those at mid-career find a need to switch to a different job or sector due to changes in values or interests, or if the industry is in decline and suitable opportunities disappear. No matter the circumstance or reason, such career transitions are stressful and require careful consideration and planning. Years of experience gained may not be appreciated in the new area. The salary the employer is prepared to pay may hence be much less initially till you have proven your ability to contribute.

Although some positions require years of training to enter, others can be started by anyone with the correct skills, knowledge and work ethics to become a success. Here are some tips on how to approach this:

• ASSESS YOURSELF
First, you need to know yourself; your values, your interests, your skills and what will give you job satisfaction. If you have not done so, go through the activities in Section 1.

• KNOW YOUR MARKET PLACE AND TRENDS
Learn and understand industry trends, find out which are the growth sectors and careers in demand, research on the requirements of the companies and departments that you are interested in and see if you have any transferable skills to offer.

• USE YOUR NETWORK
Leverage on your connections to find out more about the new career you are considering. Talk to people within the industry or sector you are interested in, ask questions and discover as much as possible about the job requirements, work expectations, working environment etc.
AFTER YOU HAVE STARTED WORK

CONGRATULATIONS!
You have landed the job you want. While it is easy to get lost in the day-to-day work, keep these tips top-of-mind to ensure you get the most out of your new job.

BE YOUR EVERYDAY BEST
Be punctual for work, stay on till your tasks are done, and refrain from surfing the Internet in the office. Pay attention to details, deliver on deadlines and be polite and respectful. Do not turn down a task, even if you have to stay later to get it done. Being humble, eager to help and flexible will put you in good stead for a promotion when the time comes.

COMMUNICATE PROACTIVELY
If you are not sure about something, ask. Being vocal and proactive shows you are keen to do the job well. It shows you want to build a relationship with your superiors, and want them to take note of your work. Working well with your peers also shows that you are a team player.

GO BEYOND YOUR SCOPE
To grow in a company, look for opportunities to do more than what you are expected to. Taking on more responsibilities shows bosses that you are ready to move up, and they are more likely to consider you for a promotion.

KEEP ON LEARNING
Some organisations may sponsor their staff to attain additional qualifications on their own time. Seize the opportunity, or take the initiative to suss out courses to enhance your skills. Employers value those who show an interest in improving themselves.

You have succeeded in landing a job. Is this what you can call ‘success’? Is this the end of your job search effort? It is only the beginning. Getting through 3 months, 6 months and to last beyond 2 to 3 years in the same job should be the target of a successful job search. The uphill climb is your speed of adapting to the job, the people and the work demands.

• CONSIDER FEASIBILITY AND RISKS
Once you have decided which profession to switch to and verified there is demand, test the feasibility and consider all factors and risks involved. How much of your skills are transferable? Are you switching into a similar industry or job role? How adaptable are you to new situations and new challenges? How fast can you learn? If you have family commitments, how would your family feel about the change? Are you and your family financially stable to cope with the switch or endure any wait? Be practical. The further you move away from your expertise, the longer it will take to switch into a new career.

• TAP ON THE RIGHT CHANNELS
Need more information or advice before you decide to switch? Visit www.CareerResource.sg or scan the QR code.

HELPING YOU MAKE THE CHANGE - WDA’S PROFESSIONAL CONVERSION PROGRAMMES (PCPs)
WDA’s PCPs are targeted at helping professionals including mid-career switchers, undergo skills conversion and secure new jobs in different industries. These individuals will be given opportunities to re-skill themselves and obtain the necessary knowledge and competencies to take on new jobs in a different industry. The programmes may also involve work attachment, which helps individuals acquire some hands-on experience at the workplace.

For more information on PCPs, visit http://goo.gl/lA3soT or scan the QR code.

AFTER YOU HAVE STARTED WORK

CONGRATULATIONS!
You have landed the job you want. While it is easy to get lost in the day-to-day work, keep these tips top-of-mind to ensure you get the most out of your new job.

BE YOUR EVERYDAY BEST
Be punctual for work, stay on till your tasks are done, and refrain from surfing the Internet in the office. Pay attention to details, deliver on deadlines and be polite and respectful. Do not turn down a task, even if you have to stay later to get it done. Being humble, eager to help and flexible will put you in good stead for a promotion when the time comes.

COMMUNICATE PROACTIVELY
If you are not sure about something, ask. Being vocal and proactive shows you are keen to do the job well. It shows you want to build a relationship with your superiors, and want them to take note of your work. Working well with your peers also shows that you are a team player.

GO BEYOND YOUR SCOPE
To grow in a company, look for opportunities to do more than what you are expected to. Taking on more responsibilities shows bosses that you are ready to move up, and they are more likely to consider you for a promotion.

KEEP ON LEARNING
Some organisations may sponsor their staff to attain additional qualifications on their own time. Seize the opportunity, or take the initiative to suss out courses to enhance your skills. Employers value those who show an interest in improving themselves.

You have succeeded in landing a job. Is this what you can call ‘success’? Is this the end of your job search effort? It is only the beginning. Getting through 3 months, 6 months and to last beyond 2 to 3 years in the same job should be the target of a successful job search. The uphill climb is your speed of adapting to the job, the people and the work demands.
REFRESH YOUR SKILLS

With the rapid rate of change and the demands of the employment market, the need to stay current by acquiring or refreshing skills is constant. As part of your career plan (Section 2), you should already have an idea of where you need to acquire or refresh your skills.

Beyond the financial cost, training will require the commitment of your time. It is therefore important that you are clear about the relevance of the training to what you plan to do. Be careful if you are pursuing a qualification just because it is “expected” or if your selection of a course is based only on what others say. Select training that fits into your career plan. Find out what happened to earlier batches of students. Employers are looking for what a candidate can actually do and contribute to their organisation rather than just a paper qualification.

Bear in mind that acquiring and refreshing skills do not need to come from formal courses alone. Beyond online learning tools, what you read or experience hands-on are also alternative ways for you to acquire or refresh your work-related skills.

Singapore’s National Continuing Education and Training or CET system helps working adults keep their skills relevant amidst an evolving and dynamic employment landscape.
SKILLSFUTURE
SkillsFuture is a national movement to provide Singaporeans with the opportunities to develop their fullest potential throughout life, regardless of their starting points. Through this movement, the skills, passion and contributions of every individual will drive Singapore’s next phase of development towards an advanced economy and inclusive society.

For more information on SkillsFuture, scan the QR code or go to www.skillsfuture.sg

There is a wide range of upgrading programmes such as Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) and support available to help Singaporeans sharpen their professional skills.

SINGAPORE WORKFORCE SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS (WSQ)
The Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) is a national credentialing system that trains, develops, assesses and recognises individuals for the key competencies that companies look for in potential employees. WSQ is based on national standards developed by WDA in collaboration with various industries and is designed to be a practical, accessible and affordable launching pad for individuals to take charge of their own careers and advancement.

For more information on WSQ, scan the QR code or visit http://goo.gl/RbHf0x

WHERE TO GO

WDA CET CENTRES
WDA has established CET Centres to deliver quality adult training. These CET Centres are public training providers which offer a comprehensive array of WSQ courses as well as additional services, such as employment advisory and placement.

For more details, scan the QR code or visit http://goo.gl/Xh0GtJ

EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY INSTITUTE (e2i)
e2i is a one-stop, skills-based institute for job seekers, employers and training providers. To help job seekers meet the hiring requirements of employers, e2i conducts employment coaching, career coaching as well as employability and skills training.

For more details, scan the QR code or visit http://pme.e2i.com.sg:

NTUC uPME CENTRE
The uPME Centre aims to be the 1st Stop and 1 Stop for PMEs in advancing their interests through Protection, Progression, Placement and Privileges. The uPME Centre provides PMEs with workplace, career and professional development advisory services to help them to be future-ready and future-proof, employment and employability opportunities, and membership benefits to meet their lifestyle needs.

For more details, scan the QR code or visit http://goo.gl/Gn3yMy

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTES (PSEIs)
PSEIs also offer a wide range of CET programmes including:
• Ministry of Education subsidised courses that lead to qualifications such as Nitec and Diploma;
• WSQ courses subsidised by WDA; and
• Professional short courses

For more details, scan the QR code or visit www.getcet.sg:

REFRESH YOUR SKILLS
For more details on available WSQ courses and programmes, scan the QR code or visit http://goo.gl/NOyv3r
SECTION 5
HANDLE CAREER TRANSITIONS
STAYING POSITIVE

In today’s modern and busy world, the only constant is change. People lose jobs. Friendships and businesses fold. You may have been passed over for promotion or your job applications are rejected. So how do you deal with such difficult circumstances? Do you let them define you? Or do you pick yourself up and move on?

When you hit a roadblock or meet with a setback in your career, your mindset will determine how it affects you. Instead of dwelling on the things that you cannot control or influence, focus on staying positive and moving forward in your plan to find another suitable job.

FOR MANY PEOPLE A JOB IS MORE THAN AN INCOME - IT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF WHO WE ARE. SO A CAREER TRANSITION OF ANY SORT IS ONE OF THE MOST UNSETTLING EXPERIENCES YOU CAN FACE IN YOUR LIFE.
BE WILLING TO CHANGE
Since your thoughts are conceived by you, you can change them. Be bold in reinventing yourself. Choose to embrace a positive way of thinking.

FEED THE ATTITUDE YOU WANT
The action you take influences your attitude. The more you live and think positive, the more it will become second nature. Consider whether the conversations, websites and online forums you are part of tend to leave you more positive and energised for your job search or leave you upset and angry with others.

START TODAY
Zoom in on an attitude, a belief or a perspective that you want to change. Then visualise what you want instead. Ignore any resistance to the idea that you might experience, and replace it with energy and passion to fuel your new mindset. You will soon find yourself doing little things to feed it, making it your new ‘operating system’.

THE RESILIENT ALWAYS RISE ABOVE
Resilience involves minimising damage during challenging times, absorbing hard knocks, recovering and bouncing back when the worst happens. It is the ability to start feeling better and strengthen your confidence after a setback. Resilience is also spotting trends and turning them into opportunities. Achieving this capacity in our careers is important, especially in today’s evolving job market.

Resilient people are curious, and choose to keep on learning. Whether you are a fresh graduate wondering about your first real job, a mid-career professional thinking of a career switch or a mature professional thinking about alternatives to retirement, resilience means being able to change and adapt with the times.

The good news is that resilience is something that can be learned, practised, and improved. By learning to become more resilient you can bring new power, direction and energy to your career.

SO HOW DO YOU BUILD ON YOUR OWN RESILIENCE?

1. CREATE CONNECTIONS
Do not wait until you are experiencing a crisis in your career before starting to reach out! Start to build a network of positive professional relationships now. Reciprocate by looking for ways to support your professional network, knowing that they will be there to support and motivate you during your tough times. Attend events even when you do not feel like it. Join groups. Recruit mentors and find ways to mentor others. Look for ways to support friends, colleagues and even casual business acquaintances. And know that they will be there to accept, support and inspire you during the hard times. Networking is key!

2. STAY POSITIVE
Positive people are more resilient than pessimists, and you can work to become more optimistic. A starting point is to stop thinking so much about what goes wrong and start focusing on what goes right. Keeping a journal can help you do that. If you notice that the same old worries and regrets keep going through your mind, pen those thoughts and decide whether you want to let them go or address them in some way. Start keeping a record of the good things too. At the end of each day, write a few lines about what went well, and what you are most grateful for in your current situation. Positive thinking does not mean ignoring the problem in order to focus on positive outcomes. It means understanding that setbacks are temporary and that you have the skills and abilities to combat the challenges you face.

3. COMMIT TO LIFELONG LEARNING
By engaging in professional development and making a commitment to lifelong learning you are continually building the skills and knowledge necessary to make changes and find new opportunities in your career. By embracing continuous learning, you achieve the ideal outlook to allow you to recover from setbacks and to adapt and succeed in new roles. The most innovative and resilient professionals tend to frequently engage in learning or improvement efforts. When you are in the process of learning, your viewpoint changes, and you spot connections that you never noticed before.

4. TAKE CONTROL AND BE YOUR OWN BOSS
In today’s economic climate, you certainly do not want to be dependent on your employer. The only person who can guarantee your future is you. The sooner you understand this and get serious about taking control of your career, the sooner you can be confident of being resilient despite whatever happens in the future. Even if you feel that you are a ‘nobody’ in a big organisation, you must learn to run your career like it is your own, one-person business. This will help ease your transition, if you ever need to make one. Think about your personal brand, recognise who your customers and bosses are, and be clear about what they are paying you for. Look for new ways to add value, and expand your range of product offerings.
5. ESTABLISH A SENSE OF PURPOSE
Imagine how success might look for you in five years’ time. Write a short personal vision statement, make a list, or draw a diagram touching upon your most vital values and the key parts of your life. When faced with crisis or tragedy, you will feel better if you can keep your perspective and having a sense of purpose can play an important role in recovery. This might mean becoming involved in your community, cultivating your spirituality, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you. Do realise that your career can not soar when you are neglecting the rest of your life!

6. STAY HEALTHY
Your career is influenced by everything you do to stay in shape and be healthy – physically, emotionally and spiritually. Making certain that work has its place and is in sync with the other things we need, be it nutrition or exercise, or the need for face-to-face interaction, allows us to live a good and simple life. By taking care of your own needs, you can boost your overall health and resilience and be fully ready to face life’s challenges.

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FINANCIAL ISSUES
When you do not have a monthly paycheck coming in, it is crucial to manage your finances carefully. Mentally, you might need to get out of your comfort zone and be prepared to make changes to your lifestyle habits, such as dining, shopping and entertainment. By limiting your resources to needs instead of wants, you can gain greater security and buy more time for yourself to get back on track.

Do not be too quick to give up your insurance policies, thinking that it is the fastest way to cut down on expenses. Consider why you took up the policy in the first place. The truth is you will never be able to buy back the same coverage at the same price. However, do review your insurance portfolio with your insurance adviser or insurance company. Different products have different features. Explore the possible option of reducing the premium or stop paying the premium temporarily. Giving up an important insurance plan should only be the last resort after you have exhausted all other options.

Never treat your retrenchment payout as a windfall gain because it never is. You should be even more prudent in your spending and be extra careful in your investment, especially when you do not know when you will receive your next pay check. Do not invest in any product without thorough research and understanding of the product. There is no free lunch, every investment has risk. Can you afford to lose your money?

When it comes to managing your debt, it is wise to consult an experienced financial planner before you make major changes, such as downgrading your type of housing or giving up a medical rider on your insurance policy, to fully understand the long term repercussions.
OTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCES YOU CAN TAP ON INCLUDE:

- Community Development Councils (CDCs)
The CDCs administer a variety of local assistance schemes and programmes to help vulnerable families and the elderly. These local assistance schemes and programmes complement the Government’s effort to strengthen our social safety net. Each CDC works with corporate and community partners under the “Many Helping Hands” approach to plan and implement local assistance schemes that benefit the community.

For more information, visit www.cdc.org.sg or scan the QR code.

For information on national social assistance schemes, please call 1800-222 0000.

- Credit Counselling Singapore
Credit Counselling Singapore deals with debt management, credit card bills, credit counselling and setting up of debt repayment plans.

For more information, visit www.ccs.org.sg or scan the QR code.

- The Institute for Financial Literacy
The Institute for Financial Literacy is collaboration between MoneySENSE and Singapore Polytechnic, providing free and unbiased financial education programmes to the public. The free financial education programmes cover basic money management, financial planning and investment know-how.

For more information, visit www.finlit.sg or scan the QR code.

- MoneySENSE*
MoneySENSE is the national financial education programme in Singapore, aimed at enabling consumers to become more self-reliant in their financial affairs. It does this by helping consumers acquire the knowledge and skills to manage their day-to-day finances, make prudent investments, plan for their longer-term needs and exercise their rights as consumers of financial services. This, in turn, serves the twin objectives of helping consumers to attain financial well-being and consumer protection.

For more information, visit www.moneysense.gov.sg or scan the QR code.

*With thanks to The MoneySENSE-Singapore Polytechnic Institute for Financial Literacy for their partnership and inputs.
If you think you experience five or more of the following symptoms almost every day, for two weeks or longer, seek help.

- Feelings of sadness or emptiness that persist
- No interest in all or almost all activities
- Greater or lack of appetite; unintentional weight loss or gain
- Difficulty in sleeping or sleeping too much
- Restlessness or feeling agitated
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating or having trouble thinking and making decisions
- Frequent thoughts of death or suicide
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt

Scan the QR Codes for these useful contacts:

- For list of providers for counselling and health advice: www.hpb.gov.sg/HOPPortal/health-article/348
- For information on social and public assistance: www.ncss.gov.sg/social_service
- For marriage and counselling support from a Family Service Centre that is nearest you, call 1800 838 0100 or go to http://goo.gl/TqznEZ
- If life seems to be getting too tough to carry on, give a call to the Samaritans of Singapore at tell: 1800 221 4444 or go to www.sos.org.sg

**EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES**

For some, losing a job can be as traumatic as losing a family member. You will need to come to terms with such feelings of despair and loss, before you can successfully move forward.

There can be a sense of loss of face and even loneliness. Headhunters that used to call you now do not return your calls. Friends may stop calling as they are unsure of what to say.

It is important to realise that in cases where a business fails or relocates out of Singapore, the retrenchment is unavoidable and not a reflection of your performance.

There can also be a reaction of anger – directed at the former boss, colleagues, the situation or others. The world is not fair. Hurting people hurt others. The challenge is to keep looking forward at what is productive. As long as one’s frustration and anger is directed outwards, it is difficult to make the inward changes necessary for us to move on. There is value in the saying that we need “Courage to change the things you can, the strength to accept the things that you cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Additional tension arising from within the family can also worsen the situation. Keep communication lines open.

**FOR AFFECTED FAMILY MEMBERS RELATING TO THE JOB SEEKING INDIVIDUAL, CONSIDER:**

- Do my words and behaviour encourage open sharing and communication?
- Do my words and behaviour effectively convey my concern and support?
- Do my words and behaviour encourage and energise effective job search behaviour or have another unintended effect? Sometimes, unemployment can increase a person’s risk of falling into depression. Especially if the person is used to being busy, the lack of purpose and activity during unemployment can make one feel lost. Having not much to do, people also tend to end up thinking a lot more, and usually not on positive things! Lack of activity and negative thoughts can make them feel down and can spiral into depression if it continues for too long. If the depression is not addressed and managed, it may undermine your attempts to carry out your career transition plans well.

Remember... you are not alone. Many people care.

And if you are well and in a position to help others who may be going through a difficult time, do show your care and support for them as well.
WHEN WE TACKLE OBSTACLES, WE FIND HIDDEN RESERVES OF COURAGE AND RESILIENCE WE DID NOT KNOW WE HAD. AND IT IS ONLY WHEN WE ARE FACED WITH FAILURE DO WE REALISE THAT THESE RESOURCES WERE ALWAYS THERE WITHIN US. WE ONLY NEED TO FIND THEM AND MOVE ON WITH OUR LIVES.

PAUL CLITHEROE
EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

While an individual’s self-reliance is key to success in a job transition journey, this is not a journey that you need to travel alone. In Singapore, there are many avenues where you can find support, whether it is upgrading your employability or changing jobs. Here are some useful links of agencies that provide assistance to those going through a career transition:

- **WDA Career Centres**
  WDA Career Centres provide a range of career and training services for the local workforce. Benefit from professional advice on how to improve your employability and gain access to job and training opportunities.

  For more information, visit [www.wda.gov.sg](http://www.wda.gov.sg) or scan the QR code.

- **Employment and Employability Institute**
  The National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) also operates the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) which serves all workers with programmes and solutions to better employment and employability.

  For more information, visit [www.e2i.com.sg](http://www.e2i.com.sg) or scan the QR code.

- **Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC)** [www.cdac.org.sg](http://www.cdac.org.sg)

- **MENDAKI** [www.mendaki.org.sg](http://www.mendaki.org.sg)

- **Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP)** [www.amp.org.sg](http://www.amp.org.sg)

- **SINDA** [www.sinda.org.sg](http://www.sinda.org.sg)

- **Eurasian Association (EA)** [www.eurasians.org.sg](http://www.eurasians.org.sg)

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT-RELATED SUPPORT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE VARIOUS SELF-HELP GROUPS SUCH AS THE:
JOB PORTALS

Today, online job portals make searching for available jobs in the market much easier. You will also be able to find useful tips and services to help you zoom in on suitable employers. Here are some of the more active job portals you can explore:

www.aces.org.sg
www.biipmi.com
www.careerjet.sg
www.careers.gov.sg
www.efinancialcareers.com.sg
www.indeed.com
www.jobscentral.com.sg
www.jobstable.com
www.jobstreet.com.sg
www.jobsupermart.com
www.monster.com.sg
www.silverspring.com.sg
www.stjobs.sg

SUGGESTED READINGS

What colour is your parachute? (2014) by Richard Bolles

Coach Yourself to a New Career: 7 Steps to Reinventing Your Professional Life by Talane Miedaner.

The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success by Nicholas Lore

Who moved my Cheese by Spencer Johnson and Ken Blanchard

Visit the LLiBrary at the Third floor of the Lifelong Learning Institute in Paya Lebar. A collaboration between the National Library Board and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency to support working adults in their professional development, the LLiBrary carries Continuing Education and Training materials and resources focusing on career development and the upgrading of skills. Users can also enjoy the NLB’s collection of digital resources at the LLiBrary.

The LLiBrary is open from 10 a.m to 10 p.m (Monday to Saturday).