

CAREER ENTRY STRATEGY—A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

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Abstract

A career entry program for adolescents entering the work force is described. The 12-step procedure is organized in four phases: Preliminary; Resume; Search; and Interview.

Résumé

Cet article traite du programme d'entrée en carrière pour les adolescents en voie de se présenter sur le marché du travail. La démarche est en 12 étapes divisées en quatre temps: préliminaire; le résumé; la recherche et l'entrevue.

An earlier paper (Clark, 1975) on the topic of Career Entry Skills (CES) contended that the coverage of CES at the high school level was lacking and suggested some topics for inclusion in a CES curriculum. Subsequent monitoring and experience in the field indicate that little has changed. The present paper puts forward a systematic strategy for CES instruction, incorporating some specific techniques and content for consideration by guidance practitioners.

CES Strategy—An Overview

The flow diagram in Figure 1 depicts a suggested career entry strategy—from an initial career decision to starting work. The procedure may be divided into four phases: Preliminary; Resume; Search; and Interview. The solid lines indicate the direct or most likely route to success; the dashed lines show less favored or recycle paths. Parallel paths represent activities which may be carried on concurrently.

Phase I: Preliminary

The initial steps in any campaign are usually crucial to its successful outcome and career entry strategy is no exception.

Career decision. Any job search begins with a decision to look for work. There may be many reasons why a young person decides to enter the labor force. It is hoped that appropriate preparation through course and program selection has been made, but in practice many career entrants in this age group (16-20 years) have little or no control over this aspect.

Career alternatives. There may in fact be few other alternatives open to the career entrant, but they should still be brought to mind. In general, employers are looking for people with skills, those who can contribute to the success of the employer's operation. Career seekers would do well to consider where possible further education or training with the aim of reducing the odds during the job search. (Although this is shown at the *start* of the career entry process it may of course be activated at any stage.)

Data worksheet. Completion of the data worksheet serves several functions. It helps the career entrant to take a personal inventory of skills, qualifications, and experience. It organizes the material in a fashion which is easy to transcribe into the resume format, and it helps to clarify the thinking of the student as to the type of

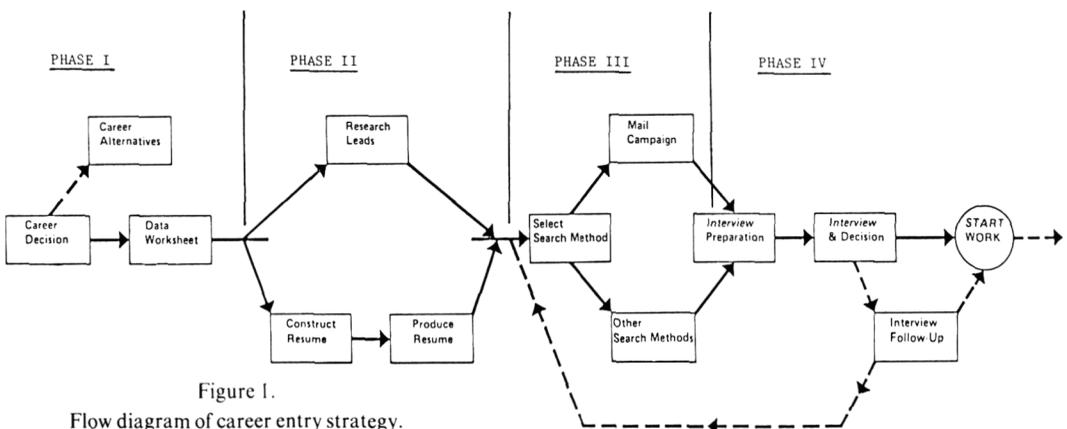


Figure 1.

Flow diagram of career entry strategy.

work which should be sought, a topic on which many are vague. The data worksheet developed by the writer (see Figure 2) includes the following sections in a 5-page format: identification, education and training, work experience, availability, personal, references, work experience, availability, personal, references, alternatives, likes and

dislikes, job preference, and additional data. It should be noted that this format and emphasis may not be suitable for all groups. It is also pointed out that not all of these data will appear on the resume.

Figure 2.
Data worksheet

<p>1. IDENTIFICATION Full Name: Address: Phone:</p> <p>2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING a. <i>High School Name</i> Program or Route Major Best Subjects (Highest Grades) Certificate or Diploma Date Expected Awards Student Organizations Sports Clubs/Associations Publications</p> <p>b. <i>Further Training</i> (e.g., Correspondence, Extension, Armed Forces, etc.) 1. 2.</p> <p>c. <i>Special Skills/Qualifications</i> (e.g., Typing, Life-saving, Driving, Languages, Equipment, etc.) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.</p> <p>3. WORK EXPERIENCE a. <i>Full Time Employment</i> Job Title: Company or Organization Name: Address: Functions/Duties (Be Specific): Name and Position of Supervisor: Dates: Reason for leaving: <i>Previous Positions</i> (Brief summary of main information as above) </p> <p>b. <i>Temporary/Part-Time Work</i> Job Title: Company/Organization Name:</p>	<p>Address: Functions:</p> <p>Name and Position of Supervisor: Dates: Reason for leaving: <i>Job Title:</i> Company/Organization Name: Address: Functions:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Name and Position of Supervisor: Dates: Reason for leaving:</p> <p>c. <i>Other Experience</i> (describe) </p> <p>4. AVAILABILITY </p> <p>5. PERSONAL Date of Birth: Place of Birth: Height: Weight: Health: Marital Status: Sports: Hobbies: Community Activities: Other Interests:</p> <p>6. REFERENCES (Names and Addresses) 1. 2. 3. 4.</p>
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7. *ALTERNATIVES*

What alternatives to going to work would you consider?

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8. *LIKES AND DISLIKES*

List the kind of activity you *enjoy* doing:

1.
 2.
 3.
 4.

List the kind of activity you don't enjoy:

1.

2.
 3.
 4.

9. *JOB PREFERENCE*

List the kind(s) of job you would like to do:

1.
 2.
 3.

10. *ADDITION* (List here anything of interest or relevance in your career to date which has not been covered or for which the allotted space was insufficient.):

.....

Phase II: Resume

Resume construction. A single page resume is advocated because of the limited education and experience of this age group and should suffice for most cases. The content of a resume is open to debate but the following topics are invariably present: personal data; work experience; education and training; availability; references.

An excellent source on this and subsequent career strategy concerns is the December, 1975 issue of the American Business Communication Association *Bulletin*. The entire issue of 14 articles is devoted to the resume, job search, and interview techniques. While the target audience of these articles is post-secondary, their pragmatic approach and business-oriented sources give them high validity for the younger career entrant.

Resume production. The production of the resume is considered separately because it is on this point that otherwise effective resumes fall short. The resume is often the employer's first contact with the career seeker; a sloppily-produced resume does not make this a fruitful contact.

The production processes which appear to be most suitable for the young job-seeker's resume include: offset printing, Xerox copies, Gestetner, and mimeograph. The process selected will depend on the number of copies desired, the funds available, school printing facilities, etc.

Research leads. The researching of leads is not part of the resume process, but it is an activity which can be carried on concurrently. It is noted that researching leads is not a job search method per se, but is rather a data-gathering process on potential employers: type of business or industry; addresses and phone numbers; names of personnel officers; etc. For this age group the following local references are usually very useful: City Directory; Business/Industrial Directory; Yellow Pages (phone books).

Phase III: Job Search Methods

With Phase III the career strategy gets into full swing. Counsellors would do well at this stage to impress on young career seekers the necessity of a committed, organized approach. Some may feel that if they check the newspaper classified ads and register with Canada Manpower the rest of their time may be spent on more enjoyable pursuits. They should be urged to prepare to put in at least a standard 5-day week on the job search. If the search methods covered below are to be effective, maximum effort is essential.

Select search method. Most young career seekers use only one or two job search methods, and commonly these methods are *not* the most effective. The most successful search methods, according to an Economic Council of Canada (1971) study, are listed in Table 1.

Table 1
 Success Rate of Job Search Methods

<i>Search Method</i>	<i>Success Rate</i>
Check with Employers	35%
Friends and Relatives	24%
Newspaper Advertisements	18%
Canada Manpower Centres	11%
Private Employment Agencies	7%

Although use of Canada Manpower Centres (CMC) is the method most often used by job seekers, their success rate is low. Why the discrepancy? Evidently only 22% of all job vacancies are listed by employers with CMC.

The necessity of using as *many* search methods as possible should be stressed. The Economic Council of Canada study found that the success rate increased by 5% for each additional job search method used by the job seeker.

Mail campaign. A job search carried out by mail has advantages for the young career entrant. It allows a wide coverage of potential job sources for a modest outlay, and it is one of the methods which is feasible while the career entrant is still attending school. Points for instructions at this stage are the content and format of the two types of letter required—one in response to a specific opening and one unsolicited.

Other search methods. Some of the other methods listed in Table 1 should be tempted if possible concurrently with the mail campaign. At this stage also the young career entrant could benefit from instruction in the following related topics: completion of application forms; taking aptitude or proficiency tests; using the telephone to maximum effect.

Phase IV: The Interview

In a real sense the job search campaign is designed to gain an *interview*—the essential prerequisite to a hiring decision.

Interview preparation. Preparing for the interview requires some research into (a) the potential employer, and (b) the job requirements.

Some of the references used in researching leads will also provide needed information on the company: size, type of operation, etc.

Counsellors or library sources should be able to provide the career entrant with information on job requirements, information which the career entrant must try to relate to qualifications and experience.

Any kind of research on the above lines will go far in meeting one of the most common complaints of interviews—the applicant knows little or nothing about the employer, the job, or how the applicant could help to meet the requirements of the job.

Some related topics for coverage at this stage might include: dress and grooming; some awkward questions to prepare for; rehearsing the interview format (particularly useful with younger and less experienced career entrants).

Interview and decision. If the preparation has been done thoroughly, the interview proper should hold no major surprises. Aspects of the interview which require care by the job seeker include: punctuality; greeting the interviewer (correct pronunciation of name); answering questions briefly but fully; having some questions for the interviewer—about the *job* and prospects, not the benefits; watching for signs to conclude; noting carefully any follow-up suggested; and thanking and taking leave of the interviewer.

Interview follow-up. If the interview results in a definite job offer this step will be of little concern to the career entrant. If no job offer is made the follow-up may serve two functions: to salvage or clinch a job offer which was marginal or uncertain; to analyze the interview experience with a view to increasing the possibilities of success in further interviews.

Conclusion

When the job seeker starts work in a new career there is little that can be done to ensure success in that career by a counsellor. Previous instruction can of course be given on suitable behaviour and attitude in a work environment, but many will not believe until they learn the hard way—on the job.

References

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- Economic Council of Canada. *Eighth Annual Review*, 1971.