

DECISION MAKING STRATEGIES FOR CAREER SUCCESS

Decision making is the process of identifying and selecting alternatives based on your unique preferences. Successful career planning requires you to make many decisions, an ability to set goals and then to know how to reach them. Often career decisions are among the most challenging you will ever make throughout your life, and never more so than in your college years. They are the basis of your major choice(s), internship and co-curricular involvements, and your first job. Ideally, you want to be able to make good decisions, which means you want them to have a high probability of success. But decisions involve uncertainty, which makes many people uncomfortable. Planning can decrease the degree of uncertainty and increase your chances of achieving your desired goal. To enhance your decision-making process, let's first gain an understanding of different **Decision Making Styles**:

Planning – Using rational thought to weigh the facts, obtain the necessary information, and explore consequences.

Impulsive – This is the “leap before you look” approach, or giving little thought to the decision before taking action.

Intuitive – Making the decision based on a “gut feeling” and striving to preserve harmony.

Compliant – This is when a person is content to let someone else decide and typically doesn't assert his or her own preferences.

Delaying – Avoiding thinking about it or taking action. In this approach the decision maker procrastinates and hopes that something happens on its own to avoid making a decision.

Fatalistic – The belief that the decision is up to fate and it will happen how it is supposed to.

Agonizing – Worrying that any decision made will be the wrong one — Being overwhelmed by the details.

Paralytic – Experiencing complete indecision and fear, resulting in the inability to act.

Defaulting – “Playing it safe” by choosing the direction with the lowest level of risk.

my SELF

Now, write down three decisions that you have made recently:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Reflection Questions:

1. Which of the above decision-making styles did you use to make each decision?
2. Think through each decision using another style. Is there another approach that could have proven to be more useful? Why?
3. What is the approach that you typically use most often? Least often?

Now that you have identified the styles that you typically use in making decisions, let's look at barriers that can interfere with the process. These factors can be external, internal, or a combination of both. In this exercise, look at the decisions that you made above and using the chart below, check any of the factors that may have influenced you in making them.

External Factors

- Family expectations
- Family responsibilities
- Cultural stereotypes
- Male/female stereotypes
- Survival needs
- Other (specify) _____

Internal Factors

- Lack of self-confidence
- Fear of change
- Fear of making the wrong decision
- Fear of failure
- Fear of ridicule
- Other (specify) _____

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you experience more internal or external obstacles when making decisions?
2. If two or more factors are present, which one(s) are most significant?
3. Does understanding your internal and external factors help you make a better decision?

A DECISION-MAKING MODEL

Now that you have gained a better understanding of the types of decision making and influences that can cause barriers, let's look at a model that will help to enhance your career-related decision-making abilities. By following the five-step process below, you can improve your ability to make informed decisions.

1. Define a career goal and list up to three objectives for each

Goal 1: _____
Objective a. _____ Date of completion _____
Objective b. _____ Date of completion _____
Objective c. _____ Date of completion _____
Goal 2: _____
Objective a. _____ Date of completion _____
Objective b. _____ Date of completion _____
Objective c. _____ Date of completion _____

2. Assess the alternatives

Alternative 1: _____
Alternative 2: _____
Alternative 3: _____

3. Gather information

Resource 1: _____ Date of completion _____
Resource 2: _____ Date of completion _____
Resource 3: _____ Date of completion _____

4. Assess the outcomes (or consequences!)

Outcome 1: _____ Date of completion _____
Outcome 2: _____ Date of completion _____
Outcome 3: _____ Date of completion _____

5. Establish a plan of action

Action 1: _____ Date of completion _____
Action 2: _____ Date of completion _____
Action 3: _____ Date of completion _____

Hopefully you have now become more aware that making good decisions requires a well thought out process and a willingness to take a few risks. The decision-making process also requires time and a willingness to gather a great deal of information.