



GETTING WORK IN A MODERN WORLD

A realistic guide to getting a
job or starting out in business

By Staff of ACS Distance Education

CONTENTS

CREDITS	5
INDEX	6
CHAPTER 1 CAREER MYTHS	8
Career myths	8
What to do about these myths and misconceptions?	12
CHAPTER 2 FINDING YOUR PATH	14
The big questions	14
CHAPTER 3 UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYERS	21
Why do people choose you?	21
Employers are real people too	24
Discovering opportunities and possibilities	25
How important is training or qualifications?	26
CHAPTER 4 PREPARING FOR A JOB	27
Education	28
Different schools for different purposes	29
Some forms of student-centred education	31
Will you learn what you need from your course?	32
CHAPTER 5 JOBS TO CONSIDER – LOOKING TO THE FUTURE	34
What is less changeable?	35
What education do i need to get ‘the’ job?	37
CHAPTER 6 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	42
It support	43
It marketing or sales professional	45
Web site developer	46

Computer technician.....	48
CHAPTER 7 BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND SALES.....	49
Manager.....	50
Small business owner.....	51
Human resource officer.....	53
Bookkeeper.....	54
Medical sales or marketing representative.....	56
Legal receptionist.....	57
Consultant.....	59
CHAPTER 8 HEALTH AND WELLBEING.....	62
Counsellor.....	63
Welfare worker.....	66
Life coach.....	69
Nutritional counsellor.....	72
Fitness professional.....	75
Fitness or health centre manager.....	77
Medical or health care receptionist.....	79
CHAPTER 9 HORTICULTURE.....	81
Nursery worker.....	82
Gardener.....	85
Florist.....	87
Horticultural therapist.....	89
Groundsman.....	91
Arborist.....	93
Landscape designer.....	95
Handyman.....	98
CHAPTER 10 WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL.....	100
Environmental manager or assessor.....	101

Wildlife officer.....	104
Marine biologist.....	107
Park ranger.....	110
CHAPTER 11 ANIMAL CARE.....	113
Veterinarian.....	113
Dog groomer.....	116
Pet shop staff.....	117
Animal shelter staff.....	119
CHAPTER 12 AGRICULTURE.....	122
Farm manager.....	123
Farm hand.....	125
Machinery operator/tractor driver.....	127
Fish farmer (aquaculture).....	128
CHAPTER 13 HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM.....	130
Event manager.....	131
Hotel manager.....	133
Caterer.....	138
Cook or chef.....	140
Restaurant owner.....	142
Tourism.....	144
Tour operator.....	146
Wedding planner.....	147
CHAPTER 14 MEDIA.....	150
Publishing.....	151
Photographer.....	153
Wedding and portrait photographer.....	154
Writer.....	156
Editor.....	158

CHAPTER 15 EDUCATION	161
Educator	162
APPENDIX	164
Distance learning and online courses	164
Other books by John Mason	165
E books by John Mason and ACS staff include:	166
Useful contacts	166
ACS global partners	167

CREDITS

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The authors fully recognise that knowledge is continually changing, and awareness in all areas of study is constantly evolving. As such, we encourage the reader to recognise that nothing they read should ever be considered to be set in stone. They should always strive to broaden their perspective and deepen their understanding of a subject, and before acting upon any information or advice, should always seek to confirm the currency of that information, and the appropriateness to the situation in which they find themselves.

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INDEX

Part 1 Choosing a Job: Planning a Career

1. Career Myths
2. Finding Your Path
3. Understanding Employers
4. Preparing for a Job
5. Jobs to Consider: Looking to the Future

Part 2 Career Profiles

6. Information Technology
7. Business, Management and Sales
8. Health and Wellbeing
9. Horticulture
10. Wildlife and Environmental
11. Animal Care
12. Agriculture
13. Hospitality and Tourism
14. Media
15. Education

PART 1 CHOOSING A JOB: PLANNING A CAREER

CHAPTER 1 CAREER MYTHS

The scope and nature of work in the world is constantly changing. Getting a job used to be relatively straight forward. Before the mid-20th century the world was much simpler. Pathways to careers were also much simpler. Many people would follow in the footsteps of their parents, doing similar training, and following on to do similar work. Those who moved away from the “family business”, may have aspired to something different; perhaps to become a doctor, teacher or engineer. In almost all of these careers, there was a relatively well established path to follow. It might have involved going to university, then gaining employment as an intern, learning on the job and over the decades advancing your career.

Unlike days gone by – where a career may have been a process of following in your parents’ footsteps - today’s path to a career is much more focussed on what you can do for yourself to enhance your opportunities.

It is a known fact that even today, many jobs are filled through ‘word of mouth’ i.e. someone knows of someone that would fit the job, rather than through advertising. This is usually achieved through ‘networking’. Networking involves hard work! You need to be ‘seen’ to be doing useful things for others. You need to be considered capable, reliable and friendly in order to build a network of contacts that respect you, and are willing to put your name forward to potential employers.

Employers look for people that are knowledgeable, able and positive. However they also look for potential, so although your knowledge and skills may still be still evolving, if you have the right attitude: a positive approach, a confident manner, the ability to transfer the skills you already have to their business, and the willingness to learn and grow - you will be looked upon very favourably.

CAREER MYTHS

There are lots of incorrect assumptions that people commonly make about careers. Some of these things which may have been true in the past are, in recent times, a myth.

Choose a career carefully and you will be set for life – This is Untrue!

In the past many people would decide on a career path in their teens and stay on the same (or similar) path for their entire working life. Others just took what was readily available to them and stayed in the job for life. Today people not only change jobs with increasing frequency, but many have several different jobs, sometimes in different industries at the same time; and most people change industries one or more times over the course of their working life.

You need to choose the right course to get the job you want – This is Untrue!

In the past, there was often only one well established entry point to a career.

To become a tradesman you would need to do an apprenticeship, to be a teacher or educator you would need a University degree, to design houses you would need to be an architect, and to be in a management role you would need a University degree. Often a young person will not know what they want to do in life, and will choose a course that gives them a broad education– it may be a generalist arts degree or diploma that includes subjects such as creative writing, psychology, languages, social studies, anthropology and so on. Employers these days see the value in people that have a good general education, because this means they often have a more lateral approach to their work. In some industries though, employers may look more favourably on a certificate or diploma level course that has focused on experiential learning (within a specific field) for example horticulture, medicine or agriculture.

Once you get the right job, you will be secure for life – This is Untrue!

In the past once you had established your career pathway, you had a high level of security. You knew where your working life was heading, you understood opportunities for advancement, you knew when you were likely to retire, and were aware of the financial situation you were likely to find yourself in upon retirement. This too has changed – most people start on a path and deviate from it many times in their working life. Job security is not a 'given' and you must be very proactive in planning for your retirement (even from quite a young age). Social security pensions are no longer seen as a right, and in the future people will be expected to fund their own retirement.

If you work hard enough, you can get the job you want – Only Sometimes True!

Certain types of jobs are constantly disappearing and being replaced by new types of jobs. No matter how hard you work you won't get the job you are working towards if that industry changes and that type of job disappears. A job that appeals to you from the outside isn't always what it appears from the inside. Even if you work hard, you may still not get a job because it does not fit with your temperament, or you live in the wrong location, or perhaps there are simply too many other people competing for the job. You need to be flexible in your approach when looking for work – this transfers to others during interviews too and people that are flexible and positive to change will always find work (even if it may not be exactly what they wanted in the first instance).

If you get a University education you will earn more – This is Untrue!

Lots of university graduates end up unemployed, this is unrelated to the fact that they went to university - reasons for this may be that there is an over-supply of graduates in their field, or perhaps what they studied is not as relevant to the jobs on offer, or the course may not be as good as what others have studied. Certain professions do not necessarily pay a lot either. Many jobs in the welfare industry for instance are low paid, when compared with what a doctor or engineer might be paid; even though all of these professions may require a similar amount of academic effort to get a degree. University graduates are not offered huge salaries upon graduation! Like everyone they have to start at the bottom. Today employers are more

likely to view a graduate as 'entry level' than ever before. Graduates also find that when they do find a job that there is so much more to learn – a degree or diploma will give you a start, but will certainly not teach you everything, and not guarantee big money.

A job with government is more secure than one in private enterprise – This is Untrue!

This is often touted, but since the global financial crisis many governments have sacked large numbers of employees. No job can be considered as 'secure' these days.

You will earn more money by running your own business – This is only Sometimes True!

The vast majority of small businesses fail, and many that survive will see their owners working long hours and weekends to simply survive. A minority of small businesses however, will thrive. The owners of thriving businesses get noticed, and because they are noticed, give the impression that being a business owner is a highly desirable situation. The failures get far less attention.

These and other such "truths" are "myths" in the modern workplace. Many people do not properly appreciate these myths about employment and careers.

When you stop and think though; the things that we commonly hear in the media and hear talked about in society are often contradictory.

For example, young people are often told that they need a college or university education to be assured of a successful career in a particular industry; but media reports are constantly being published

that show graduates not following a career path in the discipline they studied.

Governments often identify needs in education at a particular point in time, and then set about working through a bureaucratic process of industry input, course development and funding allocations, which results in a course being launched several years later in response to that identified need. Often graduates begin to emerge from a diploma or degree six years or more after a need was identified – by this time the entire economy may have taken another turn or the need may have changed. At the same time, we often read that half of the jobs that will be available in 5 years time have not yet been conceived. Is it any wonder that more than half of the graduates from many tertiary courses find difficulty getting work?

There are reasons for these contradictions. Teens and young adults often take advice from parents and grandparents who are trying to pass on their experience and words of wisdom - given to them by their parents, teachers and grandparents.

- Wisdom from the past is not as relevant in today's world. Things a grandparent heard from their grandparent may have been true at the time they were spoken, but that ancestor may have formulated their ideas about getting a job over a hundred years ago!
- Many people take advice from teachers who have never known anything but teaching. A person who goes from being a university science student at age 20, to being a teacher at age 21 and a careers advisor at age 30, may not be the best person to advise on how businesses make decisions about who they employ and why.

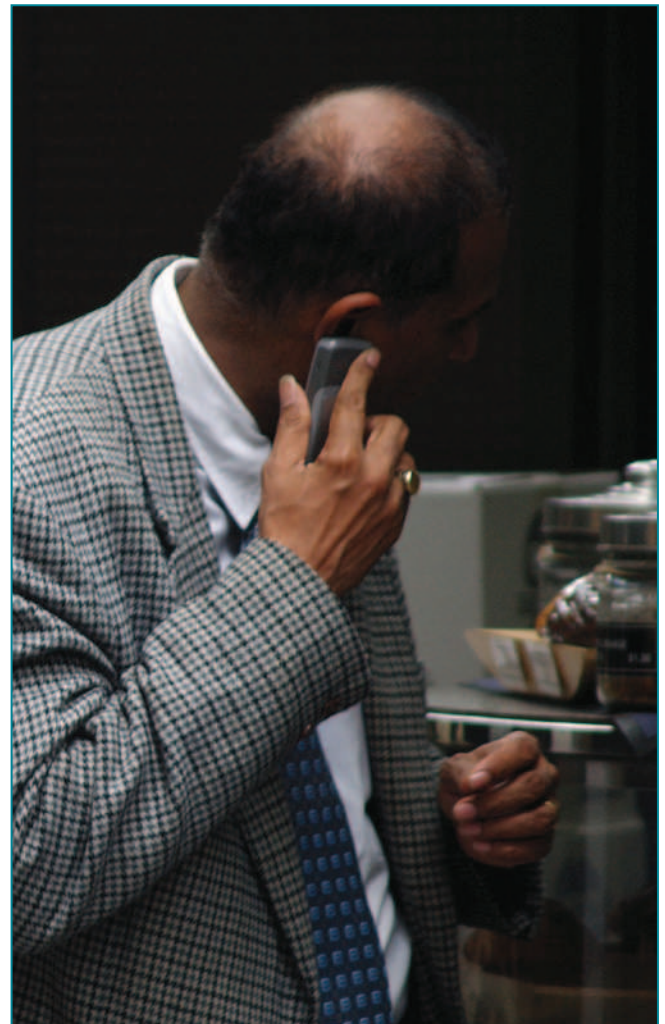
- People think that if they find their niche, and get established, they will be set for life - this is untrue. Everything is changing. Most people change jobs every few years and may move to totally different careers several times throughout their working life.
- There have been changes in the modern world that have opened up opportunities that would be unfathomable certainly for your grandparents, and possibly for your parents. There are ways to make money that never existed in the past, especially through the internet. Businesses can be conducted on a global, rather than a local scale. Many people have become self-made millionaires due to this possibility.

Many people think “If I do this course; I will get this job” In the real world, this is a myth. Qualifications are sometimes important, when and where governments have legislated to make it compulsory to have a certain qualification. Doctors and lawyers for instance, usually need to be registered to work in their jobs; and registration would require certain university level qualifications. However many industries are simply not like this.

Here are some examples:

- Lots of people study journalism degrees, but many of the people who work as journalists do not have a degree in journalism. Some people who have degrees in journalism may not work as journalists – they may work in marketing or business development for example.
- Lots of people obtain PhDs only to be told they are over qualified; while people with lesser qualifications are frequently seen beating them to a job.

- Some of the wealthiest and most successful business owners are university or high school drop outs.



Some people who have degrees in journalism may not work as journalists – they may work in marketing or business development.

- Graduates from I.T. degrees often struggle to find work in I.T., while “computer nerds” who taught themselves about I.T. at home are often more successful in that industry, without ever having done any formal study at all.

- People who study business, accounting or other subjects because their parents encourage them into what they perceive as a secure and high earning profession, often fail to succeed in the area they studied because, despite having the qualification, they do not have a passion or natural affinity for the industry which is needed for success. Many students that receive very high results in their final school year are encouraged into medicine or law because their parents or others view these as prestigious professions. However in the past medicine, for example, was thought of as a 'vocation' (a calling) rather than a course of study you undertook because you are very clever. People that undertake study due to outside pressure do not always succeed, even if they do complete their studies they may not go on to be successful in their field.
- A college or university that is dependent upon getting enrolments in order to remain viable is going to have a bias to encourage students to do their courses, whether relevant or not. They may also give unrealistic expectations to potential students – an example of this is the I.T. and multi-media industries – graduates in these courses ten years ago were told that they would be 'head hunted' even before they finished their courses and step straight into very high paying roles. In reality this caused an over-supply of graduates that were either unemployed for lengthy periods, or had to do further studies to make themselves employable. Those that did find work started on very modest salaries, even after 4 or 5 years of study.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THESE MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS?

- First of all, recognise the fact that the world is changing.
- Recognise that it is unlikely you will find the perfect job, settle into it, and remain comfortable and secure, doing the same thing, for your entire working life. This may have happened to many people fifty years ago, but it is an increasingly rare situation today.
- While you are young, focus on building broader based knowledge and experience, rather than something too specialised. That way, you keep your options to move from job to job and industry to industry more open.
- Always be on the lookout for opportunities to improve yourself; be open to learning (in whatever way necessary), even if you have to spend time learning what you don't like, or do not really want to do. Don't move from job to job too fast - or you will develop a reputation as being unreliable. Don't stay in the same job for too long, unless it offers opportunities for growth; otherwise you may become stagnant and lose your capacity to keep improving your position.
- Speak with people who have experience in the area you are interested in. Find out what their journey was to get to where they are. Ask lots of questions about the realities of the job. Do work experience in a field you are interested in to gain insights into whether it is for you or not, and valuable experience for when you are going for a job.