

THE ESSENTIAL CAREER GUIDE

OPEN THE DOOR TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER



CAROLE BROWN

About the author



Carole Brown is one of Australia's most experienced and highly regarded career coaches, having dedicated most of her working life to the career development of others.

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Disclaimer

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What people say about The Essential Career Guide



“Carole’s brilliance and clarity about career planning’s essential elements complement her wisdom from exceptional practice and international leadership. Her checklist alone gives you the advantage needed to adapt within a lifetime of transitions”

Rich Feller Ph.D., Professor of Colorado State University and Past President of the National Career Development Association

*“Anyone who wants to build a rich and varied career will benefit from using the profound and wonderfully clear advice outlined in The Essential Career Guide. Keep it by your side as you navigate career challenges, opportunities and transitions and it will give you the confidence and skill **to** make the right career decisions for you.”*

Louisa Scagliotti, Director Adept Career Moves, Australia

“This is a book that is straightforward, inviting, up-to-date, and practical. Carole Brown’s wealth of knowledge in career development shines through and provides clear and essential information about career choice and transition. I love the layout of the chapters, the practical examples, and the exercises that are embedded throughout the text.”

Dr. Norman Amundson, University of British Columbia, Canada

“At last, a simple book on career planning that gets right to the point. This guide takes you through the process step by step. Throw away the complex maps for career planning, this is like having satellite navigation to guide you where you want your career to go.”

Steven Dover, Director Human Resources, Australian Council for Educational Research

“Easy reading, very digestible and able to be savoured in tasty bite sized morsels. I really liked the balance of quotes, individual stories and concrete advice that readers could easily follow and most importantly apply. The book provides a clear pathway that the reader can follow from beginning to end. Practical, grounded and realistic – written in a way that everyone can connect with at a very personal level.”

Les Emery, Fellow Career Development Association of Australia



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1 Introduction

I couldn't wait for success ... so I went ahead without it.

- Jonathan Winters

Welcome to the *Essential Career Guide*. This book is a practical guide to building a successful career. It offers a why, what and how of career management that helps you to:

- know who you are and what you can offer
- how to successfully find jobs and opportunities that suit you best
- how to plan your career, make good decisions and then take action



Throughout my many years experience as a teacher, manager, coach and professional leader in career development, I have been privileged to observe, listen to and assist people with a large range of career questions and issues. Some of these may be familiar to you. For example, has there ever been a time when you:

- Were confused about what career direction to head in?
- Lost your job or redundancy was on the horizon?
- Felt trapped in a job, not knowing what to do about it?
- Wanted to plan for a career change or position yourself for promotion?
- Wished you knew how to write an excellent job application and prepare for job interviews?
- Wanted to know how to fast track your job search and improve your social media presence?
- Needed to plan your return to work after a break?
- Wanted to enhance your work performance and relationships?
- Wondered what further training or study options are best?

Regardless of what stage of life you are at, the value of being able to manage your career nimbly and with confidence is enormous. *The Essential Career Guide* is a practical guide to how to allocate your time and attention to growing a successful career and to becoming more of the person you want to be, making the contribution you want to make.

I hope you find this book of value in growing your brilliant career!

Carole



Throughout this guide you will come across this **Icon**. It indicates actions and tasks that will help you to apply key points to your own career. All they require is a notebook and a minute or two to complete.

2 Why your career matters

Successful (adj.) fruitful, positive, thriving, productive, flourishing, effective, real, authentic
Career (n.) vocation, job, profession, calling, business, livelihood

Throughout your life you will likely spend more time working than anything else. It makes a lot of sense therefore, to invest time and attention to ensure you feel good about what you are doing and where you are heading. Your career will happen with or without your attention. It won't stand still, nor will you.

Circumstances, such as a change in business strategy, a new boss and how well you perform your job, mean your career will go in unexpected directions and rarely move in a straight line. Despite these factors, you can largely take control of your career direction and work towards what you really want to do. But it does require your attention.

Managing your career successfully is important to both yourself and to those around you. Every day I learn of or see people in my practice who have lost their way, cannot find a job they like, are stuck for direction or aren't succeeding at job interviews. Often this leads to sagging confidence and energy, lack of clarity and certainty, and diminished creativity and resilience.

Equally, I also see people who with a little focus and determination have re-invented themselves, going on to win a better job and finding themselves much happier, more productive and moving in a direction that is right for them. They are reaping the benefits of managing or crafting their careers more effectively.

Managing your career successfully

To manage your career successfully means:

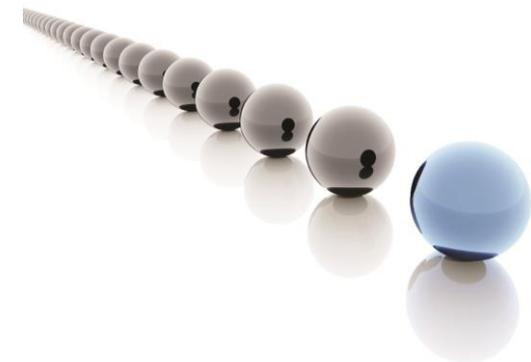
- Being tuned in to who you are and what you want to contribute
- Knowing what you have to offer
- Actively and strategically connecting to opportunities
- Keeping up to date with the job market
- Being prepared to work hard
- Having the confidence, focus and energy to make decisions that will take you forward

Gone are the days when you can expect that if you perform your job well, your career will take care of itself and your boss

will be there to support you. There are countless people who have lost their jobs or their workplace has gone ‘sour’, despite their ability and willingness to turn up every work day and do an excellent job.

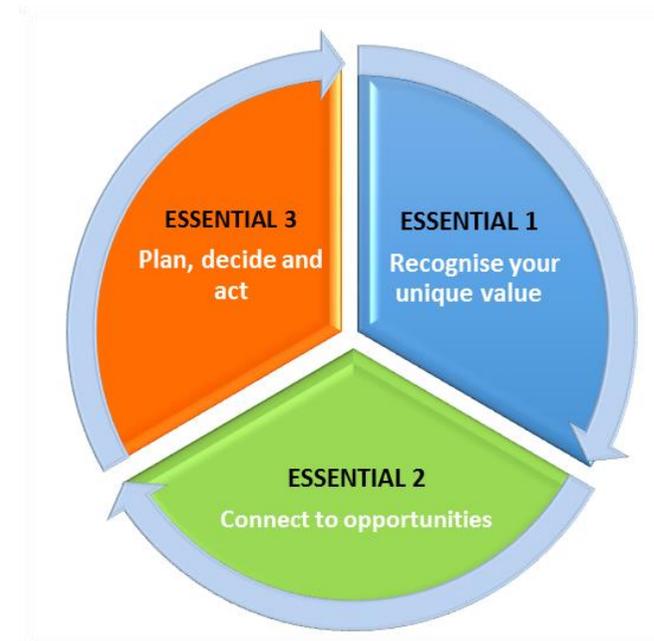
In order to manage your career you need to be proactive and flexible, open to new ideas and possibilities and able to ride out the bumps of less-than-ideal work situations when they occur. It means that you must pay attention to office politics, talk to key influencers and notice (and where possible be part of) the big decisions that your organisation is making, and why.

Most importantly managing your career requires you to be prepared to make decisions and act upon them.



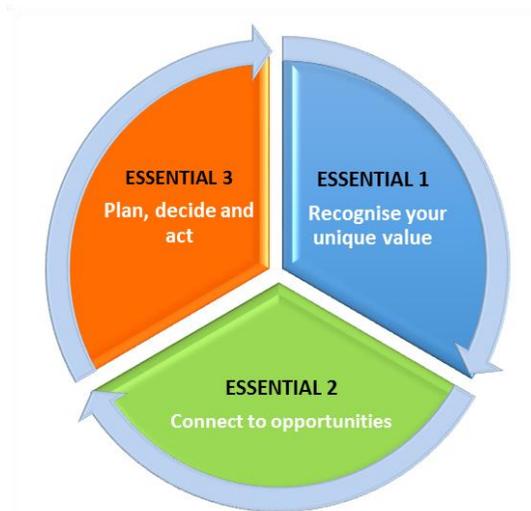
3 The three essentials for career success

No career or job is ever absolutely perfect (at least not forever), but when your job is largely fruitful, positive, thriving, productive, flourishing, effective, real and authentic, or a good combination of these, *and you recognise why*, then your career is definitely on the right track. The success that you feel in your career will flow on and positively impact other parts of your life. *You will feel in charge.*



This diagram illustrates *three basic and fundamental elements of successful career management*. While there is no silver bullet to achieving what you want for your career, by paying attention to each of these three things you will almost certainly be successful.

Each essential element is equally important and continually connected, working in relationship to each other. At any one point, one element may require more of your attention than the others,



enabling you to keep your career in flow. For example, if you are looking for a new job, you are likely considering what sort of job suits your skills and is a good match for your career values. **(Essential 1)**. As well, you will be wanting to update your resume, be

active among your networks and do some research on the labour market. **(Essential 2)**. This information should then inform the plans and decisions you make about your career and the jobs you seek.

(Essential 3).

Let me explain further what each Essential means.

Essential 1. Recognise your unique value

To achieve career success you need to understand and appreciate the interests, skills, experience and reputation that set you apart from others. Knowing who you are, what motivates you and what you have to offer, enables you to make good decisions about what you want and position yourself more confidently in the job market.

This section of the book focusses on how to:

- Understand what motivates you most
- Be guided by what interests you
- Recognise your marketable skills, identifying which skills you really want to use and develop further
- Clarify the value of your personal and career brand to employers
- Connect your values, skills and interests to your job search and career planning

Essential 2. Connect to opportunities

Knowing who you are and what you have to offer makes it much easier to swing into job search mode.

This section of the book covers how to:

- Learn about the labour market
- Efficiently and effectively search for and find jobs
- Build your on-line profile and personal career brand
- Write excellent job applications and prepare for job interviews



Essential 3. Plan, decide and act

A career without strategy, future planning and goals, is a bit like a ship without a rudder. You tend to drift around, falling into jobs, without any clear direction or compass to navigate the opportunities out there or to guide the decisions you make about your career.

This section of the book looks at how to:

- Ask the questions that enable you to ‘think big’ and make plans for your career
- Set sensible and achievable career goals
- Seize the right opportunities
- Build your career resilience
- Remain fresh and relevant in your current job

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