



Join and have your questions answered!

“Employment issues”

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ENTERING THE WORLD OF WORK

Taking the first steps into the world of work can bring about many things – it can be exciting, motivating, challenging and frightening. And if one is living with a chronic condition, it can add an additional anxiety.

But it is always important to remember that entering the world of work will also allow you to develop your skills and set career goals, as well as start your own path in life, living the life you want and achieving the things you want.

*Being part of the work world also **helps us to meet a variety of psychosocial needs that we have as human beings**, for example, it ensures our interaction with others on a personal, social and professional basis, as well as our participation in various social settings – families, communities and work environments. It also allows us to have our personal needs met and enables us to make decisions.*

In this article the basic requirements for being able to successfully be part of the work world are listed!

Self-knowledge

Self-knowledge is important and necessary as it provides us with several things. When we are self-aware, we are better able to explore our assets, so to say, for the job market – our interests, vocational skills, achievements, transferable skills, talents, personal qualities and characteristics. Some of those things we were born with and have naturally and some of the things that we do every day without even realising that we are doing them.

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Young people that are just starting their path in the work world might think that they do not have many skills, but in fact they do – it is important to look at all the basic skills that you have. Then you create a personal profile, based on those assets and match this profile to possible careers. Everybody may have a different opinion of what your career might be and there is no right or wrong, it is whatever works best for you!

Career options

Once you have the self-knowledge and started building the personal profile, you start looking at where do you want to work. It is important to have a look at a variety of acceptable career options – what type of job do you want to do, what kind of jobs are available at the moment – because what you want to do and what is available might be different- and what do you need for that job – qualifications, education etc. It can be very helpful to look at trends in employment – how many jobs are available in that sector, nationally, globally... is it something that you can travel with? Something that you can do remotely from home? All of these different things need to be considered.



In addition to this, you may need to look at how can you achieve what is required or what you want, so there may be education programmes or certain qualification or

skills that are needed. For this it can be helpful to put together a list of education/training programmes available to get the skills and qualifications you need.

Having career options will also allow you to try the career assessment tools available that can be helpful, for example Pathfinder or SkillCheckTM. Europass website can be also very useful. There is a lot more support available than you realise.

After having looked at the career options, you can match them with your personal profile.

Action plan

Once you have decided which career option best matches your personal profile, you need to put an action plan in place. The most important aspect here is that it needs to be achievable. An example that I would give here is that if somebody was visually impaired and wanted to become a commercial airline pilot, would anyone want to fly with him? We would not be willing to get on that airplane. So, it is about having realistic choices for you.

It is not to say that you can't have your dreams and reach for the stars, but it is just about putting things in the perspective. What will be necessary for you to get there and what do you need to have.

It is important to have short- and medium-term goals in this process. You could start with looking at where you want to be in five years' time, but then break it down into more manageable pieces. Pieces that you can achieve by taking small steps at a time, maybe 3-4 months or six months.

Secondly, the goals should be SMART.

Specific (Pick a career or a few options that you want to look at)

Measurable (How can I measure my progress? What will be my measure?)

Achievable (Is it achievable? Do I have the skills needed? Can I develop those skills?)

Realistic (The blind pilot)

Timely (How long will it take me to get there?)



When you have had a look at all of this, **break it down even more and select career options and job types and identify the following:**

- Name of career (e.g. nurse, IT, adult education etc.)
- Availability of jobs (look at the concrete jobs available and advertised- name and address of company, application details)
- Requirements for job (What are the concrete things requested, e.g. personal qualities, education, experience? What do you have and what do you need to fill in?)
- Trends in the sector you have chosen (If it is a seasonal job, if it offers flexi-time and to what extent it could accommodate your needs)
- Name of education/ training programme (What exactly is available to fill the gaps you need to fill- duration, name and address of college, entry criteria, application form/details etc. Also, how much is it going to cost. People are not aware that there are lot of free schemes available as well.)



Network Building –

Build your own network!

Once you have done all the above you can start building your network. And what is important to remember is that for each of you the network will look completely different.

How do you build a network? Start with compiling a list of appropriate contacts.

Have a look at your personal contacts – who do you have in your family, your friends that work in different places that might be able to get you some work experience or get you some contacts.

Have a list of all the career opportunities, the companies that work in the sector where you want to be. Have a list of all of the education and training and then the government initiatives in employment support- local employment schemes, government initiatives etc.

Plan implementation

With all of this prepared you are ready to put your plan in place! The first step here would be to develop a **Job Seeking Tool Kit** to support a job application, containing the following:

- **General cover letter** (which then could be adapted to the specific things that you are applying for);
- **Curriculum Vitae (CV)** - appropriate layout / template / spelling, grammar and punctuation. The potential employer will notice if not a lot of thought has been put in there. Take your time for this and ask somebody to have a look at it for you;
- **References / recommendations.** You can build references in many different ways (e.g. family that you used to babysit for or your NMO where you volunteer);
- **Qualifications and other documentation.**

Practicing your personal interactions.

From my experience I see that practicing is very important. **I have mock-interviewed colleagues and I know that they have all the skills and qualifications needed, but when they are in an interview they become a different person.** So it is important to practice your interview skills, as well as formal and informal conversations.



In preparation for the interviews, evaluate your performance and seek feedback, e.g. areas of strength and areas of necessary improvement. Think ahead of the questions that may be asked!

And then – start applying for jobs and/or education that you have envisaged! Here it is very important to always follow application requirements – If it is not specified, you can apply whichever way you want, but always check the details!

And always ask for the feedback! You may think that you have done well, but you have not or vice versa. You don't know the reasons why people don't hire people.

A final word here is also to keep on knocking. Sometimes the jobs are gone before we even get out there, but it is important to keep on trying! Eventually you'll get there!