

Session 1: The Importance of Flexibility and Balance in Career Planning

A *Professional Career Plan* involves much more than getting a job. It embodies detailed planning, informed choices, and managed execution.

Imagine you are in a small boat in the middle of an endless sea. After a long day of rowing you spot a number of enticing islands in the distance – all



diverse in size and features. Do you immediately head towards the nearest island which is surrounded by rocks? Or would it be preferable to select the lushest, the largest, or one with an escarpment? Or should you just row in the general direction of the islands with the single hope of reaching any dry land? Alternatively you could stop rowing, catch some fish to recover your energy, and think – running the risk of drifting away from all of the islands?

You can easily draw parallels between the story and a prospective job search. Each stage has benefits. When you plan, you allow yourself the time to regain energy and reflect. When making informed choices, you are taking ownership of both the plan and the environment. When you are active in the job search, you become truly engaged in reaching your goal. However, lingering in each stage has its drawbacks. Too much planning may lead to lost opportunities. Inability to decide leads to inactivity. Too much busyness may shield you from insight. What I have presented are the extremes. However, these extremes are unfortunately the most common practices of those who look for employment or are seeking a career change.

The more flexible and balanced approach would be to plan, make an informed choice and execute the tactic. I would label this process Plan+Choose+Execute or PCE. Working in this manner inserts the needed time for you to pause and evaluate the situation. It will force you to make decisions and spring you into action. Flexibility is achieved as you evaluate your options and plan your next move. Balance is achieved as you never are stuck in one phase for a prolonged period of time. Ultimately, progression towards your end goal will be inevitable as you repeat each PCE cycle.

As you start your career plan, remember to Plan+Choose+Execute to ensure you remain flexible and balanced in your approach. In this way you will reach your personal “island paradise”.

Stayed tuned for the next post which will outline details on the planning process.