

Career Planning Guide for IEEE Members



**How to Achieve Greater
Satisfaction and Impact at Work**



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Version 3.0

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● Introduction

What do you want from your work and your career?

Fun and fulfillment

Security/financial peace of mind

Challenge and growth

The opportunity to make a difference; the knowledge that what you do matters

The opportunity to use my talents to do what I do best

Opportunities

Great working relationships

Appreciation and recognition

The freedom to call your own shots/work independently

Balance

Impact in the organization

Influence over important decision

Whatever your career goals and interests, this planning tool will help you achieve greater satisfaction and make more of an impact at work. Because your career values and goals are unique, you are the only person qualified to determine the course of action that will best suit your interests. This tool will help you identify and tailor solutions to your unique needs, goals and work situation. Do more than read this guide. You won't be able to gain its full benefits unless you thoughtfully complete all the exercises, and then take action based on your learning. The more you put into this process, the more you'll get out of it — so plan to spend at least two to three hours working with this tool.

The content of this planning guide is based on the principle that sustainable career vitality is only possible when *your* needs, as well as those of your employer, are satisfied. If either your needs or those of your organization are not met, you will undermine the long-term relationship with a perception of inequity. If you feel cheated, you will consciously or unconsciously give less than you are capable of giving. And if your employer believes you are not meeting expectations, they may withhold the opportunities and rewards that you need to achieve your personal goals. Either way, the relationship erodes and sustainable career vitality is impossible. Consequently, in this planning guide, we will help you consider

how you can meet more of your own needs by meeting more of your organization's needs.

Once you have created your plan, we encourage you to think carefully about the role of your manager in this process. The more they buy into your plan, the more you are likely to achieve. Your manager needs and wants to know how you will help the team achieve its goals (the win-win proposition). The more you can frame your development goals in terms of how it will help your manager and your team, the more successful you will be at gaining their enthusiastic support.

Objectives and Process Steps

By the time you have completed this planning process, you will have:

1. Learned how to get the support you need to fully implement your plan.
2. Created a career development plan that will:
 - Align your strengths and interests with the needs of your organization;
 - Increase both your job satisfaction and your contributions to the success of the organization; and
 - Enhance your employability.

This tool will walk you through the following five-step process:

Step One: Self-Assessment (p. 7)

Step Two: Setting Direction (p. 19)

Step Three: Gap Analysis (p. 22)

Step Four: Development Planning (p. 30)

Step Five: Implementation (p. 38)

● Step One: Self-Assessment

Job satisfaction is essential to your career success. Without adequate job satisfaction your work will drain you of vitality, and you're unlikely to do your best work. In every job there will be some things that you like and some that you don't like. The ratio of good to bad aspects of a job will determine how satisfied you are with that job. Taking time to analyze the components of your job and how they affect job satisfaction is a critical first step towards increasing your job satisfaction. The results from this first exercise will affect the rest of your planning, so give it your best thinking.

1. Assessing Current Job Satisfaction

The following five things I enjoy most about my present job are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Five things that are least satisfying about my present job are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2. Identifying the Ideal Job

The nature of your work, and the environment in which you work, are critical to both your satisfaction and your ability to add value. While one type of work environment might bring out or even enhance your abilities, another type may diminish or negate them. The purpose of the following exercise is not to give you an impossible goal to shoot for, but rather to clarify your needs in a way that will allow you to seek work and work environments that are best suited for you.

What would represent the ideal job for you? What are the ten most important aspects of a job for you? (See the list on the opposite page for some examples)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now prioritize these ten in order of importance.

salary/rewards	working with people	influence	convenience
convenient schedule	working with ideas	ownership	prestige
autonomy	working with things	impact	daycare
challenge	variety	independence	travel
work-life balance	whole tasks	formal	recognition
security/structure	breaking new ground	informal	specialization
upward mobility	visibility	predictability	innovation
clear direction	being in charge	ambiguity	convenience
management support	limited structure	strict routine	prestige
teamwork	collaborative	flexibility	daycare
collaboration	leadership	supervisor's style	
		opportunity for creativity	

3. Making Your Current Job Better

Compare the job qualities that you find most satisfying in your current job (page 7) with those you envision in your ideal job (page 8). How are they alike? How are they different?

What do you most want to change about your current job, to make it more like your ideal job?

How would these changes impact your team or organization? How will they help you add more value to your employer or customer?

What ideas do you have for making these changes a reality? Who can help? How can you get them on board?

4. Identifying Your Talents

Before you can complete the worksheet to identify your talents, you need to clearly differentiate between your talents and your skills. Your talents represent those things that you do intuitively or can learn faster than most people. A talent might be the *ability to learn new languages*. Skills associated with the talent of languages would include mastering the vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation for a specific language.

Your talents represent your *innate* strengths. Your skills represent your *learned* strengths. It is important to differentiate between these because skills can be learned, but talents cannot. Consequently, if you take a job for which you have the right talents but not all the skills, you'll probably be okay — because you can quickly learn the new skills. On the other hand, if you lack certain talents for a job, it will take you a lot longer than most people to acquire the new skills you need to be successful.

The issue is not that one can't acquire skills in the absence of talents. Someone who lacks a talent for languages will still be able to learn a new language. But it will take that person four to 10 times longer to learn a new language than someone who has the requisite talents. It's a matter of efficiency and economics. In a rapidly changing world, learners have a clear advantage over the learned. When we are in jobs that are consistent with our talents, our competitive advantage comes from our ability to learn things a lot faster than our competitors.

To isolate your talents, think about the things you've done intuitively, without having to be taught or reminded. Think about classes, subject areas or skills where you found it quite easy to excel yet others really struggled. (You probably had a hard time understanding why they didn't get it the first time, like you did.) Once you've identified the skills you were able to master with less effort than most people, ask yourself, "What talent enabled me to learn that skill so quickly?"

In the exercises below, try to list your talents separately from your skills. For example talent for languages versus competence in Russian grammar; mathematical talent versus skills in calculus; getting results through others versus proficiency in establishing performance standards; dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty versus mastery of specific marketing forecasting methods; design and artistic ability versus skill in using computer aided design tools; thinking on your feet versus demonstrating effective presentation techniques; writing computer code versus programming in c++ ; spotting patterns and trends versus mastering statistical methods etc.).

What skills/subject areas have you found intuitively, or were able to master faster than most people? What do people compliment you on?

What patterns emerge that would indicate the presence of a talent? What are these talents?

5. Analyzing Your Accomplishments

Another way to target your talents is to evaluate your major achievements. Think of the three to five most significant things you have achieved — accomplishments where you were able to overcome significant challenges to make a real difference. These achievements need not be work related. Make the list as specific as possible. For example, "*Managed the engineering department well for three years*" does not zero in on exactly what made the achievement significant. Strive for statements like, "*Increased department productivity by 30%*" or "*Procured a patent for an original design that had a significant impact on the bottom line.*"

For each achievement, describe the situation, and the challenge met or obstacles overcome. Note the action(s) you took; exactly what happened as a result of that action; the skills you learned; and the talents you demonstrated. Use your résumé and/or brainstorm with colleagues and friends to complete this worksheet.

Accomplishment #1

Situation and related challenges:

Actions taken:

Results achieved:

Skills learned/used:

Talents demonstrated:

Exposure (How well was the accomplishment received by your group/managers/customers):

Accomplishment #2

Situation and related challenges:

Actions taken:

Results achieved:

Skills learned/used:

Talents demonstrated:

Exposure (How well was the accomplishment received by your group/
managers/customers):

Accomplishment #3

Situation and related challenges:

Actions taken:

Results achieved:

Skills learned/used:

Talents demonstrated:

Exposure (How well was the accomplishment received by your group/
managers/customers):

Accomplishment #4

Situation and related challenges:

Actions taken:

Results achieved:

Skills learned/used:

Talents demonstrated:

Exposure (How well was the accomplishment received by your group/managers/customers):

Accomplishment #5

Situation and related challenges:

Actions taken:

Results achieved:

Skills learned/used:

Talents demonstrated:

Exposure (How well was the accomplishment received by your group/managers/customers):

6. Identifying Your Competencies

Now that you've given some thought to your talents and skills, you are ready to complete an inventory of your competencies. (Your competencies reflect a combination of talents, knowledge, skills and behaviors that you use to get things done.) To help you create a more complete list of your competencies, refer to the accompanying inventory adapted from a list created by the U.S. Department of Labor. If you have come across a list of skills or competencies from another source that you feel better serves your purposes (e.g., from your current organization), feel free to use it. It is the exercise of analyzing your competencies that is most important.

Indicate whether your demonstrated proficiency in each competency area is high, medium or low.

Competencies			
Resource Management	High	Med	Low
<i>Knowledge workers must be able to schedule time, budget funds, arrange space, or assign staff. Assess yourself against the following competencies:</i>			
Budget management			
Coping with deadlines			
Establishing objectives			
Scheduling			
Forecasting			
Personal organization			
Time management			
Communication and Interpersonal	High	Med	Low
<i>Competent employees can work well with team members and teach new workers; serve clients directly; negotiate with others to solve problems or reach decisions; and work comfortably with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. Assess yourself against the following competencies:</i>			
Negotiation			
Customer relations			
Recognizing value of diversity			
Seeking and receiving feedback			
Teamwork/collaboration			
Selecting people/interviewing			
Listening			
Establishing work relationships			
Speaking/presentations			
Leadership	High	Med	Low
<i>Top performing employees must exercise initiative and provide their own leadership, instead of waiting for leadership from above. Assess yourself against the following competencies:</i>			
Anticipating problems and taking action without waiting to be told			
Following through/ accountability			
Holding others accountable			

Initiating change/improvement			
Developing self/self-directed learning			
Persistence			
Influencing and persuading			
Supervising/coordinating the work of others			
Developing people/mentoring/coaching			
Dealing with pressure			
Delegating			
Motivating others			
Responsibly challenging the status quo			
Championing change/new ideas/innovation			
Providing feedback/initiating difficult conversations			
Information Management	High	Med	Low
<i>Knowledge workers must be able to identify, assimilate and integrate information from diverse sources; prepare, maintain and interpret quantitative and qualitative records; convert information from one form to another and convey information, in writing, as the need arises. Assess yourself against the following</i>			
Analyzing/classifying			
Decision-making			
Synthesizing			
Writing			
Reading			
Abstracting			
Dealing with ambiguity/uncertainty			
Constructing			
Modeling			
Interpreting/translating			
Observing			
Integrating			
Reporting			
Conceptualizing			

Calculating			
Designing			
Editing/revising			
Investigating			
Systems Thinking	High	Med	Low
<i>Knowledge workers must understand their own work in the context of the work of those around them; they must understand how parts of systems are connected, anticipate consequences, and monitor and correct their own performance; they must be able to identify trends and anomalies in system performance, integrate multiple displays of data, and link symbols (e.g., displays on computer screen) with real phenomena (e.g., machine performance). Assess yourself against the following competencies:</i>			
Thinking strategically			
Thinking systematically			
Establishing performance standards			
Evaluating performance			
Measuring performance			
Correcting performance			
Technical/Functional Competence	High	Med	Low
<i>Knowledge workers must demonstrate high levels of competence in selecting and using appropriate technology; using technology to monitor tasks; and operating, maintaining and troubleshooting complex instruments and equipment. Assess yourself against the following competencies:</i>			
Troubleshooting/maintaining technology			
Using instruments/equipment			
Problem solving			
Selecting applications			
Technical/Functional skills (please list)			

● Step Two: Setting Your Direction

Now that you have a clearer idea of who you are and what you need to truly enjoy your work, it's time to create a vision and some goals for yourself.

1. Writing Your Vision Statement

Your vision statement describes in general terms how you will add value for others. It is future oriented and may be somewhat idealistic. Below are examples of ineffective and effective vision statements:

Vision Statement: Example #1

Become the Vice-President of Research for the Company.

This statement is ineffective because it says nothing of the value the individual plans to create for others. Furthermore, it is limiting because it depends on a specific slot on the organizational chart becoming available at the right time. What happens if the position gets eliminated in a reorganization?

Vision Statement: Example #2

I will enhance the competitiveness of the company by shaping its technological direction.

Vision #2 is more effective because it specifies the value to be created and is much less limiting. It also provides more flexibility because one can shape the technological direction of a company in many different organizational roles.

Vision Statement: Example #3

I will be issued more patents than any other engineer in the company.

Vision #3 falls short in terms of the value it creates. Patents for the sake of patents may serve the egotistical needs of the individual, but are unlikely to further the interests of the organization.

Vision#4

I will contribute to the organization's success by developing technologies that reduce this country's dependence on fossil fuel.

Vision #4 is much more effective. It not only describes the value to be created for the organization, but also the contribution to society-at-large.

Writing Your Own Vision Statement:

Write down your vision statement for the future, how will you add value for others?

1. In the next few years:
2. Over the course of the next 5-20 years:

2. Setting Your Goals

A goal describes the specific next step/milestone toward the realization of a vision. Writing your goals down is important, because if a goal is not written down, it's probably nothing more than a wish. Writing your goals down also helps you to clarify and refine them. The following activity will guide you through the process of writing your goals, and hopefully achieving them.

Answer the following questions as honestly as you can.

Given my strengths and those things that are important to me, what are my professional goals? What do I want to begin doing in:

One to Two-Year Goals:

- target job (which could be your current job)
- type (and size) of company
- How will I add value?
- How will I make a real difference for your customers? (Remember, if you're employed by a company, that company is your primary customer.)
- salary
- location

Three Years and Beyond:

- target job
- type (and size) of company
- How will I be adding value?
- How will I make a real difference for your customers? (Remember, if you're employed by a company, that company is your primary customer.)
- Salary
- location

Reality Check:

When you identify potential jobs, it's important to focus on jobs that will allow you to utilize your talents and satisfy your career needs, as well as help you grow in directions that make you more employable. Also, remember that skills are easy to learn, but talents are not easily learned. Consequently, the jobs you identified should be aligned with your talents. If you have the needed talents but not the skills, you'll probably be okay — because you can always learn the skills.

Review your short-, and medium-term goals:

Do they lead you in the direction of your vision? Yes ___ No ___
 Will achieving them make you more employable? Yes ___ No ___
 Will achieving them increase your fulfillment? Yes ___ No ___
 Are they consistent with your talents? Yes ___ No ___

If you answered "no" to any of the above four questions, please revisit and modify your goals to align them better with who you are and what is most important to you.

● Step Three: Gap Analysis

At this point, you have:

- Analyzed your current work environment and described your ideal workplace
- Identified your strengths (both innate talents and learned skills)
- Spelled out a vision and some specific goals

To help you determine whether your goals are aligned with your strengths, and whether the environment is in sync with your ideal, you may need to learn more about your targeted jobs. If you feel you need to gather more information on your targeted jobs, consider the suggestions listed in steps 1 and 2 below. If you are confident that you have all the information you need to make an informed decision, skip steps 1 and 2 and proceed with step 3 on the next page.

1. Networking and Interviewing

Besides discussing your plans with colleagues and friends, schedule informational interviews with professionals currently doing the jobs you are interested in. You needn't tell them that you are specifically aspiring to that job; you can just let them know you are interested in learning more about the position. Some questions you might ask are:

- What is the purpose of this job? How does it contribute to the success of the business?
- What kinds of challenges does the job present?
- What past experience have you had that helped you do this job?
- What opportunity does this position hold for growth?
- What kind of formal education is needed to do this job?
- What talents and skills are essential to success in this job?
- What are any negatives about this job?

Joining a professional association is a great way to network with people in your business who can help you understand the different career opportunities available. Talking to fellow professionals can have many benefits. Among them are:

- Providing feedback on your resumé
- Supplying an alternative approach to your job search
- Furnishing industry information
- Providing learning experiences
- Adding to your network contact list

2. Researching the Opportunities

If the above networking efforts do not yield the information you need, libraries, professional associations and recruiters can be valuable sources of information. Reference librarians can usually direct you to resources that might describe job responsibilities. Professional associations will often have information on the job descriptions and requirements of positions their members hold. They may also direct you to books and articles on the subject. Some questions you may want to answer are:

- What kinds of organizations do I want to work for? (size, location, type, industry)
- How can I make contact with them?
- What qualities do these firms look for in employees?
- What jobs are available for engineers in these firms?
- What type of work environment do these firms offer?

Recruiters can be a useful source of information about the availability of the kinds of jobs you're interested in, the qualities firms are looking for in prospective employees, and general salary ranges.

3. Analyzing the Gaps

Once you have gathered the necessary information, you should have a much clearer idea of what your targeted jobs require in the way of competencies, and what they will offer in terms of challenges, growth opportunities and work environment.

The following three worksheets provide an opportunity to identify competency gaps, as well as job criteria that may not be up to par. After completing these worksheets, you should have a snapshot of any areas needing attention.

On the following worksheet list each goal, record the competencies required to do that job, and then check off those competencies you already possess. (A list of your competencies can be found on pages 15 through 18.)

Competency Worksheet

Target Job	Required Competencies (talents, knowledge, skills, behaviors)	Competencies You Possess/Lack
<i>One to Two Years:</i>		
<i>Three Years and Beyond:</i>		

The worksheet on the previous page should have helped you identify your competency gaps or development needs. Remember, if the competency you lack is knowledge or skill based, you can acquire the knowledge through training, observing others, talking to others, reading, etc., and you can develop the skill through practice and feedback. However, if the competency you lack is talent based, and if it is also central to your success in the job, then you may want to set your sights on finding a job that is better suited to your talents. On the other hand, even if the competency gap is talent based, you may still choose to pursue the job if the required competency is not central to success in the job. If you choose to go this route, you will need to identify ways to manage your weakness (i.e., talent deficiency). Innate weaknesses can be managed by partnering with colleagues who have the talents you lack; using technology to compensate for the weaknesses (e.g., spell check); or redesigning the job to minimize the demand for the talents you lack.

Now look on the following worksheet at your target jobs from the perspective of the educational qualifications needed.

Qualifications Worksheet

Target Job	Qualifications Required	Qualifications You Possess/Lack
<i>One to Two Years:</i>		
<i>Three Years and Beyond:</i>		

Having completed both the Competencies and the Qualifications Worksheets, you are ready to take a look at the type of work environment these jobs may offer.

For example, what are the:

- Travel requirements
- Opportunities for working independently
- Opportunities to work in teams
- Opportunities to be creative, innovative, entrepreneurial.
- Time commitments
- Opportunities for challenge and growth
- Financial and other benefits
- Opportunities to work with people, ideas or things
- Levels of predictability, security, ambiguity, uncertainty, change, flexibility
- Work schedules and hours
- Policies and procedures governing the workplace
- Opportunities for promotion
- Visibility
- Dominant cultural norms and managerial styles

On balance, if the work environment has too many significant negatives, you need to ask yourself if those negatives are negotiable. For example, travel or work schedule might be negotiable, but cultural norms and managerial styles are likely to be fixed. If there are negatives in areas that you really care about, and they are fixed, you should probably reconsider the target job and/or the target company.

Job Environment Worksheet

Target Job	Work Characteristics and Environment	Desirable	Undesirable
<i>One to Two Years:</i>			
<i>Three Years and Beyond:</i>			

● Step Four: Development Planning

This step is possibly the most challenging. You know what your target jobs are, and the competencies you will need to succeed in those jobs. You are now ready to develop a plan of action that will lead you toward these aspirations. What can you do to acquire the new skills you will need? How will you manage any relevant talent deficiencies? What can you do, both on and off the job, to start acquiring and demonstrating the necessary competencies?

1. Growing in Your Current Job

Development Plan #1 is for expanding both your contributions and satisfaction in your current job. Your current job is your springboard to future opportunities, so all career planning begins with the current job.

Development Plan #1—Improving the Current Job

Revisit the job analysis you completed on pages 7 and 8. What changes could you make to your current job to make it more meaningful? What could you do to make a greater difference in the current job?

Improvement desired: To the job To the value you add	Action Needed	Target Completion Date	Actual Achievement Date

2. Developing Yourself for Success in the Next Job

Development Plan #2 is for your short-term goals (one to two years).

List the target jobs you have identified for the one to two year timeframe. Then look at the worksheets you filled in on pages 25 and 27. Note the competencies and qualifications needed for these jobs, and those where you fall short. Now, think carefully about what you are going to do to bridge these gaps. Can you gain informal self-directed activity, or do you need some formal continuing education?

The following worksheets list both the competencies you need to gain, and the things you can do to develop these competencies. Fill them in as you investigate formal activities (on-the-job activities, courses, tutorials, etc.) and less formal ones (reading books, experimenting with new software, off-the-job activities, etc.). Then, to take this a step further, commit yourself to a target completion date and keep track of how you do by filling in the actual completion date. This commitment should keep you on your toes.

Sample Development Plan—Short-Term Goals (1 to 2 years)

Competencies or Qualifications Needed	Learning Activity	Target Completion Date	Actual Achievement Date	
C++	Take IEEE self-study course	May 05		
	Attend lecture at Computer Society Conference in L.A.	June 05		
	Ask manager for opportunity to work on a new project requiring C++	June 05		
	Public Speaking	Read "Secrets of Successful Speakers"	Feb 05	
		Present paper at computer conference (Ask John to review presentation prior to conference and give me feedback. Ask Sarah to attend my session and give me feedback.)	April 05	
		Simple budgeting procedures	Present budget proposals to work team and solicit feedback on my presentation skills	March/April 05
Take in-company course on budgeting	May/June 05			
Volunteer to do team budget at work	May 05			
Volunteer to do the budget for winter scouting jamboree	May 05			
Selling Ideas (Talent Deficiency)	Manage this by working more closely with Kim who is excellent in this area		July 05 Ongoing	

Development Plan #2—Short-Term Goals (1 to 2 years)

Competencies or Qualifications Needed	Learning Activity	Target Completion Date	Actual Achievement Date

Development Plan #2—Short-Term Goals (1 to 2 years)

Competencies or Qualifications Needed	Learning Activity	Target Completion Date	Actual Achievement Date

3. Positioning Yourself for Long-Term Success

Development Plan #3 is for your long-term goals (three years and beyond).

Development Plan #3 requires some insights into the future. Foreseeing the future is not easy to do with any degree of accuracy, but just as strategic business planning requires educated guesswork, filling out your mid-range career plans will force you to do some research and investigation that can only save you time and eliminate surprises later on. While it certainly won't be the last word, it will at least set the stage. And as you update it periodically, you will be able to gauge your progress and planning ability by the level of revision needed.

As far as your medium-term job goals are concerned, it might be difficult to specify all the appropriate activities at this time. However, as time elapses, review these goals and action plans and update them to reflect the emerging reality.

Development Plan #3—Medium-Term Goals (3 years and beyond)

Competencies or Qualifications Needed	Learning Activity	Target Completion Date	Actual Achievement Date

● Step Five: Implementation

Once you have created your plan, the most important part of the task remains ahead of you. Whatever it is that you have identified to do...START DOING IT— NOW!

1. Revising Your Plans

As you implement these professional development plans, you must be ready to adapt them to changes in your circumstances. For example, your own changing expectations and outlook may cause you to revise your plans along the way. A new and exciting technology may open the doors to new opportunities. Or you may find yourself challenged by management responsibilities that come your way. Consequently, you need to review your plans from time-to-time, and decide if they still seem realistic, reasonable and appealing to you. If not, don't hesitate to revise them.

2. Getting Support from Others

The more support you can get from others, the more likely it is that you will accomplish your goals. Get this support by:

- a. Sharing your plans with others and asking for feedback on your plans.
- b. Telling people about the competencies you are striving to develop, and asking them for feedback on your progress. Turn to your colleagues into coaches.
- c. Finding someone who wants to develop the same competencies, and pairing up to master the competency together.
- d. Getting your immediate manager involved. After you, your immediate manager is likely to exert more influence on your career than anyone else. Your immediate manager can help you with resources, feedback, coaching, and opportunities to work on new things that will stretch you and increase your visibility.

