The background is a vibrant blue with several thick, white, abstract lines that create a sense of movement and depth. These lines are layered and overlap, with some forming loops and others extending across the frame. The overall aesthetic is modern and clean.

CAREER CONVERSATIONS

EMPLOYEE WORKBOOK

OCTOBER 2009

A PROJECT OF THE

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in Career Development



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WHY PARTICIPATE IN A CONVERSATION ABOUT MY CAREER?

A career conversation is simply a discussion between an employee and his or her manager that supports the employee in developing career goals and an action plan for achieving these goals. This conversation will not always result in a specific decision or plan right away, but will set the stage for an employee to later clarify goals and set plans. Employees and managers may have a number of career conversations over a period of time. The employee often navigates toward other jobs or work opportunities in the same organization as a result of the career conversation. This result is beneficial for both the employee and the employer. The employee can acquire more meaningful work, be promoted, find better work/life balance, or feel more personal fulfillment. The employer can retain its more satisfied workers and adapt more easily to changing business goals.

The employee's career goals are informed by his or her personal needs and characteristics, as well as the business needs and strategic plan of the employer. As employees set career goals, certain training options may be identified that will provide the skills needed to achieve these goals. A career conversation is usually one hour long and may lead to follow-up conversations. Both the employee and the manager need to do some preparation before the conversation occurs.

The career conversation process is outlined in the diagram "Career Conversation Process" on the next page.

The Career Conversation Process



Adapted from Borgen (2001)

WORKBOOK OVERVIEW

This workbook for career conversations applies the principles of basic problem solving. It will help you prepare yourself and offer resources to ensure your participation in a career conversation is rewarding. It will also give you a resource to go to after a career conversation to continue with the planning process. Take the time before the career conversation to read through the workbook. This preparation will help you to get the most from the career conversation.

The following definitions of terms are offered so you and your manager can start with the same understandings.

A “Career Conversation Employee Positioning System” (EPS) is an image designed to portray the process of the employee moving to the destination (i.e. career goals) and the employee’s need to assume responsibility to plan the most effective route to reach these goals.



The “Challenges” represent common concerns of employees as they develop career goals and plans.



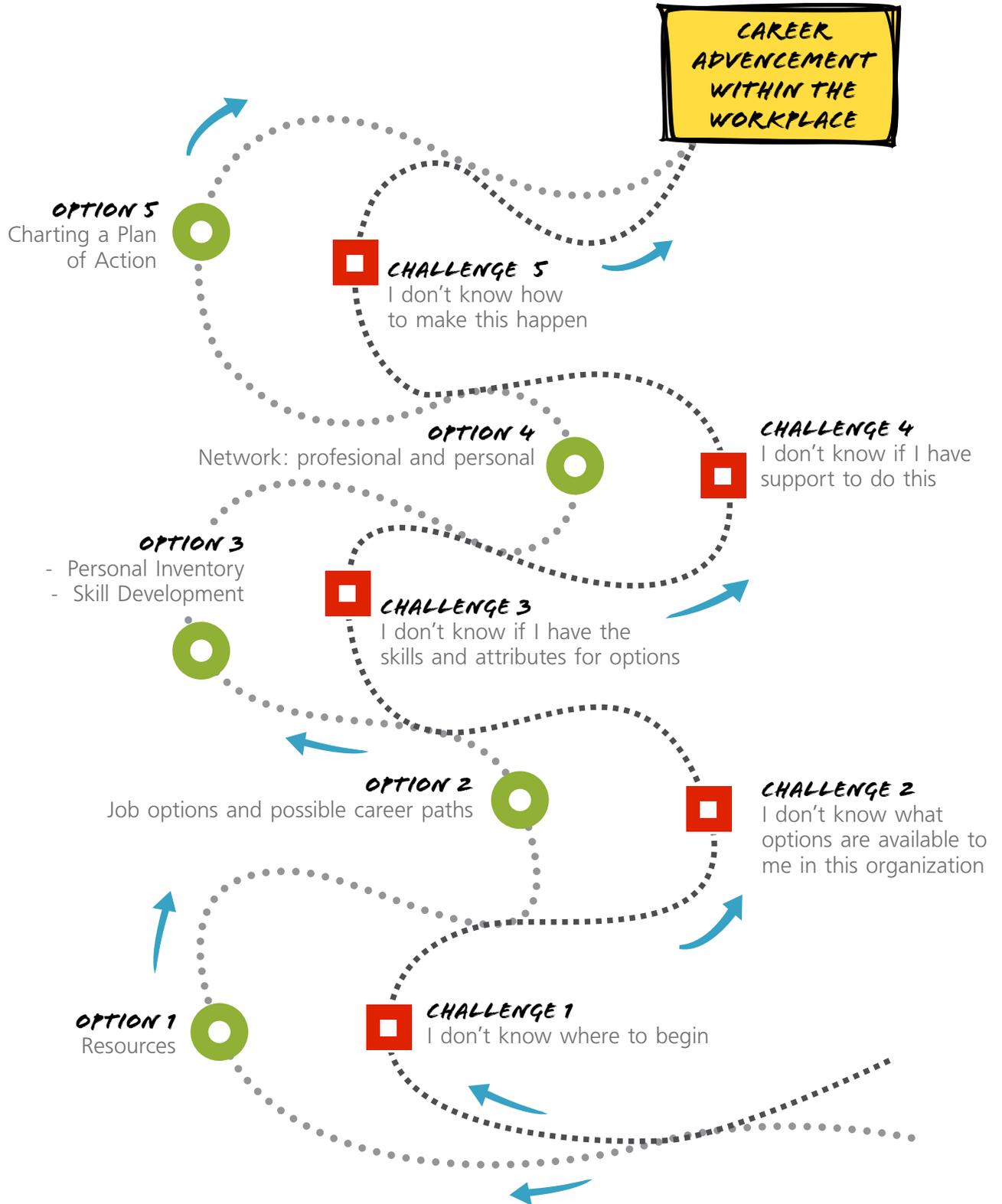
The “Options” represent the resources that employees can apply to making career related decisions.



“Charting a Plan of Action” represents the employee’s establishment of action plans to achieve his or her employment related goal(s).

This workbook is organized according to each of the common roadblocks (challenges) and offers information you can use on your side trips, to facilitate your participation in career conversations, and achieve your career goals.

CAREER CONVERSATIONS : EMPLOYEE POSITIONING SYSTEM (EPS)



THE WORKBOOK OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- ✔ Assist the employee in considering relevant information that is needed to make career decisions and plans
- ✔ Identify what is needed before decisions and plans can be made
- ✔ Determine how to access information and support to help you meet these needs



CHALLENGE #1 I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN

IDENTIFY BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO PARTICIPATING IN CAREER CONVERSATIONS



IDENTIFYING YOUR CHALLENGES TO CAREER CHANGE

The process of planning your career is like planning and taking a trip. One has a goal, a destination in mind. However, there may be problems along the way. So it is necessary to recognize the potential challenges or roadblocks and make the suggested side trips to acquire the resources needed to overcome the challenges. For example, one may need to go through a mountain pass that has been snowed over, so it becomes necessary to stop at a town off the main road to purchase some snow chains, put them on your car, and find out any tips about driving through that particular pass in the snow. In the same way, each of you has a career goal, a destination – to get a promotion or to get training to do a different job. You may have already encountered barriers that have hindered reaching your destination. For example, you may have emotions such as frustration with your co-workers or pressure from your family that interfere with taking the time to make career changes. By recognizing these challenges and finding ways to overcome them, you will eventually reach your destination.

The Career Conversation : Employee Positioning System has five general categories of employment challenges. For each of these barriers there is a corresponding employability option where you may acquire the knowledge, skills, and/or support necessary to overcome the barrier or barriers you face.

You are on this Employee Positioning System somewhere. It is necessary to start by identifying your location on the map. It is also important to understand that you may have more than one challenge and that this is common for employees.

EXERCISE 1

To understand where you are on this map, think about how you have been able to advance your career at work or barriers you have encountered in your career. Sometimes employees do not achieve career goals due to personal reasons such as not seeing themselves in a job with more responsibility or not feeling motivated to take a skills training course. Other people find that their reasons have more to do with their place of employment, for example, possible job vacancies are not posted for current employees to consider or they do not know if their coworkers would support them as they work toward certain goals. Sometimes it is our family or community that make it difficult to pursue our career goals, for example, just accomplishing the demands of day-to-day life is overwhelming without taking on anything else.

Consider factors related to yourself and your situation at work and outside of work and write down the possible reasons below. **Complete the following worksheet.**

Personal Reasons :

Workplace Reasons :

A) After identifying the reasons for the difficulty in achieving your career goals in your workplace, you can now identify the challenge(s) that you face right now. Put a check beside the following challenges that you currently face :

I don't know what options are available to me in this organization. There are job opportunities that I may not even know about, but I might like to try out. I don't understand how employees in this workplace typically move from job to job or get promotions.

I don't know if I have the skills and attributes for these options. I know there are jobs and promotions I can apply for, but I am not sure that I am qualified. I don't know what type of training I need to get the skills and qualities needed for these options.

I don't know if I have the support to do this. I am not sure whether my boss thinks that I am capable of moving to a new position in the company. I don't know if there are any resources available to support any training that I take or whether training is rewarded in this company. I don't know if my colleagues, friends and family would support me if I pursued other opportunities.

I don't know how to make this happen. I have a goal and know what training I need to achieve this goal, but am not sure what steps to take to make it all happen. I may have been ready to make a move for a long time, but I can't seem to achieve my goals.

B) After identifying the challenge or challenges you face, write out what you need before you can get past each challenge. What specific kind of information do you need before establishing a goal and achieving it ?

Needs :

UNDERSTAND REACTIONS TO CHALLENGES.

As people anticipate having a career conversation and face challenges in making a career change, they may experience a range of emotions. Here are some of the emotions and related thoughts that you might feel or can expect to feel.



I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TRUST MY MANAGER TO BE HONEST.

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN BE OPEN AND HONEST.

I WORRY THAT I WILL BE MISUNDERSTOOD.

I WORRY THAT IF I MAKE A COMMITMENT I CAN'T BACK OUT.



I WILL BE SAD AT LEAVING MY OLD JOB.

I WILL MISS MY COWORKERS IN MY NEW JOB.

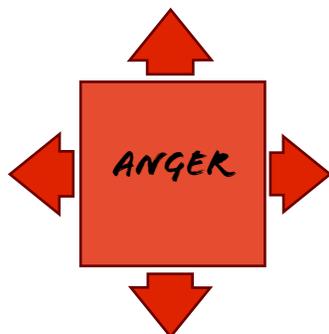


CAN I LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS?

WHAT IF I SAY THE WRONG THING?

WILL ALL MY FAILURES BE IDENTIFIED?

WHAT IF I FAIL?



I DESERVE BETTER!

IT IS TOO LATE TO TRY TO MAKE ME HAPPY IN THE WORKPLACE!

NO ONE BACKS ME UP!

These emotions are common for employees in your situation, but can put the brakes on moving forward in your career. How do people manage these emotions to increase the possibility that the career conversation will be successful? Just identifying and acknowledging that you feel this way is a step in the right direction. **Here are some other possible strategies to try:**

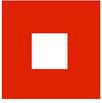
- ✔ Tell your manager that you have some of these feelings and let him or her know that you do not want them to interfere.
- ✔ Feelings are often the result of unsolved and ongoing problems. What needs to be done to solve these problems ?
- ✔ With change comes loss of something we value. It is important to allow yourself to be sad about these losses but also look forward to the future.
- ✔ What needs to happen in the career conversation so that you can be open and honest ? Can you negotiate with your manager about what you need to engage in the conversation ?
- ✔ Who can you talk to about your feelings who understands you ? Just talking about our feelings can make us feel better.
- ✔ How have you managed these types of emotions successfully in the past ? What else can you think of that will help you manage your emotions so they do not become barriers ?

EXERCISE 2

In the spaces below, write down any emotions you identify that may interfere with having a successful career conversation or may become barriers to achieving your career goals.

Beside each emotion, write down one thing you can do about that feeling that could be helpful.

<i>EMOTION</i>	<i>HELPPFUL STRATEGY FOR HANDLING THE EMOTION</i>



CHALLENGE #2

I DON'T KNOW WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO ME IN THIS ORGANIZATION

UNDERSTAND HOW TO GET INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR WORKPLACE, JOB OPTIONS, AND TYPICAL CAREER PATHS.

Challenges 2 and 3 require that you know about potential job options and the skills and attributes necessary to work in those jobs. This means that you must find information that satisfies what you need to know.

Go back to page 9 of the workbook and review the challenges that you identified for yourself. Now, **list some questions related to missing information about possible job options associated to these challenges.**

Sample questions :

- ✓ What job options are available to me in this organization ?
- ✓ How are people promoted in this organization ?
- ✓ What types of work are related to the kind of work I do now ?
- ✓ What skills are needed to do a management type of job ?
- ✓ How do employees job share so they have more time with their children ?
- ✓ Is there any training available to help me acquire new skills ?

EXERCISE 3

YOUR QUESTIONS:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Having identified what information you need, it is time to look for answers to your questions. **There are 3 main sources of career information : print, people and Internet.**

1) PRINT

Many companies have printed annual reports and other documents that describe the nature of their business, past accomplishments, and business goals and plans. You will need to consult with your manager to determine if this type of information exists and whether you can read it.

2) PEOPLE

Talking to people is often the best way to get up to date information about your company and other jobs that currently exist or may be created. There are 2 steps to gathering information from people who you know (your personal network). This could include friends, family, previous colleagues, your human resource or union representative, to name just a few.

First, it is important to identify the **people in your network**. Start a list now of people that you know at work and the jobs they have. Include everyone, even if you have little in common with them, because some people you know may be able to provide information or introduce you to someone you would like to talk to.

EXERCISE 4

PEOPLE I KNOW	JOB

EXERCISE 5

Now, **list some questions that you would like to ask them that are related to your challenges.**

Sample questions :

- ✓ Can you tell me how you got this job ?
- ✓ What was your career path to get this position ?
- ✓ What skills do you need to do your particular job ?
- ✓ Can you identify how your department might change in the future and if there will be a need for different workers as a result of these changes ?
- ✓ Can you introduce me to someone who works in this other job ?
- ✓ Does your job involve overtime work ?

YOUR QUESTIONS:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The second step in getting information from people you know is to arrange to meet with them to ask them your questions. Most people love to talk about their jobs and help other people with their careers if they can. Perhaps offer to buy them a coffee when you meet or offer to help them with information sometime in the future.

EXERCISE 6

Write a list of the people you plan to meet and the locations, dates and times of these meetings so you can keep track of these arrangements.

PERSON	MEETING ARRANGEMENTS
	(PLACE)
	(DATE, TIME)
	(PLACE)
	(DATE, TIME)
	(PLACE)
	(DATE, TIME)
	(PLACE)
	(DATE, TIME)

3) INTERNET

Today, the best way to get the most up to date information is by exploring resources on the Internet. Utilize your search engine, such as *Google* or *Yahoo*, to research companies and occupations. Often, a company will have descriptions of jobs including the kinds of competencies utilized in each job. If this is not available try looking at job descriptions used when a company recruits new employees. This can help you find the kinds of skills and qualities required for various jobs.

Remember to check whether the Internet resource is Canadian or specific to a different country because information, such as salary, varies from place to place. Also be a wise consumer of information on the Internet. Unless the website comes from a credible source, you need to cross check information with other sources to ensure it is valid. Here are some Canadian websites that provide excellent occupational information that you can check out.



JOB FUTURES

This resource has information about 265 occupational groups in Canada and links to over 100 related web sites.

www.jobfutures.ca/en/home.shtml



OCCUPATION INFORMATION

This web page has numerous links to find information on your particular occupation and information about related jobs. There is also regional information available.

www.jobsetc.ca/category_drilldown.jsp?category_id=125&crumb=12&crumb=42



BUSINESS INFORMATION

This web site can direct you to the web site of your company and companies that conduct similar types of business in your region.

www.ic.gc.ca/epic



INDUSTRY AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

This web site provides information on training needs, courses, and conferences.

www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/ic_wp-pa.htm

EXERCISE 7

After searching for answers to your questions, **write a list of the questions that you still need answers for.**

Your manager may be able to provide some answers to your questions or suggest a resource you can access for information. There may also be a company Intranet site with job postings, job descriptions, and career progression information that you can access.

I STILL NEED ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



CHALLENGE #3

I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE THE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES FOR THE OPTIONS

IDENTIFY PERSONAL STRENGTHS.

IDENTIFYING YOUR ASSETS

The easiest way to identify your assets is to examine your past accomplishments. This allows you to highlight the assets that you possess for your trip.

Refer to the following "Portfolio of Assets" below. This includes a variety of assets that are not limited to a particular job, but can be utilized to recognize and overcome your challenges :

- ✓ Skills
- ✓ Interests
- ✓ Personal characteristics
- ✓ Values
- ✓ Work and volunteer experience
- ✓ Educational background
- ✓ Sources of social support

Some of these assets can be identified by reviewing your resume if you have one. If not, it is important to explore past accomplishments as a means to developing a personal portfolio.

EXERCISE 8

Identify one past accomplishment as a means to identify your assets. It is something where you did a good job and enjoyed it. If possible, you should think of something related to your work or volunteer experiences. If none come to mind, then other activities may be considered, such as a school or university project you had to complete.

Referring to the "Portfolio of Assets" on the previous page, identify the skills, interests, personal characteristics, or values that you demonstrated in achieving this accomplishment.

PAST ACCOMPLISHMENT *SKILLS, INTERESTS,
PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS,
VALUES DEMONSTRATED*

EXERCISE 9

Repeat this process with 2 to 5 other accomplishments you have achieved, using the space below.

<i>PAST ACCOMPLISHMENT</i>	<i>SKILLS, INTERESTS, PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS, VALUES DEMONSTRATED</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

EXERCISE 10

Once you have a good overview of the assets you have, refer back to the earlier exercises :

- ✓ Your Road Blocks (Exercise #1, pages 8-9)
- ✓ Job options and career paths (Exercises 4, 5, & 6, pages 15-17)

List any of your assets that may help you overcome the challenges.

ASSET	CHALLENGE

EXERCISE 11

Now list possible job options you might be interested in pursuing and the assets you have that would relate to being qualified for this job option.

JOB OPTION	ASSETS



EXERCISE 12

IDENTIFYING YOUR ASSETS

Think back to a specific time when you did something about which you felt really good and write it down.

- _____
- _____

With this experience in mind, answer the following questions :

① What was it about the experience that you felt good about? How were you involved? What did you achieve ?

- _____
- _____

② What skills did you use ?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

③ If someone were watching, what would they say about how you did it (e.g. quickly, carefully, cheerfully, etc.) ?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

④ What did you like or dislike about what you were doing ?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

⑤ How did you get along with others ?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Additional Resource for Expanding on Your Portfolio of Assets

Degree Navigator at www.jobsetc.ca/toolbox/quizzes/quizzes_home.do?&lang=e

This web site offers quizzes you can complete online to identify your :

- ① Abilities
- ② Preferences in working with data, people or things
- ③ The types of work you prefer such as directive, social, methodological, objective, and innovative work.
- ④ Values for your work environment
- ⑤ Preferred style of thinking and understanding
- ⑥ Style of learning

IMPROVE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

SOME ASSETS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS...

After completing an inventory of your assets, it is important to think about how these relate to the kinds of assets that are most important for employees to possess. The *Conference Board of Canada* conducted a survey of businesses in Canada to determine the skills that employers look for in their employees. These tend to be skills that people can use in any work ; the skills transfer from one job to another.

Download the “Employability Skills 2000” information from the *Conference Board of Canada* Website (www.conferenceboard.ca) to review the skills and examples that are provided.

EXERCISE 13

These transferable skills are grouped into 3 categories : **fundamental skills**, **teamwork skills**, and **personal management skills**.

Review the lists of skills and identify those that are currently in your portfolio of assets and the ones that you would like to develop.

1) FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
THAT ARE ALREADY IN MY
PORTFOLIO OF ASSETS

SKILLS I WANT TO DEVELOP

2) TEAMWORK SKILLS

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
THAT ARE ALREADY IN MY
PORTFOLIO OF ASSETS

SKILLS I WANT TO DEVELOP

3) PERSONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
THAT ARE ALREADY IN MY
PORTFOLIO OF ASSETS

SKILLS I WANT TO DEVELOP

IDENTIFY AREAS FOR GROWTH

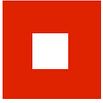
POSSIBLE TRAINING NEEDS

Now that you have a good inventory of the assets you bring on your road trip, you can start to identify the kinds of training you might need to be qualified for particular job options.

EXERCISE 14

List 2 job options in your company that you would be interested in pursuing. From what you know of the qualifications required for these job options, identify the skills, interests, personal characteristics or values that are not already in your suitcase of assets.

<i>JOB OPTION</i>	<i>ASSETS I NEED TO DEVELOP</i>					
1.	<table border="1"><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr></table>					
2.	<table border="1"><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr></table>					



CHALLENGE #4

I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE THE SUPPORT TO DO THIS

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SOURCES OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL SUPPORT

To achieve career goals and make life changes, everyone needs support whether it is practical (e.g. time to take a course, money, etc.) or emotional support (e.g. the approval of important people in your life). There are different sources of support people have for career changes. These are:

Your network at work

This network refers to the people at work, including colleagues, managers, supervisors, and employees in other jobs in your organization. These people have a wealth of information to share, can be “cheerleaders” as you work toward goals, and may be in a position to suggest your name when the possibility of a promotion arises.

Professional (organization, professional associations, training programs)

Organizations may have policies that support employee training and career changes. For example, some companies have job shadowing programs, mentorship programs, funds and possible time off for approved training programs. The company may also have a policy regarding salary increments related to the completion of approved training.

Professional organizations may sponsor relevant training programs. They also may have policies regarding types of qualifications and how these relate to recommended salary scales.

Personal support network (family and friends)

We all have certain people in our network who we know will offer practical and emotional support for us. This can be friends who will offer to baby sit if we need to take a night class, or family members who are willing to offer a shoulder to cry on when we feel overwhelmed.

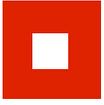
It is important to identify the types of support you will need once you start on the road to a job change and then consider who might provide that support in your networks and profession.

EXERCISE 15

Start a list of the types of support you will need and who can either provide this support or suggest someone who can.

TYPE OF SUPPORT

SOURCE OF SUPPORT



CHALLENGE #5 I DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN

UNDERSTAND AND DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE ACTION PLAN.

EXERCISE 16



CHARTING YOUR PLAN OF ACTION

You have already determined your starting point (your first challenge, the first side trip you must take, the assets you carry with you and some of the options before you).

Considering this, **chart the plan of action you must take in order to access your options to overcome your first challenge on your trip towards implementation.**

YOUR PLAN OF ACTION

How will you reach it ? e.g.
What will you have to do ?
Who can help ?
When ?



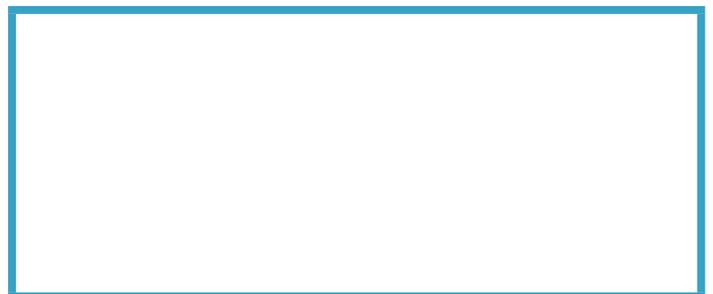
How much time
do you need ?



What potential obstacles do
you see ahead as you move to
your first stopover ?



What strategies can you put
into place to ensure that you
will be successful ?
Don't forget your assets.



Make a commitment to this plan of action by summarizing it in the “Action Plan” on the next page. You may want to share this with your manager, as this will increase the likelihood that you will complete the plan. It will also increase the likelihood that the company will provide resources to help you complete your plan, and acknowledge your accomplishments.

As you start working on each action plan, you may find information about yourself, your workplace, or your situation that changes the direction you are going. It is common for people to need to cycle back to earlier challenges and begin the process again so they do not end up somewhere that they are not happy.

As you keep your manager informed about your progress, you may find that the situation in the organization is changing and this information needs to be incorporated as you go along. This awareness will likely open up unforeseen opportunities and benefit both you and your company as you become increasingly aligned with the company goals.



MY ACTION PLAN

Name

Date

Action Plan prepared with

IDENTIFIED NEEDS

GOALS (Short and long term)
