

Take Charge of Your Career!

No matter where you are in your career, whether you are beginning an internship or starting a full-time position after graduation, you are your own “career agent.” That is, you manage the direction of your career. Here are some hints for navigating the process.

Before you accept a position . . .

- **Start with some self-examination.** Review your career goals and strategize about what you need to learn in relation to these goals. Decide what skills you would like to capitalize on and what new assets you need to gain. This is especially important when completing an internship or entry-level position, because you are building the foundation for your career.
- **Research the organization.** Look at the company’s products, services, clients, and culture. Based on this information, decide whether you would feel comfortable working here and whether this organization can act as a launch pad for your career.
- **Assess the position description.** Inspect the projects or tasks to be completed. Most internships and entry-level positions will involve some “grunt work,” but you should ascertain that the position will help you to learn by obtaining meaningful work experience.

Once you are on the job . . .

- **Take initiative.** Be aware. If there is a special project that you would like to collaborate on, let your supervisor know. Always keep your career goals in sight. Collect materials for your portfolio, such as reports that you have written, charts you assisted in generating, or any other items you created.
- **Network.** Some organizations will offer a formal mentoring program. Most often, however, this networking will occur on an informal basis through professional organizations, volunteer opportunities, or other community associations (e.g., the UM-St. Louis Alumni Association).
- **Keep your resume updated.** It is easier to effectively describe the skills you are gaining when these experiences are fresh in your mind. Periodic updates will also help you assess your career direction.

Keep in mind that career development is a continual process, so you may be undertaking any of these steps at any point in your career. As the navigator, you are in control of your career, and the possibilities are limitless!

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