

# My Career Plan

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## Meet our Expert



I'm Nicole Williams, "career doctor," author and founder of WORKS, a NYC-based career development company that helps young women like you. WORKS provides us an amazing opportunity to challenge ourselves, realize our potential and fulfil our dreams. I'm going to tell it like it is, and share some handy career tips that will hopefully help motivate and inspire you to improve your 9-to-5.

And even if you're fresh-out-of-school or not currently employed – here are some pointers on how you can kick-start your job hunt, and begin on a career path that's right for you.

So let's get started. Based on your assessment, here are some ideas on how you can start tackling your career goals.

## Career Strategies

### STEP 1: TAKE INITIATIVE

Ever notice that outgoing people tend to get ahead faster than those who don't speak up (even if the quiet types are harder workers)? To be recognized, you need to be seen AND heard. Play up what YOU are good at! Check out TIP 1 to get some initiative-boosting tips that will help you get your move on!

### STEP 2: GET CLARITY FROM ABOVE

Schedule face-time with your boss. Before the meeting, review your contributions, achievements, and "opportunity areas" (where you want to learn/improve). Bring these items to your boss' attention and, even if you don't get a promotion THAT day, together you can develop a game plan for your professional growth in the months ahead – something that will give you renewed drive and direction.

### STEP 3: DRESS TO IMPRESS

Dress for the job you WANT, not the job you have! If you're not taking pride in how you present yourself to the world, it's a reflection that maybe there's not much pride going into your work either. But how work appropriate IS your current office wardrobe? While you probably know it's not the best idea to roll in to the office wearing sweats, did you realize that your flip flops might be raising eyebrows? Check out TIP 2 for a handy guide on what's hot and what's not in terms of work wear.

# Job Jump

## **STEP 1: NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK**

Finding a new job takes work. Contact family, friends, previous coworkers, your college alumni center – ask how they can help! Even if it's just spreading the word that you're on the market and keeping their ears open for job leads, the larger the network of people working for you, the better your odds.

## **STEP 2: DO YOUR HOMEWORK**

You're circulating your resume and getting interview offers – great! Now you need to prepare to “wow” your prospective future employer. Visit the company's website, jot down notes about their key products/services and create a list of questions to ask your interviewer. NOTHING is worse than replying “No!” when asked if you have any questions. Showing your familiarity with the organization/field and displaying an interest in what makes them tick will give you a real leg up on the competition.

## **STEP 3: DON'T CHECK OUT UNTIL YOUR LAST DAY**

Leave a good impression with your current coworkers and supervisors by giving it your all until you're out the door. Don't slack off – remember, you want these people to be your references and you might need to lean on them in the future. Another word to the wise – do the lion's share of your job-hunting OUTSIDE of the office on your personal time. Nothing raises suspicions like someone who's rushing off to answer their cell phone every five minutes.

# Career Change

## **STEP 1: DETERMINE WHAT GETS YOU GOING**

The key to finding a job that clicks is to align your passions and talents with what pays the bills. Skills are learned, talents are inherent and passions are things you just can't live without. Start tallying what defines YOU here. Check out TIP 3 for a guide on how to define your passion.

## **STEP 2: MAKE THE ROUNDS**

Once you've narrowed your new career prospects down to a handful of interesting opportunities, reach out to some people actually working in those fields. Circle back to your college alumni club or ask friends for contacts. Coordinate informational interviews to get the inside scoop and help determine if the profession would be a good fit for you. Read TIP 4 for guidance on how to set up this get-to-know-you meeting and get ideas for questions to ask.

## **STEP 3: KNOW WHAT IT WILL TAKE**

No guts, no glory. Sometimes, transitioning into a new career means going back to school for an advanced degree or taking a hefty pay cut. Before you leap, carefully evaluate how this decision will affect your life, finances, etc. and if you can live happily with these lifestyle changes. Taking risks can bring fantastic results, but it can also backfire. Make sure you have all your ducks in a row before committing to a new career.

# Resources

## LINKS

[www.nicolewilliams.com](http://www.nicolewilliams.com)

[www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)

[www.wetfeet.com](http://www.wetfeet.com)

[www.vault.com](http://www.vault.com)

The Occupational Outlook Handbook at [www.bls.gov/OCO/](http://www.bls.gov/OCO/)