

Career SMARTZ

A highly effective career success strategy built around “Find a need and fill it.”

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Milestone 4: Define and Promote Your Talent (i.e. your Professional Brand) Checklist 4.1 (Define Your Talent)

Objective

Your objective in this Checklist is to define your career-related talent – ***in other words, your strategy for achieving your career mission objective*** (as you defined it on Form 2.6 (My Career Mission Objective)). Think of it this way:

Your career mission objective + your strategy = Your Talent

Using today’s jargon, your talent is often referred to as your “Professional Brand.” Your brand tells others what career-related abilities you possess and what kind of employer needs you can satisfy.

A note from the authors

This Checklist is one of the most important exercises of the entire CareerSMARTZ program! Being able to define your talent and communicate how it can be used to meet the needs of employers is the key to your future career success. Therefore, nothing is more important than this exercise! Please dedicate yourself to completing it properly and thoroughly. ***Your future you will thank you!***

Why is defining your talent so important?

Employers give top preference to job seekers and employees who clearly understand – and who can communicate - how their talent can be of value to the employer. Therefore, if you want an employer to provide you with a job and a salary, you must first convince him or her that you’re worth their investment of time and money. And that goal can be accomplished by articulating how your career mission objective strategy can help the employer reach his or her business goals.

When should you begin this exercise?

To develop talent, it is typically necessary that you first complete some form or formal education or training and then perfect your talent with on-the-job experience. If you’re beginning - or currently involved in - an educational or training program, then you may

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postpone this Checklist until you have reached a point in your education or training where **you have developed a basic understanding of what must be done to achieve success in the occupation for which you are preparing (i.e. your strategy for achieving your career mission objective).**

Note that we use the phrase “basic understanding” to mean a point in your education or training when you feel you have enough knowledge to begin the job knowing that with time and experience you will develop a more complete understanding of how to do the job successfully.

Remember, employers don’t demand that their new hires are 100% certain as to how to achieve success in their new positions. The reality is most employers hire people who demonstrate that they have a solid or basic understanding of how to achieve success.

Trigger point

It’s time to define your talent when you have a basic understanding of the true nature of your chosen occupation - its goals, objectives, operational strategies, obstacles and needs – and have a basic understanding regarding how to achieve success in the job.

Whatever you do, don’t postpone this Checklist (as well as Step 5 in the CareerSMARTZ program) until the 11th hour of your education or training!

To do so could be costly! Give yourself enough time while completing your education or training to complete this Step (Step 4) and Step 5 (Seek and Secure Employment). By doing so, you will reduce the possibility of a long period of unemployment after graduation while you look for a job.

Materials needed

- Checklist 4.1 (the document that you’re reading now)
- A blank printed copy of Form 4.1 (My Talent Profile)
- Form 2.4 (My Employment Opportunities) – completed as directed
- Form 2.6 (My Career Mission Objective) - completed as directed

Completion time

Varies from individual to individual. Completing this Checklist cannot be done in one sitting. Rather, we recommend that you break the assignment into several sessions and spread the work out over a few days.

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Remember

Your support team is a powerful source of information and assistance. Don't hesitate to call upon them when attempting to complete this Checklist.

Follow the steps below to complete this Checklist.

1. Gather Form 2.4 (My Employment Opportunities) that you completed earlier in this program - the one that you completed for the occupation that you selected as your career goal. Read carefully what you recorded for the goal, objectives, strategies, obstacles and needs of your chosen occupation.

Now, considering what you have learned from your current - or recent - education or training, ask yourself if any of the information on Form 2.4 (My Employment Opportunities) should now be changed (edited, added, or deleted)? If your answer is, yes, then make the necessary changes and updates to Form 2.4.

Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

2. Start completing Form 4.1 (My Talent Profile). Using the latest, updated version of Form 2.4 (My Employment Opportunities) as clues, complete statements 1-6 on Form 4.1. ***Do not answer item 7 yet.***

Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

3. Read the following to note the importance of problem-solving in your career!

Understanding how to successfully achieve your career mission objective (which happens to also be the goal of your chosen career) is the main key to your career success! Central to this objective is your ability to solve problems as they occur.

Also, your knowledge regarding how you plan to achieve success (especially how you plan to solve problems) in the position that you wish to secure is the answer to the most important question asked by all employers in job interviews, ***“Why should I hire you?”***

What steps are involved in solving a problem?

Fortunately, many bright minds have addressed this question and from their work many strategies for solving problems have emerged. For example, the folks at [IBM](#) asked their

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scientists how problem-solving works and they came up with a five step process called [IBM Think](#) (<- click this link for more information)

According to the IBM Think model, problem solving results from 5 actions:

1st Seeing. Using your five senses ***augumented with today’s modern information gathering technologies*** you are now able to see the world as it truly exists and in greater detail and clarity than ever before. An example of this kind of “technology augmented seeing” is when you use a microscope or use x-rays to view things that you couldn’t otherwise see with just the naked eye. Modern technology helps you see things as they trully are!

2nd Mapping. Problem-solvers next use a variety of tools to record (map) what they have learned from seeing the real world. Recording (mapping) their observations helps them better understand what they see. Examples of such mapping tools range from simple tools, such as a notebook to very sophisticated tools, such as a computer.

3rd Understanding. By being able to see the world as it truly exists, and by being able to record (map) your findings, you can then better understand how our world actually works, how and why things fail, and what steps should be taken to solve problems or create new innovations.

4th Believing. Once you have an idea regarding how to change things for the better, how to solve problems and needs, the human brain creates a sense of “belief” that you can actually make a difference in the world by implementing your ideas. This belief motivates you to take the next and final step.

5th Acting. Because of the 4 factors above, human beings are motivated to take action to bring about changes and improvements in our world.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the IBM Think strategy and check your IOS, Android or Windows app store to download the IBM Think app to learn more about how to solve problems!

Learning how to solve problems is so important for career success that we strongly encourage you to dedicate yourself to becoming a top-notch problem-solver. Study the IBM Think model and use Google to find other problem-solving strategies.

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4. Start using modern “mapping tools” to record what you find when examining (seeing) your career field. Coming up with answers regarding how you plan to achieve success in your chosen occupation (especially how you plan to solve problems) is often difficult to do! Fortunately, several “mapping tools” have been developed to help you record and organize your findings into a meaningful structure.

We recommend the following 3 mapping tools. Click on the 3 item headings below for more information about each tool.

Mindmaps – a quickly drawn diagram (by hand or with a computer) that visually outlines the elements, structure, or parts of an idea, concept, or body of information as they are conceived in the mind. Mindmaps quickly turn your ideas and thoughts into a visual picture for easy understanding and reference.

Flowcharts – a carefully crafted visual diagram (also by hand or with a computer) outlining a sequence of events or a process showing all the steps, actions, and decisions from start to finish involved in the event or process. Typically used to illustrate how a particular function should work or operate.

To Do Checklists – a list of things that you want to do (usually created daily) and often arranged in sequential order with start and end completion times or dates. Items are “checked off” as they are completed. Search Google with the phrase “examples of to do lists” and you’ll find plenty of examples.

Do this now before you proceed any further.

The authors have found it helpful to use all three mapping tools. We first use Mindmapping to quickly record our random thoughts and ideas – in no particular order – just as they flow out of our minds. Then we use Flowcharting to carefully organize our thoughts into actionable, sequential steps from first to last. And, finally, we use a To Do Checklist program to record what tasks we wish to complete on any particular day.

After you’ve finished reading about the above mapping tools, try them out. Search Google.com for free Mindmapping, Flowcharting, and To Do Checklist software programs, and then download them to your computer and practice using them. Also, check out Download.com for free software. Programs are available for both Windows and Mac users. If you use a tablet vs. a traditional computer, check your app store for these programs. Also, ask your support team members which programs they recommend.

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Practice using the programs that you have found until you feel you understand how they work. Keep researching options until you find three programs that you want to use.

Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

5. Create the first draft of your strategy regarding how you plan to reach your career mission objective. Using your Mindmapping program and the information already recorded in items 1-6 on Form 4.1 (My Talent Profile) as clues, record your thoughts and ideas regarding how you plan to reach the mission objective of your chosen occupation. Don't worry about any order, just record your random thoughts on your Mindmapping program as they come to mind.

In lieu of a Mindmapping program, you can record your thoughts on a sheet of paper.

Expect that your first draft will have holes, gapes, missing information and unknowns – that is the nature of the problem-solving process. However, the more you work on your strategy, and the more input you get from others, the more detailed and clear your strategy will become.

Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

6. Next, use your Flowcharting program to arrange your Mindmap thoughts into sequential order indicating which decisions and tasks should be completed first, second, third,.... Last. Your goal here is to create a basic, sequential, step-by-step plan (roadmap) for achieving your mission objective. Yes, it may be very basic and incomplete at this point, but that's OK. You'll refine it later.

Again, In lieu of a Flowcharting program, you can record your thoughts on a separate sheet of paper.

Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

7. Review (Brainstorm) your strategy with others to improve its design.

Find 2-3 people who have some knowledge of your chosen occupation. Use your support team to find these people. Contact each person and ask if they would review your strategy and make suggestions.

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Ideal candidates for Brainstorming include people working in your chosen career field, teachers who prepare people for entrance into your chosen career field, and retired career professionals.

Conduct your Brainstorming sessions and update your Flowchart as needed.

Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

8. Complete item 7 on Form 4.1 (My Talent Profile). Based on all that you have learned about how to reach your career mission objective, summarize your thoughts by completing item 7 on Form 4.1.

Continue to improve your strategy!

Over the course of the next few weeks continue your research into the true nature of your occupation and how to successfully reach your career mission objective. In addition to researching literature, seek out and interview people who are experienced in your chosen career field.

Note that your strategy is a never ending, evolving process that will continue to need revision as the world changes and as you continue to learn! Therefore, keep item 7 updated as your career mission objective strategy evolves and matures.

What’s your next step?

When you have completed Item 7 on Form 4.1 (My Talent Profile), move on to Checklist 4.2 (Promote Your Talent) to start promoting your talent to the world.

Need more help? Get the full power of CareerSMARTZ!

Private, one-to-one career guidance is available from the authors of the CareerSMARTZ program. One-hour counseling sessions are provided via Skype, Hangouts or other video chat services and can be scheduled to meet your time zone. Receive personalized guidance from the convenience of your home, office, or dorm room. **Visit CareerSMARTZ.com for more information.**