

Career SMARTZ (CS21)

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



Task 1: Define Your Talent

Note: All underlined words are hyperlinks to Internet websites and will only function when viewing this document on your computer.

Objective

Your objective in this guide is to define your career-related talent – ***in other words, your strategy for achieving your career mission*** (as you defined it on CS20 (Define Your Final Career Goal and Mission). Think of it this way:

Your career mission + 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 author

This guide 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 are worth their investment of time and money. And that goal can be accomplished by articulating how your talent 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 postpone starting this guide until you have reached a point in your education or training where

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you have developed a basic understanding of what must be done to achieve success in the occupation for which you are preparing.

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 do not 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.

Whatever you do, do not postpone this guide 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 task and subsequent tasks. By doing so, you will reduce the possibility of a long period of unemployment after graduation while you look for a job.

Materials needed

- CS21 (the document that you are reading now)
- A blank printed copy of CS22 (My Talent Profile)
- CS10 (My Talent Requirements) – completed as directed
- CS20 (My Final Career Goal and Mission) - completed as directed

Follow the steps below to complete this guide:

Note: Completing this guide requires that you leave this guide several times to complete tasks and learn about problem-solving resources, so please do not plan on completing this guide in one session. Spread the work out over several days or weeks.

1. Gather document CS10 (My Talent Requirements) 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 (talent) 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 CS10 should now be changed (edited, added, or deleted)? If your answer is, yes, then make the necessary changes and updates to CS10.

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Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

2. Start completing CS22 (My Talent Profile). Using the latest, updated version of CS10 (My Talent Requirements) as clues, complete statements 1-6 on CS22. ***Do not answer item 7 yet.***

Do this now before you proceed to the next step.

3. Read this section carefully to note the importance of problem-solving in your career!

Understanding how to successfully achieve your career mission 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 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 believe that problem solving occurs as follows:

The first thing to happen is “Seeing.” Using their five senses (***augmented with today’s modern information gathering technologies***) people 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 the naked eye. Modern technology helps you see things as they truly are!

The second thing to happen is “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.

The third thing to happen is “Understanding.” By being able to see the world as it truly exists, and by being able to record (map) one’s findings, people can then better understand how our world actually works, how and why things fail, and what steps should be taken to

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solve problems or create new innovations.

The fourth thing to happen is “Believing.” Once one has an idea regarding how to change things for the better and how to solve problems and needs, the human brain creates a sense of “belief” that one can actually make a difference in the world by implementing their new ideas.

The last thing to happen is “Acting.” Because of the 4 factors above, human beings are motivated to take action to bring about changes and improvements in our world.

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. Keep the above IBM Think model in mind as you progress through this guide.

4. Become familiar with and start using modern “mapping” tools (as mentioned above in the IBM Think model) to record what you find when learning about your career field. Mapping tools will help you record and organize your findings into a meaningful body of knowledge.

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

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

Flowcharts – are carefully crafted visual diagrams (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 function should work or operate.

To Do Checklists – are lists 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.com](https://www.google.com) with the phrase “examples of to do lists” and you will find plenty of examples.

Do this now before you proceed any further.

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The authors have found it helpful to use all three mapping tools. We first use Mind mapping 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 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](https://www.google.com) for free Mind mapping, Flowcharting, and To Do Checklist software programs, and then download them to your computer and practice using them. Also, check out [Download.com](https://www.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.

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. Now it is time to create the first draft of your strategy regarding how you plan to reach your career mission. Using the Mind mapping program that you have chosen and the information already recorded in items 1-6 on CS22 (My Talent Profile) as clues, record your thoughts and ideas regarding how you plan to reach your career mission. Don’t worry about any order, just record your random thoughts in your Mind mapping program as they come to mind.

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

Expect that your first draft will have holes, gaps, 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 the Flowcharting program that you have chosen to arrange your Mindmap thoughts into sequential order indicating which decisions and tasks should be completed first, second, third, etc. Your goal here is to create a basic, sequential, step-by-step plan (roadmap) for achieving your mission. Yes, it may be very basic and incomplete at this point, but that’s OK. You’ll refine it later.

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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. Contact each person and ask if they would review your strategy and make suggestions.

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 CS22 (My Talent Profile). Based on all that you have learned about how to reach your career mission, summarize your thoughts by completing item 7 on CS22.

Continue to improve your strategy!

Over the course of the next few weeks or months 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 on CS22 updated as your career mission strategy evolves and matures.

What’s your next step?

When you have completed Item 7 on CS22 (My Talent Profile), move on to Task 2: CS23 (Promote Your Talent) to start promoting your talent to the world.

Need more help? Visit the [Contact US](http://www.CareerSMARTZ.com) page at www.CareerSMARTZ.com.