

td at work

TIPS, TOOLS & INTELLIGENCE
FOR DEVELOPING TALENT



KEEPING YOUR CAREER ON TRACK

Susan A. Kaiden

atd

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

KEEPING YOUR CAREER ON TRACK



AUTHOR

Susan A. Kaiden

Sue Kaiden is the manager of the ATD Career Development Community of Practice. She has more than 20 years of experience improving performance in the healthcare, IT, and nonprofit sectors, and 10 years of experience as a career coach. Sue holds an MBA from Cornell University.

Community Manager, Career Development

Sue Kaiden

Editor, *TD at Work*

Patty Gaul

Associate Editor

Caroline Coppel

Production Design

Maggie Hyde

WHY DO I NEED A CAREER ROAD MAP? 1

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER..... 1

CLARIFY YOUR WORK PREFERENCES 4

REFINE YOUR CAREER ASPIRATIONS 7

EVALUATE YOURSELF 8

DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN 11

CONCLUSION 13

REFERENCES & RESOURCES 14

JOB AIDS

Preference Grid..... 15

Gap Analysis 16

Need a trainer's lifeline? Visit td.org/tdatwork.

Printed in the United States of America.

For help or inquiries about your subscription, please contact Customer Care at 1.800.628.2783/1.703.683.8100 (international).

If you were asked, “Where do you see yourself five years from now?” would you be able to answer the question? In today’s rapidly changing environment, it’s difficult to imagine what the world of work will look like in two years, much less five years down the road. In light of this uncertainty, it’s almost tempting to give up on career planning altogether.

But would you embark on an important journey without a destination? Or without any idea what you want to see or do when you arrive? Yet this is precisely how many of us approach our careers. We meander along the back roads without a plan and then wonder why we arrive at a destination that is not to our liking.

Don’t wait until you’re laid off, burned out, or unhappy in your current position before you consider where you want to go on your career journey. By conducting periodic inventories, both of yourself and of the job market, you can keep your career on course, despite any detours or road blocks that you may encounter along the way.

This *TD at Work* will help you to:

- Understand why you need a career road map.
- Identify what you have to offer employers.
- Clarify your preferred skills and work environment.
- Refine your career aspirations.
- Evaluate your strengths and identify any gaps.
- Develop an action plan.

WHY DO I NEED A CAREER ROAD MAP?

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll probably end up somewhere else.”

—Yogi Berra

Gone are the days of climbing a career ladder at one company until you get your gold retirement watch. Instead, we face an evolving economy with accelerating technology, globalization, and business model disruptions that can change industries overnight and render occupations obsolete.

In fact, according to recent Department of Labor figures from a longitudinal study, younger Baby Boomers—individuals born from 1957 to 1964—held an average of 11.7 jobs from ages 18 to 48. And the evidence points to greater job mobility for younger workers, with many studies predicting that today’s workers will hold 14 or more jobs in their lifetimes and that more will rely on self-employment as a viable option.

During the past 10 years, many companies have eliminated employee career development programs in favor of a DIY model. While there is some evidence that this trend is reversing as the job market improves, it behooves you to take responsibility for your own career development. Using the tools in this *TD at Work* to map out a plan will help you stay abreast of changes in your field and identify any tune-ups or course corrections that might be necessary.

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER

“Take inventory of what you’re good at and extend out from your skills. Or determine what your customers need and work backward, even if it requires learning new skills.”

—Jeff Bezos, CEO, Amazon

Just as merchants need to take an inventory to know what wares they have to offer their customers, as an employee or a job seeker, you need to conduct a periodic inventory to identify what you have to offer employers. We’re not talking about your resume or the jobs you’ve held before, but a complete list of the skills, knowledge, and personality traits that contribute to who you are as a person. Job satisfaction is highest when you utilize your best skills doing something that interests and motivates you in a work environment that suits your personality.

Skills

Skills are the basic building blocks of what you know how to do. Skills are generally learned by doing and will improve over time as you hone your craft. The items that fall under this category should include proficiencies that you have

developed through training and experience that can be transferred from one company or industry to another.

As you develop your skills list, include both work-related and nonwork-related items. At this stage, don't concern yourself with how much you enjoy using these skills—identifying your preferences comes later in this process.

Knowledge

The next category to include in your personal inventory is knowledge. You may have acquired this knowledge at school, in a workshop, or on your own—perhaps, for example, through volunteering or individual study.

The difference between skills and knowledge is that knowledge is a subject that can be learned. You either know it or you don't know it. If you're a history teacher, for example, the skill is teaching and the knowledge is history. Additionally, knowledge can become outdated and need to be refreshed, while skills, if you continue to use them, usually get better with age.

JOB SATISFACTION IS HIGHEST WHEN YOU UTILIZE YOUR BEST SKILLS DOING SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS AND MOTIVATES YOU IN A WORK ENVIRONMENT THAT SUITS YOUR PERSONALITY.

Your knowledge list should contain any specialized technical or industry expertise that you have acquired. If you're a training and development professional, for instance, you might include specific e-learning tools or assessments that you have been trained to administer. Or if you've worked for many years in a specific industry and understand the terminology and issues facing companies in that space, make sure you incorporate that into this inventory. Add credentials under this heading as well, including any professional certifications or academic degrees that you hold, such as ATD's Certified Professional in Learning and Performance.

Finally, if there is a subject that personally fascinates you or a hobby about which you have a wealth of knowledge, include it here. It may not go on your resume, but this inventory should be a compendium of everything you have to offer, no matter how irrelevant it might seem at the moment.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND PERSONALITY TRAITS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The ATD Competency Model defines competencies as higher-level clusters of what someone needs to know and do to be successful. They're composed of measurable or observable skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviors critical to successful job performance.

For the purpose of the exercises in this *TD at Work*, we are using skills, knowledge, and personality traits as simple categories to describe yourself. Because these exercises are for your personal use, how you categorize items—as skills, knowledge, or traits—is less important than understanding what you bring to the table.

Skills: Proficiencies developed through training or experience. A skill is something you know how to *do*.

Knowledge: Practical or theoretical understanding of a subject.

Personality Traits: Abilities, a natural capacity to perform certain activities, and behaviors; the way in which you act or conduct yourself. These tend to be more innate and not easily learned.

Personality Traits

The final category in a personal inventory involves your personality traits, or the sum of the qualities that describe who you are. These attributes generally are not learned and don't go away—you might find yourself prefacing them with "I am." Items to include in this section might be characteristics such as "detail-oriented," "creative," or "calm under pressure." To identify these traits, think about how your friends or colleagues describe you: "She's incredibly empathetic and kind" or "He's highly imaginative and thinks well on his feet."

If you have taken the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), DiSC, or another personality profile test, you may already have a list of words that you can use to describe yourself.

Table 1 gives an example of a completed personal inventory for a fictitious training and development professional whom we will call Tina Trainor. It lists her skills, knowledge, and personality traits. We will use Tina as an example throughout this *TD at Work* to illustrate how to use the various tools.

As you can see in the table, Tina has six years of experience as a training specialist. She started her career as a nurse and, after a few years on the job, was asked to provide training for the graduate nurses. Tina learned that she loved the role and decided to pursue a position in the training and development department. Last year, she completed the ATD Master Trainer Program to strengthen her skills and training credentials.

FIGURE 1: IDEAL CAREER



TABLE 1. PERSONAL INVENTORY: TINA TRAINOR

Skills and Experience	Knowledge and Credentials	Personality Traits
Examples: Teaching, Writing	Examples: History, Grants	Examples: Introverted, Detail-Oriented
<p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching/Instructing Group Facilitation Public Speaking/Presentation Skills Curriculum Development Developing Instructional Materials Needs and Audience Assessment Establishing Rapport and a Positive Classroom Environment Storytelling Role Playing Program Evaluation Networking <p>Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six Years—Training Specialist Four Years—Nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Learning Principles ADDIE and SAM Learning Models Learner-Centered Instructional Methods Individual Learning Modalities Group Dynamics Leadership Development Healthcare Industry Clinical Knowledge <p>Technical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WebEx/GoToMeeting PowerPoint Blackboard LMS Social Networks (LinkedIn, Facebook) <p>Degree: BS in Nursing</p> <p>Credential: ATD Master Trainer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extroverted Creative/Idea Person Enthusiastic/Positive Organized Collaborative Empathetic Good Sense of Humor Enjoy Variety and New Challenges <p>Personality Profiles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBTI (ENFJ) DiSC (High IS, Fairly High D)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE WITH THE PERSONAL INVENTORY

Having difficulty completing the personal inventory? Here are some resources that can help.

O*NET

Developed by the Department of Labor, O*NET is the primary source of occupational information in the United States. It contains information on skills, knowledge, and abilities needed for a wide array of careers and industries. The site also has summary reports that include a list of typical skills, knowledge, and work activities utilized by specific positions. Visit www.onetonline.org for more information.

The ATD Competency Model

The ATD Competency Model identifies the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required for talent development professionals. It defines competencies important for everyone in the field, and then breaks them down into measurable key actions and specialized knowledge. Visit www.td.org/model for more information.

Friends and Colleagues

It is common to undervalue your strongest skills because they come so easily to you. We recommend making a first draft of your personal inventory and then sharing it with trusted friends and colleagues who know you well and have a realistic perspective on your talents. Ask people who have worked with you in some capacity, either paid or unpaid, and can speak to your strengths. This outside perspective will keep you from overlooking some of your best gifts.

CLARIFY YOUR WORK PREFERENCES

“Observe all men, thyself most.”

—Benjamin Franklin

The second step is to build self-knowledge by clarifying what skills you most enjoy using and what type of environment helps you to do your best work. You can do this by completing a preference grid, included in this issue.

In the first section of this *TD at Work*, you took an inventory of your skills, knowledge, and

personality traits to determine what you have to offer. Now it's time to decide which skills you most like to use and where you'd most like to ply your trade. This step helps you describe the attributes of your ideal job, as well as the types of jobs you would like to avoid.

After completing this grid, you may find that you're very happy in your current organization, but that you might want to change departments. Or you may realize that you love your job, but that it would be even better if you had a more flexible schedule.

BECAUSE MOST JOBS—EVEN THE ONES THAT WE LOVE OVERALL—INCLUDE SOME WORK THAT IS LESS APPEALING, AIM FOR A JOB THAT ALLOWS YOU TO USE YOUR FAVORITE SKILLS 70 TO 80 PERCENT OF THE TIME AND YOUR LESS FAVORED SKILLS THE REST OF THE TIME.

To get a better sense of what would bring you satisfaction in your professional life, it's helpful to answer these questions:

- Which skills do I like to use most? Which skills do I not like to use?
- What industries and sectors am I most interested in? Which ones am I least interested in?
- What type of work environment lets me do my best work? Which environments prevent me from doing my best work?

Take your time with this step, as it may require some soul searching or additional research. For example, look at the skills required for industries you'd like to work in, using O*NET or another occupational information source, and see if they match up with skills you already have and want to use.

Preferred Skills

Look at your personal inventory. For each skill listed, ask yourself if you'd like to use it every day, and mark it “yes,” “no,” or “maybe.” Be sure to identify the skills you truly dislike with a “no.”

Skills that you don't mind using, but wouldn't want to do all day, should receive a "maybe." Skills that you love should be marked with a "yes."

This exercise is important because we are motivated the most when we are using the skills we enjoy; those skills are also typically our strongest skills. In your ideal job, you would use your preferred skills 100 percent of the time. However, because most jobs—even the ones that we love overall—include some work that is less appealing, aim for a job that allows you to use your favorite skills 70 to 80 percent of the time and your less favored skills the rest of the time.

Most people also possess skills that they don't particularly enjoy using. Sometimes jobs change and we end up devoting most of our day to tasks that we can do, but don't want to do. This is a recipe for burnout. During this exercise, it's equally important to identify the things you dislike so that you know what to avoid in future positions—even those within your current department or organization. For example, you may realize that you don't care for the skills that are likely to come with a management position: You'd rather be doing the work than supervising the people doing the work.

Industry or Sector

The next area to consider is the industry or sector in which you would most like to work. Consider what you like and don't like about the industry or sector in which you are employed, or ones you've worked in previously. Think about the types of people you most enjoy being with or the subjects that fascinate you. All of your interests and preferences are clues to the type of industry that suits you best. For example, if you've always liked tinkering with or fixing things, you might enjoy a position in a manufacturing field or with a company that sells physical products rather than services. On the other hand, if you love helping people in practical ways, you might enjoy the healthcare or nonprofit sectors.

If you need more help to determine which industries might be the best fit for you, good resources include:

- the explanation of John Holland's RIASEC occupational codes (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional) at www.self-directed-search.com/how-does-it-work-/riasec
- *What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles.

STANDARD LIST OF INDUSTRIES

Below is a sampling of various industries, as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- Accommodation and Food Services
- Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Construction
- Educational Services
- Finance and Insurance
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Information
- Management of Companies and Enterprises
- Manufacturing
- Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
- Other Services (except Public Administration)
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Public Administration
- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- Retail Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Utilities
- Wholesale Trade

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS. 2014. NORTH AMERICAN INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (NAICS) AT BLS, MAY 22. WWW.BLS.GOV/BLS/NAICS.HTM.

If you are a trainer and like the industry in which you are currently employed, include types of firms that you're interested in or content that you'd like to teach. For example, if you're in the healthcare field and enjoy it, list the different types of companies that are involved in the healthcare sector. There are healthcare providers such as hospitals, but there are also many firms that serve the healthcare industry, such as consulting, software, and medical equipment companies.

Work Environment

The final area of your preference grid will include environmental factors, such as company size, corporate culture, physical location, length of commute, type of boss, salary level, and so forth.

Any work environment factors that are important to you should be included and arrayed based on your true preferences.

Be honest with yourself about what you can and cannot tolerate. For some people, an ideal commute is walking downstairs in their sweats; others would not enjoy working at home because they would miss the social interaction.

At this point, you may be thinking that this is an unrealistic exercise and that no job will have everything you want. But while you may not get everything that you want, you will more closely approximate your ideal job if you clearly identify the elements that are most important to your job satisfaction. Aim for a position that includes as many of these positive attributes as possible and you will be surprised at how close you can come to achieving your ideal.

TABLE 2. PREFERENCE GRID: TINA TRAINOR

Categories	No	Maybe	Yes
Skills Example: Teaching or training on specific topic(s)	<i>Skills you have but don't want to use:</i> Bedside nursing Online learning only Computer programming	<i>Skills that you wouldn't mind using:</i> Program evaluation Development of instructional materials Clinical knowledge Technical training Blended learning	<i>Skills you would most like to use:</i> Teaching/instructing—face-to-face Group facilitation Program design Storytelling Role play Leadership development
Industry or Sector Example: Healthcare, finance, nonprofit	<i>Industry or sector you'd like to avoid:</i> Defense industry Insurance Government Pharmaceutical	<i>Industry or sector you'd consider:</i> Nonprofit Startup Cultural organizations NGOs	<i>Industry or sector you're most interested in:</i> Healthcare Consulting Training company Research/think tank
Environmental Factors Example: Commute time, corporate culture, salary, benefits, physical environment, size of company	<i>Environmental factors you want to avoid:</i> Commute longer than one hour Large bureaucratic firm Authoritarian workplace Salary below \$70K Travel more than 50%	<i>Environmental factors that you can live with, but they're not ideal:</i> Commute 30-60 minutes using public transportation Salary \$70K-80K Small firm or startup Travel 25-50%	<i>Environmental factors you most desire in a new workplace or position:</i> Commute 30 minutes or less Collaborative workplace Creative co-workers Innovation is encouraged Potential for advancement Salary \$80K-95K+ Travel less than 25%

Having this information can also assist you during your next performance review. When your manager asks how to help you be even happier in your job, you will be prepared to ask for that one day a week at home, or that training opportunity that will expand your technology skills.

The completed preference grid shows that some of Tina's favorite skills include training delivery, facilitation, and role play. That column also contains the industries or sectors in which she'd most like to work, as well as the environmental factors that allow her to perform at her best. It's a recipe for her ideal job. The middle "maybe" column includes skills she doesn't mind using, such as clinical knowledge, as well as second-choice industries and environmental factors. In reviewing the "no" column, we see that she would like to stay away from bedside nursing as well as positions in which she would be required to do all of her training online. She would also like to avoid a job with extensive travel or a commute that is longer than an hour (wouldn't we all). Keeping these items in mind will help her avoid jobs, companies, or situations that are not a good fit. It's often as important to close the door on situations that won't make you happy as it is to open the door to opportunities that are more likely to increase your job satisfaction.

Once you've completed your preference grid, compare it with your current position. If it's nothing like the job that's described in your "yes" column, it may be time for a change. On the other hand, you may find that your current job has many of the features of your ideal job—perhaps many more than you thought. If so, you're in an enviable position. Most people find that their current position includes items in all three preference categories.

Look closely at the features of your current job that are in the "no" column. These are the factors that will cause the most dissatisfaction and burnout, so try and make a change if you can. Are you stuck with a lengthy commute that keeps you from spending time with your family? If you like your company but hate the commute, perhaps your boss will allow you to work from home once or twice a week. Any change you consider should

move you closer to the ideal job described in your "yes" column.

IT'S OFTEN AS IMPORTANT TO CLOSE THE DOOR ON SITUATIONS THAT WON'T MAKE YOU HAPPY AS IT IS TO OPEN THE DOOR TO OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE MORE LIKELY TO INCREASE YOUR JOB SATISFACTION.

If you are not currently employed, the "yes" column should become the factors you use to identify those jobs to which you should apply. We recommend not applying to any job that includes items in your "no" column.

REFINE YOUR CAREER ASPIRATIONS

"Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

—Theodore Roosevelt

If you've completed steps one and two, you should be closer to having an answer to the question we posed at the beginning of this *TD at Work*: "Where do you see yourself in five years?" The items in the "yes" column of your preference grid are the building blocks of an ideal position for you. Over time, this ideal job description will change as various factors become more or less important to you. If you have young children, for example, schedule flexibility and a reasonable commute may be imperative. Early in your career, you might not mind working long hours if your company is a fun place to be.

Think about where you would like to be, personally, in five years. Are you planning to retire? Thinking about having a family? Hoping to be in a management position? Think about how those personal desires might affect the information you provided in your professional preference grid. Do they change your answers dramatically? If yes, you'll need to decide if you should be looking for a job closer to home or for one that will allow you to build your management skills. Can you take steps now to help you reach those goals?

Your next step is to find two to three current job postings that are similar to the job that you've described in the "yes" column of your preference grid. It doesn't matter where they are located—or even whether you're actually looking for a job at the moment—because you will be using this target job for benchmarking purposes. For this exercise, use a job that is close to your ideal but represents a bit of a stretch goal. You can find job listings in the ATD Job Bank (<http://jobs.td.org>) or on a site such as CareerBuilder.com. It's best to use specific skills or credentials to find appropriate listings rather than job titles, because those vary widely.

To return to our example, using the search terms "training AND healthcare AND leadership AND development," a search of the ATD Job Bank brought up several jobs that looked like a good fit for Tina Trainor. After perusing the options, we chose the following description to use as her target job.

Senior Training and Development Consultant

The senior training and development consultant delivers training programs to employees with a primary focus on leadership development. Works with other learning professionals, subject matter experts, and leaders to analyze learning needs.

Essential Job Duties

- Facilitate both classroom and virtual training sessions.
- Develop, deliver, evaluate, and update training programs and projects.
- Regularly assess training needs, identify gaps, and recommend solutions.
- Utilize a consulting approach to needs assessment.
- Perform training administration using the learning management system.

Requirements

- Bachelor's degree with 10 years' experience required; master's degree preferred
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills

Requirements (continued)

- Project management skills
- Demonstrated high level of skill delivering and facilitating employee training
- Working knowledge of adult learning methods and practices
- Knowledge of performance improvement methods
- Knowledge of learning management systems and instructional design tools
- Collaborative team player
- Ability to work with members at all levels of the organization and subject matter experts
- Ability to multitask and prioritize workload in a fast-paced environment

EVALUATE YOURSELF

"The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark."

—Michelangelo

Now that you have a sample job listing to use as a benchmark, you can look at your skills, knowledge, and personality traits, along with your career preferences, and measure how you fit against the requirements and preferences of the job.

You can do this by conducting a gap analysis and then filling out the well-known SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) chart.

Perform a Gap Analysis

To complete a gap analysis, examine your target job description and identify the skills, knowledge, and personality traits that are needed, as well as any specific credentials or educational requirements. For this exercise, you can use the gap analysis job aid included in this issue.

Next, take a hard look at your personal inventory. What skills, knowledge, and personality traits do you have that match the requirements of the target position? Do you have the requisite credentials and experience? What specific accomplishments or examples can you provide

TABLE 3. GAP ANALYSIS: TINA TRAINOR

Gap Analysis	
Their Requirements	My Qualifications (Proof/Examples)
<p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated high level of skill delivering and facilitating employee training • Consults with leadership to identify performance issues and develop interventions • Develops, evaluates, and updates training programs • Excellent communication skills • Project management skills • Time management skills 	<p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest training delivery scores on internal workshop evaluations—received Best Trainer award three years in a row • Worked with leadership to create a leadership development program that won an ATD BEST award • Responsible for developing and updating leadership and management development programs for entire team • Positive course evaluations and performance reviews • Consistently deliver programs on time and under budget • Performance reviews and recommendations cite my strong ability to prioritize and manage my time
<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership development • Healthcare industry • Working knowledge of adult learning methods and practices • Knowledge of learning management systems 	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended several workshops/created leadership development program • Ten years of experience in the healthcare industry • ATD Master Trainer; have attended additional workshops on adult learning • Some knowledge and experience with learning management systems
<p>Personality Traits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultative/collaborative personal style • Ability to work with members at all levels of the organization • Multitasker, prioritize workload in a fast-paced environment 	<p>Personality Traits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories about how I've collaborated and worked with all levels of people to move projects forward • Story about juggling priorities during downsizing
<p>Education/Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree with 8-10 years' experience • Master's with 10+ years' experience preferred • Position requires 30-50% overnight travel 	<p>Education/Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six years' experience in training and four years' nursing experience • No master's degree • Would prefer less travel, but can do it

that will prove you actually possess the skills or personal traits that are desired? Pull out your most recent resume if you need a reminder of your specific accomplishments.

This is the time to be honest with yourself about areas in which you fall short. We recommend using a tool such as the ATD Career Navigator to assess your current skills. At this point, you might also benefit from talking to a

mentor or trusted colleague about how your background compares with the target job requirements. Highlight the areas where your skills or experience are thin or lacking. Once you've finished completing this gap analysis, you will have an excellent idea of just how well your skills and background are suited to your target job.

If you are in active job search mode, use this exercise to compare your qualifications with current job postings. It is an excellent tool to prepare for upcoming job interviews, because it reminds you to identify examples and stories that fit the position requirements.

Table 3 shows a completed gap analysis for Tina Trainor. Her current qualifications compare fairly well to the requirements for the target position. Her weakest areas are her limited experience with learning management systems and a lack of a master's degree, which is listed as "preferred." She has less experience than required, but remember that this target job is a stretch goal.

Conduct a SWOT Analysis

Once you have identified gaps in your skills and experience, it's important to remind yourself of your strengths by completing a SWOT analysis. This exercise also prompts you to look at the big picture and capture information about the marketplace and other external factors that are outside of your control.

Strengths

The best place to identify your strengths is by looking back at the work that you've completed using the tools outlined thus far in this *TD at Work*. Be sure to include the skills and talents that you most like to use (from your preference grid) as well as the attributes on your gap analysis for which you have ample supporting evidence. Add any credentials, degrees, or certifications that you possess as well as personality traits that would be viewed as strengths for your target position.

Weaknesses

When considering your weaknesses, include any issues that you uncovered in your gap analysis as well as any personal factors that might work against you in the job market. If your target job requires or prefers a credential that you don't possess, that should be included. Other weaknesses might include lack of experience with new technology. For example, if most of your experience is with face-to-face training, the trend toward online and mobile learning may affect your marketability.

Opportunities

The opportunities and threats in your SWOT analysis relate to external factors. Consider these questions when identifying your opportunities:

- Are there changes in your field that would be beneficial to someone with your background, such as a greater use of online training platforms with which you have experience?
- Are there any national, state, or local regulations or programs that might present an opportunity, such as a national effort that provides technical training grants?
- Are there hiring trends in your field that could benefit you, such as a greater need for training and development in an industry that is growing rapidly in your region?
- Are there demographic trends that could drive more demand for your skills, such as many people retiring in your field who will need to be replaced?

If you're not sure where to find information on these types of trends, consult business journals; ATD's publications, such as the *State of the Industry* report and *TD* magazine; and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which provides information on trends in various occupations.

Threats

When considering threats, be sure to focus on external factors affecting your field and region. For example, is your region facing major downsizing in a particular industry in which you have been employed? Are there new regulations or technologies that will reduce the need for your particular skills? Are there demographic changes that will negatively affect you, such as many new graduates in your field who will have more recent training?

Table 4 shows the SWOT analysis completed by our persona, Tina Trainor. She identified significant strengths in training delivery as well as her healthcare knowledge and personal traits. She was concerned about her limited experience with learning technology, a lack of a master's degree, and limited management experience. In terms of

TABLE 4. SWOT ANALYSIS: TINA TRAINOR

<p>Strengths (Personal Strengths, Internal Factors)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training delivery ATD Master Trainer credential Nursing background (clinical knowledge) Healthcare industry/terminology Highly organized Time management/ability to prioritize workload Interpersonal skills Collaborative/consultative style Perform well in fast-paced environment 	<p>Weaknesses (Gaps, Internal Factors, Areas for Improvement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited experience with newer instructional technology platforms for online and mobile learning Lack master's degree (often preferred) Limited management experience No formal training in consulting or performance improvement methods
<p>Opportunities (Market/Industry Trends, External Factors)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth in healthcare industry Affordable Care Act increased insured population New healthcare regulations/quality requirements New technology and software being introduced that requires staff to be retrained frequently 	<p>Threats (Market/Industry Trends, External Factors)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend toward more online learning Rapid changes in healthcare industry and technology threaten to make my clinical knowledge obsolete Government budget cuts to Medicare payments

external opportunities, growth in the healthcare industry was good for her long-term career prospects. She viewed the constant changes in healthcare as both an opportunity and a threat because it means that trainers will be kept busy but their knowledge can become obsolete quickly.

DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

“Have a bias toward action—let’s see something happen now. You can break that big plan into small steps and take the first step right away.”

—Indira Gandhi

By now, you should have a clear picture of your professional strengths and weaknesses as well as any opportunities or threats that exist in the environment. The next step is to identify strategies and action items to help you close any gaps and develop a personal development plan. Remember, this may or may not include developing a plan for a new job or new employer. It is mostly a tool and a road map to keep you on your desired career path. Here are some strategies to consider.

Training

If you have identified a gap that can be alleviated by gaining a new credential or certification, you will need to decide which credential to pursue and how much money and time you have available to dedicate to this goal. Research your options carefully. Review job postings to determine which credentials are most frequently requested, ask industry professionals, and read up on the requirements before making your choice.

Knowledge gaps can often be closed by attending a workshop. There are many options to choose from, such as online programs and MOOCs (massive open online courses). If you need to practice a new skill, a face-to-face experiential learning approach is usually more beneficial than a virtual option. On the other hand, if you need to learn how to use a new technology tool, an online learning program might be a better choice.

Volunteering for a local nonprofit or association can also be a terrific way to obtain new skills. This can be particularly helpful if you have training in a specific area but have not had much opportunity to use your knowledge. For example, if you’ve been trained to use a particular technology platform but haven’t had a chance to

use it at work, you might be able to help a local nonprofit implement the technology.

If you think a higher-level degree is necessary for you to progress in your career, talk with people in the field to make sure it is essential before embarking on that path. Ask them how they got to where they are today. You may learn that a credential or additional experience is more important than a degree, or that you will in fact need to get an advanced degree if you want to move up.

Mentoring

Mentoring has greatly expanded in recent years, so the hardest question to answer may be the type of mentor who can best fill the need you currently have.

A traditional path to locating someone who can assist you in developing your professional skills has been to identify a mentor inside or outside of your company who is willing to help advise you on your career progress. Most midlevel and senior-level professionals like to share their knowledge and provide advice to up-and-coming people in the field. Ask them for 15-20 minutes of their time to get their advice on your career aspirations. Come prepared with a list of questions that will show them that you have done your homework.

VOLUNTEERING FOR A LOCAL NONPROFIT OR ASSOCIATION CAN ALSO BE A TERRIFIC WAY TO OBTAIN NEW SKILLS. THIS CAN BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL IF YOU HAVE TRAINING IN A SPECIFIC AREA BUT HAVE NOT HAD MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

You also may be able to find a virtual mentor through LinkedIn or other social networks. Look for someone who is in a position to which you aspire and with whom you have something in common—the same alma mater or special interests, for instance. Then introduce yourself or get an introduction through your network and ask for their advice. Another way to gain virtual mentors is by joining industry-specific groups

on LinkedIn and posting questions on the group's discussion thread, or following industry experts on Twitter and approaching them with specific questions.

Connecting With Others

Attending local networking events is an excellent opportunity to get to know others in your field. Identify people whom you would like to meet and find others who can introduce you through LinkedIn or other social networks. As with mentors, people are usually very flattered that you're asking for their advice, but have specific questions and keep your meetings brief.

Joining the local chapter of your professional association is an excellent way to make contacts and stay abreast of trends in your field. If you are interested in moving to a new industry, it can be tremendously valuable to join a local industry-related association to learn more about the field. There are also hundreds of local networking and special interest groups that might be helpful to you. To find local associations, look at Weddle's association directory online (www.weddles.com/associations/index.cfm). Another option is to use MeetUp.com, which provides a platform for local interest groups to recruit new members and publicize their events.

Acting Within Your Organization

People can't read your mind, so it's always a good idea to make your aspirations known. Talk with your boss or mentor about the direction you'd like to take in your career. If you want to grow within the company or learn new skills, let them know what you're hoping to do. Don't have this conversation during an emotionally charged meeting like a performance review. Instead, ask to meet to talk about your professional growth and come with a list of specific skills you'd like to learn or experience you'd like to gain. Sell it by considering how this new skill or experience will help your department as well as your performance in your current job.

You may be able to gain new skills by volunteering to work on a cross-functional team or project outside of your department.

Finally, there are times in your career when you might want to consider a lateral move within your organization. This is true if you like your company but need to gain experience in a new area. If your organization values your skills, it will support your transition in order to keep a good employee.

After doing a personal inventory, thinking about her desired work environment and situation, reviewing her strengths and weaknesses, and determining what her ideal job would look like, Tina Trainor decided she needed to take action on several fronts:

- Identify the learning technology tools that are most in demand.
- Research training options on popular learning technology tools.
- Look into master's degree programs and determine if she can afford the time, money, and effort involved in pursuing a higher-level degree.
- Find project opportunities at work or as a volunteer to develop her management skills.

Like Tina, you will need to decide which gaps or issues are the most important ones to address first and make a list of the steps you are going to take next. Writing down your goals and intended actions builds your commitment, and breaking down next steps into smaller “to-do” items makes taking action less daunting.

Once you start talking to people about what you're trying to accomplish, you will be surprised by the opportunities that appear. Every step you take, no matter how small, will build your momentum and move you along the road to your career goal.

CONCLUSION

“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”

—Seneca

Your career will not be a straight road from here to your current goal. It will take twists and turns and be influenced by serendipity and chance. So why bother with this exercise? Increasing your

self-knowledge and clarifying your preferences will help you to recognize the right opportunities. Taking steps to identify your strengths and close gaps in your qualifications will help you to be more prepared for those opportunities when they present themselves.

As you progress in your career, your preferences and needs will evolve. That is why it is crucial to reassess your situation at key points on your journey. Once you have completed these exercises, you should review them annually or when personal circumstances change.

While it's true that the world of work is constantly evolving, if you regularly assess yourself against current job requirements and industry standards, your skills will be more resistant to obsolescence. Periodically evaluating your career goals and preferences will improve your job satisfaction both now and in the years to come.

So, when you are asked, “Where do you see yourself in five years?” will you have an answer?

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

BOOKS

- Bolles, R.N. 2014. *What Color Is Your Parachute?* 2015. New York: Ten Speed Press.
- Buckingham, M. 2007. *Go Put Your Strengths to Work: 6 Powerful Steps to Achieve Outstanding Performance.* New York: Free Press.
- Reitman, A., and C. Williams. 2006. *Career Moves: Take Charge of Your Training Career Now.* Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.
- Rothwell, W.J., J. Arneson, and J. Naughton. 2013. *ASTD Competency Study: The Training & Development Profession Redefined.* Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.

ARTICLES

- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2015. "Number of Jobs Held, Labor Market Activity, and Earnings Growth Among the Youngest Baby Boomers: Results From a Longitudinal Survey." Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 31. www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf.
- Carroll, M., and A. De Back. 2014. "Marketing Your Career Brand." *TD at Work*. Alexandria, VA: ATD Press.
- Feldstein, M. 2013. "Defining and Leveraging Your Professional Value." *Infoline*. Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.
- Salter, C. 2009. "Kindle 2 Preview: Jeff Bezos on Why Amazon Works Backward." *Fast Company*, February 6. www.fastcompany.com/1153395/kindle-2-preview-jeff-bezos-why-amazon-works-backwards.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

- ATD Career Navigator. www.td.org/Communities-of-Practice/Career-Development/Career-Navigator.

The ATD Competency Model. www.td.org/Certification/Competency-Model.

ATD Job Bank. <http://jobs.td.org>.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) at BLS, May 22. www.bls.gov/bls/naics.htm.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 8. www.bls.gov/ooh/.

The Business Journals. www.bizjournals.com.

John Holland's Self-Directed Search. 2013. RIASEC Theory and the Hexagonal Model: Matching Personalities to Occupations. John Holland's Self-Directed Search. www.self-directed-search.com/how-does-it-work-/riasec.

PREFERENCE GRID

Categories	No	Maybe	Yes
Skills Example: Teaching/training on specific topic(s)	<i>Skills you have but don't want to use:</i>	<i>Skills that you wouldn't mind using:</i>	<i>Skills you would most like to use:</i>
Industry or Sector Example: Healthcare, finance, nonprofit	<i>Industry or sector you'd like to avoid:</i>	<i>Industry or sector you'd consider:</i>	<i>Industry or sector you're most interested in:</i>
Environmental Factors Example: Commute time, corporate culture, salary, benefits, physical environment, size of company	<i>Environmental factors you definitely want to avoid:</i>	<i>Environmental factors that you can live with, but they're not ideal:</i>	<i>Environmental factors you most desire in a new workplace or position:</i>

GAP ANALYSIS

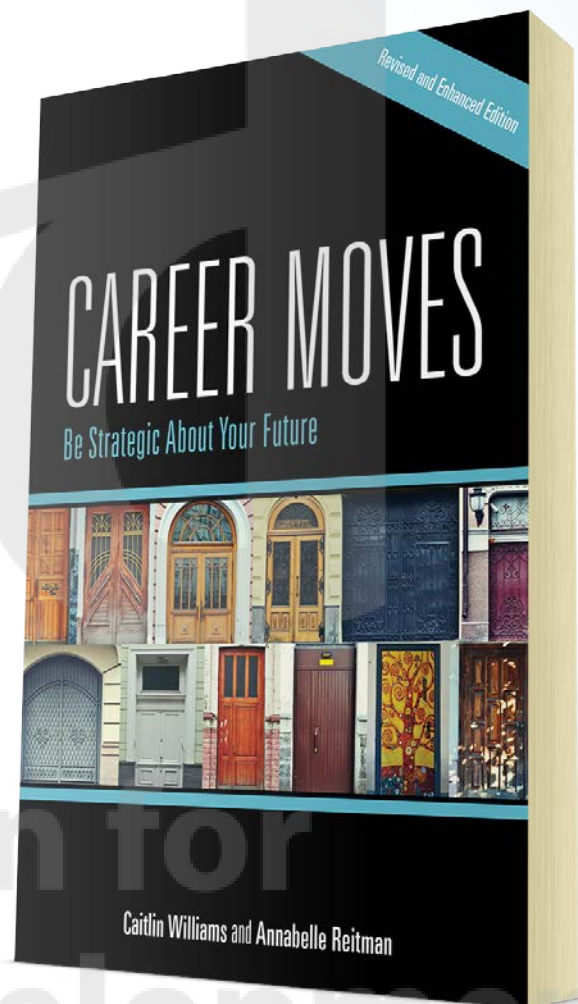
Gap Analysis	
Their Requirements	My Qualifications (Proof/Examples)
Skills:	Skills:
Knowledge:	Knowledge:
Personality Traits:	Personality Traits:
Education/Experience:	Education/Experience:

Start Making All the Right Moves in Your Career

“Whether you are just starting your career or have been at it for a while, Annabelle and Caitlin will stretch your thinking and push you toward professional success. This book is jam-packed with ideas and must-dos to help you plan an exciting career.”

Elaine Biech

ebb associates inc



In this third edition, career experts Caitlin Williams and Annabelle Reitman empower you to take charge of your training career and optimize your goals.

071470.62220

Learn more at www.td.org/careermoves.

atd Association for
Talent Development

atd

Association for Talent Development



Association for
Talent Development
1640 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
www.td.org/publications



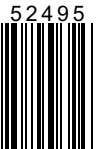
TEXT PRINTED ON
10% RECYCLED FIBER



ISBN 978-1-60728-300-3



9 781607 283003
251514



\$24.95

0515018.02410