

# The Career Development Paper

## Purpose

Once a person has developed a job search focus, and anticipated the job search process by working through the previous chapters, what comes next? We have developed a document that will guide you through the actual process. We outline here a career development paper (CDP) that our students have found very useful as a guide during recruiting. The career development paper works similarly to an annual budget in a corporation, so the skills involved in developing, using, and modifying it, and then finishing what it outlines, are very relevant to necessary organizational skills.

The career development paper is designed to help you to use your self-assessment paper—that is, to think through and manage in an active, rigorous way the implications of that paper.

The career development paper is a nuts-and-bolts strategy paper that asks you to outline a job search program and to lay *specific* plans for implementing it. Our experience has been that students who carefully consider and execute the assignment and then implement its components during their job search find that process to be much less difficult than it otherwise could have been (and often is for their peers). The notebooks are *not* to be handed in with the papers. You should hand in a *copy* of your typed paper, *keeping* the original.

## Content

The CDP should contain the following elements:

1. A copy of the themes list developed in your self-assessment paper. If, upon reexamination, you wish to refine those thematic labels, you are encouraged to do so. The themes should be listed on one page and *numbered for easy reference*. Whereas the raw data from the various data-generating devices was your data base for the self-assessment paper, your themes will be your basic data base for the career development paper.
2. Implications of your themes for work and career. These implications should (1) be specific; (2) address a variety of dimensions of work; and (3) be referenced to specific themes (again to demonstrate the logic you used to construct them). Some dimensions you might wish to consider would be physical environment, interpersonal requirements, location, tasks and routines, organizational style, rewards. The logic connecting implications to themes should be clear.
3. An analysis rigorously based on your themes and implications of what career opportunities you have elected to pursue in your job search and *why*. Be sure that your assumptions are explicit and that your focus is clearly defined. Note briefly how each alternative could fit into a long-term career path.
4. A statement describing the kind of life style you intend to live next year, including a justification,

based on themes and implications, for that plan. I encourage you to push yourself here to think through the variety of life style issues we have raised throughout the course and at the same time to be realistic. You may wish to include your personal definition of "success," a typical intended weekly schedule, and expected financial allocations.

5. A *detailed* action plan for your job search for the coming year. *What* will you do? Calendar *whom* you will visit, contact. *When? Where* will you go? *What* will you want to learn? *How* will you learn it? *What* is your time frame/schedule? How will you manage your personal life and school work? These issues (and others) should be addressed carefully. The action plan should be justified clearly by your themes and implications and should consider the topics raised in the career development half of the course. We encourage you to review this plan several times asking yourself these questions: "What am I assuming or taking for granted? Is that reasonable?" and then to be very explicit about the answers.

**IF YOU HAVE A JOB OR ARE NOT LOOKING THIS SPRING:** Some of you have already accepted jobs for next year or are in joint programs that will keep you off the job market next spring. Those of you deferring your entry to the job market for a year should write the paper as assigned. For those who have already accepted a job, the content of the paper is altered slightly.

- A. Write section 3 as a *detailed* justification of your job next year in light of your themes and implications. How well does it fit? What difficulties do you expect to encounter? Specifically, (who, what, how, when, where) how will you manage the joining up process?
- B. Substitute for section 5 a discussion of your long-term career strategy (based on themes and implications) and of how the job you have accepted fits into that plan.

### Format

Your CPD must be typed. *Maximum* length is twenty-five pages. Hand in *two copies*. *Keep the original* for yourself. Do *not* hand your notebook in. Do not put your papers in a notebook or cover. Staple in the upper left corner.

### Criteria for a Good Career Development Paper

1. Logic of connections between themes and implications
2. Logic of connections between themes/implications and jobs to pursue

3. Logic of connections between themes/implications and intended life style
4. Detailed and specific action plan with attention given to the issues raised in the CD half of course (focus, correspondence, interviewing, support systems, company visits, coping, choosing, and joining up)
5. Reasonable length
6. Clarity of communication
7. You may wish to include various forms you will use to help you organize your job search [contact log, interview questions (tied closely to and referenced to themes and implications), company research form (again, based on themes and implications), list of target companies, a linking chart (a matrix with themes and implications down one side, life style aspects or job demands across the top and comments in the cells), and/or a typical weekly schedule during the second-semester job search (have you realistically allocated enough time to implement your action plan?)].

### ASSIGNMENT

We have included here a copy of Steven Taylor's career development paper so that you can see what one might look like and find its strengths and weaknesses. Read through it and identify what it does well and what could be improved. How will you improve on this design in your own paper? What feedback would you give to Steve? Are there any cautions you would pass on to him as he begins his job searches?

### Steven Taylor's Career-Development Paper

To rise to a position of such power that we have no one to blame but ourselves is a fearful state of affairs . . . . A very few march unambivalently and unhesitatingly into adulthood, ever eager for new and greater responsibilities. We are accustomed to imagining the conversion or sudden call to grace as an "Oh, Joy!" phenomenon. In my experience, more often as not it is, at least partially, an "Oh, Shit" phenomenon.

—M. Scott Peck, 1978  
*The Road Less Traveled*

### Self-Assessment Themes (plus Three)

Steven Taylor is a person who:

1. Requires a balance in both work and personal life.

---

Prepared by Lori Wilson and Jim Clawson. Copyright © 1989 by the Darden Graduate Business School Foundation, Charlottesville, VA. UVA-PACS-025.

2. Plays a little fast and loose with traditional customs.
  3. Thrives in an unstructured environment.
  4. Is demanding of self/a drive for continuous improvement.
  5. Has a need for intellectual stimulation.
  6. For whom Family is important.
  7. Can be pompous, but usually conscious of it.
  8. Needs to spend time in outdoor activities.
  9. Values independence and self-sufficiency.
  10. Cares more deeply about a smaller number of people.
  11. Enjoys external confirmation of success.
  12. Is demanding of friends.
  13. Prefers an active environment.
  14. For whom Playing music is missing as a part of my life.
  15. Handles crises well.
  16. Learns from setbacks.
  17. Adapts well.
  18. Is restless, I like to get on to the next project.
  19. Is willing to take risks to gain greater rewards.
- Plus three!
20. Would like to see more of the world and its variety.
  21. Senses the emergence of a more contemplative me.
  22. Would like to find a place to call home, somewhere I will always come back to.

### **Implications of Self-Assessment Themes**

#### ***Professional Aspect***

##### **Cognitive:**

1. I like to balance intuitive and analytical approaches to solving problems (T4,T7,T8).
2. I enjoy a constant flow of new and challenging situations (T3,T4,T5,T17,T19,T20).

##### **Routines:**

3. Predictability of hours is not critical, but relentlessly long hours will be unacceptable (T1,T3,T6,T8).
4. I like to take a break between major projects (T1,T3,T15).
5. A varying daily routine is exciting (T2,T3,T13,T18,T15).
6. I want to commute less than 45 minutes from home to work, and I prefer not to drive (T6,T18).

##### **Tasks:**

7. I enjoy making presentations and being challenged to support the analyses (T3,T4,T5,T7,T9,T17,T19).

8. I like to travel in my work and would like to travel internationally. (T3,T5,T9,T13,T17,T20).
9. I thrive on unearthing the difficult questions, the ones nobody likes to answer (T3,T4,T12,T17).
10. I want to be responsible for managing my day (T1,T2,T3,T4,T9).
11. I derive great satisfaction from getting a team to pitch in and push a project to completion (T3,T10,T15,T17).

##### **Organizational Style:**

12. If it's not a fun place, then it's not for me (T2,T3,T13,T20).
13. I want to work with people who see excellence as a goal in and of itself and worth the effort (T4,T5,T9,T10,T12).
14. I like to work in an informal environment (T2,T3,T13,T15,T19).
15. I want to work in a firm small enough that I know everyone by name (T1,T9,T10,T19).
16. I want to know if I've done well, and I want to hear about it if I haven't (T4,T11,T16,T19).
17. A little pressure in my work is exciting! (T3,T4,T13,T15,T16,T19).

##### **Rewards:**

18. I would like to have an equity interest in my work, or at least a compensation plan that returns some equity (T11,T19).
19. I would like to have enough capital seven years from now to take no salary for a year while starting a business (T2,T19).
20. I will seek at least \$50,000 per year as a base salary.

##### **Environment:**

21. I would like to work in an office where I can tell whether it is day or night outside (T8).
22. It would be best if I can work with a very organized secretary or support staff (T2,T3,T13,T15,T18,T19).

##### **Social Aspect**

23. I would like to live in a place where there is a diverse and international population (T20,T22,T2).
24. I would like to have access to both the ocean and the mountains (T8,T21).
25. I would like to be close enough to theaters and music performance venues to go on a week night (T14,T5,T21,T20).
26. I like having a small group of friends to get together with regularly (T5,T10,T12,T22).

### *Material Aspect*

27. I want to buy a home and a piano to go inside (T22,T14).
28. I would like to begin planning for acquiring a ski house with access to both downhill and cross-country skiing (T6,T8,T22).

### *Family Aspect*

29. I would like to begin a family within the next ten years (T6,T13,T22).
30. I want to give my children the same exposure to natural beauty that I had while growing up (T6,T8,T10,T20,T21).
31. I want my children to have a place they will always think of as home (T6,T22).

### *Emotional Aspect*

32. I need to cultivate a more conscious sensitivity to the effects of my actions on others (T2,T4,T7,T10,T12).
33. I need to come to a better understanding of my own definitions of success, and I need to evaluate myself in those terms and not as much by what others say or do in reaction to my efforts (T2,T9,T11,T17).
34. I need to allow myself greater joy in my successes, lest I exhaust myself through relentless self-criticism (T4,T18,T19,T21).

## **Careers I Intend to Pursue**

### *Venture Capital*

I would like to join a venture-capital firm where there is an opportunity to move up into a partnership position.

### *Why?*

#### **Agreement with implications:**

- a. Venture capitalists are concerned with seeking out investments in ideas and people that create new products, develop new markets, or exploit market niches that others have missed. (I-2,I-9)
- b. A large part of a venture capitalist's time is spent convincing other investors or partners to join him in investments. (I-7,I-11)
- c. Firms are generally small (2-20 professionals). (I-14,I-15)

- d. The venture business consists largely of listening to and reading about a lot of crazy ideas, and trying to sort out which ones aren't so crazy. (I-9,I-1,I-5)
- e. Most firms are organized as partnerships. (I-18)
- f. The work tends to be transaction by transaction, so there are peaks and valleys in the intensity. (I-4)
- g. Competition in the business has forced investors to expand the geographic range of their work. (I-8)
- h. Certain firms are forming alliances and cross-investment pools with foreign venture investors, while an even smaller number have set up overseas offices. (I-8)
- i. If I am very good, there is the potential for great financial reward. (I-19)
- j. Working environments tend to be open, informal, and collegial. (I-14,I-16)

### *Why not?*

#### **Contradictions with my implications:**

- a. The business is domestic for the most part. (I-8)
- b. Most venture firms have minimal support staff. (I-22)
- c. There is a certain objectivity and distance required of professional investors when looking at new opportunities. (I-11,I-12)

### *Other Factors*

The venture business is made up of many very small firms, and the competition for the few jobs available to MBAs is fierce. For jobs with venture firms investing primarily in technology innovations, a technical background is a big advantage, but it is not an advantage I possess. The small size of the firms means that they do not actively recruit new employees, so the amount of effort required to find opportunities is much greater than it would be to look for work as a brand manager or financial analyst. Further, the industry has entered a phase where returns have fallen because of the tremendous amount of new investment funds that have been allocated to venture investing over the past five years.

In spite of all the challenges presented above, if I am interested in the venture business, I feel as though I should give it my best shot.

### *Fit with Long-Term Career Path*

I have to be realistic in acknowledging that I may not find an opportunity, but since I think that I want to start my own business in the long run, the contacts I make in this job search and the

knowledge I gain will hold intrinsic value even if I don't find the opportunity I seek.

A position with a venture firm can lead in two directions long term. The first is the obvious upward move into a partnership, and the second is the outward move to join with some of the entrepreneurial ventures the firm has either funded or turned down. I believe that my path lies along the second fork, toward an entrepreneurial venture, but that will depend on how I evolve over the next few years, and I suppose it also would depend on the evolution of any partnership I may join.

### Action Plan

Date	Action
12/88	Meet with contact at San Francisco firms, seek additional names, particularly firms with international plans.
1/88	Meet again with summer employer, Smith Group. Seek commitment on permanent hire/no hire decision.
1/88	Generate additional letters and follow-up calls. Plan dates for February S.F. trip if appropriate. Follow up on Wasserella, London opportunity.
2/88	Visits to interested firms in Boston, S.F., D.C.
3/88	Decide!

### Questions to Ask

1. What type of investments are you currently pursuing? LBOs, start-ups, work-outs, intermediate stage?
2. What are your plans for expanding investment activity and staff over the next five years?
3. Any plans to seek cross-investment with foreign V.C. firms?
4. What is your general philosophy on compensation and what is required to become an equity participant?
5. What is the working style of the firm? Collaborative, individual, hours, expectations on additional education/training, travel?
6. How are troubled investments handled?

### Luce Scholarship

I have applied for a Luce Scholarship to be assigned to work in Asia from August 1989 to June 1990. I have been selected by the University of Virginia for the national competition, but the

final selection will not occur until March, three months from now.

### Why?

#### Agreement with my implications:

- a. I think that Asian cultures are becoming a major influence on life in the United States, yet I have little understanding of the places or the people. (I-2,I-9)
- b. The Luce Scholars are bound to be an extremely accomplished and inspirational group of individuals. (I-13)
- c. My life has been greatly enriched by my previous experiences living abroad. (I-2,I-8,I-23)
- d. The Luce program is specifically dedicated to developing a cadre of Americans with a sensitivity to Asian concerns. (I-1,I-32)
- e. There is a great element of unpredictability to life in a foreign country. (I-2,I-3,I-5,I-17)
- f. A year in Asia would provide a clean break from my life to date, and will grant me a rare opportunity to move in new directions upon my return. (I-33)

### Why Not?

#### Contradictions with my implications:

- a. A Luce year will delay acquisition of material gains. (I-27,I-28,I-19)
- b. The combination of Asian language study and working in a foreign culture will demand tremendous effort. (I-3)
- c. I will be far from my current friends and support group. (I-26)
- d. I will not know much about my work or location until after I have committed and arrived there! (I-1,I-12, I-14,I-15,I-21)
- e. It is uncertain whether my work will be continuous with the work I pursue upon my return. (I-18)

### Fit with Long-Term Career Path

I have been working for three years now to expand my hopes and dreams upward from the cynical state I found myself in the summer of 1985 in New York. I expanded the range of geographic possibilities by moving to San Francisco; I expanded the range of intellectual and professional possibilities by coming to Darden and performing well here. The opportunity to work and study in Asia as a Luce Scholar represents a geometric expansion of possibilities beyond those I have achieved, and a chance to

challenge myself and grow in ways which I will not realize along any other path.

The Luce in itself would achieve my long-term goal of working internationally (8), but it also fits very well with my hope to be an investor/manager in an international business. In a very real sense, a placement into an Asian country with only a minimum of language training will test my entrepreneurial mettle to the utmost degree.

### *Action Plan*

I have already completed the bulk of the work required for pursuing the Luce Scholarship. This fall I completed an application and submitted a personal statement and several recommendations. The University selection process also included an hour-long interview with four international studies specialists. Additional steps are as follows:

Date	Action
12/12/88	Request a recommendation letter from the Dean to the Luce Foundation endorsing my candidacy.
12/31/88	I should be notified by here about a second-round interview appointment.
1/88	Second-round interview.
2/88	Selection of finalists, day-long interview in Washington, D.C. (if I make the final group).
3/88	Announcement of awards, selection of assignments.

### *Management Consulting*

A good bit of our class discussion this term about the Darden placement process has centered around the career du jour, which in 1989 everyone seems to be saying is management consulting. Well, so be it! The facts of the matter are that I came to the Darden school thinking that consulting was not for me, largely on the basis of having observed a close family friend over the years who has now become a managing partner at a consulting firm. Mr. D. was gone almost all week long when we were growing up, and when he was around, he seemed to be constantly falling asleep on the couch. Now that I've grown older and gotten to know him more as an equal, I see that, while part of his problem is a general selfishness, clearly part of his problem was that his job forced him to constantly be away from home and family.

I have looked at the management consulting field this fall, and there are wide differences in approach and style among these firms. Some of

them seem to have an asset-allocation philosophy of personnel management. Others approach their assignments in discrete chunks, consciously attempting to alleviate undue pressures on staff. Nonetheless, the business is a client-service business, and if a client requires a sudden trip to Timbuktu, you *will* be on the plane. At present, I do not have a family, so lifestyle pressures would not be as large a factor, but I expect that once I do find someone to begin a family with, I would find the lifestyle intolerable at many of these firms. So I come to this element of my job search with some skepticism and the knowledge that, while there are certain practices within some firms (small to medium-size companies and international strategy) that I will find appealing, the large bulk of these firms are probably not for me. Let's go to the analysis!

### *Why?*

#### Agreements with my implications:

- Consultants tend to be handed the most difficult and prickliest problems their clients face. (I-2,I-7,I-9,I-13)
- The business requires rapid grasp of new situations. (I-1,I-2)
- Assignments are generally geographically diverse. (I-5,I-8)
- Many firms explicitly approve and assist employees to leave for entrepreneurial opportunities. (I-9)
- The work is project oriented, with definite beginnings and endings. (I-4,I-16)
- Support and research staff is an essential part of most firms. (I-22)
- There are few very large firms, although consolidations are occurring. (I-15)
- Competition for talent is keen, bidding up starting salaries. (I-19,I-20)

### *Why Not?*

#### Contradictions with my implications:

- There will be pressures between client demands and personal wishes. (I-10,I-12)
- Most firms compensate on a salary-only plan up until the partnership level. (I-18)
- Certain firms *do* take an expendable-asset view of entry-level staff. (I-3,I-10,I-4,I-21,I-24)

### *Fit with Long-Term Career Path*

And now will the compromise be revealed? The long-term career fit lies in the opportunity to develop my skills as a crisis problem-solver and

as a creator of solutions that work, not just solutions that look good on camera. The long-term fit also lies in working in a place that doesn't contradict my goal of leaving to start my own business. There is also a sort of backwards fit, in that I have not yet discovered what business I want to start (or buy?), and consulting firms do provide an opportunity to look around at industry trends, and even different industries to some extent. What I would really like to be is a management consultant who invests in his clients or who is paid in equity (see action plan)!

When I argue with myself about the long-term merits of joining a consulting practice, I focus on: How am I going to find the expertise to start a business if my expertise is not going to be in the technical side of a particular business or industry? Shouldn't I be learning a trade if I want to be in business for myself? And what business does a consultant know how to run, save for a consulting business? My reply is that I see myself joining with a partner or a group of partners. I have the finance background and the crisis-management capability, but I need a partner with a technical expertise to figure out how to make the product and a partner with the administrative skills and temperament to keep us all on track and keep track of where we've been.

#### *Action Plan*

Date	Action
12/88	Interview at West Coast job fair. Meet with [Darden grad consultant] to talk further about consulting practices in S.F.
1/88	Research additional firms working with smaller companies and consulting firms with venture-capital investment arms. Write letters to targets and arrange meetings if possible.
2/88	If possible, combine visits with trips to V.C. firms as outlined above. If not, defer to spring break. Time will be constrained in February by need to complete field project/SBS.
3/88	Additional visits and interviews if necessary.
4/88	Negotiation of offers and decision.

#### **Time Constraints and Personal-Stress Red Flags to Watch for!**

One thing which has struck me lately about the Darden placement process is its focus on completing the job search by mid-March or so. The *Self Assessment and Career Development* book does not insist on that schedule, but because the

Darden placement office places such a major emphasis on the first three weeks of January, a large proportion of students begin to believe that these three weeks are the only opportunity they have to find the perfect career for themselves. I have been focused on those days as well until the last two weeks, when I have looked at myself in the mirror and realized that the ideal job will probably not emerge for me out of that process. For the job-seeker not targeting the Fortune 500, a large dose of self-confidence and a daily reminder of whose decision this is are going to be of critical importance.

I forecast a scenario where extreme depression will be visited upon those who have not accepted employment offers by spring break, and worse, extreme pressure will descend upon those who have job offers which are not yet what they want but are the last "on the table" at that point.

This fall, I have been through tremendous emotional strain, having been rejected (at least for now) by my girlfriend of three years, and having come to the realization that I would like to point my career toward international opportunities over the long run. My initial inquiries into international opportunities have been almost universally met by "we are only hiring local nationals for overseas slots," which, unfortunately to me, makes a lot of sense when I am in an objective mood. The Luce Scholarship is one step I've taken to combat this frustration.

I have also been somewhat overcommitted in terms of day-to-day activities, with being an officer of two clubs (I must have been crazy last spring!), tutoring two first years, taking days off to join two friends' wedding parties, traveling back and forth to Washington to try to patch things up with Sandi, and working on my field-project team. I have coped with my stress by sticking to a five-day-a-week exercise schedule and deliberately setting time aside for non-Darden reading. This strategy has worked well, and I intend to continue it this spring, but I am still under internal strain. One of my tasks for this Christmas holiday is to begin to discover what else is bothering me and see whether I can return to Darden a more settled individual.

#### *Location Analysis*

##### **My life so far**

1960–1968	Five cities in eight years: Akron and Newark, Ohio; Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D.C.; St. Paul, Minnesota
1968–1976	Barrington, Illinois—the formative years
1976–1977	Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

1977–1981	Ithaca, New York—Cornell University Leave terms spent in: Bourges, France Washington, D.C. Michigan
1981–1986	New York City
1986–1987	San Francisco, California
1987 (summer)	London, England
1987–1988	Charlottesville, Virginia
1988 (summer)	Washington, D.C.
1988–1989	Charlottesville

When you look at it this way, my desire to have a place to return to begins to make more sense. I've been a moving target!

### *Likes and Dislikes*

#### *Charlottesville*

##### **Likes:**

Access to outdoor sports  
Convenient gym, pool  
Blue Ridge Mountains  
Lots of cultural events at the university  
Exceptionally intelligent group of friends

##### **Dislikes:**

Good ol' boys not the most welcoming crowd  
Heterogeneous population  
Shopping-center mentality  
Requirement to drive everywhere  
Friends all from Darden

#### *San Francisco*

##### **Likes:**

Incredible setting for a city!  
Access to both ocean and mountains  
Close to running and biking trails  
Great restaurants and diverse selection  
Higher quality food in groceries, health consciousness  
Walk to take care of errands  
Close to parents (1/2 hour)  
Fun, outdoor group of friends  
Cultural events  
Quiet at night even in city  
Very clean  
Friendly feeling

##### **Dislikes:**

Limited change of seasons  
Traffic congestion leaving or returning to city  
Expensive housing (but beautiful views)

#### *New York City*

##### **Likes:**

Tremendous diversity of population  
Very diverse, very bright group of friends  
Great restaurants  
Any kind of culture you want  
Very convenient for errands, services  
Sky's-the-limit approach to life  
Long Island beach weekends

##### **Dislikes:**

Dirty and noisy, even at night  
Congested  
Very expensive, lower quality housing  
Everything is expensive, for that matter  
Element of danger, defensive feeling  
Far from skiing

#### *Washington, D.C.*

##### **Likes:**

Lots of parks and open space  
Metro to work  
Sunny, no tall buildings  
Good restaurants  
Fairly diverse population  
Political arguments everywhere

##### **Dislikes:**

Everybody lives in the suburbs!  
Noisy at night (not everywhere)  
Hot, hot, humid, hot hot  
Far from skiing, hiking  
Traffic congestion to ocean and human congestion to beach!

### *Final Comments*

Much as was the case with the Self-Assessment Paper, writing this piece was partially enlightening, partially unnerving. The process of deliberate self-examination and comparison of spoken goals with careful, documented research about how well those goals fit with my needs and abilities is, I think, one of the most difficult tasks I have taken on. I hadn't done it before this class, although I have certainly spent loads of time thinking and writing in a general way about what and where and who I like and don't like. Elevating the realities of managing professional, familial, and spiritual life into one's full consciousness is a key element in the assumption of fully responsible adulthood. The development of a more conscious reality has helped me to take greater responsibility for my life, and I think that it will help me to make more careful life decisions going forward from today. This increased responsibility will probably lead to periods of increased uncertainty, but in the end, I believe it will lead to greater peace and fulfillment. For that I am grateful.