

On the Right Path: How and Why to Create a Career Map

In a recent [Accountemps survey](#), 85 percent of workers said knowing what their career path looks like is important to their job satisfaction. While you'll want to work as closely as you can with your boss to determine opportunities and, ideally, get help in reaching the next level, you're ultimately the one who must jump into the driver's seat and take the wheel.

Here are tips on creating a career map:

Pinpoint your destination. Establish your primary professional goal in detailed terms. Is your objective to move up into a supervisory role? Do you want to transition into a specialized area such as forensic accounting? Whatever your target, make it specific and set a deadline for reaching it.

Identify your starting point. Understand where you are before attempting to map out how you'll get where you want to go. Conduct a candid self-assessment. In what areas do you excel? Which aspects of your job are most appealing? Write down weaknesses, too. Are there skills shortages that could hold you back if left unaddressed? Be honest about your strengths, shortcomings, likes and dislikes.

Watch for mile markers. Break down your main goal into smaller ones. For example, if you want to become a manager, key steps might include volunteering to oversee higher-profile projects and pursuing a leadership role with the local chapter of a professional association. When you reach an interim milestone, reflect on the accomplishment. Acknowledging and celebrating incremental successes will help you maintain momentum.

Ask for directions. Seek a mentor if you don't already have one. Mentors can provide ongoing support, objective feedback, and invaluable real-world insights. In addition, partner with your boss by sharing your goals and soliciting advice. He or she might be able to give you projects that'll prime you for the role you seek, alert you to relevant training opportunities, and generally advocate for you within the organization.

Stay driven. Any trip worth taking will present some bumps along the way. When you hit a roadblock, regroup and move on. Instead of dwelling on the setback, focus on the lessons learned — and the solutions that'll get you back on track.

Accountemps is the world's first and largest temporary staffing service specializing in the placement of accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals. The company has offices worldwide and offers online job search services at www.accountemps.com.