

International Council of Nurses



Career Planning and Development

It's your career: take charge

Workbook



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It's Your Career: Take Charge Workbook



Developed by

Gail J. Donner and Mary M. Wheeler

for the International Council of Nurses

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Message from the International Council of Nurses

Since it first was published in 2001, *It's Your Career: Take Charge* has helped to guide many nurses in planning and developing their career paths. I am delighted that this set of materials has now been updated and revised for 2010.

Though much of what was written nine years ago is still relevant today, there have been many changes in health care settings throughout the world. Much progress has been made in career advancement for nurses: be it the establishment of advanced practice nurses, nurse prescribers, or the many other areas in which nurses are obtaining new skills and knowledge. More than ever, nurses need the marketing skills that help "sell" personal/professional services. For that reason ICN, through its Socio-Economic Welfare Programme, brings you this updated workbook to give nurses an overview of what career planning and development is and why it is important today.

This workbook is part of a series of Career Planning and Development publications which also includes:

- *It's Your Career: Take Charge* guidelines;
- *It's Your Career: Take Charge* trainer's manual; and
- A set of powerpoint slides.

We trust that they will enable you to further develop your technical, analytical and interpersonal skills and your sense of fulfilment as you strive to provide better service to individuals, families and communities in today's ever changing environment.

Rosemary Bryant
President
International Council of Nurses

About the Authors

Gail J. Donner, RN, PhD, is Professor and Dean Emeritus in the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto, Canada. Her research and consulting interests include career development, health policy and nursing administration. In addition to presenting papers, seminars and workshops on a variety of health care topics, Gail has been active on a number of boards and committees and is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada; Chair of the Board of the Change Foundation, in Toronto, Canada; a member of the Board of Healthy Kids International; and book editor of the Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership. For her contributions to nursing and the community, she has received the Order of Ontario, an honorary Doctor of Science from Ryerson University in Toronto, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario Award of Merit, the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award, and the Ontario Medical Association Centennial Award.

Mary M. Wheeler, RN, MEd, PCC, is a certified coach with over 15 years of consulting expertise in career, organisation and human resource development and has published extensively in the area of career development, coaching and mentoring. She has co-led CareerCycles Getaways for the Ontario Medical Association Physician Health Program and acts as an executive coach and as an associate of Development-by-Design. Mary is an active member in the International Coach Federation, the Association of Career Professionals International and the Career Planning and Adult Development Network for which she is a book reviewer. She is also a book proposal reviewer for Sigma Theta Tau International and a member of the Nursing Advisory Committee, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada.

In 1992 Gail and Mary began their partnership, donnerwheeler, Career Development Consultants. Throughout their careers they have had a long-standing commitment to the professional development needs of nurses and, in particular, a strong interest in the career planning and development issues of nurses. Well known internationally, they speak, write, do research, provide workshops and individual career coaching, and consult on career development strategies. In 2009 their third book, *Taking Control of Your Career: A Handbook for Health Professionals*, was published by Elsevier.

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Introduction

Welcome to ***It's Your Career: Take Charge***. Health care in the world is changing, as is the world of health care. The opportunities for nurses and for nursing are growing though the pace and outcomes of changes vary throughout the world. In some countries the struggle for self-regulation continues, while in others nursing is recognised as an autonomous profession. Everywhere the goal has been to transform nursing from an occupation whose members work within a social context that devalues nurses' work as unskilled, to a profession comprising autonomous, well-educated, career-oriented, knowledgeable workers. As professional self-regulation becomes the norm in many countries, nursing professionals, labour and regulatory organisations are providing leadership for the profession in establishing its place within the health care system.

These changes have created new roles, new work settings and new colleagues for nurses. Nurses now work in a variety of environments – in institutions, communities and independent businesses. They work alone, with other nurses, or in inter-professional teams as clinicians, educators, researchers, consultants or managers. Moreover, nurses are presidents and chief executive officers of health care agencies. They are policy analysts and politicians. Professional associations are focusing on re-designing educational programmes to meet changing health needs, implementing standards of practice and establishing nursing as a respected and credible profession.

Regardless of the status of nursing or the stage of its development, individual nurses require support in their practice and in their professional development. Career planning and development is an integral part of developing as a professional wherever nurses live and work. By moving from thinking of nursing as a job to thinking of nursing as a career, we are able to take charge of our profession. We are looking at how to create futures for nurses as individuals and for the profession as a whole. The changes in nursing and in how it is perceived by nurses and society, along with the changes in the health care system, have created an environment in which individuals must become career resilient and self-directed. They must take control of their careers and futures.

Career-resilience is about flexibility and adaptability, something nurses understand. As a career-resilient nurse you are sure of yourself as a professional, able to adapt to changes in the external environment, and to grow and develop. Career-resilient individuals are self-reliant. They are dedicated to the idea of continuous learning, ready to reinvent themselves to keep pace with change. Moreover, career-resilience conforms to the many definitions of professional nursing practice including autonomy, self-direction and continuous learning. The career planning and development process requires all of those attributes and must be integrated as part of the individual's quest for self-determination as a professional.

Career planning and development is a dynamic process that adapts to changes in the nurse and in the world in which nurses live and practice. While it is true that individual nurses must plan and develop their careers, many need and want help with this very important part of their professional development. There are a number of questions that nurses are asking, including:

- ✓ How can I plan my career?
- ✓ How can I remain employable?
- ✓ What are the opportunities today and what will they be in the future?
- ✓ Who can help me?

Nurses have dreams, goals and ideas about their futures, but they need a process to guide them in achieving their maximum potential.

This programme, ***It's Your Career: Take Charge***, provides a model nurses can use to guide their career development along with practical strategies for identifying and achieving success and satisfaction as they define it. ***It's Your Career: Take Charge*** is directed toward individual nurses like you to help you take charge and be in control of your career within the ever-changing world of health care. Being in control of your own career is a skill that can be acquired by learning how to integrate the process of career planning and development into your ongoing professional and personal development. Feeling in control of one's own career is a strategy for dealing with change, for recognising opportunities, and for achieving the most for yourself and for nursing. It is a strategy that can benefit the individual, the workplace and society.

The purpose of this workbook is twofold. First, it gives nurses an overview of what career planning and development is and why it is important today and for the future (Module One). Second, it introduces nurses to a Career Planning and Development Model and provides them with various career planning and development activities (Module Two).

When combined with the Trainer's Manual, this workbook also provides guidance for nurse career coaches to help them conduct an ***It's Your Career: Take Charge*** workshop and offer career coaching to individual nurses.

It's Your Career: Take Charge is intended to provide you with the skills you need in order to care for yourself and your career. Use it in good health!

Gail J. Donner and Mary M. Wheeler

MODULE ONE

Career Planning and Development

An Overview

MODULE ONE: Career Planning and Development: An Overview

I never lose an opportunity of urging a practical beginning, however small, for it is wonderful how often the mustard-seed germinates and roots itself.

Florence Nightingale

Career planning is “a continuous process of self-assessment and goal setting” (Kleinknecht & Hefferin 1982) that can be a key influence on a nurse’s ability to thrive on new opportunities and grow with change rather than merely react against it. Careers need attention and nurturing, therefore, career planning and development can play a crucial role at every stage of one’s career. As you move through your career, your skills develop, your needs change and your goals and plans evolve. Consequently, the process of planning and developing your career begins when you graduate from your nursing programme and should continue as an integral part of your ongoing professional development.

Stages in Nurses’ Careers

Career is defined in one dictionary as “life work; success in one’s chosen profession; a path or course.” (Morris 1980). It is “a life expression of how a person wants to be-in-the-world. Today’s careers are not so much linear conduits as they are continuous process-weavings, inventions, and temporary arrangements. Your career develops as you develop, and evolves as you evolve within a lifelong process. A career is how an individual combines, in patterns that change over time like turning a kaleidoscope, an inner search of meaning and connectedness (challenge, purpose, adventure, fulfilment, legacy) with outer validation and rewards (money, friends, recognition, security, approval).” (Hudson 1999)

Nurses’ careers generally can be described as passing through five stages.* These stages refer not to jobs, roles or positions, but rather to a nurse’s progression throughout her or his career. The stages reflect the movement through a career, not the movement through jobs. In fact, in each stage, a nurse may have more than one job or position. Although nurses are always learning and growing, their identification with nursing and the initial learning stage is distinct from the learning that relates to building knowledge and skills to do a particular job in nursing. As nurses review their professional goals, training needs and job opportunities at various times during their careers, they usually pass through most of the stages more than once.

Stage one, *learning*, is the neophyte’s introduction to nursing as a profession and takes place within the basic educational programme. Similarly, the nurse studying a specialisation (e.g. anaesthesiology, public health) or widening their scope of practice (e.g. management, minor surgery) is in the learning stage while undergoing further education.

The second stage, *entry*, begins when newly registered or credentialed nurses select their first workplace. It is that time of their careers when nurses explore their various employment options and begin to think about areas of practice that could be both appropriate and rewarding.

* This is adapted from Donner’s original four stage model⁴

In the third stage, *commitment*, nurses identify their likes and dislikes in terms of clinical areas, geography, work life, etc. At this point, usually between two to five years following graduation, nurses evaluate their career goals, seek mentors, consider continuing their education, and generally seek to find the right “fit” between themselves and their work settings. This is the time when nurses’ shift their focus from job to career and longer term commitment.

In the fourth stage, *consolidation*, nurses become comfortable with their chosen career path and are able to balance their personal and professional lives. This stage is notable for nurses’ dedication to career, commitment to continuous learning, and focus on making a contribution to health care and society. It is when the nurse begins to mentor others and assume a leadership role in professional and community organisations.

In the fifth stage, *withdrawal*, nurses prepare for retirement and begin to think about what comes after nursing.

The skills required to engage in career planning are those same skills nurses already use in their daily practice as part of problem solving and the nursing process. Just as they assess, plan, develop and evaluate care plans with and for their patients, so too must they learn to assess, plan, develop and evaluate career plans for themselves. The skills they rely on are the same, but the focus or target is different.

Thus career planning is not a one-time event, but rather a process that over time becomes part of a nurse’s repertoire of skills and experiences and enables the nurse to develop as a professional and achieve the objectives she or he has set. Margaret Sovie (1982) described a model for developing nursing careers in the hospital setting, but the model can be extended to any setting. She identified three phases in nurses’ professional development: professional identification, which includes orientation and helps nurses identify their practical role; professional maturation, which focuses on staff development for career advancement; and professional mastery, which involves career advancement, professional recognition and professional satisfaction. The professional mastery phase is that step in professional development in which the professional invests in the profession and makes a long-term commitment. In nursing most of the attention has been paid to orientation and job mastery and to the extrinsic, rather than the intrinsic, needs of nurses. In a comprehensive career planning and development process, attention is paid to the professional development of nurses and to their personal and career growth.

Why Career Planning and Development is Important

The tremendous changes that have marked nursing over the last half of a century have brought significant challenge along with terrific opportunity. The shift in perspective from viewing nursing as an episodic series of jobs to seeing it as a lifelong career has undoubtedly been the most significant change in nursing since Florence Nightingale professionalised nursing in the late 19th century. These developments in nursing that we discussed in the introduction to this workbook have coincided with equally dramatic changes taking place in the health care systems and the economies of many, if not most, countries. These changes

have created an environment in which individual nurses must take control of their careers and futures.

As health care changes, so do the sites and nature of nurses' work. Even if they remain in the same work environments or with the same employers, their roles and responsibilities may be different. Because nursing practice routines and hierarchies have been dismantled as health care has been reorganised, nurses' work and roles have and will continue to change significantly. Preparing nurses, the largest employee group in most health care agencies, to anticipate and respond to organisational change and enabling them to take greater responsibility for their career goals is critical to maintaining the health system's viability.

Health care agencies, like other large employers, demand flexible employees who are receptive to change and who have acquired the competitive skills necessary to find and create work. As employees in the health care sector, nurses require clinical competence, expert knowledge, and the ability to be creative and flexible, all of which result in their being in control of their careers. The role for the employer is to ensure that employees understand that job security is linked to their competence, transferable skills and adaptability. Increasingly, organisational structure will be based on work that needs to get done, and nurses will be valued for their abilities both to contribute to the completion of that work and to take responsibility for their own career development and ongoing learning. Nurses need to understand that adaptability and self-management are key career competencies for the future. Those competencies will enable nurses to be competitive both within and outside of health care organisations.

But challenges also exist outside hospitals and other large health care agencies. As nurses move back into community environments and independent practice, they must keep focused on the goals they have set for themselves and be strategic in their pursuit of those goals. Nurses' dependence on others to define their futures for them is a phenomenon of the past. Continuous career planning is a strategy that can offer nurses the means to respond to both short and long-term changes in their profession, in health care, and in their workplaces.

Hackett (1995) identified some of the most important predictors of job success and satisfaction as those associated with work-related attitudes, habits and beliefs rather than with specific job skills. Career planning and development assists nurses to develop and utilise the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for them to create a work environment that is meaningful, productive and satisfying. Inherent in the career planning and development process is the opportunity to identify and affirm the value of both personal and professional strengths and the potential to reinforce a sense of self-efficacy with regard to career and job-related activities. Equipped with a sense of efficacy, nurses are better able to take control of their career and work choices.

Attending to one's professional development is a time intensive process that requires reflection as well as planning. Career planning and development gives nurses a way of relating their ideas and vision with the practical realities of their life in order to achieve useful and realisable outcomes. The career planning and development process helps you answer the following four questions:

- ✓ *Where have I been?*
- ✓ *Where am I now?*
- ✓ *Where would I like to go?*
- ✓ *How will I get there?*

As you move through the process you will learn to see yourself and your future with new eyes so that you can get the most out of yourself and your career while giving the most to your clients. The career planning and development process is really about the development of a life skill, one that nurses can apply not only in their workplace, but in their personal lives as well.

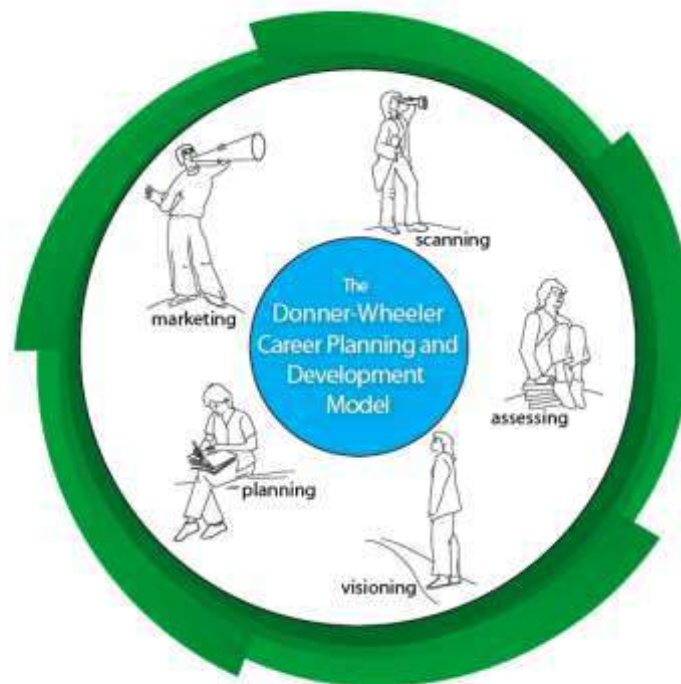
MODULE TWO

The Career Planning and Development Model

MODULE TWO: The Career Planning and Development Model

In Module One you learned that career planning and development is an individual responsibility, a lifelong activity and a necessary survival skill in a world of work and health care that will continue to change. Module Two will introduce you to a five phase Career Planning and Development Model which is comprised of *scanning, assessing, visioning, planning and marketing*. It serves as a framework that you can use to develop as a professional and to build your career in an effective way. An overview of each phase of the model is provided together with specific activities you can participate in as a member of the ***It's Your Career: Take Charge*** workshop or when consulting with a nurse career coach.

Your first step should be to read about each phase of the model: what it is, why it is important, and how to do it. Then turn to the focused activities at the end of each phase and complete the questions. Each activity will help you tailor the process to your own circumstances. As you become comfortable with the process, you will be able to move back and forth with ease among the five phases.



Career development is a continuous process. It moves back and forth among phases rather than progressing in a lock step linear way through the career planning and development process. It requires individuals to:

- Understand the environment in which they live and work.
- Assess their strengths and limitations and validate that assessment.
- Articulate their personal career vision.
- Develop a realistic plan for the future.

- Market themselves to achieve their career goals.

In other words, it is a focused professional development strategy that helps nurses take greater responsibility for themselves and their careers and prepare for ever-changing health care systems and workplace environments. Career planning is something you engage in as part of your everyday professional activity. You can use it to help you stay happy and challenged with the work you are currently doing or to help you make a career change. The five phases* of the process include:

Phase One: Scanning Your Environment

- *What are the current realities/future trends?*

Phase Two: Completing Your Self-assessment and Reality Check

- *Who am I?*
- *How do others see me?*

Phase Three: Creating Your Career Vision

- *What do I really want to be doing?*

Phase Four: Developing Your Strategic Career Plan

- *How can I achieve my career goals?*

Phase Five: Marketing Yourself

- *How can I best market myself?*

* This model is an adaptation of Donner's four-phase model.

Phase One: Scanning Your Environment

The world rewards those of us who can catch on to what's happening, who invest our energy in finding and seizing the opportunities brought on by change.

Price Pritchett

What is Scanning?

When you enter a client's room, in a hospital or in their home, the first thing you do is look around to get a picture of the environment within which the client lives and where you will have to deliver care. Scanning your own personal and professional environments, in effect the world in which you live and work, is a similar activity. Scanning helps you reflect upon the circumstances influencing your world so that you can decide how best to adapt to and make use of the environment. It helps you plan your career just as you plan a client's care.

When asked to think about the word "environment," you should conjure up not only a close-up picture of the setting in which health care is practised, but also a wide-angle shot of the external area surrounding you. You would not consider providing care to clients without knowing something about their family, socio-economic circumstances, and health status. So too, in order to understand how current trends and future developments in health care could affect your career, you must think about the broader context of your external environment as well. Scanning the environment and then identifying your own strengths and interests will give you the information you need to make and then implement a successful career plan.

Scanning your environment is about taking stock of the world in which you live. It involves understanding the current realities in the health care system and the work environment as well as the future trends at the global, national, and local levels in health care and nursing. Through the scanning process you become better informed, learn to see the world from different perspectives, and are able to identify career opportunities, both current and future. Scanning is a continuous activity, which together with self-assessment forms the foundation of the career planning process. We observe, learn about, and assess the world around us through reading, talking with others, continuing our education, and through exposing ourselves not only to information and ideas from and about nursing and health care, but from other disciplines and ideologies as well. It is from this solid understanding of our environment that we go on to complete a self-assessment and find the best fit between our environment and us.

Why Scanning is Important

Scanning provides you with the information you need to understand your current work and life realities and to identify possible short and long-term opportunities for developing your career in the future. You must have a solid understanding of the environment before you can decide how to use your skills and experience in the most beneficial way, both for you and for society. Scanning is the easiest and most productive way to place yourself as an observer, rather than a player, in the world in which you live. It enables you to see beyond your

immediate circumstances to grasp what is possible, to think about things in new ways, and to open yourself to new opportunities.

The process of scanning is generic, although the specifics of the scan will vary from country to country and even between local areas. There are cultural, political and social differences between countries, and it is through attention to those characteristics that a scan must be completed. An excellent example of a world-wide scan is documented in Progress Report on the implementation of resolution WHA49.1 on the need for midwifery and nursing services for the World Health Organization (WHO 2001). The authors of the study examined the social, economic and political developments in WHO Member States in order to formulate a number of recommendations targeted at strengthening nursing and midwifery services. The scan provides the reader with the context in which to view the recommendations and also provides support for those recommendations. The ICN Chief Executive Officer presents the results of a global environmental scan as part of his report to the Council of National Representatives every two years. Key issues and trends influencing nurses, nursing and representative nursing organisations are outlined. This provides the framework for understanding the present and preparing for the future.

Those nurses who have been following international developments in hospitals have been able to anticipate the kinds of changes that their own health care agency may experience. They have been able to recognise that opportunities in hospitals will change in the future, and that community opportunities may open up for them either as employees or as independent practitioners. Instead of waiting to see what might happen, they are readying themselves by thinking, learning and planning to meet some of the challenges and the opportunities that, for instance, increased use of technology, shortened lengths of stay, privatisation and regionalisation may produce.

As nursing moves back to the community (where we began), opportunities increase for new and innovative forms of practice and health care delivery. Nurses run post-partum clinics, home support for new parents and at-risk new-borns, and community and home-based elder care, all of which result from nurses' continuous scanning of their environments – identifying gaps in health care delivery that they could fill. Without continuous scanning, it is very difficult to use your own skills to your best advantage, very difficult to know the best direction in which to head, and even more difficult to feel in control of your own future.

How and When Do You Scan?

Throughout our careers, each of us must scan continuously, and in a variety of ways, to learn about what is happening in the present and what may happen in the future. Sources of information include professional and popular journals, print and other forms of news media, the Internet, observations, friends and colleagues, and everyday experiences. For example, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) has recognised the importance of scanning and has provided help for nurses through its publication, *Guidebook for Nurse Futurists* and its web site www.icn.ch. Reading, talking, and listening, skills that nurses continuously employ are the tools we use to make sense of all of the information we collect. Once you have collected the information, you must organise it into global, national, and local categories.

You should think of your scan as a work in progress, something you continuously update and revise to reflect the changing environment. If you are prepared, you should be able to

identify the *global, national and local* trends and issues in society, health care and nursing. Scanning, therefore, becomes not a task to be completed at some regular or not so regular time, but rather an integral part of everyday professional and personal life.

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to scan your environment. The trends and issues you identify in your scan will serve as a basis for you to make informed decisions about potential career opportunities. What follows is a template you can use to assist you with your scan. Consider each of the areas —, global, national and local — and insert those trends and issues you observe to be important at this time. We have provided some questions to consider as you fill in your scan. Once you have completed your scan, remember that you will need to review and revise it on a regular basis.

For each of the categories, i.e. global, national and local, consider issues related to society, health and nursing. What follows is a list of questions with a sampling of possible answers. Over time your list of questions and answers will likely grow.

Global

What health/social issues seem to be worldwide phenomena?

(Pandemic diseases, ethical issues, allocation of resources, gap between rich and poor, economy).

What are the nursing issues that seem to be global in their scope?

(Regulation, nursing migration, quality of work life, patient safety).

National

What are the significant health and social trends in your country?

(Controlling health care costs, privatisation of health care, regionalisation, decreasing length of hospital stays, infant mortality, shift of responsibilities between the health and social sectors, armed conflict, natural disasters, health insurance).

What are the issues affecting nurses in your country?

(Shortage/surplus of nurses, education, regulation, quality of work life, remuneration).

Local

What are some of the important social and health issues in your local area?

(Changing demographics of the client population, shift in care to the community, increasing caregiver burden, patient safety, quality of worklife, environmental sustainability).

What are the important nursing issues in your local area?

(Shortage/surplus of nurses, demographics, e.g. ageing workforce, changing practice-settings, changing roles in the practice setting).

Scanning Your Environment

Global Trends and Issues

Society	Health Care	Nursing

National Trends and Issues

Society	Health Care	Nursing

Local Trends and Issues

Society	Health Care	Nursing

Phase Two: Completing Your Self-Assessment and Reality Check

Listening to your heart, finding out who you are, is not simple. It takes time for the chatter to quiet down. In the silence or not “doing”, we begin to know what we feel. If we listen and hear what is being offered, then anything in life can be our guide.

Sue Bender

What Is a Self-Assessment?

You would not consider developing a patient care plan without a thorough patient assessment. Career planning requires a similar approach. A thorough self-assessment is the key to exploring old, new and previously unconsidered opportunities. It is also important to help you reaffirm that what you are presently doing is best for you. It enables you to identify your values, experiences, knowledge, strengths, and limitations and to marry those with your environmental scan to create your career vision and identify the directions to take as you plan your future.

When you scanned the environment, you focused on your surroundings and on understanding how they influence the present and the future. Now as you begin your self-assessment, you will turn that focus towards yourself so that you can recognise, first, all the attributes that make you who you are and then, what you in turn have to offer to the environment. Completing your self-assessment and reality check will allow you to give honest and accurate answers to the two questions: “*Who am I?*” and “*How do others see me?*” When put together with the results of your environmental scan, your replies will enable you to complete the last three phases of the career planning and development process: creating your career vision, developing your strategic career plan, and marketing yourself to implement your plan.

Why is Assessing Yourself Important?

Over the years you may have randomly gathered impressions about what you like or dislike doing and have some sense of your abilities and limitations. You may also have developed in many ways outside your professional life. Who you are now may be very different from who you were when you chose to pursue a career in nursing. Without a deliberate self-assessment, you would have only a vague picture at best of your current self. How then, could you know what you want and are best able to do now, let alone how to take control and direct your future? If you neglect this phase in the career planning and development process, you will be driven only by the needs of the market or the opinions of others. The result is often dissatisfaction with the job chosen or poor performance because your values, skills, and interests do not match the job requirements.

Although completing a self-assessment is a process that takes time, the result is a better awareness of yourself and your strengths and limitations. The process will help you learn about which facets of yourself have remained unexpressed or untapped and how to develop them. Moreover, you will begin to understand how you may have been limited by learned perceptions, familiar but unsatisfying roles, or others' expectations of you. You will then be better able to capitalise on your strengths and life experiences.

Once you have completed your self-assessment, you will be able to promote what you have to offer and understand where to improve or increase your skills. With an accurate picture of yourself to add to your environmental scan, you will be able to investigate the full spectrum of available and potential opportunities and decide which options are the right ones for you. Your confidence and self-esteem will soar. Revisiting your self-assessment throughout your life will allow you to update your self knowledge, set learning goals, develop career goals and action plans, and feel confident that you will love the work you do.

Beginning the Self-Assessment Process

To complete a self-assessment you need to give yourself the time and permission to concentrate and look inward, to take stock, and to develop a personal and professional profile. Make sure that your self-assessment is comprehensive. It requires considerable reflection, the ability to ask yourself some hard questions, and the determination to validate your responses with others.

The first question is: "*Who am I?*" Answering this question involves much more than describing what you do or what your job title is. Work is just one part of our lives. Regrettably, many people describe who they are only in relation to the work they do. Even though we spend a considerable amount of time at a job, we cannot ignore those other components that complete our lives, including our personal health and well-being, our family, friends, and community. As you move through your self-assessment, you need to keep the whole you in mind, a complex human being who is the sum of your past and current experiences. Think, for instance, about all the adjectives you could use to detail what makes you unique. Although we are all unique, the challenge lies in being able to articulate it.

Who we are includes our beliefs and values, our knowledge and skills, and our interests. Beliefs influence the way we view ourselves and the world around us. Values are a set of principles that drive our decisions, actions, behaviour and relations. They are the ideals that guide and give meaning to our lives and work. We use our knowledge and skills to produce results. Interests are the activities we like to devote our time to and from which we gain pleasure.

Assessing Your Values. Values are those principles we prize, cherish or hold in esteem. They direct our decisions and influence our lives. Psychologists suggest that ultimate satisfaction comes from living and working in concert with our values. As you begin to identify your values, consider which ones are present in your current job and which ones are not. Ask yourself:

- ✓ What is important to me in my work and in my personal life?
- ✓ Who or what are the significant things in my life that I need to consider at this time?
- ✓ What are my priorities—self, family, community or other?

Assessing Your Knowledge and Skills. Recognising what knowledge you possess and what your skills are and the degree to which you possess them are crucial outcomes of the self-assessment process. Knowledge is gained through formal and informal education and through work and life experiences. It is the foundation from which nursing practice develops. Skills are developed or acquired abilities.

In the past, job requirements tended to relate only to job duties, or “hard skills,” such as those involved in providing total nursing care to neonates, as opposed to work attitudes. When you sit down to evaluate your skills take into account your personality and nature, your attitude, the way you work with others, and your ease of communication. These attributes, or “soft skills,” are as important as your clinical skills and are often highly transferable.

In this component of the self-assessment process, you should evaluate both your hard and soft skills and understand what you have to offer. Take some time to reflect over your whole career and to consider the most significant highlights or milestones along the way. Consider not only the professional work you have done, but also your personal and community life. Knowledge and skill gaps or limitations are just as important to acknowledge as your strengths. If you do not recognise these limitations and act to address them, you may assume roles for which you are ill suited and consequently inhibit your ability to succeed. You should ask yourself:

- ✓ What knowledge and skills have I developed both personally and professionally?
- ✓ What are my strengths?
- ✓ What are my limitations?
- ✓ What knowledge and skills require further development?

Assessing Your Interests. Interests provide another measure of “fit” between what a job provides and what we’d ideally like to be doing. They can be grouped into four categories:

- people — helping, serving, caring for, or selling things to people
- data — working with facts, records, or files
- things — working with machines, tools, or living things such as plants and animals
- ideas — creating insights, theories, or new ways of saying or doing something.

Think about the work you have done and the life you have lived. You should be able to articulate what excites you and makes you feel most alive and fulfilled. What have you liked about your past and/or current job(s)? What haven’t you liked? In what kind of environment do you perform at your best? What do you like to do outside of the workplace? What energises or motivates you?

Recognising Your Accomplishments. As you finish your self-assessment, you should be able to identify your strengths and limitations as well as your significant accomplishments over the past 5, 10, 15, or more years. The insights and answers to the “who am I?” question can be found in each individual’s personal and professional accomplishments. Accomplishments refer to those specific activities that marked the highlights of your performance in your role. They are the specific initiatives you undertook to do your job well. For example, you might have developed a patient/client teaching package, facilitated a community based self-help group, or developed a staff development programme for your colleagues. They are often not items on a job description. Rather they are situations where you identified a challenge, used a specific approach, and had a successful outcome. They represent those times in your life when you made a difference. These accomplishments become the added value you bring to any work environment. They reflect those times when you achieved a personal or professional best.

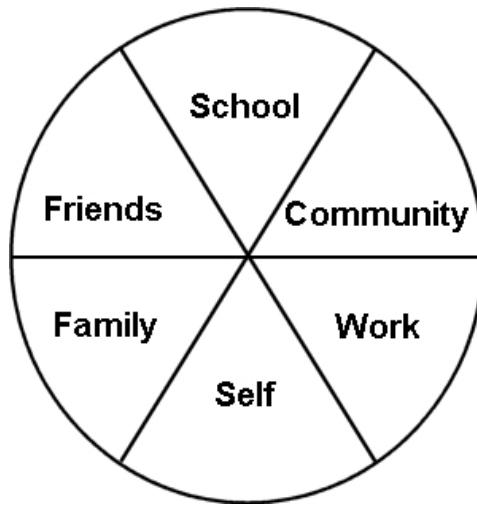
In the past three to five years, what have been your most significant accomplishments at work and outside of work? Can you describe those times in your personal or professional life where you made a difference?

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to complete your self-assessment. The following are some preliminary questions that can help you understand who you are and what is important to you. They should not limit you but act as a catalyst to start your reflections. Your answers will give you the words to describe your unique self, what you like to do, and what you have to offer. Record your responses so that you have tangible evidence of who you are. As you start to document your answers, you can begin to write your own story. As you write, envision that you are writing your autobiography, detailing where you have been, where you are now, and what you have learned about yourself along the way. Your story should include all the important personal and professional events in your life and how they relate to one another.

1. Values

What are my priorities?



Mark the percentage of time you spend daily in each of the sections in the circle.

Now, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel comfortable with how I spend my time each day?

- What is important to me, in my work and in my personal life?

- Who or what are the significant things in my life I need to consider at this time?

2. Knowledge and Skills

- What knowledge and skills have I developed both personally and professionally?

- What are my strengths?

- What are my limitations?

- What knowledge and skills require further development?

3. Interests

- What have I liked about my job(s)/role(s)?

- What haven't I liked?

- What energises or motivates me?

- In what kind of environment do I perform best?

- What do I like to do outside of work?

4. Accomplishments

- In the past three to five years, what have been my most significant accomplishments at work and outside work?

- Can I describe those times in my life when I made a difference?

Your Reality Check

Just as we seek validation of our patient assessments, we should also validate our self-assessment. A reality check is about seeking feedback regarding our strengths and limitations — about expanding our view of ourselves by reflecting on others' perspectives. Once you have completed your self-assessment and answered the question, "Who am I?" you must validate it by doing a reality check. "*How do others see me?*" is the complementary and critical second question you must ask yourself.

Careful career planning requires feedback, both formal and informal, from colleagues, friends and family. You may derive this feedback from routine performance appraisals as well as from an ongoing dialogue and discussion about your current performance and future possibilities. Keep in mind that your social and community networks are also important sources of feedback about your knowledge, skills, strengths and limitations. Asking for feedback is not easy, but successful career planning depends on your being open to new ideas and perspectives. It involves listening and accepting constructive feedback and acknowledging those areas where change is needed. Seeking advice about new skills that you may require and how to develop them is essential too.

Why is a Reality Check Crucial?

Nurses often have been hesitant to boast about what they have accomplished and how they have made a difference. It feels uncomfortable. Getting feedback affirms where we shine and at times identifies knowledge or skill gaps that need to be filled. But before others can give us feedback, they need to know that we are open to hearing what will be said. For instance, you may hold an unrealistically high opinion of your abilities, which can lead you to set your sights on an unsuitable job or role, and then be continually disappointed because you are not selected. Or, alternatively, you may have an unrealistically low opinion of your attributes, which may prevent you from seeking positions well within your reach or lead to selling yourself short in your current role. So be prepared to invite and listen carefully to feedback and to acknowledge those areas in yourself where change is needed.

How Do You Do a Reality Check?

Start with those individuals you trust. Then consider getting feedback from an individual whom you know, but not that well, and ask her or him the same questions. Asking such sources for feedback may be risky so choose carefully. Their responses, however, will further enhance your self-assessment. You can also refer to any performance reviews, notes of appreciation and thanks, or personal notes you may have taken when you received feedback.

Feedback from people of all levels with whom you work and live is essential to deepening your self-awareness and facilitating your growth. You need a range of opinion in order to approximate an objective truth. No one welcomes criticism. However, when someone you trust offers it and you are able to accept it, the criticism could be instrumental in your career. It could provide sound input about how to develop new skills and attitudes.

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to complete your reality check. Review your self-assessment and re-read your accomplishments. Then ask yourself the following questions:

- What feedback have I received about these achievements from colleagues, friends, and family?

- What did they identify as my strengths and limitations?

- What three adjectives would they (or did they) use to describe me, both in and outside my workplace and why?

- How did my assessment of accomplishments compare with others' assessments?

Piece together all the data and create a written, composite profile of your strengths and challenges. With an accurate sense of who you are and how others see you, you will be ready to explore a range of opportunities and determine where you have the most to contribute.

Having completed a self-assessment and reality check is like looking at a tapestry, rich in the colours and designs that reflect all of you. It will show you where you have been and where you are now, both personally and professionally. But because you continue to grow throughout your life your self-assessment must be a continuous activity throughout your career.

Phase Three: Creating Your Career Vision

Those who achieve success are those who take a dream and make it come true.

Author Unknown

What is a Career Vision?

When you work with your clients, you assist them in envisioning possibilities about their future health and well being, to review the environments in which they live, and to consider whether those options are realistic. You then assist them as they put a plan in place to achieve the goals they have for themselves. This process is similar to the one you will need to go through to plan your career. Once you have determined a realistic and comprehensive picture of your own values, beliefs, knowledge and skills, and looked at those in the context of the real world scan you have completed, you are ready to think about your career possibilities. Do you like what you are currently doing? Do you feel it is a good fit with your personal life, and want to develop within that role? Or, have you learned that you enjoy change and variety and that it may be time to move on to other challenges? Where is it you see yourself going? Because your vision of your potential future is grounded in your scan and self-assessment, it is focused on what is possible and realistic for you, both in the short and the longer term. Your career vision is the link between who you are and what you can become.

Vision is another word for a dream, an image of potentiality. A career vision is tempered by the realities of your environmental scan and self-assessment, but not determined by them. While the range of opportunities is not infinite, it is most likely greater than that which you first assumed. Those who have a career vision talk in terms of what is possible. They make use of all their resources and they have the ability to harness and focus their energy.

Why Should I Have a Career Vision?

Having a career vision is perhaps the most forceful motivator for reaffirming our current situation or for making a change. Creating a career vision answers the question, "*What do I want?*" If you do not have some idea of where you want to go, you will most likely just react to events as they occur rather than choose a direction in which to go and be able to anticipate or take advantage of an opportunity when it occurs.

Think back to when you chose nursing as a career. You had formed some kind of picture of what nursing would be like and what part you would play in it. You perhaps created an ideal vision of your work and your future. Yet over the years the realities of your life and of the world around you may have undergone significant changes. Therefore, you should be continuously reassessing whether that first picture still accurately depicts your current reality: "Am I feeling the way I felt when I chose nursing as a career and am I doing what I want to be doing?"

Many nurses have never considered that they could have a part to play in designing their career futures. Some may have to free themselves from a career path that others have expected of them before they can begin to formulate their own career vision. Other nurses will have to acknowledge that they have more choices than they had ever considered. These changes require a shift in orientation. You must move from responding to what “they” think you should be doing with your career to becoming an active participant, a goal setter, a doer. That means taking control of your career and your future, making choices, understanding the consequences, and moving forward.

Today, career success depends not only on having a dream, but on knowing how to turn that dream into a reality. Creating an up-to-date career vision is a crucial step in that process. Developing a strategic career plan and using marketing strategies to implement that plan can lead you to success regardless of good or bad times.

How to Create Your Own Career Vision

Wouldn't it be great to design your work the way you want it? You may be able to do that, but first you need to create a vision for your work. It may be a more comprehensive version of what you are already doing, or it may be very different. Creating a career vision involves images (*visualisation*), words (*affirmation*), and energy (*germination*). Visualisation forms a picture or image of what you want to create. An affirmation is a statement that articulates what you want to create in your life. Germination is the energy and commitment required to grow the vision you believe will occur. Creating a career vision begins with taking time to do some active daydreaming about your ideal day. Your career vision will be as individual as you are. Creating it will require you to ask yourself some important questions, and give yourself permission to let go of what you previously thought possible.

There are two general questions that will guide you in this process. As a warm up, ask yourself, “Where would I like to go?” Free up your imagination, there are no wrong answers. Then ask yourself “What is my ideal vision for my work?” to provide more focus as you begin to create your new or updated career vision. As you answer the questions, your evolving career vision should be influenced rather than determined by the data you gleaned from scanning your environment and completing your self-assessment. Formulate your career vision in the present tense, as if it were occurring right now, and in as much descriptive detail as possible.

As you moved through the process, you may have come to the point where you say to yourself, “I want to (fill in your own response), but *I can't* because I'm too old, or I don't know how to go about applying for the position, or I'm not good enough.” Many nurses do not believe that they can do what they really want to in their careers. Self-limiting beliefs block our progress. They have the potential to inhibit our ability to create what we want. Although the environment can impose barriers to our progress, what we believe about ourselves and what could be possible are powerful determinants of our behaviour. That is why it is so important to explore our assumptions and clarify the values that underpin them. Disregard these self-limiting beliefs because they have the potential to inhibit your ability to create what you want. We must eliminate our self-limiting beliefs before we can realise new beliefs, and in order to realise new beliefs, we must have a clear vision of what we want to create. We

must also articulate the barriers in the environment that may interfere with the fulfilment of our career vision, e.g. legislation or government bureaucracy. These obstacles must be assessed to gauge if they are “real,” to determine if they are surmountable and subsequently considered as we move on to create our career plans.

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to develop your career vision. When you start, your vision doesn't have to be too realistic; that comes later in the process when you set your career goals. Don't worry about whether your vision is too big, too vague, or too impossible. It should be grand and inspiring. If it is an important dream, it may even be a little frightening. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I want? What am I seeking?

- What does my ideal day look like? What am I doing? Where am I doing it? Who is there with me?

- Is someone currently doing the kind of work I'd like to do? Describe the characteristics of that work.

- What are the self-limiting beliefs that could prevent me from doing what I really want to do?

What are the environmental constraints that I must consider before I can do what I really want to do?

Phase Four: Developing Your Strategic Career Plan

Vision without action is merely a dream; action without vision passes the time; vision with action can change the world.

Joel Barker

What Are Career Plans?

Do you remember the first time you developed a patient care plan? You may recall that care plans initially seemed quite onerous. They required dedicated time, in-depth knowledge of the patient, and a clear understanding of his or her goals. Your own goals and those of the health care team at times may have been confused with patient goals. In the end, however, it was worth the effort; the care plan guided you to be able to work in partnership with clients to achieve their health goals.

A strategic career plan functions in the same way. It is a blueprint for action. Now you are ready to specify the goals, activities, timelines and resources you need to help you achieve your career vision. This is the part of the process where you start to put on paper the specific strategies you will use to take charge of your future. Of course, the strategic career plan is always a "work in progress", continuously the object of evaluation. We should be constantly scanning our environment, assessing ourselves, evaluating and re-evaluating our goals and our plans for reaching them.

Why Should I Develop a Career Plan?

Have you ever witnessed a colleague who appeared to "fall into" a particular career opportunity? Did you attribute it to merely being in the right place at the right time? Sometimes experiences that appear to happen by accident often have their roots in a deliberate, clearly envisioned plan. Having a strategic plan helps you to take advantage of the "accidents" that are bound to occur. You, too, can make a career plan work for you. Whatever your career vision may be, having a plan will give you the advantage of recognising accidents as opportunities and, ultimately, of taking control of a rewarding career.

Developing your strategic career plan is critical to taking control of your own career. Designing a plan is not something that someone else can do for you. You must do it for yourself to ensure that you are continually and satisfactorily progressing toward your personal career goals. The trick is to ensure that you have a plan that is both uniquely yours and easily converted into action. It must be derived from your career vision and outline specific actions that you can take to achieve clearly defined goals. The motivation to develop a plan comes from genuinely being interested in a career rather than being concerned with having regular employment. A career is a lifelong investment and, as with any investment, planning pays off!

Having a strategic career plan involves discipline and the ability to measure success. The incremental steps you take to achieve your goals will become recognisable and, when

reached, provide you with additional incentives to persevere with your strategic career plan. Think about plans that you have used to assist you in achieving a long-term vision, such as continuing your education, either formally or informally. Whether your goal is to go back to school as a full-time student, or to enrich your learning through “on-the-job” training, you need a plan to ensure that you will achieve your objective. Without a plan, both short- and long-term career goals may appear or become unattainable.

Having a strategic career plan ensures that you will be able to build on options that are best suited to achieving your vision. Beginning to plan signals your commitment to acting on a specific goal. It indicates that you are serious about embarking upon the journey toward your overall vision, and that you are ready to address each of the components of an effective plan.

How Should I Plan?

Getting started with your plan requires some dedicated time, energy and creativity. Don't worry about it being perfect. The best plans start with clear ideas about what both interests you and is possible to achieve. Moreover, your plan will remain effective only if you continually assess whether it still reflects the best means of attaining your goals and vision in light of changes in your environmental scan, self-assessment, or stages of your career.

A strategic career plan includes the identification of *goals, action steps, resources, timelines, and indicators of success*. Document your plan—in writing! The exercise of writing forces you to include each of the critical components and makes it easier for you to continually review, refine, evaluate and re-evaluate both your goals and your progress.

Set Goals. Once you have created your career vision, you need to set short and long-term career goals or your vision will remain forever only a dream. A goal is the purpose or objective toward which an endeavour is directed. It keeps you looking toward the future, focused on finishing, doing it all, and doing it right. Choosing and setting goals means that you are serious about taking charge of your career.

You may choose a combination of short and long-term goals to transform your career vision into a reality. Moreover, you can concentrate on one goal at a time, pursue two at once, or balance a shorter and longer-term goal. Pursuing multiple goals encourages flexibility. It helps you feel more in control and less at the mercy of external forces, such as organisational change, new legislation or regulation. If your desired direction becomes blocked, you have other options from which to choose.

Setting a goal is taking a dream seriously. The first step to taking your dream seriously is to tell it to yourself, the second is to set deadlines, and the third is to tell others. When you are choosing your career goals, always ask yourself, “What do I hope to achieve by pursuing this goal?” Remember to keep them specific, within a certain time frame, reachable and relevant. Will anyone who reads them understand what you are trying to accomplish? Do you have actual target dates for achievement? Are your goals realistic enough to be attainable? Are they both stretching and empowering? Are the goals in tune with your future needs?

Sometimes the first step you need to take to move you closer to the short and long-term goals you had originally set is to break them down further into smaller, incremental units. Goals that are specific, realistic and measurable, as well as those that are divided into workable components, make your plan more manageable.

A goal should move you from the intangible to the tangible. The clearer you are about your goals, the easier it will be to develop a plan of action. For example, your goal to continue your education may have a short-term component, such as reviewing your current financial situation to determine the options, and a long-term component, such as putting aside a particular percentage of your income in order to be able to consider further education.

Just as with personal goals, career goals should be realistic (I *can* do it); desirable (I *want* to do it); and motivating (I *will* work to make it happen). Be prepared to keep re-evaluating and possibly altering your career goals in order to achieve your career vision. Setting clear goals involves converting your dream from a vague concept into an action-oriented goal statement from which you can design your strategic career plan and close the gap between vision and reality.

Specify the Action Steps. Once you've determined your goals, use specific action steps to break goals down further into discrete and concrete activities. Action steps complete the sentence, "In order to achieve this goal, I will..." Action steps required to achieve your education goal may include talking to others who have gone back to school, or reviewing the information from an educational programme. Or, you may have a goal to become more involved in your national nursing association. The action steps you would plan could include attending association meetings, joining a committee, and eventually running for elected office within your nursing association.

Identify Resources. The most effective career plans are usually not developed in isolation. Having identified specific action steps to take, you are now ready to look at the resources you may need to achieve your goal. The process of developing a plan requires you to think about who and what will help you implement your plan. Making a thoughtful inventory of your available and potential resources is the first step you should take to begin to implement the action steps associated with each of your goals. To achieve your education goal, some of the resources available to you may include former teachers, your nursing association, colleagues, financial counsellors, to name a few. Once you have determined the resources you will require, you will be ready to set timelines to accomplish your action steps.

Establish Timelines. Successful career plans benefit from the rigour of specific timelines. Often, we hesitate to establish target dates for fear of not being able to meet them; yet, we all have examples of when deadlines helped us to accomplish the identified tasks. If your goal is personally motivating and your plan is realistic and concrete, assigning timelines ensures that you dedicate your resources in an efficient and ultimately rewarding way. Timelines should be suited to your particular needs and fit your personal priorities. Given your financial situation, your family demands and your work obligations, what are some reasonable timelines to achieve each of the action steps you've specified? Timelines are also important, not only in relation to your personal goals, but in response to other events that you may or may not be able to control. That is why it is important to go back to your scan of your

environment as you start to establish timelines. Timelines can be modified, but including them at the outset is critical to developing an effective career plan.

Identify the Indicators of Success. How will you know that your plan is working? If you have documented your plan, including specific action steps, required resources and timelines, you have a good start at identifying indicators of success. Think about what you are hoping to accomplish with your plan. For example, acquiring the appropriate financial resources may be one of the indicators of success in your plan to continue your education. Determining that you are professionally stimulated and happy doing what you are doing at a particular point may be another indicator of a successful career plan. Another sign of a good plan may be feeling that you have successfully taken charge of your own career. As you design your own plan, think about what success will look like for you. You also may define success differently at various stages in your career. Record your personal indicators to help you evaluate your plan at those different stages. These may include extrinsic factors (e.g. pay rise, promotion, acceptance into decision-making bodies, professional recognition) as well as intrinsic factors (e.g. self-esteem, self-actualisation).

Career plans should be dynamic, responsive to personal circumstances, and professionally stimulating. In order to ensure that your plan remains flexible and relevant to your career vision, you must continuously re-evaluate your goals and your means of reaching them.

When you reflect on the means you used to reach your goals, which ones were successful, which ones were not? What would you do differently the next time? You should be ready to adjust your plan as aspects of your self-assessment change, as your continuously updated environmental scan indicates that significant changes have occurred around you, or as you move into different stages of your career.

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to develop your own strategic career plan. Always keep your career vision at the forefront. A well-developed strategic plan will not only help you realise your career vision but also enable you to recognise and take advantage of other career opportunities as they occur.

- Start by putting your written career vision right in front of you.
- Identify your short and long-term career goals.
- For each career goal complete the following strategic career plan outline.

Strategic Career Plan

Career Vision:

Career Goal:

Action Steps:	Resources:	When to Accomplish:	How Will I Know I Have Succeeded:

Phase Five: Marketing Yourself

*Whatever you do or dream you can do -- begin it.
Boldness has genius and power and magic in it.*

Goethe

Nurses as Self-Marketers

Just as you assist your patients in articulating their needs in order to achieve their health goals, so must you learn to speak for yourself so that you can successfully implement your career plans. Regardless of whether you have chosen the traditional nursing role as an employee or have decided to embark on self-employment, you will need to acquire self-marketing skills.

Nurses possess knowledge, skills and experience to meet certain needs or requirements. In this context, if you are an employee, the consumers of nursing services are health care, community or social agencies; if you are self-employed they are clients. Marketing involves the ability to package your professional and personal qualities, attributes and expertise so that you can effectively communicate to your employer or client what you have to offer and why you are the best person for the service that needs to be delivered.

When you completed your self-assessment, you identified your values and beliefs and evaluated your past experience, accomplishments, strengths and areas for improvement. Now that you have taken a close look at the things that make you unique, you can effectively promote yourself by making yourself visible, maintaining your visibility, and using it to meet your goals. Your strengths, coupled with a commitment and belief in yourself, make you your own best marketer.

For nurses, self-marketing is facilitated by establishing a network, acquiring a mentor and developing your written and verbal communication skills. Self-marketing entails scanning the environment and 'knowing your business'. Having the ability to articulate who you are, what you want and what you can do represents only half the equation. The other half is the ability to persuade others that what you have to offer meets the demands and challenges of the ever-changing environment.

Why Marketing Yourself Is Important

A comprehensive self-marketing strategy is a vehicle that you can use to move from the planning to the action stage of achieving your career vision(s). Self-marketing enables you to take control of how you represent yourself to others. It is a skill that develops with time, effort and determination. In this section, you will learn about the resources and tools that form the foundation of an effective self-marketing strategy that you can use to create your own opportunities and take control of your career and your future.

Together, the tools in this self-marketing strategy will work to enhance your professional image and give you the edge. Marketing yourself is challenging because, as with other steps

in the career planning and development process, it must be integrated into who you are and what you do. It is a valuable part of the ongoing and evolving process of becoming who you want to be and doing what you want to do.

Marketing may be a new term for you in relation to your professional development, but the activity is something you've been doing through most of your career. When you applied to nursing school, interviewed for a position, gave a report to colleagues, you were *marketing* yourself. You already know how to do it, now you just have to learn how to use those skills strategically.

How Can I Market Myself?

Networking. The first and most important step is to establish a network. The process of networking involves the development of mutually beneficial relationships through the exchange of personal and written resources. It is a way for people to connect and to build and maintain relationships so that they can help each other achieve their goals. Effective networking enables you to establish your presence, to create widespread visibility and exposure, and to make others aware of your skills, talents, and accomplishments.

Networking can produce significant results if you believe in yourself and are committed and prepared to work at it. Remember, you must make the effort to find the contacts you need to help you get what you want.

- The first step in developing your own network is to make a list of people you think may be helpful to you. Consider all the facets of your life as you identify potentially helpful people — your social life, your family life and your work life.
- Second, contact those people. Be clear about what you are looking for, what you would like them to do for you and how you will be a resource to them, to society, to the community, etc. For the majority of nurses, networking begins in the work environment where there are innumerable opportunities to develop a professional network by leading or collaborating on work projects, sitting on committees, or participating in agency workshops and conferences. Enrolling in education courses and initiating dialogue with fellow students and teachers could also help you expand your professional network.
- The third step you could take to develop your network is to attend appropriate social events, association meetings, and community events to meet and speak with others. Scan the environment to determine the current realities and future trends in the area that you are targeting.

You can build your network by maintaining and tapping into ongoing alliances with friends, family, community contacts, classmates, colleagues, teachers, and supervisors whom you have known over the years. Find out who knows whom, and speak to others who are doing or have done what it is you want to do. Keep in mind that it is not as important who you know as who knows you. When you meet with others, concentrate on communicating who you are and what you can do for them.

Another excellent forum for networking is in the volunteer community. The people you meet during your volunteering will help expand your network. Your participation will also make you visible and perceived as a valuable contributor in the community and/or profession. Moreover, volunteering serves as an opportunity to develop new skills and to gain experience and insight into a new environment.

Networking is the key to being and keeping informed about what is going on in nursing and health care so that you can position yourself strategically and maintain your professional visibility. Once you have established your network(s) you can target certain individuals and begin to build and maintain a *support group*. Support groups are based on the principle that few people have ever accomplished what they want to solely on their own. Your support group should consist of individuals who believe in you and want to see you succeed. Surround yourself with individuals who keep a positive attitude and are a source of confidence as you develop an action plan to reach your career goals. Seek out those whose feedback you value and whose emotional support you can count on, particularly when you take risks.

Finding a Mentor. The second step in your self-marketing strategy should be to acquire a mentor. It is especially important to have a mentor to guide and support you as you plan to transform your dreams into reality. In the nursing world, mentors generally are experienced nurses who know the ins and outs of the health care environment, have good connections, and have more access to information than less experienced, often younger, nurses. These experienced nurses, who already have made a significant contribution to nursing, should be interested in sharing their knowledge and fostering leadership skills in less experienced nurses. But do not restrict yourself to the nursing community to find a mentor. Your social, community, and business connections are also excellent resources. Determine the source and type of mentor you need by looking at your self-assessment and determining the kind of help and support you require. By way of coaching and providing moral support, your mentor can help you scan the environment and give you feedback as you assess your own strengths, identify your career goals, and develop a career plan. Using his or her own network as a resource, your mentor may be able to enhance your professional visibility and social standing and provide you with career prospects.

To find a mentor, identify who in your professional and social community is well respected and possesses a leadership style that you admire. Select a mentor from whom you can learn the most and who may be interested in watching you grow professionally. Once you have identified a possible mentor, create both informal and formal opportunities for each of you to get to know one another. You can do this by volunteering to work on similar projects or by choosing to sit on a committee of which she or he is a member. If your prospective mentor does not work with you, you may want to schedule an appointment to speak to her or him about your goals, what you have to offer, and what you are seeking from the mentoring relationship.

You may feel uncomfortable about approaching a potential mentor. But keep in mind that mentors also benefit from a relationship with a protégé. It helps them keep on top of the issues and also gives them the opportunity to contribute to their profession and/or society by developing others and helping them expand their networks.

Developing Your Communication Skills:

- a) **Marketing Yourself on Paper.** Creating a targeted résumé and other written communication such as business cards is an important part of self-marketing. A well-constructed résumé is your best-written promotional piece. Like you, it is unique. An effective résumé will represent your knowledge, skills, and talents in such a convincing way that the reader can get an immediate sense of who you are and what you can do for them. Creating a résumé requires preparation, patience and practice, practice, practice! Remember, there is no such thing as a generic résumé. You need to customise your résumé to ensure that it is effective for each specific opportunity you are pursuing. Use your résumé as a strategic marketing tool to accentuate the accomplishments, skills, and knowledge you identified as part of your self-assessment. It is essential as a part of the job search process.

You will need to collect some data about a potential opportunity before you can customise your résumé. Learn about the position and the organisation, and scan the environment to determine what you can offer and how. If this is a structured job, what is the employer seeking? How do your knowledge, skills and accomplishments relate to a particular position? What skills and experience can be transferable from your current or previous position to another position? Does this mean that you may need to create more than one version of your résumé? The answer is yes!

Although many people assume that a résumé and curriculum vitae (CV) are the same thing, the two actually differ significantly. A résumé is a two to three page “snap-shot” of your career that is focused on your education, professional background, and accomplishments. A CV is a more detailed description of your professional and academic interests and accomplishments. It is usually over several pages long and reviews your lifetime career achievements. A CV generally is used to apply for grants, scholarships, awards and academic appointments. A résumé, which is a focused summary of your achievements, is most often used to apply for a position or funding agencies and complements a CV in many cases.

Your résumé should always be accompanied by a one-page covering letter. The purpose of a covering letter is to encourage the recipient to read your résumé more carefully to determine how your experience and abilities can benefit their organisation or society. It should be written on personal letterhead and attached with your business card, giving the readers all the details they need to get in touch with you.

Writing for publication is another way in which you can use your communication skills to market yourself. There are numerous opportunities you can create and use to highlight your knowledge and potential to diverse audiences. Community newspapers, professional journals and health care information pamphlets are but a few of the vehicles you can use to let others know what you can do. Review your environmental scan, your self-assessment and your plan to help you begin to think about the written self-marketing opportunities you can create.

Business cards provide a professional and simple way to introduce yourself to others and to ensure that they don't forget you. Your employer may have supplied you with

a business card. However, one of the self-marketing strategies you should consider is also having a personal business card.

When you network with key people, have your business card ready so that you do not fumble with a pen and paper. Your business card represents you: make sure it does its job well. It must be visually appealing and should include your name, credentials, and contact options, e.g. address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Before you create the business card, ask to see the business cards of colleagues and friends to give you ideas about the design that would best reflect you.

- b) **Marketing Yourself in Person.** Developing your presentation skills through professional speaking, presentation and interviewing are the next steps in the self-marketing process. Each time you meet someone new or have the chance to speak to a group, you are presented with a marketing opportunity to accent your positives, take credit for your accomplishments, and remind others of what you have to contribute. To seize these opportunities effectively, you should rehearse a short self-promotional statement. Then when you meet people and are asked to talk about yourself, you will be ready to clearly and concisely articulate your knowledge, skills and unique contributions with confidence and vision.

You do not need to wait for people to come to you. Making presentations to both professional and community audiences are two strategies you can use to enhance your visibility. Become active in your professional association and interest groups and contribute to an initiative that will profile your talents and accomplishments.

The interview is another excellent self-marketing opportunity that you will have many occasions to use over the course of your career. Whether you are interviewed for a job, school or a volunteer position, by a professional association, a community agency or credit organisation, you will need finely honed interviewing skills. Interviewing is a powerful self-marketing opportunity in which you can ensure that you have presented your knowledge, skills and potential in the most positive and appropriate manner.

Remember that the interview is a marketing opportunity for both the interviewer and the person being interviewed. It is a two-way exchange of information that gives interviewers an opportunity to market their specialty and expertise and their goals to you while they also decide whether you will be a good fit with them. At the same time, the interview gives you the chance to market yourself. You can demonstrate through your answers to the interview questions that you have relevant and expert knowledge, skills and the ability to do the task and that you are the best candidate to meet their needs. This strategy will require you to promote yourself, not an easy prospect for many nurses. The interview also gives you an opportunity to have your questions answered so that, if you are offered the position or the opportunity you are requesting, you will be able to make a well informed decision about whether it is the right one for you.

- c) **Marketing Yourself Online.** Another way to do everything we have already talked about is through the online medium. Creating and maintaining social networks have in many ways become easier in today's world. The medium may have changed but much of the message remains similar. E-mail, your own website and all of the social media tools available online help you maintain and create social networks. The internet is helping create the reputation economy, ideas of branding and marketing previously reserved for big companies are now being pushed down to individuals. It is a tremendously powerful tool.

Be aware of your online footprints. Everyone now has left footprints on the internet, a post on a discussion forum, an e-mail to a group of friends, or a picture on an online picture sharing site. Somebody searching for information about you can usually find a great deal and not all of it may be something you'd like to share. There are wonderful tools available for communicating, but be aware that somebody looking at these may not know or appreciate the context of the content. We are not suggesting you avoid these tools — but only that you be smart about them. Know what is private and public on these tools. Know what is available online about you. Do a search of your own name on popular search engines. What comes up? Whatever information you discovered, can also be seen by potential employers, professional colleagues and those who are strangers. Make sure you are in control of what is out in cyberspace about you.

Developing a Business Image. Marketing is a significant component of business survival for those nurses who are self-employed as well as for those who are employees. For those who are employees, the business image is one of the means you use to keep your employer and your colleagues aware of your contribution to the workplace and of your interest in its goals and plans for the future. For the self-employed, developing a business image includes making contact and then maintaining communication with potential markets. If you are self-employed, you would have developed a business plan for your future in Phase Four, the strategic planning step of the career planning and development model, that indicated where you want your business to go and the steps you planned to take to get there. Now in the self-marketing phase, your business image should be constructed carefully because it has a bearing on your ability to attract and keep clients, that is, on the very viability of your business. Be aware that a positive image is built gradually. However, a negative image develops quickly and is very difficult to reverse.

Some of the components of a business image include:

- a) Your communication in print, for example, stationery, advertising, telephone listings, business card, and brochure.
- b) Your staff, both their appearance and their attitude in dealing with people.
- c) Your office, including location, furniture, magazines, signage and parking access.
- d) Telephone contacts, including attitude and tone of voice.
- e) Your pricing, whether it is competitive and fits with the business image you are attempting to create.
- f) Your credit policy for account payment.
- g) The actual provision of your service.

You may have decided about each of these aspects separately in your business planning, but they all come together to create your business image. They must work together as a whole, presenting one integrated message for your client and for the community – that of a professional nursing service.

Regardless of whether you are employed or self-employed, self-marketing is about using all your resources to present yourself in the strongest, most positive way. Remember that the best resource you have to shape your own future is you! Keep your goal in mind. Creating an effective self-marketing strategy that works for you takes time, effort, and patience. Following these strategies will contribute to realising your goals.

Participant Activity

Marketing yourself is representing yourself in the best way possible by using all your resources. How is your marketing readiness? Use the following checklist to answer that question.

- I know I am my best marketer
- I know how to network
- I have a support group
- I have a mentor
- I have a current résumé
- I have a business card
- I have made a recent presentation
- I have, or am working towards being, published
- I have excellent interviewing skills
- I have determined the appropriate fee for my services
- I have excellent negotiation skills

Which areas need some attention?
Develop a plan to address those needs.

What I Need To Do	When I Will Do It
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Closing Comments

Module Two has introduced you to a five-phase career planning and development model, a process that includes the following five activities: scanning, assessing, visioning, planning, and marketing. A career is personal and individual; it is about an individual's values, choices, goals and plans. But planning and developing our careers are activities that we engage in both alone and in partnership with others, in a quiet and private place as well as in a complex and busy workplace or professional environment. Career planning is an ongoing process that is more like a spiral than a straight line. As we move back and forth in the process, we apply what we have learned from each experience to the next. To be successful, career planning and development must become an integral part of our professional development, that is, it must be situated within our lives and careers, and not be something we engage in as an occasional act. Just as we are continuously developing our clinical, administrative, teaching, and research skills, we must also continue to develop our career building skills.

Career development reflects the qualities that embody nursing professional practice including autonomy, self-direction and continuous learning. Module Two has been about helping you to do that – to learn the what, why and how of a five-phase career planning and development model and to begin to integrate the associated skills and attitudes into your everyday professional and personal lives.

Although career planning and development is a continuous process, to ensure that you are getting the most out of your career planning activities, you should consider an overall evaluation of how it is working for you. Either following each career change, or on an annual basis, complete the following questionnaire. It will help you determine which phases of the model need more attention, remedial work or consultation.

How Am I Doing?

Scanning

- I am aware of the current realities and future trends at the global, national and local level within health care and the nursing profession.
- I am aware of the current realities and future trends at the global, national and local level outside health care and the nursing profession.

Assessing

- I can describe my strengths and how I use them in my work.
- I can describe my limitations.
- I know how others would describe me.
- My current position is a good match with my values, beliefs, knowledge, skills and interests.

Vision

- I can describe my ideal vision for my work.

Planning

- I can identify my career goals.
- I have a written career development plan.
- I know what steps to take over the next 6-12 months to further my career.

Marketing

- I have established a relevant network.
- I have, or am considering, acquiring a mentor.
- I continue to develop my communication skills through presentations and publications.
- I have an up to date résumé.

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ANNEX

Participant Activity Forms

Phase One: Scanning Your Environment

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to scan your environment. The trends and issues you identify in your scan will serve as a basis for you to make informed decisions about potential career opportunities. What follows is a template you can use to assist you with your scan. Consider each of the areas —, global, national and local — and insert those trends and issues you observe to be important at this time. We have provided some questions to consider as you fill in your scan. Once you have completed your scan, remember that you will need to review and revise it on a regular basis.

For each of the categories, i.e. global, national and local, consider issues related to society, health and nursing. What follows is a list of questions with a sampling of possible answers. Over time your list of questions and answers will likely grow.

Global

What health/social issues seem to be worldwide phenomena?

(Pandemic diseases, ethical issues, allocation of resources, gap between rich and poor, economy).

What are the nursing issues that seem to be global in their scope?

(Regulation, nursing migration, quality of work life, patient safety).

National

What are the significant health and social trends in your country?

(Controlling health care costs, privatisation of health care, regionalisation, decreasing length of hospital stays, infant mortality, shift of responsibilities between the health and social sectors, armed conflict, natural disasters, health insurance).

What are the issues affecting nurses in your country?

(Shortage/surplus of nurses, education, regulation, quality of work life, remuneration).

Local

What are some of the important social and health issues in your local area?

(Changing demographics of the client population, shift in care to the community, increasing caregiver burden, patient safety, quality of worklife, environmental sustainability).

What are the important nursing issues in your local area?

(Shortage/surplus of nurses, demographics, e.g. ageing workforce, changing practice-settings, changing roles in the practice setting).

Scanning Your Environment

Global Trends and Issues

Society	Health Care	Nursing

National Trends and Issues

Society	Health Care	Nursing

Local Trends and Issues

Society	Health Care	Nursing

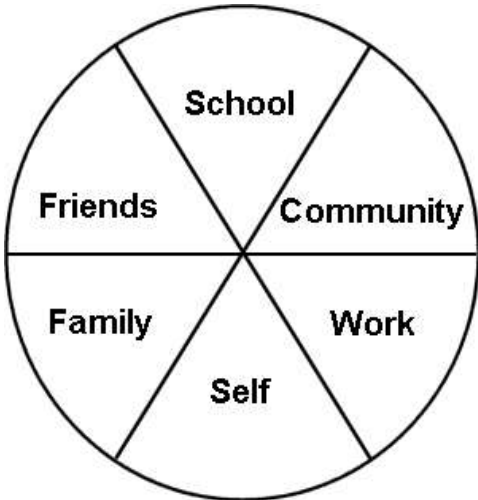
Phase Two: Completing Your Self-Assessment and Reality Check

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to complete your self-assessment. The following are some preliminary questions that can help you understand who you are and what is important to you. They should not limit you but act as a catalyst to start your reflections. Your answers will give you the words to describe your unique self, what you like to do, and what you have to offer. Record your responses so that you have tangible evidence of who you are. As you start to document your answers, you can begin to write your own story. As you write, envision that you are writing your autobiography, detailing where you have been, where you are now, and what you have learned about yourself along the way. Your story should include all the important personal and professional events in your life and how they relate to one another.

1. Values

What are my priorities?



Mark the percentage of time you spend daily in each of the sections in the circle.

Now, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel comfortable with how I spend my time each day?

- What is important to me, in my work and in my personal life?

- Who or what are the significant things in my life I need to consider at this time?

2. Knowledge and Skills

- What knowledge and skills have I developed both personally and professionally?

- What are my strengths?

- What are my limitations?

- What knowledge and skills require further development?

3. Interests

- What have I liked about my job(s)/role(s)?

- What haven't I liked?

- What energises or motivates me?

- In what kind of environment do I perform best?

- What do I like to do outside of work?

4. Accomplishments

- In the past three to five years, what have been my most significant accomplishments at work and outside work?

- Can I describe those times in my life when I made a difference?

Your Reality Check

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to complete your reality check. Review your self-assessment and re-read your accomplishments. Then ask yourself the following questions:

- What feedback have I received about these achievements from colleagues, friends, and family?

- What did they identify as my strengths and limitations?

- What three adjectives would they (or did they) use to describe me, both in and outside my workplace and why?

- How did my assessment of accomplishments compare with others' assessments?

Phase Three: Creating Your Career Vision

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to develop your career vision. When you start, your vision doesn't have to be too realistic; that comes later in the process when you set your career goals. Don't worry about whether your vision is too big, too vague, or too impossible. It should be grand and inspiring. If it is an important dream, it may even be a little frightening. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I want? What am I seeking?

- What does my ideal day look like? What am I doing? Where am I doing it? Who is there with me?

- Is someone currently doing the kind of work I'd like to do? Describe the characteristics of that work.

- What are the self-limiting beliefs that could prevent me from doing what I really want to do?

- What are the environmental constraints that I must consider before I can do what I really want to do?

Phase Four: Developing Your Strategic Career Plan

Participant Activity

Now you are ready to develop your own strategic career plan. Always keep your career vision at the forefront. A well-developed strategic plan will not only help you realise your career vision but also enable you to recognise and take advantage of other career opportunities as they occur.

- Start by putting your written career vision right in front of you.
- Identify your short and long-term career goals.
- For each career goal complete the following strategic career plan outline.

Strategic Career Plan

Career Vision:

Career Goal:

Action Steps:	Resources:	When to Accomplish:	How Will I Know I Have Succeeded:

Phase Five: Marketing Yourself

Participant Activity

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- I have an up-to-date resumé.



International Council of Nurses

3, place Jean-Marteau
1201 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: 41 22 908 01 00
Fax: 41 22 908 01 01

www.icn.ch