



PLANNED HAPPENSTANCE AND YOUR CAREER

The excitement and hopefulness of planning your career is often combined with the stress of uncertainty of what's ahead. Forecasting our future careers is not so simple when there are forces beyond our control – technological, economic, social and political impacts can make career journeys more non-linear than ever before. Contrary to belief, career development does not come with a handy map that specifically outlines next steps and how exactly to get there.

So how can you navigate your career journey with more confidence?

“Planned Happenstance is both an attitude that you gain and actions you take. It is the view that you can create opportunities by taking action on your curiosity and on chance events. It is not just luck or being in the right place at the right time. It is a conscious, purposeful, and on-going process that will help you to build a more satisfying and fulfilling career.”

5 Key Traits to Help you Navigate your Career:

Curiosity: Explore new opportunities and follow your interests by talking with people and learning new things. Be active in creating opportunity for chance events to occur. Go to a networking event, talk with a professional in your field of interest or try out an activity of interest. Be curious about the opportunities and the possibilities.

Persistence: Expect that there will be obstacles in your path. Persist by surrounding yourself with supportive people and keep the effort up to overcome challenges. Grit and awareness of your strengths can help you.

Flexibility: Keep an open mind and be flexible with changing attitudes and circumstances. It's okay to change plans, adapt your plans and create new plans!

Optimism: View new opportunities as attainable and assume that good things will happen. Focus on the “how can I do this?” versus “I can't do this because...” There is value in every experience (paid or unpaid) – the key is being confident and be able to articulate the benefits.

Risk-Taking: Stretch your comfort zone to learn the most. Taking action in the face of uncertainty will create the possibility of generating opportunity. Not taking action will guarantee no opportunity.



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Reflect on an unplanned or unexpected experience (or a “lucky break”) that impacted your career/education journey so far. Describe the situation briefly.

Reflect on which of the 5 Planned Happenstance traits (Curiosity, Persistence, Flexibility, Optimism, Risk-Taking) were evident in your situation.

How did the unplanned/unexpected experience shape your career journey?



Evaluate yourself on the 5 Planned Happenstance Traits.

Curiosity: _____ got this _____ so-so _____ needs work

Persistence: _____ got this _____ so-so _____ needs work

Flexibility: _____ got this _____ so-so _____ needs work

Optimism: _____ got this _____ so-so _____ needs work

Risk Taking: _____ got this _____ so-so _____ needs work

Are there ways you can leverage your strengths to help you navigate your career path?

Career is about the journey, not the destination. Expect moments of uncertainty and use your skills to leverage possibilities while navigating your own unique path.

Sources:

Luck is No Accident: Making the Most of Happenstance in your Life and Career by John Krumboltz Ph.D and Al Levin Ph. D

Kathleen Mitchell, Al Levin and John Krumboltz “Planned Happenstance: Constructing Unexpected Career Opportunities”
Journal of Counseling and Development, 1999.



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