

# SKILLS

## ACADEMY

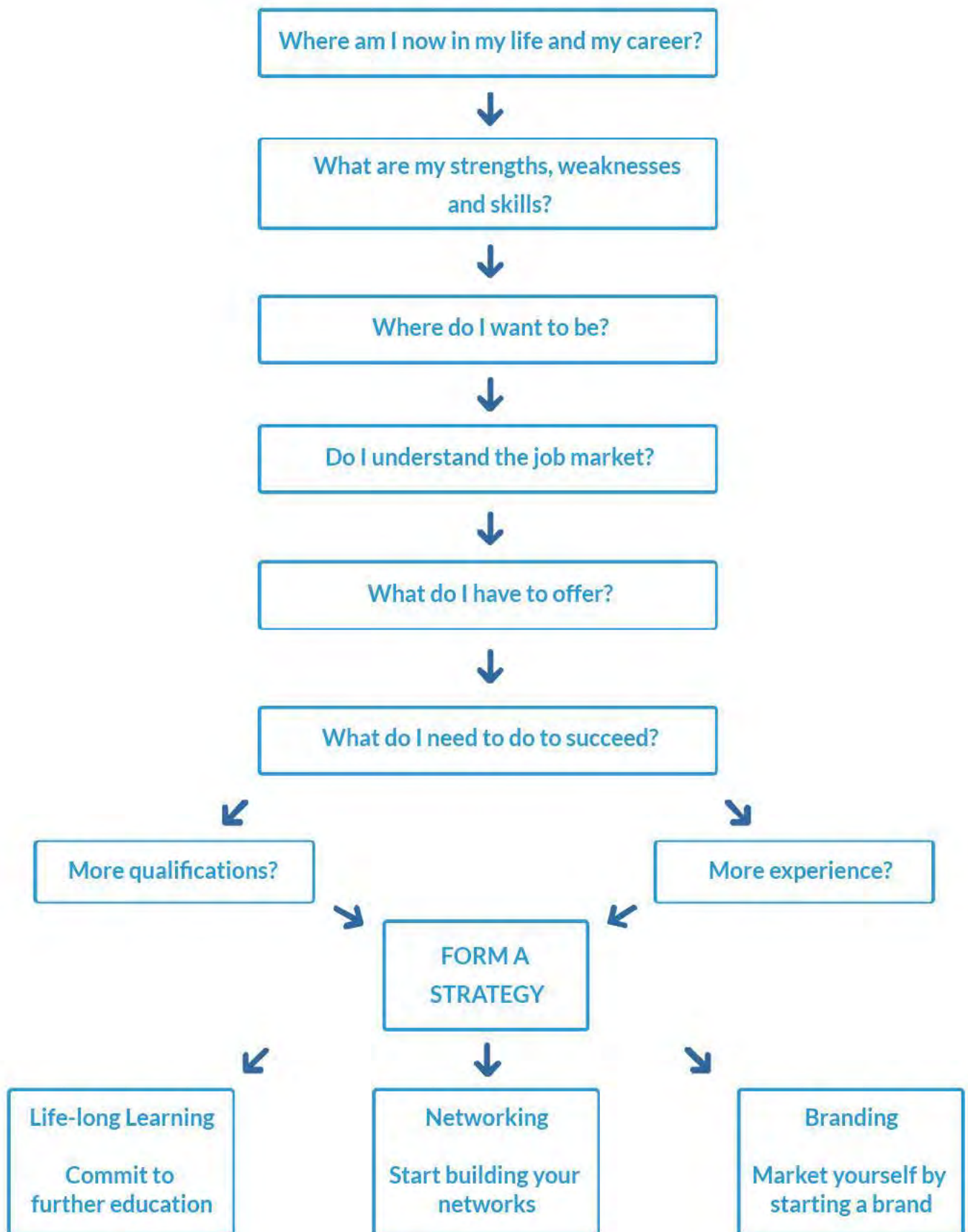
S U P P O R T E D   L E A R N I N G

A photograph of a man in a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, adjusting his tie with his hands. The image is overlaid with a teal color filter.

# Career Guide

[www.skillsacademy.co.za](http://www.skillsacademy.co.za)

## Accelerate / Jumpstart your career



## A Job Market For A New Generation

The job market is rapidly changing. Gone are the days when you studied straight after school, got a job and stayed there for the rest of your life and got a gold watch for your effort. Today there are more career options for young people than ever, and it is estimated that Millennials (people born between 1980 and 2000) will have up to 6 different careers in a lifetime! The average South African holds 13.5 jobs over his/her lifetime. So whether you are a Millennial or not, it is no longer a question of picking and then staying on the same career course for your whole working life.

So how do you get ready for the rollercoaster-ride that is the modern career? It is quite simple. You need to learn to promote yourself and commit to life-long learning. You can do this by building your personal brand and creating a personal learning network.

**The job market has become flexible, and individuals entering the market have to learn to be adaptable from the outset of their careers.**

**The biggest risk is not taking any risk... In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.**

**– Mark Zuckerberg**

## Where Are You Now?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I know what kind of work I am interested in?
  - What are my needs and preferences?
  - What is my ideal work environment?
  - What are my characteristics?
  - What skills do I possess?
  - What experience I you have?
  - What are my strengths and weaknesses?



## Do A Career Test

Unsure how to start asking yourself these questions? Need to know more about yourself?

Visit [www.careertest.co.za](http://www.careertest.co.za).

This website will help you make the right choices about your future and your career.

Use the following voucher code to access the tests: CT2014CSA.

### • Where do I want to be?

- Am I pursuing my passion?
- Do I want a new job?
- Do I want a new career?
- What are my different choices in a changing job market?

### • Do I know what employers are looking for?

- What do I have to offer?
- Do I have a brand?
- What educational qualifications do I have?
- Am I reliable and competent?

### • Should I study more?

- Have I committed to life-long learning?
- What are my best options for further education?

### • Do I need more experience?

- Are there any organisations I want to volunteer at?
- What can I give to the community?
- What am I hoping to gain from the experience?
- Do I want to do an internship?
- Who do I contact?



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- How does my brand improve my employability?

- Does my brand reflect my strengths?
- Does it make me stand out from the crowd?
- What will I do to improve my brand further?

- How do I develop my personal learning network?

- Am I networking properly?
- Am I utilising all the online resources available to me?

- Do I know where I want to be five years from now?

- How does the world see me right now?

**Don't have all the answers? Then read on to find out how to succeed in the next step of your career.**



## **What Is A Brand?**

A brand is the way that a product is displayed and identified by the world. You could say it is the shiny side of a product. So, what product are you selling? Yourself, of course! This means you should learn to develop yourself as a brand. Viewing yourself in this way is one of the most valuable steps towards having a successful and fulfilling career. Remember that when you join the work-force you will be viewed as a commodity or a tool. You become an instrument that gets the job done. While that sounds very impersonal, it is the truth. If you can view yourself in the same way, you are on your way to being a useful product. Just having a CV is no longer enough; employers want to 'see' what you have done and get a clear picture of you as a whole person. Social media makes this very possible.

## **How Do You Build / Improve Your Brand?**

What do you want? Where do you see yourself in the next 2 - 5 years? Boring as it may seem, it is the first and most important question you have to ask yourself. You cannot promote and develop something you do not understand. Remember, you get to choose your own adventure.

**If you choose a job you love you will never have to work a day in your life!**  
- Confucius



## Now that you know what a brand is, let's form a strategy! Make Your Own Brand Map

Melissa Stanger (on the [youtern.com](http://youtern.com) website) suggests that you make a brand map. Let's try it:

- Start by putting your name - your brand - in the middle of the star below.
- Next you can brainstorm and come up with all the words that define you. Think of the values you represent. What symbolises you? Are you punctual, good at multi-tasking, a born leader or a fashionista?
- Not sure what your strengths are? When writing down your trademarks focus on the key-aspects that make you truly unique. The special things that characterise you can easily be incorporated in your brand, and will make you stand out.
- Not sure which words define you? Ask your friends and family.
- Once you have found five strengths or unique personal traits you can complete your brand map.



**Tip: Never create a brand that is not uniquely you!**

You will not be able to truly own a brand if you don't feel comfortable with the way you are presenting yourself, and people will instantly know you are not being true to yourself.

Remember: the goal of creating a successful brand is to attract individuals who will help you to excel in your chosen field, individuals who you can form long term business networks with. Anyone and everyone you meet can potentially help you strengthen your brand and career.



## How Do You Add Even More Substance To Your Brand?

- Know the importance of a good self-image

If you portray yourself as confident, people will treat you as if you are. This, in turn, will make you feel more confident and competent, which will result in a positive curve of growth. This means confidence is key.

- Know how to present yourself, how to behave and how to build your personal networks

Start creating your own personal learning network by becoming knowledgeable in your fields of interest. Visit websites that are of interest to you and subscribe to their newsletters. Comment (intelligently) on public forums and engage with professionals who are already in the field.

### Ever heard the expression, It is not WHAT you know, but WHO you know?

- Know what is happening in the world

Follow at least one news source, such as the radio. DJs often talk about current topics, and they do it in a fun, interesting or even controversial way. Whether you agree with their views or not, armed with all this knowledge you will be able to stand your ground in any new social situation. Alternatively, watch television news, read a daily newspaper or an online news publication.

- Do you love social media?

Then simply follow several news sources on Twitter. Twitter recently revealed that their ultimate aim has always been to supply people with bite-sized and easily digestible pieces of news that they can catch up on while on the run. A surprising 40% of Twitter's active users don't tweet at all, but log in just to see what is happening in the world.

- Keep studying

You can improve your brand by taking short courses and learning new valuable skills. 48% of South Africans employees look for opportunities to keep learning. With that sort of competition can you afford not to seek out further education yourself?

This may mean a choice between full time studies or supplementary studies while you work. Distance colleges have a variety of subjects to choose from, and their courses and qualifications come in all shapes and sizes, from diplomas to short courses and certificates. This option will also give you the opportunity work and study at the same time.





## How To Build Your Personal Learning Network

Build your reputation by advertising your brand. How can you do that? By networking.

Some people love to interact socially and even thrive on it. However, even the most outgoing people may struggle to speak to complete strangers. For many networking appears to be a nightmare. It does not need to be though!

If you are a natural introvert the good news is that networking does not only involve speaking to people face-to-face anymore; a lot of networking is done via social media these days.

- **Join a club or a professional community**

This is a great way to meet professionals in a slightly more relaxed setting and to gain insider knowledge on your industry of choice.

- **Go to job fairs**

This will help you understand the current climate of the industry you would like to work in. You may also find out about and subscribe to industry newsletters you may not know about yet. Mainly, however, it will give you the opportunity to market your brand and interact with other professionals.

- **Get a mentor**

A mentor is a person who can give you information and advice. If you are busy studying, select a mentor among your lecturers and tutors. Alternatively think of someone you admire from your community, or who works in the field you are interested in.

- **Visit a recruitment agent**

If you need extra guidance or you struggle to find jobs online make an appointment with a recruitment agent. They will be able to explain the current job market and will also be able to assist you in finding a suitable position.



- Do an internship

Reach out. You can gain much needed experience from doing an internship. Contact companies you want to work at. They may have a summer internship for you, or they may be able to refer you to a company that does run an internship program.

- Volunteer

Getting involved in your local community or in other volunteer programs will help you develop your skills to work in a team. It could even give you the opportunity to be a mentor yourself.

- Join or create a support group

There are many other people looking for jobs, and interacting with and supporting your peers can be invaluable, since you are connecting on an equal level with peers that may be your colleagues in future.

- Keep an eye on the job market

You can do this by looking at job ads on job portals and the websites of companies you would like to work at. Find jobs that you would ideally want to apply for in the next five years. This is all part of a long-term plan. When you find the ideal job it should be one that appeals to you and that you should have all the relevant qualifications for when you finish your course. If not, focus on diversifying your studies.

- Online networking

Keep your social and work life separate. While some people prefer separate accounts, having one account on a particular social network can consolidate your talents and be a useful tool to promote yourself, but also to connect and communicate with and to learn from others.

**Note:** If there are photos or comments appearing on your social media profiles that make you feel uncomfortable then it is time to clean up your image. Use the same rules for your online personality and branding as you do for the way you conduct yourself in everyday situations.



Learn to use all the networking resources available to you on the internet:

**Facebook** is good for communicating with friends and family, but also for contacting businesses and promoting your brand by making informed comments and by posting interesting and relevant news articles. Companies have also started using Facebook as a word-of-mouth tool to advertise vacancies. It is a good way to keep in contact with old co-workers, since you never know when one of their employers may be looking for new employees.

**Twitter** is ideal to promote your brand in a quick and efficient way and to keep up to date with what is happening in the world. Also look for jobs, market your brand and find brands you want to associate with. Remember to keep your eye on the ratio between your following and your followers. People are more likely to follow someone who is following fewer people than they have followers.

**Google+** is fast becoming a useful tool to promote your brand, especially in the media and technology industries. It is great for networking, since it will expose you to people who are not necessarily your friends, but are interested in the same things you are.

**LinkedIn** is a professional online network, specifically aimed at introducing potential employees and employers. You can upload a comprehensive profile onto LinkedIn that acts like a CV, and with 450 million users across the world it is changing how people search for jobs. There are more than 3.8 million LinkedIn users in South Africa today and the numbers are growing as the platform is gaining popularity on the African continent and abroad.

**People are not only using LinkedIn to find employment.**

**80% of LinkedIn members use this platform to network with other professionals.**



## Useful Exercise

Take charge of your future by mapping your progress:

Decide on a list of actions you want to implement in your career or studies on a month to month basis.

o When you complete an action make a tick next to it.

This will give you an overview of your accomplishments throughout the year.

Month	Action	Achieved
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		



**We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten. Don't let yourself be lulled into inaction.**

**- Bill Gates**

## Conclusion

By answering the questions below, let's see if you have a better idea now of what your next step should be.

- Have you indentified any aspects that still need work?

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- I am interested in a career in:

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- Three of my strengths are:

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- These five personal traits will benefit my brand:

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- I can promote and develop these traits in the following way in the next 2 years:

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● I possess these three job related skills:

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● My brand is all about:

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● I will cultivate a positive attitude by:

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● These are the educational qualifications I still want:

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● I can improve my personal learning network by:

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● In the next five years I will be:

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● In the next ten years I will be:

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Successful people begin where failures leave off. Never settle for 'just getting the job done.' Excel!  
- Tom Hopkins



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