

20 Career Development

INTRODUCTION

Few pharmacists stay in the same job position during their career. The average American changes jobs every 3.8 years and the average hospital pharmacist every 4 years.¹ You will change jobs throughout your career, and you may even change the type of work you do as a pharmacist.

This is a great time to be a pharmacist. There is an unprecedented number and variety of career opportunities for pharmacists. Foregoing the opportunities, finding a good job or changing to another job is something that should be done thoughtfully and carefully.

This chapter is about career planning for pharmacists beginning their career or for veteran pharmacists looking for a job change. The chapter presents information about careers, career development, how to assess strengths and preferences, and about being prepared for the next job. It also covers how to find opportunities, how to assess job offers, and how to make a career change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After this reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define a career
- Describe the pitfalls of planning for your career
- Identify the steps in finding a job as a pharmacist
- Describe how to differentiate yourself from others to find the job you want

- Describe how social media can help or hurt your chances for a job.
- Write a convincing letter of application and develop a curriculum vitae (CV)
- Explain some dos and don'ts in interviewing
- Provide the top 5 mistakes millennials make when interviewing for a job

A CAREER

Having a job and having a career are not the same. Anyone can have a job, but not everyone can have a career. *Webster's Dictionary* defines a career as “a pursuit of progressive achievement, especially in public, business, or professional life.” And goes on to say, under the word *career*, “a profession for which one trains and is undertaken as a permanent calling.”²

Pharmacy is more than a job and more than work for hire. Pharmacy is a profession that should be pursued as if you will never learn enough. Members of the pharmacy profession chose pharmacy, learned a body of specialized knowledge, and prepared for a life pursuit of their profession. Pharmacists are *lifelong learners* who continually are improving their practice skills and are proud to be a part of a noble profession.

CAREER PLANNING

To be the most successful, careers need to be planned versus drifting from opportunity to opportunity. Planning involves establishing goals and deciding how to achieve them, then pursuing objectives (important steps) that achieve the goal

COMMON MISTAKES STUDENTS MAKE

Pharmacy students often make mistakes in career planning.³ Mistake number one is procrastination. Many students become so involved in coursework and other activities that they do not think about or plan what they would like to do with their degree until it gets close to graduation. Ideally, a pharmacy student should be thinking about what he or she would like to do as a pharmacist as soon as the decision is made to go to school to be a pharmacist. Students should also be exploring various opportunities throughout their time as a student.

Every pharmacy student should be introduced to and should investigate the pros and cons of graduate work in pharmacy during the first year of pharmacy school. Basically, there are two available domains: clinical/social/administrative and pharmaceutical science.

The second mistake pharmacy students often make in career planning is to be too passive. Many students wait for the jobs to come to them in the form of interviewers who come to the campus on “career day” rather than actively looking for good opportunities. Because there are so many opportunities available for new graduates, some students are not challenged to think about their careers. Proactive strategy seeks introductory and advanced practice experiences and internships while in school, where you may want to eventually work. In this way, potential employers get to know you and see your work, and you get to see if this may be where you eventually work.

The third mistake is for students to make assumptions about what is available in the workplace. Students may only assume positions are available in independent, chain, or hospital pharmacies or that the only positions available are the ones being recruited during campus career day.

The fourth mistake is letting the pressure of paying off school loans overcome the value of pursuing a pharmacy residency, which some students think is just another year of senior clerkships—it is not. A 1-year pharmacy residency is the equivalent of 2 to 3 years of practice experience and provides training to become a pharmacy leader. It provides increased

knowledge and confidence and puts the resident in a position to obtain the best new jobs—the ones that are the most satisfying. Although salaries for residencies are about 50% less than being paid for a full-time job, the money is a lot more than you were a student, and most residents are able to pay on college loans.

AVOIDING COMMON PITFALLS

The author of an article titled “Choosing Your Career Direction—Before It Chooses You” offered some don’ts for students thinking about careers as pharmacists:³

- Don’t be driven by what others think you should do with your life.
- Don’t assume there is only one right choice.
- Don’t assume that career planning is something you do once, and then it is over.
- Don’t assume the decision you make just out of pharmacy school will be your only decision about your career.
- Don’t wait for an opportunity to find you. Continually seek opportunities and learn all you can about them.

FINDING YOUR JOB AS A PHARMACIST

The first decision to be made, and as early as possible, is to decide what will happen after graduating from pharmacy school. Will you pursue further education, add more training, or gain employment?

MORE EDUCATION

Many of the best opportunities exist for pharmacists with education beyond a doctor of pharmacy degree. Many jobs in the pharmaceutical industry (see Chapter 18 – The Pharmaceutical and Biotechnology Industry) require a Master-of-Science (MS) or Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) degree. A MS or PhD degree in a specific science discipline (pharmaceutical chemistry, pharmacology, pharmacokinetics, or pharmaceutics) can also be obtained and used to find a job in academics (see Chapter 15, “Pharmacy Academia”).

Some pharmacists also find that seeking a graduate degree in business administration (MBA) provides more flexibility in finding the ideal job. Some educational degrees that are useful when combined with the Doctor of Pharmacy degree are the Master of Public Health (MPH) or a law degree (JD).

MORE TRAINING

Some of the best opportunities in pharmacy are for pharmacists who have advanced training provided by a pharmacy residency or fellowship. Pharmacy residencies provide 1–2 years of intense training in the practice of pharmacy and pharmaceutical care. Pharmacy fellowships provide 2 years of intense training in performing clinical research (see Chapter 2, “The Pharmacist”). Residencies and fellowships help differentiate one pharmacist from another.⁴ Many of the top leaders in the pharmacy profession have completed a postgraduate residency or fellowship. Completing additional education or training after graduation helps a pharmacist stay competitive when added educational and training requirements for pharmacists are introduced over the years since graduation.

GAINING EMPLOYMENT

Another possibility is to go directly into the workforce after graduating from pharmacy school. Endless opportunities abound for new pharmacy graduates. However, selecting the correct job is not an easy task. In finding the first or next job, it is important to take charge and put in the necessary time to locate the best job for you. Finding a good job in pharmacy takes good planning and assessment.

Planning

Planning starts with identifying career goals. Most important is putting the goals into written statements. If the goals are not written, they will just become wishes, and likely mean not be achieved.

Goals should be practical, achievable within a certain time frame, and as specific as possible. One way to do this is to make two or three short-term goals (achievable within 2 years), two or three intermediate goals (achievable within 10 years), and two or three long-term goals (achievable over a career). Once drafted, goal statements need to be revised and refined over several days and revised annually. Table 20.1 is an example of some goal statements written by one new pharmacy graduate.

TABLE 20.1

Professional Goals for One New Pharmacy Graduate

Goals achievable within 2 years

Work in a thriving, independent community pharmacy

Learn about owning and running a small business

Get involved in a local professional organization

Goals achievable within 10 years

Identify the type of pharmacy I would like to purchase

Seek advice from a pharmacy administration professor in pharmacy ownership

Evaluate three to five independent community pharmacies for their potential

Purchase one store

Become an officer in the state pharmacy association

Goals achievable within my career

Make the first store into a professional pharmacy where patients and pharmaceutical care are the priorities

Make the pharmacy successful from business and patient viewpoints

Be elected president of the state pharmacy association

Assessment

To set realistic and achievable goals involves knowing yourself and the opportunities available. Learning about the two should take place as close together as possible, but the process starts with self-assessment.

Self-Assessment

There are different ways of examining yourself for your likes and dislikes, and for your strengths and weaknesses. Several tools are available that can help make self-assessment easier. The first approach is to read *What Color Is Your Parachute?*⁵ This is an inexpensive, short, easy-to-use manual that has been in print for many years. An excellent workbook is also

available. These will help answer important questions such as --What do I like to do? What am I good at? Where do I want to accomplish it?

The other tool recommended for self-assessment and career planning is the American Pharmaceutical Association (APhA) Pathway Evaluation Program, first developed by Glaxo/Wellcome/Smith Kline Pharmaceutical Company to help pharmacy professionals, especially student pharmacists, in career planning.⁶ The program consists of three parts:

Briefing document: Pre-workshop, self-assessment exercises; a combination of written and on-line exercises

Workshop workbook: Materials and exercises to use during a live workshop

Follow-up materials: Exercises and resources to use after completing the workshop

It is highly recommended that the student use this program during his or her first year of pharmacy school, especially while taking a course on Introduction to Pharmacy if one exists. There is even a virtual mentor program. The Web site for this program is listed at the end of this chapter.

As far as getting to know a job better, there is nothing like finding out about it firsthand. Pharmacy students who can handle coursework and a part-time job should work as pharmacy interns or as pharmacy technicians to become familiar with what various pharmacy jobs have to offer. While in school, students should also schedule their practice experiences at a variety of places where pharmacists work.

Another good way to find out the pros and cons of various jobs in pharmacy is to attend professional pharmacy meetings—local, state, and national—to network with pharmacists. At these meetings, ask pharmacists where they work, what they do, and what they like and do not like about their job. Most pharmacists love helping pharmacy students find their way.

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES ON YOUR OWN

Finding opportunities on your own can be daunting if you are seeking to go beyond finding a job by word of mouth. Here are some tips:

- Attend local, state, and national pharmacy meetings.
- Sign up for the personnel placement service of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP).
- Attend the midyear clinical meeting of the ASHP in early December.
- Go to the Monster.com site (<http://www.monster.com>).
- Go to Pharmacist.com (<http://www.pharmacist.com>).

Pharmacist.com has many tools for seeking a good job in pharmacy, including (a) choosing the right employer, (b) 25 tactics for negotiating with your potential employer, (c) networking for career success, (d) successful job interviews, and (e) typical interview questions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

Networking with other pharmacists and professionals is a hallmark of the profession. Meeting and getting to know other pharmacists and professionals helps you gain new knowledge, find new opportunities, and advance your career. Networking can sometimes allow you to help other people by connecting people together. It not always what you know, but who you know.

THE PROS AND CONS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN JOB SEEKING

Social media is a double-edged sword that can help, but can also hurt your chances for gainful employment. One author has said “pharmacy students are especially vulnerable to being their own worst enemy when it comes to online social networking.”⁷ The author suggests that pharmacy students need to realize they are now in a professional school, and they should ask themselves one question before posting anything online: Is it something you would want pharmacy faculty, your colleagues, a future employer, or your patients to see?

You can find a statement by ASHP on the use of social media by pharmacy professionals.⁸ Every student should read this.

DEVELOPING YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE

Putting It Together

Once you identify a preferred job, the next step is to develop a résumé, which in pharmacy is more commonly called a *curriculum vitae* (CV). The CV is a critical document used during job searches. A CV tells employers who you are and what qualifications you have to perform a job. CVs must be carefully composed, presentation perfect, and attractive to stand out from the CV of others.

There are several helpful references on creating an effective CV, one of which is specific for creating a CV of a pharmacist.⁹⁻¹¹

CVs usually consist of eight categories: the heading, the job objective, education and training, work experiences, honors and awards, activities and interest, references, and contact information.¹²

Heading: Include your formal and complete name (first, middle initial, and last).

Job objective: Include a brief description of your career objective for the job sought. This needs to be carefully thought out and crafted. It should not include clichés such as, “I want to contribute as a valuable member of the health care team.” How boring, bland, and useless.

Try answering these questions in this section:¹³

- First things first – what are you writing? Answer: an objective summary of your qualifications and skills that match the exact position you are applying for.
- Next, what are you? Are you a seasoned pharmacist? Young professional? Recent graduate? Say so.
- How much experience do you have?
- What makes you special? What is your major asset? Skill set?

Be honest and write this section from your heart.

Education and training: Include all formal college education, special course-work, and any residencies and fellowships.

Work experiences: Include any work experiences, paid or unpaid, that would contribute to gaining the job you are seeking. This section should list the job title and a brief summary of a few key responsibilities.

Honors and awards: This needs to be carefully considered. Include only the most worthy accomplishments.

Hobbies and interests: This is a chance to show that you have well-rounded interests. List only two or three.

References: The statement, “references available upon request” does not cut it! In fact, this by itself, a statement like this can disqualify you. Good references can seal the deal.¹⁴ For new graduates, it is important to list two job references, a professor who knows your classroom work, and a clerkship preceptor who knows your clinical abilities.

Here are recommendations:

- List only references who have agreed to be references
- Make sure your references agree with the facts you've put in your resume
- Provide names, current job titles, company affiliations, and phone numbers of your references
- Include a frame of reference – your relationship (I was his mentee for two years)
- As a courtesy, call your references after you've had interviews

Students may think their CVs do not show much. At this point in your pharmacy career, the quality of the information is more important than the quantity of information. Here are some deadly sins in formatting a CV and how they can be avoided:¹⁵

- Typos – An obvious problem.
- Faulty formatting – keep it readable and not “fancy” (adding fonts, shading, etc.)
- Irrelevant job experience – delete anything not in line with the job being sought.
- Weak word choice – banish “helped,” “provided,” and “worked.”
- Boring bullets – don't list work accountabilities from a job description,
- Not including a strong branding statement in your objective – create a dynamic statement description of yourself.
- Length – too short or too long are both problems. It is a good idea to provide no more than one page for every 10 years of experience.

After you have written the CV, set it aside for a while and come back to edit. Be sure to prune out any deadwood and cliché's like:

- “Salary negotiable” – Yes, they know.
- “Responsible for” – Turn into “managed,” “led,” etc.
- “Experienced in” – Turn into what you achieved

- “Problem-solving skills” – So does everyone else.
- “Detailed oriented” – This is self-defeating if they find a typo in your CV.
- “Hardworking” – Show, rather than tell. Provide examples where your hard work benefitted your employer.
- “Team player” – Delete. Rather, tell about when you were on a team, what you contributed, and how it worked.
- “Proactive” – Stale. Again, show rather than tell.
- “Objective” – Using “Career Summary” is preferred.

The CV writer and several others should carefully proofread the CV before it is used to find a job. They should look for these strategic mistakes commonly made on CVs:¹²

Aiming too high, too soon: Do not use words like leader, manager, or supervisor unless you have the background to support their use. Employers favor people who like to start in entry-level jobs and prove they can handle more responsibility.

Weak career objective: This should be “employer oriented.” Rather than about yourself, it should be about how the company will benefit from having you as an employee.

Giving all education, training, and work experience equal billing: The education, training, and work experiences should point to your ability to do the job for which you are being considered. Directly related items should receive top billing. Those not related to the job sought should not be stressed.

Burying crucial information: Formatting the CV is critical. The readers should not have to hunt for the information they seek, such as who are you and why they should hire you. The information should be laid out in such a way that it plays like a symphony. It should start out with an attention-getting statement (most likely the job objective statement),

flow from movement to movement, and end with a finale. The CV merely gets your foot in the door. Therefore, the CV writer's goal is for the reader not to throw the CV into the trash but to place it in the small pile of "candidates to be interviewed."

Highlighting the irrelevant: This goes back to selecting what needs to be stressed: the special skills the employer may want.

Keeping the employer in the dark: When the CV is written in such a way that it leaves questions in the employer's mind, the applicant may never get a chance to interview and provide answers to those questions.

Some final recommendations for preparing a CV include reading, rereading, and rewriting drafts. Also, share the draft CV with others, especially friends who have experience hiring professional people. Finally, answer this key question: What is the number one reason someone should hire you?

ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES

As soon as there are a few good opportunities to consider, the job seeker should turn their attention to the 20 critical job factors (from APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals) the job seeker scored when job seeking began. Each of the job opportunities should be assessed for each critical job factor and matched to the importance placed on each job factor by the candidate. For example, let us say "job security" was marked as important (score of 8 or higher) by the job seeker. The question is, for each of the opportunities considered, how good is job security?

Not all the job factors will be listed in the employment advertisement. When this happens, the job seeker should write out specific questions that can be asked when interviewing for the

job. Before accepting a job offer, all of the job factors important to the job seeker should be assessed.

After going through the job factors for all job opportunities, scoring can be used to see which job provides the best fit for you as an individual. Once this process is complete, you can begin applying for the best-fitting jobs.

Salary is not the most important feature of a job. Having an opportunity to show what you can do is just as important. In addition, the benefit package must be carefully considered even if you are a new graduate and this is your first job as a pharmacist. It is recommended that you look for a benefit package that has the following features. It:¹⁶

- Provides benefits that are important now
- Provides enough flexibility to meet future needs
- Is stable and secure
- Is economically rewarding
- Is within your employer's ability to grant

When handed a list of benefits with explanations, make sure you read it and understand it.¹⁷ People who have worked a long time can be consulted to explain what you may not understand. Next, identify which of the benefits are most important to you now and identify the quality of each benefit important to you. Last, compare the benefits for one job versus other jobs under consideration. Benefits can represent as much as 30% of the total compensation for a job. Therefore, benefits need to be considered with the salary and other job factors that are important to you.

The quality of the work you will be doing, growth in the job, expectations the employer has for you, and the work environment and culture are important considerations. How you think you will be treated by the employer or a supervisor is a critical consideration that is often

overlooked before being hired Do the people working at the place you are considering seem happy? Do they feel comfortable working there? How are they treated? What is the downside of the job, and how important is that to you? Be honest with yourself. Don't just look at the upside of the opportunity.

THE LETTER OF APPLICATION

The letter of application is as important, and perhaps more important than a well-written CV. It may be the only information the initial job screener uses to decide which candidates will be interviewed. Therefore, it must be done carefully.

The letter of application should not say, "I read your advertisement for a pharmacist position. I am a pharmacist. Enclosed is my CV." The letter of application must grab the attention of the reader, but not be so overwhelming that the reader thinks you are too good to be true. Here are 10 tips for writing an outstanding letter of application. These references provide more detail on each tip:¹⁸⁻¹⁹

- Address the letter to a specific person (not "To Whom It May Concern" or "The Personnel Manager." Use the person's correct title.
- Keep it accurate and concise
- Express interest in the specific position and the company
- Show you know something about the company by doing some research
- Refer to a former conversation, if the intended reader or another employee suggested you apply
- Sell your value by listing your skills or major accomplishments or both, but do not go overboard

- Tie your qualifications to the needs of the company
- Express your potential
- Towards the end of the letter, repeat the recipient's name to show friendliness
- Request an interview
- Ask more than one person to edit it
- Print it on high-quality paper
- Spend extra on delivery

Here is what not to do:²⁰

- Avoid the overuse of the word "I" – don't look self-centered.
- Have a weak opening statement – put the emphasis on their need, not yours.
- Omitting your top selling points – the main reason why they need you.
- Making it too long – stick to one page.
- Repeating your CV word for word – this is a selling job, not a rehash of your life.
- Being vague – make sure you state the job for which you are applying.
- Forgetting to customize – don't use the same letter for each opportunity you are seeking.
- Ending on a passive note – let them know you will be following up with them.
- Being rude – thank the reader for their time and consideration.
- Forgetting to sign the letter – not necessary if using email.

The letter of application needs to be clear, concise, and organized. Most important, the letter should be composed in such a way that the reader cannot wait to read the CV enclosed with the letter.

The goal of writing a letter of application and submitting your CV is to gain an interview. A carefully crafted letter of application and a good-looking CV with good references can do

that.

THE INTERVIEW

First things first. Please understand -- interviews are pitches and the product is you.²¹ Second, you must respect the recruiter.²² This means you must sell yourself and understand the interviewer will determine if you are successful at doing that. Therefore, don't:

- Get personal
- Use slang
- Use your cell phone while being interviewed (turn it off or leave it in your car)
- Lie

Most people hate interviewing for a job. Often, they do not know what to expect or don't understand the process. Many people make mistakes. Here are some to avoid:²³

- You are late and do not bother to call ahead.
- You dress in your best jeans and polo shirt.
- You smell of smoke, heavy cologne, or perfume.
- You interrupt the receptionist while she is answering calls.
- You give the interviewer a "dead fish" handshake and greeting.
- You demonstrate ignorance about the hiring company.
- You answer questions with rambling thoughts and verbal pauses.
- You use everyday language and speech patterns.
- You have poor eye contact with the interviewer.
- You ask only self-serving questions.
- You fail to address the questions asked.

In another article, the top five interview mistakes millennials make are:²⁴

- Inappropriate attire (75%)
- Have posted questionable social media content (70%)
- Have not done their homework (62%)
- Don't ask enough questions (60%)
- Overconfident in themselves (60%)
- Checking phone/texting during interview or when in presence of company employees (30%)

How you dress for an interview matters. Unless the prospective employer tells you otherwise, you should dress in your "Sunday best" clothes. An excellent explanation of proper dress for an interview is available.²⁵

Interviewing is hard work and not enjoyed by many people. That may be because they do not understand the interviewing process. The interviewer and the person being interviewed have different goals that need to be satisfied to have a successful interview.

The goal of the interviewer is to find out if the person being interviewed is qualified to do the job. If the candidate is qualified, the next goal of the interviewer is to find the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate. The interviewer will try to discover the quality of past work performed and how well the candidate will fit with other employees.

The questions the interviewer uses for the interview will be in seven areas, which are presented next with a few example requests or questions for each:²⁶

1. Basic interview questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your weaknesses?

2. Behavioral interview questions

- Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty at work.
- Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?

3. Salary questions

- What salary are you seeking?
- How would you respond if the interviewer said, “That is awfully high?”

4. Career development questions

- What are you seeking in terms of career development?
- How do you want to improve yourself in the next year?

5. Getting started questions

- What do you see yourself doing within the first 30 days of this job?
- How would you go about establishing credibility with your fellow workers?

6. More “about you” questions

- How would you describe your work style?
- Tell me about your proudest achievement.

7. Brainteaser question examples

- How many times do the hands of a clock overlap in a day?
- With your eyes closed, tell me step by step how to tie my shoes.

A more extensive list of typical interview questions is available.²⁷

If the interviewer is satisfied with the candidate’s responses, the interviewer may shift to telling the candidate about the job and why he or she should work there. This is a good sign during the interview.

The primary goal of the person being interviewed is to find out as much as possible about

the job. If the job sounds good, the other goal is to impress the interviewer that you are the right person for the job, but not in a boastful way.

The interviewer has all the power in the interview and will conduct the interview the way he or she sees fit. A good interview is when there is a two-way conversation rather than questions by the interviewer and answers by the job candidate. If the interview is conducted using the latter method, time may expire before the candidate's goals can be achieved. If this is the case, about two-thirds of the way through the interview, the candidate should be assertive in a respectful way and start asking questions about the job.

It is a good idea to have a list of questions. Ask if it is okay to take notes. It is always good to ask if there is a *job description* available. It is the job of the person being interviewed to understand the job and to get a feel for the employer. The person being interviewed also needs to feel he or she has convinced the interviewer that he or she (the candidate) is able to get the job done and is the best person for the job.

Here are some final tips on how to ace a pharmacy job interview:²⁸

- Prepare, prepare, prepare.
- Keep your answers short.
- When in doubt, overdress.
- Say to the interviewer, "I really want this job."
- Follow promptly with a handwritten thank you letter using appropriate stationery.

One last advice. Special considerations are in play if you are interviewed by a group, or if you are interviewed alongside your competition for the job. These considerations go beyond the scope of this book, so the best strategy is to do some research on these situations.

GOT AN OFFER?

Some people get so excited about getting an offer for a job that they just accept the offer as given. “About 80% of employers stated that the job applicant who negotiates in a professional manner would make the best impression on them, compared with applicants who just accept the first offer or applicants that use an overly aggressive style when negotiating.”²⁹

Here are some tips to obtain the best offer:

- Get a written job offer before conducting any salary negotiations – This is when they want you the most.
- Avoid answering questions about your current or previous salary, or salary expectations – This is trap that can work against you.
- Conduct research to determine your market value – To see if the offer is in the “ball park.”
- Set a salary range – Your minimum and desired/plausible maximum.
- Establish your best alternative to a negotiated agreement – Look for other offers to use as leverage.
- Give yourself time – Don’t feel pressured – sleep on it.
- Choose your battles – Where are you willing to be flexible, inflexible. Don’t quibble about little things.
- Keep it professional – Listen, consider, ask good questions.
- Remember to consider non-monetary benefits – Job title, location, start date, relocation, education, equipment, development funds, etc. These can add up and be helpful.
- Get your final offer in writing – Then send your letter of acceptance.

CHANGING JOBS

After working as a pharmacist for some time, your job may no longer be challenging or the environment may have changed and no longer be to your liking. Perhaps you would like to try

something new and different. You ideally should be moving from a negative experience to a positive experience or from a positive experience to an even more positive one.

No matter how bad your current job may get, it is ill-advised to jump into another job right away without some self-assessment and planning. It is important to go through the same steps as previously listed for finding the first job. However, there needs to be more reflective thinking about the jobs you have had as a pharmacist. What did you like? What did you not like? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? One of the best tools for helping with this reflective thinking exercise is the *What Color Is Your Parachute* workbook.³⁰

The potential job change may be coming at an important point in your career. What is it that you want to do in pharmacy? Are you headed in the right direction? Do you want to make a major change such as moving from community to hospital pharmacy? Some unhappy pharmacists are just in the wrong setting.

One approach is to list all the jobs you know pharmacists do. The Pathways Program mentioned can help. Make sure the list is comprehensive. Circle those jobs you think you would like to explore further.⁶ You should be open minded and should not discount opportunities that you may not be qualified for now.

After brainstorming about potential career choices, put the jobs in order of preference, and for the first three, ask yourself these questions:³¹

- What skills are necessary for this job?
- Which of these skills do I possess now?
- Which skills do I need?
- Where can I learn these skills?
- How long will it take me to learn these skills?
- How much will it cost to invest in my future?

- When will I start to learn these skills?
- Will it be worth it?

If a major change is what is needed, do you need more education or training? If you have a bachelor-of-science pharmacy degree, what about applying for a nontraditional doctor of pharmacy program? What about doing a midcareer residency?³² It is never too late.

DIFFERENTIATION

The best jobs go to the people with the most education and experience or to those with a special set of skills. The key to finding the best jobs is to differentiate. Differentiation is the development of competencies which collectively create a quality distinction. What will set you apart from others who are seeking the same job? It might be completing a residency or fellowship. It might be some specific experience or certification in a specialized area. Diversification, knowing a little bit about many different areas of pharmacy practice, also works.

CHANGING FROM ONE JOB TO A SIMILAR JOB?

Some pharmacists just change job sites rather than thinking about changing the kind and quality of the work they do. One wonders whether this fits the definition of a career. For this strategy to work, you must like the quality of the work you are doing, like the environment, and like the salary and benefits.

FINDING A NEW JOB

Finding opportunities when you would like to make a change is similar to when you seek a first job. You hunt the newspapers and professional journals, go to local pharmacy meetings, and most of all, network with friends who may be aware of good opportunities. There is also one other avenue usually not used by new graduates: the use of an *employment agency*. Using a good employment agency that specializes in health care opportunities can be invaluable. There might be a small application fee to use an employment agency; however, the employer usually pays the agency for connecting you to the employer. A well-designed, up-to-date CV will be needed no matter the approach used to find a new job.

CHANGING CAREERS

What if you wake up one day and find that you no longer like dealing with sick people? Or, you no longer like being a pharmacist? What can you do? Answer – plenty!

Many jobs pharmacists hold have no patient contact. Many management positions, most jobs in the pharmaceutical industry, and positions in the government have no patient contact. Companies that make and sell pharmacy software, companies that publish information about drugs, and professional pharmacy organizations need pharmacists, and none of these positions involve patient contact.

What can you do if you are a pharmacist and do not want to practice pharmacy? An interesting book by Rucker can help.³³ Useful information is provided for pharmacists in the predicament of no longer wanting to practice pharmacy, yet wanting to use their background to do something useful and rewarding. Professor Rucker was able to identify 260 non-pharmacist job titles held by pharmacists.

Some examples of non-pharmacist jobs being done by pharmacists include developing

cosmetics, buying drugs for a drug wholesale company, editing a pharmacy journal, performing legal work as a pharmacist–attorney, and working in a pharmacy library.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For those interested in more information about career opportunities, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals has published an interesting book that covers 70 job titles held by pharmacists.³⁴ Each job is described by someone doing the job at the time the book was published. These stories are invaluable to someone wanting to know more about a specific pharmacist job. Another excellent publication, *Survival Strategies for Your New Career*, has been published by the ASHP.³⁵

SUMMARY

Being a pharmacist means being a part of a profession. Being a professional means you have a career rather than just a job. Having a career means continually striving to improve in your chosen profession and taking your oath seriously. This does not mean you need to continue doing the same job forever. Growth sometimes means having to go on to different and perhaps more challenging opportunities. When this happens, good planning and self-assessment make the change easier and success more likely.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Rate your interest in the following areas (5 = high, 1 = low):
 - a. Caring for patients

- b. Interpreting and using data
 - c. Presenting information
 - d. Problem solving
 - e. Teaching
 - f. Discovering new knowledge
 - g. Helping others
2. Circle your top three choices in question 1. Which areas in pharmacy do you feel best match your top three interests?
 3. Review a newspaper and two pharmacy journals listing jobs for pharmacists.
 4. Make an appointment to interview a pharmacy resident by telephone or in person.
 5. From what you know and have read about pharmacy residencies, what are the benefits of doing a residency?
 6. Make an appointment to interview someone who interviews pharmacists for jobs. What are the important things they look for in job candidates?
 7. Someone offers you just what you are looking for as your first pharmacy position, but the salary is much less than expected. Discuss how you would handle this and if you would take the job.
 8. You discover you are unhappy in your current job. What is the first thing you should do?
 9. Assume that when you graduate there are no positions in community or hospital pharmacy. List the three career choices you would be most interested in pursuing.
 10. You are retiring from a career in pharmacy. What would you want your greatest accomplishment in pharmacy to be?

CHALLENGES

1. For extra credit, and with the permission of your professor, prepare a CV following the instructions in this chapter.
2. For extra credit, and with the permission of your professor, complete the APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals Program (see link in the next section).

WEB SITES OF INTEREST

APhA Career Pathway Evaluation Program for Pharmacy Professionals:

https://www.pharmacist.com/sites/default/files/files/Pathway_Workshop_workbook_070807.pdf

CareerPharm: <http://www.careerpharm.com/>

Monster.com: <http://www.monster.com/>

APhA Career Center: <http://www.pharmacist.com/career-center>

APhA Career Option Profiles: <http://www.pharmacist.com/career-option-profiles>

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