

CAREER PLANNING FOR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Tim Miller

On behalf of Tengizchevroil, I congratulate the forum organizers. This is an important gathering and I am pleased to see so many people in attendance. On educational matters, I often find myself speaking with students and employees looking for career advice. The advice I provide is generally as follows:

- Your future deserves careful thought and planning – seek advice;
- A good education is the cornerstone of success; and
- Work hard, both in school and on the job.

The reason my first piece of guidance is to plan your career and seek advice is because that is what worked for me. When I was in high school and thinking about what I would like to do one day, I thought it would be great to be an architect. I thought it would be fascinating to design buildings such as the amazing architecture here in Astana – buildings that would stand for many decades and that millions of people talk about. I spoke to a trusted teacher at school and he asked me to do one very important thing – research the job market for architects. What I found out caused me to change my direction and is the reason I am here today.

My research showed that there were more architects graduating from architectural schools than there were jobs. Furthermore, most architects did not get to design the grand structures such as the Baiterek Tower, the KazMunaiGaz building or any of the other magnificent buildings in Astana. In fact, most architects, at least in the United States where I am from, design kitchens, make alterations to existing buildings, or advise on the restoration and conservation of old properties. Now this is important work, and it can be satisfying work, but it was not for me.

After additional research I decided that pursuing a degree in engineering would provide more opportunities with more variety and would pay better. It may even enable me to see more of the world that I wanted to explore. So after figuring out what I wanted to study, I then decided to investigate what main industries I could enter such as aeronautics, civil construction or the energy business. As a result, I became an engineer in the energy industry and here I am today.

Now let me tell you about my son's path. He went to university to study mass communications and public relations. When he graduated, he was unable to find a good paying job in his field of study. After doing a series of interesting and odd jobs, he decided that he needed to find a new path. After some research, he decided to return to university to pursue a degree in computer science.

In both situations, and although the research phase happened at different points, we both decided that careers are planned, they don't just happen. But planning is only one part of achieving a satisfying career.

A good education is critical if a person is to have any chance at achieving their full potential. At TCO, we have achieved significant success since we were established in 1993. That success is due to the efforts of our workforce. And the reason they have helped TCO meet its objectives is because they are among the best educated and hardest-working professionals in the industry.

To continue to achieve our objectives, TCO intends to continue to hire the best and the brightest for its most critical positions. And while a strong educational background is critical, it is also important for a prospective employee to be able to demonstrate more than the fact that they are knowledgeable about a subject. They also need strong analytical skills, the ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment by understanding when it is necessary to apply established procedures and when it is time to innovate.

In TCO, we believe that every member of the workforce is a leader. We are all expected to demonstrate leadership abilities relevant to our respective positions.

TCO developed a leadership competency model that defines the leadership skills and behaviors expected of employees at various stages of career development. The model emphasizes the importance of achieving superior results in the right way, of taking accountability for your actions and decisions and encourages employees to demonstrate leadership behaviors that will encourage success.

TCO invests in its workforce so it can achieve its mission and vision. A workforce that is continuously being trained in the latest processes and systems, on the use of the latest technologies and is receiving ongoing educational training is a workforce that will help ensure a companies continued success. TCO believes that it is vital that we invest in our Kazakhstani workforce in particular.

Today, Kazakhstani citizens comprise 86 percent of the general TCO workforce and hold 74 percent of the managerial and senior supervisory positions. We have almost 90 employees on temporary international assignments and have created a special programme to develop the technical skills of employees working in operations groups. In addition, we actively cooperate with Nazarbayev University by sending future managers to the Executive MBA Programme.

Our main recruitment activities take place on the campuses of universities and technical colleges throughout Kazakhstan. TCO's job fairs have become an effective tool for finding talented prospective employees. For example, in 2014, TCO recruited 76 people through job fairs, including 29 graduates of the Bolashak Presidential Scholarship Programme.

In conclusion, I would like to commend you – the leaders in higher education – for everything you do to prepare the students of Kazakhstan's universities and colleges for the workforce. It is up to the student to plan a career path, to decide what education will help him or her best achieve their objective and to work hard both in and outside of school. However, it is you who helps ensure that students are receiving the best education possible; you who work with industry to identify the career opportunities of tomorrow; and you who ensure that great universities such as Nazarbayev University strengthen the minds and spirits of the leaders of tomorrow.

In closing, I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and to learn about the issues being dealt with by the higher education leaders. Tengizchevroil looks forward to continuing to work with you and I wish you all a most prosperous forum and much personal success.