

# Cross-Cultural Education Journal



Discussions of Interest to Immigrants

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## Faith Lutheran Church

### Developing Your Career

*“Welcome one  
another as  
Christ welcomed  
you, for the  
Glory of God.”*

Romans 15:7

**CAREERS DO NOT  
SIMPLY HAPPEN.  
THEY ARE DEVELOPED  
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PLANNING,  
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LEARNING, PATIENCE,  
AND, TO THE EXTENT  
POSSIBLE, DEVOTION.**

#### Introduction

Work in any culture has been and still remains the means by which people produce income to purchase a home, provide for family, and save for retirement. In the past, jobs were important and people “worked to live.” Life’s work was often passed onto the next generation in a family, such as in farming and rural communities. Over the past two decades, many have come to think of developing a career instead of just having a job. Careers now often become more closely attached to a lifestyle in which one “lives to work” and holds several different jobs over the years.

This essay presents concepts about developing a career. Also considered are some of the basic building blocks that are used to set the foundation of all careers, regardless of cultural differences.

#### Definition of “Career”

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *career* as, “... pursuit of consecutive, progressive achievements, especially in public, professional, or business life.” Another definition of *career* is, “... a profession for which one trains and

which is undertaken as a permanent calling.”

These definitions share common points as career cornerstones. First, a career is usually based upon training and building of knowledge. Second, a career is usually thought of as being associated with the pursuit of goals that are permanent throughout one’s working life; namely, a permanent calling.

Although the primary meanings of the word *career* have remained fairly stable over the years, the use of the word has changed to keep pace with the rapidly changing nature of work in today’s world. The terms “career,” “job,” and “occupation” are often used interchangeably. In truth, a career is something much larger than a job or occupation.

#### Basic Viewpoints

A career consists of learning and work experiences (both paid and unpaid) undertaken throughout one’s lifetime. Developing a career requires active management of learning and job paths. Many factors, including age, gender, abilities, family, and cultural values influence a

career. Chance and being in the right place doing the right thing at the right time are also important.

Teachers, mentors, employers, counselors, and family are part of a supportive career network. However, each person must plan, develop, and manage his or her own career path, and are ultimately best suited to make choices on the basis of their own skills, knowledge, interests, experiences, personal circumstances, and preferences.

Developing a career requires flexibility to adjust while paying attention to new opportunities. Developing a career means keeping pace with new technologies, advances in business practices and management techniques, and changing environments. Hence, a willingness to learn and adapt is required to successfully develop a career which is equally adaptive and flexible.

Careers do not simply happen. They are developed over time with planning, management, learning, patience, and, to the extent possible, devotion. Learning about one's own abilities and desires will help in making wise decisions as a career advances.

### Positive Factors in Career Development

**Education** is usually the early foundation for developing a career, and must be commensurate with plans for one's life work. Education alone may consume several years. However, time used wisely in education will always be time well spent.

The collection of **skills** that are developed through learning and experience are commonly referred to as a *skill set*. Skill sets are found in the following categories:

1. **Personal management** (skills needed to manage personal and professional life)
2. **Learning and job finding** (skills used to explore education, learning, and work options)
3. **Career development** (skills used to develop and extend a career)

Experts in the area of career development agree that there are important *career development competencies* that fall into these categories. Working on these

skills throughout a lifetime will assist in developing a career, as well as in personal, family, and cultural life.

**Personal management** focuses on the following:

1. **Adopting and maintaining a positive self-image.** A positive self-image helps us to know who we are and what we can do. It allows understanding and appreciating our own skills, behaviors, and natural interests to be able to confidently make informed decisions.
2. **Interacting positively and effectively with others.** This is one of the most important attributes that employers look for in employees. Such qualities as honesty, showing respect and knowing how to work cooperatively on teams will enhance both personal and working life.
3. **Changing and growing throughout one's life.** Change and growth (as a result of change) are natural parts of life and are unavoidable. How a person handles or deals with changes and growth in their personal life indicates how that person will handle change in their career and professional life. Knowing when to ask for help shows a sense of humility.

**Learning and job finding** focuses on the following:

1. **Continuing to learn throughout life.** Everybody learns through natural growth, formal and informal education, and experiences (positive and negative). Understanding the relationship between learning and work opportunities helps to align the two and plan a career so that learning will complement one's work. Continue expanding your knowledge to support your current career or to apply to a new career if the direction of your professional life changes. As your career grows, be sure to stay current in your area of expertise and technology.
2. **Knowing where to find reliable career information and how to use it.** Finding out what resources are available and how to use them is important. This can be done by building a "network" of people, knowledge, and information resources. Networking has traditionally been the number one method of finding career information and employment opportunities. Maintain your contacts with people.
3. **Understanding the relationship between work, society, and the economy.** Learning about socie-

tal needs and how to best support them and the culture in which we live is key to understanding how we can best contribute. Life interests can be developed that are of greatest benefit to society and culture.

**Career development** focuses on the following:

1. **Securing, creating, and maintaining work.** Each person needs to develop effective means for finding work that matches their interests, education, knowledge, and past experience. This includes a well-written resume that is continually updated as experience and abilities grow. Maintaining and expanding your resume cannot be emphasized enough.
2. **Making career-enhancing or career-changing decisions.** The ability to make wise decisions based upon the information gathered will have impacts throughout life. Each person must understand how our personal beliefs and attitudes may affect decisions. Techniques for overcoming barriers can be developed through learned and experienced problem-solving techniques.
3. **Maintain a balance between life and work.** Personal, family, community, cultural life, and work all should complement one another. One should ask oneself what a balanced life means, and where one will expend energy and talents for any given circumstance.
4. **Understanding the changing nature of family and work roles.** Family and work roles are often different for men and women. Expectations and pressures all people face will often impact what it is that they will do with their careers. Sometimes a career must be changed to meet family needs.
5. **Understanding, engaging in, and managing career development processes.** Work towards building and using good processes to help develop the career foundation. Some processes might revolve about gaining the best education possible to support your career. Develop other processes to support your efforts when seeking employment.
6. **Understanding career goals.** Identifying a long-range career vision assists with setting and achieving goals to support that vision. Identify and set career goals by considering your options. Be sure that your goals are achievable, and remember that all goals will not be achieved. Identifying those that are most important helps shape a career vision and

build self-respect. Document your goals and allow them to change periodically.

## Negative Factors in Career Development

Some immigrants might consider a career as a means of economic subsistence and survival. For the most part, they hope to make a better life for their family. Some have a better financial foundation and find it easier to be successful than others. Most immigrants see America as a land of opportunity, perhaps even more so than those whose families have lived in America for generations.

In this highly competitive world, there are some that believe immorality and cheating are natural, and it is just an issue of who is the best at being dishonest. Although there are exceptions, most Western people obey rules, regulations, and laws. However, some people from other cultures, as well as some in America, seek to take advantage of the weaknesses of others. This behavior eventually corrodes the spirit, and results in unhappiness due to failed marriages, alienation from others, undermining of a career, and spiritual losses.

## What Does the Bible Say About Our Work?

A career must be for and about something much greater than a paycheck. If not, it will soon become disappointing. The daily challenges work presents will become empty. The following quotations from the Bible (New International Version) stand out about work and our relationship to it.

1. The Bible states clearly that we are each individuals created and loved by God. From First Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price."
2. Work, not idleness, is part of God's creative plan. God created the world for us, and He sent Adam to work in the garden. From Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."
3. God created us to be active and useful, and intended for work to be a good and positive part of our daily lives. Not working is not an option. From

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### *Faithful people, raising up people of Faith*

If you wish opportunities to further explore what has been discussed here or additional topics of interest to immigrants and others, you might like to contact Rainbow Zeng at the address above.

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#### About Faith Lutheran Church:

Faith Lutheran Church is a caring people, who support one another's spiritual growth and who reach out to the community with Christ's love.

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Second Thessalonians 3:10-12: "...we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat.' We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat."

It is often difficult to be enthusiastic to work at seemingly pointless tasks for an uncaring and unsympathetic boss. From Colossians 3:22-24: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

### Conclusions

Think carefully about the following notions and ask appropriate questions while planning and developing a career:

1. Education is the basis of every career and must be

pursued as early as possible.

2. Learning must continue over our entire lifetime.
3. Skill sets take years to develop and are cumulative.
4. Both positive and negative experiences can be beneficial in future work.
5. Those who have the most to offer and effectively inform prospective employers of their education, skill set, and experience will be most successful.
6. Effective, reliable, and supportive resource networks are important.
7. Flexibility is essential; most people do not work at the same job all their lives.
8. A healthy work-life balance is essential to develop a successful career and life.
9. Money must not be your motivation to work. Motivation must come from within.
10. Ultimately, we work for God and His Glory.