

Two vital aspects of seeking career guidance

I am often asked for the most important piece of information I would choose to impart to anyone regarding career guidance and what to do first or what to expect.

The first would definitely be..... anything to do with time and timing.

1 The timing of seeking career guidance is crucial

Too late and we might be dealing with career crisis management and not career guidance
Too early and there may be things that need to be achieved or underway before career guidance can be at its most useful.

2 There is a certain amount of time needed to commit to undergoing the career guidance itself. Some people are still under the illusion that it constitutes a quick chat on the phone for 20-30 minutes. However it is not rocket science to work out that career concerns that have been there sometimes for years if not decades are not going to be tackled by a quick chat with someone who knows virtually nothing about you. The full works at Medical Forum is going to take a good 12 hours spread over roughly 3 weeks - some of which is done distance style and some in person.

3 Then after the formal career guidance process there will be time needed to put into effect the goals, learning and planning, researching and self marketing that will be essential

I generally recommend about 4 hours a week goes to this - this may be required over a period of months not weeks (depending on how radically different a plan is wanted). Some people have little trouble allocating this amount of time once they realise how important it is. However if someone is currently super stressed, doing a particularly tough rota, has extensive family commitments, has been balancing being unwell with struggling in to work or is chronically disillusioned - keeping that four hours free can seem impossible (not to mention the extra stress even the thought of having to fit one more thing in can be). It may be worth waiting until some initial work is done on time management, assertiveness and preserving time for oneself before attending for independent career guidance as otherwise the effort and expense of seeking support might well be wasted.

The second most important aspect of seeking career guidance is that success of a career programme is not whether a person changes direction. I am often asked what is the most important piece of information I would choose to impart to anyone regarding career guidance and what to do.

The second most important thing to realise when seeking career support with us is that success of a career programme is not whether a person changes direction. Success can only really be measured by the individual because there are many "types" of change.

For example - if a doctor joins our programme with the express wish to change career and the outcome is that they realise they do NOT want to change or that it is simply not propitious but a plan is developed with them so that they regain control of their career plan, achieve a better work life balance and/or pursue some professional and life goals that had so far eluded them - have we failed? I'd like to think not. However it is common for journalists and those trying to judge how effective we are to ask "how many of the doctors you see change career?"

The answer is all of them make changes.

Whether those changes prove to be enough will only become clear over time and there is always the option to make even more changes at a later date.

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For example - if a doctor joins our programme with the express wish to change career and the outcome is that they realise they do NOT want to change or that it is simply not propitious and a plan is developed for them to regain control of their career plan, achieve a better work life balance plus pursue some professional and life goals that had so far eluded them - have we failed? I'd like to think not. However it is common for journalists and those trying to judge how useful we might be to them to ask "how many of the doctors you see change career?"

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