

Spotlight on **DECA**



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Career Planning

Sara Landry, Vice President of Career Development

In life it is often said, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Believe it or not, this concept holds true for your career goals. We are often asked what we would like to ultimately accomplish in our career someday. It is important to know that even outside of school, it is vital to carry out your career plan. It is never too early or too late to work on career planning activities. This should be an enjoyable experience and if done correctly, will lead you to success. Three tips to successful career planning are to explore new educational experiences, set goals, and reflect on your personal likes and dislikes.

The best investment you can make is in yourself. Spending your time and money on further advancing your education is the best investment you can make. While materialistic objects depreciate in value over time, your educational experience and opportunities only make you worth more (and also make you more marketable)! For this reason, you should never pass up an opportunity that will help you grow in your career and as a person. There are many opportunities to further enhance yourself so why not give it a try? You have so much to gain and nothing to lose!

One of the most important aspects of success is goal setting. Research shows that those who set career goals are more successful in the long run than those who fail to set goals. Setting both short and long-term goals is necessary. Short-term goals are those you would like to achieve within the next year while long-term goals are set for beyond one year. Throughout your career, you can tweak or revise your goals in addition to creating new ones once you accomplish others.

Incorporating your likes and dislikes into your career planning is of the utmost importance. In order to achieve a career that fits you best, take the time to make a chart listing your likes and dislikes. Once you have these items listed out, compare the job duties required for the career that you have in mind and see which side it fits best with. If this career applies to more of your likes than dislikes, try it out! If more dislikes fit with this career, then explore a different career that will fit more of the things you like. Trying to find a career that fits with your hobbies is definitely possible and is very much encouraged. You have probably heard, “Find a career you love, and you won’t have to work a day in your life.”

Remember to take the time for career planning because it will really pay off in the end. Always taking advantage of opportunities will only benefit you and make you a better person in the long run. Exploring educational opportunities may not sound like the most fun at first, but in the end it is extremely rewarding. Also, setting goals, such as writing down both short-term and long-term goals on paper will help you stay on track; achieving these goals will be part of your success. Additionally, finding the perfect career can easily be done by jotting down a list of both likes and dislikes. This way, you can visually see if the career is the best fit for you. Keeping these three major tips in mind will lead to a great plan and most importantly, a great career.



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Articles and letters welcome for publication

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Successful Chapter Meetings

Benjamin Baker, Vice President
of Chapter Development

In my last article I explained how the individual DECA chapters are the core of Michigan DECA, and I gave incentives for joining DECA. But, after gaining all the new members, individual chapters must keep them. Here's where the chapters begin to make their mark: Successful chapter meetings is the next step to developing an exceptional chapter.

What are successful chapter meetings? Successful chapter meetings are those that increase member involvement, inform, and prepare members. When planning chapter meetings there are a few key points to be considered and included.

One is why people are going to come to the meeting. Members will not come to a meeting where they have no say and no action. Meetings should generate participation. Imagine a group of students sitting in a classroom, staring at one or two students listing off information for a half an hour... boring! Make the meetings fun, make the meetings exciting, give students something to do, but most importantly don't waste members time.

To make meetings exciting provide activities for members. Hold DECA related competitions, trivia games, anything. Don't just sit and talk. Include prizes, like candy, and keep the majority, if not all, of members active. After the fun, provide information, but be sure to have an agenda to guide officers and members through the information portion of the meeting, and in each meeting be sure to include an open forum. Michigan DECA is nothing without chapters, and chapters are nothing without members. Remember, serving members is most important, so allow members a voice in their chapter.

Another way to insure meetings are enjoyable and to avoid wasting members' time is though significance. Meetings must provide information of relevance and importance. If information is not relevant to the entire chapter or insignificant the information does not need to have an entire meeting to deliver it. To keep meetings full of information of importance you must consider the frequency of your meetings. Meetings should be held when there are significant items to be discussed. Though, it is important to hold at the least monthly meetings to stay connected to members. Holding limited meetings will develop anticipation, instead of becoming a daunting task. With meetings being relatively rare they must be of high priority. Having good (fun, exciting and informative) meetings are the best incentive for attendance, but attendance should still contentiously be emphasized.

With frequency of meetings and content considered, you should also consider the duration of the meetings. Many short meetings are far more enjoyable and effective than excessively long meetings. If need be you can always hold additional meetings to insure everything is taken care of, and at the end of each meeting officers should revise what was achieved and make sure everything has been a handled, leaving nothing open-ended.

Last but not certainly not least, follow-up to make sure everything is understood, and actions, if there are any, are taking place. Follow-up can take place in the form of minutes being circulated, a small meeting, phone calls, any form of contact with members. Using these tips can help insure a successful chapter by improving member participation, getting tasks achieved and comprehended, and, most importantly, having fun.



*Congratulations to
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Grand Rapids Creston High School
Grosse Pointe North High School

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Hamtramck High School
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Rochester Adams High School
Southgate Anderson High School
Troy High School
Tuscola Technology Center
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Utica Stevenson High School
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Ypsilanti High School



Balancing Life and Leadership

Markianna Svorec, Vice President of Leadership Development

We all know that balancing life with school is one of the biggest challenges that we face as students.

Students don't know when to say no, and if they do, maybe they say it too often. In everyday life we are faced with decisions; to either do homework, or see friends. Everyone struggles with it, maybe some more than others. Now that you've just begun school again, whether you're a freshman or senior, or anything in-between, you're starting to realize that school is stressful, and friends and family help take away from the stress.

It's healthy to have fun, but school work should always come first and foremost. School decides the rest of your future. So just remember when you're making your choices to go to the basketball game when your paper is due the next morning, that maybe losing three hours of sleep is worth it, but judging by most people's moods when a paper is due and they stayed out all night; it's not.

I'm here to help! I know all about struggling with balancing school work and friends. I was horrible at it my freshman and sophomore year. I cared more about my friends than I did school. Which isn't all bad, but I wasn't doing my work. When I started my junior year, I think that is when I started to look at school differently. I started caring, and putting all my effort in. I guess you can say I started to grow up; which was awesome, because I started to do my school work in school, during study hours and whenever the teacher gave us down time. In return for this effort, I had less homework to do after school, and I could spend more time hanging out with my friends.

This worked out really well for me in my senior year also, because I started to do more things to keep me organized. In the end being organized is the key isn't it? If you're not organized then you might not know when to do that paper, or when your friend's birthday is. Important things need to be written down; you need to make constant reminders to yourself at all times. I am, by nature, a forgetful person, so this works for me perfectly. Our school used to hand out planners for kids, (most kids would throw them away) HOWEVER, I kept mine, knowing that it actually works really well in helping me stay on task and getting my homework done. So, if you have one, and just never use it, I would recommend dusting it off, and giving it a try. Seriously, you'd be amazed at how much it works.

In my last article, I mentioned that it would be beneficial to join a marketing or business class, (whichever your school offers). I'm glad you did, and could see it for yourself. If you're returning to marketing all over again, I know why! Marketing was simply my favorite class of the day, every day. I loved our teacher Mrs. Davis, she was always there helping us, and making sure we were moving along so we could do well at the State Career Development Conference and even at the International Career Development Conference. I don't want to say she busted my butt; but she did, and if she wasn't there I wouldn't be where I am today.

It's good to get close to your Advisors! They're the ones with the years of experience, or even if they're a new Advisor, they still have a lot to offer. Take hints, and notes from them when trying to understand the different types of competition that DECA has to offer. Studying for competition is also key, they want to know how committed you are to the competition. You have to make time to study. I know life is busy but this is where our balancing comes back into play. Balancing DECA, schoolwork and friends is a lot to handle, which is one of the reasons why DECA students get a lot of recognition, because they do twice as much work that other students are faced with. DECA students are making a huge impact on the world.

To wrap this up, I would just like to say that balancing things is easier said than done. Most people don't even notice they're doing it, some need more help. Which is why I'm here, I'm your Vice President of Leadership Development, and knowing the struggles, as I've said before, you can always contact me, ask for help, or even give tips on how to manage school, friends, family and DECA!

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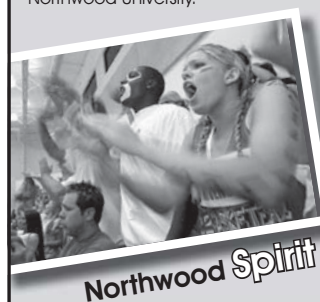


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Scheduling Your Time

Madison Mayleben,
State Secretary

Do you find it difficult to be organized? Here is a tool to help you! When you decide to structure your time, you are allowing yourself to use time more efficiently; which should prevent you from

the temptation to waste away precious time. This is called “de-sensitizing”, which involves removing oneself from the constant day-to-day and hour-to-hour decisions on how you plan to spend your time. A workable time schedule can make decisions for you.

The first step is to take a piece of paper, planner, or phone to record your schedule. Whatever method you decide to use, you should assign each hour or half-hour per day of the week and giving each time its own block. Now you can begin to fill in your schedule.

Keep in mind as you are scheduling, that you need to be realistic. You don't want to get discouraged and give up. Be flexible in following your schedule because things are not always going to go as planned.

Start to plan on what is necessary and then add to it later, but only if you really need to. You should first schedule the events that include your classes, club meetings, work, travel, family time, meals, and times you go out for fun activities with your friends.



With the remaining time in your schedule you then can begin to estimate how much time you will need to study each week. Also add in when you will achieve other tasks such as cleaning and exercise. Your daily life responsibilities are important not to ignore.

Once your schedule is complete, you should keep it with you at all times. If you don't have it with you, how are you supposed to know what to do next or when you need to change your schedule?

Each week, you should look over your schedule to see how well it is helping you to stay on track. Scheduling takes time and effort but in the end it pays off because you will be a more efficient individual and have structure, success & less stress.



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Public Relations in Your Chapter

Brandon Wendell, Vice President
of Public Relations

Public Relations in your chapter is such an important factor to continue to thrive. Your chapter, school, and community all benefit from your chapter's public relations; from events your chapter puts on such as a car wash or food drive. Or even activities your chapter does, such as flyers, school bulletin boards, or websites, your chapter is using public relations to your advantage! There are a few things you should keep in mind, however, when developing ideas for ways of approaching your public relations, including:

1. Will this attract new members to our chapter?
2. Will the community be aware of what we are doing? If so, how does this involve them? If not, why?
3. And finally, how, will developing these ideas, benefit our chapter in standing out against the other organizations in our school?

Students, staff, family and your community, although you may not be aware, all notice when your chapter does something new and exciting. That is why it is important for your chapter to take everything you do and publicize it to the most extreme extent possible. When people notice an active chapter, full of excitement and prosperous events, your chapter is recognized and makes you shine! This helps increase awareness of not only what your chapter is and does, but of your community as well. If you keep all these things in mind, you can learn how your community reacts to your success and help receive astonishing recognition by those all around you!



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How to Avoid Sabotaging Your Job: Tips to Ensure Your Job Security

Caroline M.L. Potter,
Yahoo! Hot Jobs

In today's workplace, there are more ways to damage your career than ever before. An errant tweet. An erroneous Facebook post. A heated email exchange. All of these can sully an otherwise impeccable reputation, as can a litany of faux pas in front of your coworkers.

Workplace expert Alexandra Levit, author of *How'd You Score That Gig?*, shares her insights for avoiding the stumbling blocks and temptations that inhabit our work lives and work spaces.

Keep Your Focus on the Networking Part of Social Networking

"You have to set boundaries as to how you use various social networks [e.g. Facebook for personal, LinkedIn for professional] and make sure you communicate those boundaries so that feelings aren't hurt," Levit says. While Facebooking has become a part of many people's workdays, "don't let your boss and coworkers catch you chatting and playing with Facebook applications when you should be working," she says.

Avoid Sending a Tweet in the Heat of the Moment

Twitter is a great tool to help raise your reputation. "Use your real name on Twitter to network with people you wouldn't have the chance to communicate with in real life, and send them valuable information or interesting tidbits about their field," Levit says. Just don't get caught up in the heat of the moment. Before you post something on Twitter, think about whether you'd want to read it on the front page of the Wall Street Journal.



Finding Friends at the Office Is Fine -- But Don't Look for Love

You spend a lot of time at the office, so it may be tempting to become involved with a colleague. "You can pursue friendships in other departments and with friends of your coworkers, but don't ever date a boss or a direct report," Levit says. "And refrain from dating an immediate coworker unless you can handle seeing that person every day if the relationship goes south."

Appearances Count Around the Office

Don't let casual Fridays be your fashion downfall. "Pay attention to what constitutes business casual in your workplace [e.g., what others are wearing] and dress accordingly -- although business casual usually means khakis and a button-down shirt," says Levit. "And no matter what the trend du jour is, 'Don't ever wear short shorts or flip-flops to work.'"

Practice Proper Email Etiquette

Almost everyone has trouble managing their in-boxes these days, so don't be so quick to send unnecessary emails -- or those that might stir the pot around the office. "Only 'reply to all' if every person on the string really needs to hear what you're saying," Levit says. "Always check the list of people in the 'to' and 'cc' lines before sending any email. Don't hit reply too quickly in case that reply-to-all function is accidentally on, and don't use email for negative or controversial discussion."

Think Before You Speak

Converse carefully with coworkers, especially at first. "Spend more time listening than you do speaking," she says. "Show an interest in other people, but don't discuss anything that you wouldn't talk about with your grandmother or religious officiant -- especially with a coworker you don't know extremely well. In general, steer clear of sex, drugs and politics."

It's Good to be Heard -- But Not All the Time

Watch your volume control around the office. And don't be afraid to speak up if someone else's volume is distracting you. "Say nicely that you're on the phone with a client and ask if he wouldn't mind keeping it down a bit," Levit says. "Never allow your desire to avoid confrontation affect your work effectiveness."

Just Say 'No' to Complaining

Everyone has complaints at the office, but it may be best to avoid sharing them with coworkers. "It's good to get negative emotions off your chest by venting to a close friend or family member, but don't complain at work at all -- people won't like you," she says. "Instead, think of ways to turn a bad situation into a more positive one and approach your boss and coworkers with solutions rather than problems."

Know the Difference Between Sharing and Over-sharing

There's a fine line between a caring coworker and an over-bearing one. "Develop close friendships with coworkers over a period of time, assessing how much you can trust them before you disclose too much personal information," she says. "However, do not assume someone is going to be your best friend just because you work in the same office eight hours a day; and when it doubt, you should err on the side of caution."

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The Real DECA Experience

Casey Block,
State President

With the winter season on its way, there is only one thing that excites Michigan DECA members more than the snow, DECA season! Not only is competition underway, but so are many, many other opportunities to start your winter off with a bang. I believe to truly enjoy "The Real DECA Experience" you have to get yourself involved in all the different conferences and activities that DECA has to offer. When DECA is offering these opportunities to all 180,000 members, with conferences all around the country, they are sure to be a blast.

Meeting fellow DECA members from your district not only allows you to extend your network, but to also compete in a friendly, fun atmosphere. Don't be afraid to step outside your chapter and communicate with other chapters from across your district. Study hard here in the next few weeks so you can ensure to go home with the most medals possible and a chance to compete at the state conference! Have pride in your district, your chapter, and most importantly yourself in pursuing a great performance and a great time at your district conference.

Don't forget that all of your hard work could lead you to the State Career Development Conference, March 9-11, 2012 at the beautiful Hyatt Regency Dearborn. And by Aspiring Higher, you could make it to the top of the mountain and attend the International Career Development Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah!

Believe me when I tell you that these conferences will be the highlight of the year. If you have any questions don't be afraid to contact me or any other State Officer! Will you experience all that DECA has to offer? Are you ready to Aspire Higher?

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