

The Career Timeline Exercise

When my clients are mulling over a few different career options or jobs they are interested in, I ask them to think about when in their lives would be the best time to do each of those jobs. This may factor in their age, their family commitments, or their desire to travel or to stay in one place. This question can be incredibly helpful in deciding a next step and mapping out a longer-term career vision.

On a piece of paper draw a timeline from left to right. Split it up with vertical lines into 10-year segments starting at age 20, so 20-30, 30-40 etc. For the decades that have passed write in those columns what you have already done, both for work and in terms of wider contributions to society such voluntary or community work, caring for others or raising a family.

Now think of any jobs you would like to do or roles you would like to have in future. Don't try to be realistic in terms of what the jobs are or how many you list. For each one think when would be the best time in your life to do this activity, and also which decades it will or won't be possible for you to do this activity and then enter that activity into an appropriate column.

For example, if you want to become a snowboarding instructor it may be better for you to train for this either earlier in life when you can easily travel or alternatively, if you have kids, after your children have flown the nest.

Once you've filled your timeline in, look at what you want to do within the next 10 years and, if it's not what you're already doing now, think about how you can make it happen.

My Career Timeline

