



Career Planning for Planners

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- Landing a Planning Director role
 - Moving beyond Planning
 - Nailing the recruitment exercise

Landing a Planning Director role



- Challenge the stereotypes:
 - Universities no longer seek the clichéd introverted, number-crunching Planner who cannot communicate with others and is excited by spreadsheets and KPIs.
- Prove your broader value:
 - It is not enough to talk about the quantitative impact of change - you need to be driving change.
 - Demonstrate that you are not a faceless backroom planner; provide insight as to the true performance of the University, not just passive presentation of data.
 - Get into the shoes of your audience and see the world from their perspective. That's when you'll be listened to.
 - Look for opportunities to present to the senior management team or Council.

Landing a Planning Director role

- Demonstrate skills beyond technical knowledge:
 - Planners must be on top of the technical knowledge required for the role, but they get the top job because of their broader skills set.
 - Take a genuine interest in the broader sector, government policy, the role HE plays in the health of the nation, etc.
 - Provide analysis and insight into the competition.
 - Demonstrate mastery of words and numbers.
 - Demonstrate superb communication skills.
- Network:
 - Create strong relationships – particularly with Finance, Student Administration and Faculties/Departments, including academics. Planners only get to do what they do if people give them ‘permission’; otherwise they become passive presenters of impenetrable data sets.
 - Represent the Planning function within the institution.
 - Get networked with the outside world, particularly with regulators.

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Moving beyond Planning



- Planners can run the risk of getting “boxed in”; where do you go next?
- As the leader of a single-profession function, you have to demonstrate you can manage a multi-professional function.
- Gain as much project management experience as possible; this will give you vital examples of contributing beyond Planning.
- Take on additional teams (governance, student experience) where possible; Planning teams are generally small and can leave directors lacking scale of management experience.
- Get some operational experience; people only get to run really substantial empires through experience.
- Do not stick to a narrow Planning trajectory; do a stint in a department/faculty and take on a generalist role.

Moving beyond Planning

- Sell the advantages of a Planner:
 - Top-notch Planners are highly intelligent senior players in an institution, with amazing technical as well as strong interpersonal skills.
 - They know the institution incredibly well; they engage with all corners of it.
 - Planners are key strategic leaders in a time of uncertainty and change. You should have big views on big issues.
 - Planners are close to the powers-that-be.
- Reporting line:
 - It is generally better, as Director of Planning, to report to a Registrar (or someone whose job you might aspire to do one day) than to a VC.

Possible career moves

- Directors of Planning can move on to become:
 - Registrars, Heads of Administration, or Chief Operating Officers.
 - Chief Executives of relevant agencies, e.g. QAA, HESA, etc.
 - Broader senior administrative roles, of which Planning is part, e.g. Director of Policy, Planning and Governance, or Academic Registrar.
 - University Secretaries
 - Planners in bigger or better-ranked institutions

Don't be scared of a sideways move on the way up! Get experience outside the specialism.

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Getting yourself noticed

- Demonstrate ambition at every opportunity
- Get known by the right people in the sector; get on the radar of more senior people.
- Take on external roles
- Network/join associations; become involved in HESPA
- Get to know headhunters – if they have reached out to you, have the introductory conversation about a role they are working on or choose to be a source of advice and recommend potential candidates.



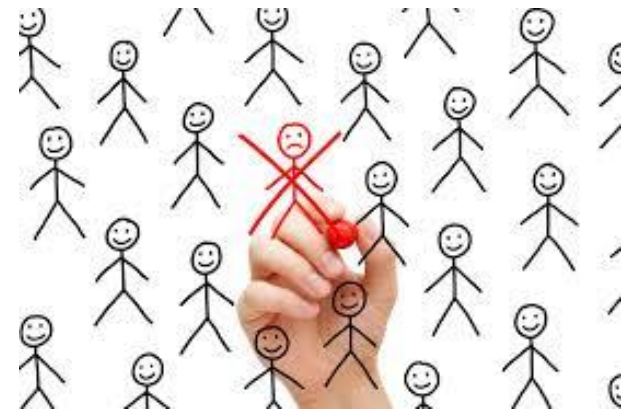
Performing well

- A simple and clear CV, and tailored cover letter
- Do not be the clichéd planner; don't make the mistake of quoting data endlessly
- Don't prioritise preparing for the presentation over practising interview questions
- Evidence of strategic impact
- Cross-institutional roles
- Regional/national/international exposure
- A change story
- Scale of management experience
- Compelling motivation, energy and hunger



If you don't get the job

- Remember there really is an element of luck in these processes; your chances depend on the field, the particular response of the panel, etc.
- These processes can be political.
- Don't over-react to feedback – be gracious.
- Persevere; you have to have a go at a few processes to work out how to play them.
- Don't take it personally; for every one successful candidate, there are many who don't get the job.
- Don't complain to the panel or headhunter; awkward conversations do not help your cause next time around.



Your turn – group exercise

How might you answer the following interview questions?

- Tell us about a cross-institutional project you have made a major contribution to?
- Give an example of a difficult situation you have had to handle. What went well? What would you do differently?
- If a friend of yours were considering going into Planning and asked for your advice, what would you say?

Job offer!





Professional Competency Framework

