



Push's Quick Guide to...

## Working Backwards, Driving Forwards

### Choosing your chariot:

One origin of the word 'career' is the word 'chariot'. A chariot is not a safe and stable thing: it's something that requires constant focus, care, and adaptability. Navigating a career path will require exactly the same, and whenever you feel stable you might hit a bump and have to re-steer it and gather control. That's why adapting from failure and developing ourselves when things don't go our way is crucial. As Socrates explained to Phaedrus in Plato's famous chariot metaphor...

*"Our soul can be understood as a chariot driver, struggling to rein two horses, one representing our better nature and the other our baser impulses."*

– Cal Newport, Digital Minimalism

Navigating a career path will involve a constant unfolding of decisions, and proactively taking the reins of your professional life to ensure you're focusing on your better nature (living the best type of life for yourself) versus the impulses, which can drive us to just focus on the financial gains, but which might not give us good work-life balance.



When you're thinking about your 'course of life' – the Latin translation of Curriculum Vitae (CV) – here's 3 tips to help you stay in control of your chariot.

### The 'perfect' career path:

There is only 1 'perfect' career path, and it's not on any Rich List or online ranking of 'best jobs'. The perfect route is quite simply the one that aligns best with your personal and professional needs. Your needs can be satisfied by considering the following combination:

1. **Knowing what you want to do:** your interests, hobbies, and short-term/ long-term professional goals.
2. **Knowing what you can do:** your acquired knowledge of a topic, your acquired hard and soft skills – plus natural talents/ talents you've developed, or a combination of both.
3. **Knowing what each job involves:** researching careers, speaking to employers/ careers advisers and trying out jobs through work experience, professional placements, internships and part-time jobs.

### Working backwards:

This technique can help you discover and map out what careers are out there. Think of anything you find interesting, and...

- Set up a Google Alert so that you receive notifications about this industry or career each day.
- Create a LinkedIn profile and search for industries; follow interesting professionals' profiles & their posts.
- Search hashtags on Instagram to find people doing that career now.
- Contact companies in a professional manner; ask if they can help you understand their industry via advice or even a job/placement. Be proactive: contact them with a short, professional DM (or their comments thread) asking the top advice they'd give you about how to navigate a way into their industry.
- Go old school: make a list of a few businesses in your area that might help you develop work experience and skills that are linked directly (or loosely) to the industry you want to get into. Dress suitably (it doesn't need to be a suit: what do they wear in that company?). Print your CV. Then go in: introduce yourself, and hand it over. Learn a quick 2-minute pitch, so you can highlight what you know about the industry, what you know about their business, and how they can help you develop (and how you can help them, too). *Fortune favours the brave*. If there is any paid work or unpaid placements, you'll be at the top of their minds way more than the 10 other people who just sent an email.

You can say to someone (in-person or online)...

**“I love what you do, can I ask you some questions about how you got into this job and what skills and talents you feel you need to be successful?”**

...And they will often be happy to give you their time and share a few tips. Sometimes they're able to offer more - they might agree to guide you and/or help assess your progress and industry goals (this is called a mentor, and they're wonderful if you can find them). They might even arrange a placement for you.

**So remember:** it's your chariot, on your course of life. Be brave and be confident when you ask someone how they do what they do. And, if you ever want to stop that current chariot route, that's fine. A lot of people switch careers throughout their lives, so if your route suddenly turns into one that's not rewarding, then get off it. Take a break and work out a more suitable route (you can take a lot of the skills you've developed in any role into a new career).



**Watch our quick guide on how to make proactive choices.**



**Watch our quick guide on how to write your life's story.**