

Do the Two-Step

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Does this ever happen to you? You face a huge project, complex, maybe new to you, whose direction or desired result may not be clear to you. You look at the task, feel shivers of anxiety crawl coldly up your back, and you walk away from it.

Fear of the big job is the father of procrastination. If the job's too confusing or scary, you'll put it off till the deadline's menacing growl has reached your ears. Now you get the impossible done.

Planning your career has that same clammy feel. We barely know what to order for lunch. How are we supposed to envision our entire working life?

If your career path disappears into an impenetrable fog a few feet ahead of you, let's try looking at it another way. Stop trying to get a whole-life vision. Big companies tried planning several decades ahead and quickly learned they don't forecast well beyond three to five years. Markets move too fast; the target constantly changes.

Be as smart as the big guys. Shorten your vision. Do the career two-step. If you've spent months squinting at your future and you haven't blown away the career fogn, then narrow your focus to the next job and the one after that.

1. What would you like to do next (what seems to be before you now), and
2. What job or opportunity might it lead you to?

If you know what you want or can do now, you've made the career search bite-size, a problem you know how to solve. If you can say even vaguely where you might go after that (and most of us can), then you know how to make the most of the first step, i.e., what to get done while you're in the first phase.

Unexpected inspiration could come to you, but doing the "Career Two-Step" is the cure for career procrastination. Just like other impossible projects you've faced, they all had one or two small tasks you could do. If you do the smaller pieces, the larger task becomes more doable.

You may never get the view of your Elysian Heights, but you'll have a rewarding work life if you learn the "Career Two-Step."