

## **Instructions for completing the Career Life Line**

The Career Life Line is an exercise that is used in most career development workshops to help an individual start thinking about his or her career experiences and choices. The line at the top of the attached page, going from zero to a plus 70, typically represents a chronological life span. However, people can also think of it as a psychological life line. Some individuals may have had many job experiences early in their lives and others may not start a second job until after retirement. The individual completing the life line needs to think about what it means to him or her.

You will note on the career life line page a set of “Career Points” that you will be completing. In the example of a hypothetical person at the top of the page, the first career simulation would have occurred at about 5 years old and the individual represented is thinking of retirement somewhere around 62. Hence, their F is at 5 and their R is at 62 on the career life line. These are general points and do not have to be too precise. Each person working on the career life line will want to place these different points relative to their own experiences and aspirations.

For the responses that you will return to me via email, I would like you to put the letter that is indicated and the year where it would fall on the life line, using the conceptual line at the bottom of the page. As you work on this exercise, you will represent the letter and the year, e.g., F for the first career simulation and the 5 to indicate that it would fall on year 5 of the career life line. The second entry in the example is L 12 indicating that this was a key life event and occurred at approximately year 12. After that the letter and age, you can simply enter what the key event is. There are simulated examples given for each of the letters and you may want to make one or two entries for each point depending on your personal life situation. In addition, there are two letters, E and S, representing where you would like to live permanently and the spouse or family you have or would like to have. For some of you, your current residence will change during your military career because of different deployments and assignments. I am more interested in your

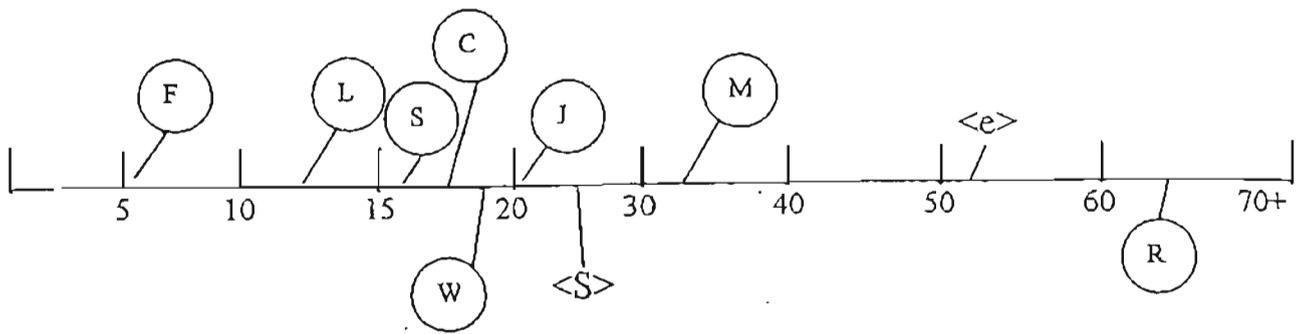
permanent residence -- where you would like to live after you have separated from the military. Or if you are a civilian you may be early in your career and would like to eventually end up living somewhere other than where you are living now. For example, many military people like to go back to their home state of birth after they retire and plan to live there permanently. For many people in corporate settings, they are willing to move during the first 10 years of their career but by mid-life they want to be established and own a home in places like Florida. The idea here is to show where you want to live and what the consequences would be for your career. For example, wanting to be a Wall Street broker and live in rural Pennsylvania may pose a challenge. Obviously, the S represents your spouse or family. If you are currently married and have a family this will be a relatively easy item to describe. If you are not yet married, you may want to talk about what are the characteristics of an ideal spouse or family. This would also have an impact in how you develop your career.

I have suggested that you put a letter and number with a following response to make it easy for your typing. If you would prefer to type right on the form and indicate with letters on the bottom life line and email that to me as an attachment, that is also acceptable.

After you complete the career life line, it may be useful if you would sit down with a spouse, significant other or close friend and discuss what each of these mean to you. I would urge you to be honest and try and think through how each of these events impacts your career. For example, most people have a tendency to be impacted in their major choice by some significant colligate experience, e.g., a key faculty member may have started you on the path to be a psychologist because she was such a wonderful lecturer. However, the event may also have restricted your choices in college. Does your undergraduate major continue to “fit” you well and is it still the best career choice as you think about your skills, talents and interests? Another example may be how you see retirement. As some of the power point panels in the social and societal change units suggests, people are living older and are still quite active in retirement. A few years ago many of us thought of retiring early; but, now retirement seems to be stretching more into

the mid to late sixties. Part of that is related to wanting to have sufficient funds to retire comfortably. As you think of retirement and when you plan to engage in it, what will be your activities? What are you doing to financially plan for retirement? Will you still be living in the same place that you will be living in mid-life, or do you plan to live in a retirement community?

The intent of this exercise is to get you thinking about what your career means to you and various elements and issues that are involved. When this exercise is used for a career development workshop in an organizational setting or when it is used in individual career coaching, it becomes a basis for an active dialogue about what a career is for a given individual. When you are done, I hope you can start to articulate what you want from your career life!



(F) = first career "simulation" that you can remember, e.g., playing truck driver, selling lemonade \_\_\_\_\_

(L) = key family/life event, e.g., move to Oklahoma, father's loss of job, mom's second marriage to a banker \_\_\_\_\_

(S) = significant school (precollegiate) experience, e.g., selected for debate team, elected to student senate, got an "A" in math class \_\_\_\_\_

(C) = significant collegiate experience, e.g., failed premed chemistry, joined Union Board, did a semester abroad \_\_\_\_\_

(W) = key entry level work experience, e.g., first job as pizza deliverer, worked at Harold's Warehouse store, was a summer intern \_\_\_\_\_

(J) = first full time job, e.g., army recruit, consultant with Anderson, trainee with Seagate, sales representative with a pharmaceutical company \_\_\_\_\_

(M) = midcareer job or where you would like to be at 35, e.g., own my own restaurant, be a vice president with Bank America, be a human resource manager with a small (100-200 employee firm) \_\_\_\_\_

<e> = indicate where you would like to live permanently and why (place at point when it is important to be living in this area) \_\_\_\_\_

<S> = describe your spouse/family (or one you would like to have) and place them on the line when you married \_\_\_\_\_

(R) = retirement age and a description of your retirement \_\_\_\_\_

