

Education

Your window to the world of learning

How to choose the right career path

DIVERSE FIELDS Unlike in the past, students now have various career opportunities, either conventional or offbeat. **V Pradeep Kumar** elaborates on how one can choose the right fit

Last year while counselling, I came across parents who were pushing their son into Engineering, much against his wish. The boy struggled with the course for a year, failed in a few subjects and left the course, to pursue a career in Journalism. There are many examples of parents pushing towards a career instead of guiding and facilitating children to choose the right career. The massive slowdown in Indian IT industry this year has brought the focus on opportunities beyond mainstream courses like Engineering. Speaking recently at Indian Institute of Technology Madras's convocation, Nandan Nilekani, currently Chairman, Infosys said, "Many jobs that exist today may not be there tomorrow while many which don't exist today will be created later."

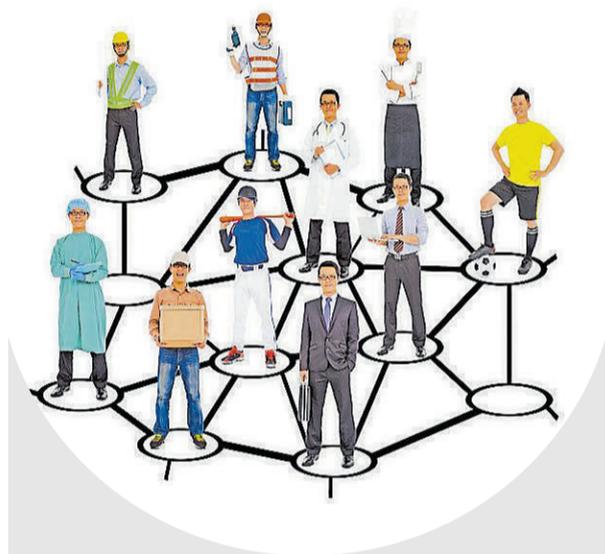
A number of factors have contributed to massive slowdown and restructuring in the Indian IT sector. Increased automation has resulted in moving from mundane jobs to those requiring a higher degree of skills. As per a recent report, at least 2,00,000 software engineers in India might lose their jobs each year over the next three years, due to planned downsizing. Consequently, oversupply of engineering seats than the demand has been a bitter truth for the last few years. In many colleges, the intake has been lower than 30% of the approved intake. According to All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the council has approved the progressive closure of more than 400 colleges across India, from 2014-2015 to 2017-2018 academic years, including 65 during the current year, due to a very low intake.

Hence, in today's highly dynamic and globalised world, students should critically analyse current trends and relate to long-term opportunities in conventional and offbeat careers. As opposed to traditional careers in fields like medicine and engineering, offbeat careers offer students a greater variety and opportunities. Further, some offbeat careers offer opportunity to work from the comfort of your home, facilitating an optimum work-life balance.

Various factors

What's your dream career? Would you like to be an actor or an anchor; a commercial photographer or a choreographer? Or you would like to go for conventional careers? This continuing debate of conventional or offbeat career can only be answered by considering several key factors. Here's a look at some of the factors:

- **Interests and passion:** It's important to choose a career that motivates you from within. Do an in-depth analysis to assess your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats through a detailed SWOT analysis. These inner thoughts and ideas come from your heart, representing your desires and act as a catalyst for your action.
- **Earning potential:** Usually, offbeat careers take a longer time to take off and the earning potential is lower than the traditional careers in the initial years. However,



Some of the conventional and emerging fields that one can pursue:

CONVENTIONAL	EMERGING
● Engineering	● Fine Arts
● Healthcare	● Cinematography
● Science	● Choreography
● Humanities and Social Sciences	● Photography
● Finance & Management	● Event Management
● Law	● Social work
● Teaching & Research	● Journalism
● Defence and Security	● Hotel Management
	● Travel
	● Museums and Libraries

er, unlike conventional careers where the earning potential is usually steady and follows a pattern of 10% to 15% growth per year, earnings in offbeat careers grows exponentially once you are established.

- **Family support:** In view of relatively low earnings in the initial years, family support is essential. Emotional support and encouragement in the midst of challenges are critical. Hence, don't be swayed by glamour and independence in an offbeat career. Assess the likely challenges and your support system before taking the final decision.

- **Lifelong learning:** Depending on the career you want to pursue, consider the courses you must complete. Further, learning is lifelong in any career and this is especially important when you are in an offbeat career. Your growth in the field will depend on your ability and intellect. The world around is dynamic and changes in preferences, trends and technology have a lot more influence in an offbeat career. Therefore, predicting the changes and sharpening your skills continuously to stay ahead is crucial for your success.

- **Soft skills:** Usually in offbeat careers, you could be on your own or work in a relatively small team. This demands mul-



ASSESS CRITICALLY It's important to choose a career that motivates you from within. In this light, do an in-depth analysis to assess your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in your chosen field.

“ Always monitor new trends and changing preferences, and adapt accordingly.”

titasking when needed. In this light, it is important that you have a strong set of soft skills such as communication (listening, writing and speaking), interpersonal skills, time management, optimism, collaborative skills, and optimal utilisation of resources among others.

- **Create a large network:** Develop your network in your chosen profession by connecting with other people. Get active on social media and professional websites to develop contacts as well as to showcase your work. Know established players in the profession so that you can ask for guid-

ance and collaboration. It is also important for you to be your own PR manager.

- **Career goals:** Always monitor new trends and changing preferences of the consumers and adapt accordingly. So, let your short-term career goals to be reasonable and achievable and your long-term goals be time-bound and realistic.

- **Self-motivation:** The challenges in an offbeat career are many, especially in the initial years. You have to be strong-willed, to take slow progress or even some initial setbacks in its stride. To succeed talent alone isn't enough, you need self-motivation and persistence too.

An offbeat career provides you an excellent opportunity to utilise your skills and lead a very satisfying life. Success is not an exclusive club as there's always room at the top for those who can pursue a passionate career. Do remember that the sign on the door of opportunity reads 'push' and you have to push yourself. As Aristotle once said, "Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work" and that's the route to success in an offbeat career.

(The author is a management and career consultant)