*CHAPTER 9*

*Encouraging Individually Directed Career Development*

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# Quiz 9.1: Six Vocational Preferences[[1]](#endnote-1)

### Your vocational preferences describe the way you prefer to gather information and tasks, activities, and objectives which you feel more comfortable performing. The congruence between the preferences and vocational choices you make in your career help explain why you might be satisfied and successful in certain jobs rather than others. Just as an analytical thinker might not be responsive in a counselling setting, people with an artistic orientation might not be very comfortable working in a group trying to sell merchandise. As a result, they might not be as successful as others whose preferences more closely fit with the tasks they were performing.

In a practical illustration of the typology, researchers had high school students work in simulated occupational environments, where each environment required them to perform tasks and solve a problem characteristic of different interest types. Students found that their perceptions of their interest paralleled the problems and tasks they performed. That is, students with artistic interests felt more adept at solving artistic type problems.[[2]](#endnote-2) Each preference or type is assumed to flourish an environment of the same label. On the other hand, incongruence which occurs when the person and job are not matched leads to dissatisfaction, instability in the career path, and low performance. The research illustrating this is extensive.[[3]](#endnote-3)

*What are Your Vocational Preferences?* What are you like? How important the following preference for you in an organization? To help define on your vocational preferences, rank the following statements from 1 to 6 inserting a 1 next to the statement that reflects the tasks you prefer to perform.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Realistic. My values are practical, productive and concrete; I have mechanical vs. social skills.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Investigative: I am analytical, skeptical, and value the acquisition of knowledge through scholarship or investigation. I may lack interpersonal skills.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Artistic: I am open to experience, innovative, intellectual and artistic activities. I may lack clerical and office skills.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Social: I am emphatic, patient, and have concerns for the welfare of others. I will sacrifice my personal goals for the sake of the organization.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Enterprising: I have the ability to be persuasive and sell. I am energetic but lack scientific ability.

\_\_\_\_\_\_Conventional: I have technical skills for business or producing things. I may lack artistic competencies.

This test only illustrates the concepts and the actual test can be found on the WWW.

Questions:

1. You can develop an understanding of your preferences by reviewing your experiences and the tasks and you feel most comfortable performing. Identify examples of times in a work experience when you felt really motivated because of the tasks and activities you were carrying out. This might have been a summer job or volunteer work. Identify examples of tasks and activities when you felt unmotivated performing.

2. What work tasks and experiences interest you? What tasks and activities do you like to perform? What experiences do you not find interesting? What tasks and activities do you like to avoid? What are you good at doing? What are you not good at?

3. Review each of the paragraphs you have written and identify the items which reflect the preferences:

* Realistic: active activities, scientific, mechanical tasks with motor coordination
* Investigative: thinking, organizing, understanding
* Artistic: self-expression through artistic expression
* Social: Sensitive to others, helping and understanding
* Enterprising: Persuading, managing project, enterprising,
* Conventional: structure, order, control

4. Each of these preferences has implications for the tasks you will feel more comfortable with. Based on Holland’s congruency theory, what occupations reflect your preferences?

# Quiz 9.2: Identifying Your Career Anchors

Your career direction should match what you finding essential and meaningful. When it does, you are likely to be more motivated and fulfilled in your work and life. The core values connecting your career direction and what you find meaningful are referred to as career anchors, according to Professor Edgar Schein from MIT.

To reflect on your career anchors, rank order the following statements inserting a 1 next to the statement that reflects your values. This test illustrates the concepts of Schein’s career anchors and are based on an abbreviated inventory. [[4]](#endnote-4)

\_\_\_\_\_\_1. I identify with my work or profession and don’t want to be a manager.

\_\_\_\_\_\_2. I like to take on responsibilities and organize people to achieve common goals.

\_\_\_\_\_\_3. I am motivated in work situations where there are fewer organizational constraints and where I can work independently.

\_\_\_\_\_\_4. I am more interested in a long term commitment with an organization where there is some job security.

\_\_\_\_\_\_5. Staying in one location vs. relocating to different geographical areas is most important.

\_\_\_\_\_\_6. I am primarily motivated to build or create in new projects or enterprises.

\_\_\_\_\_\_7. My interest relates to work that helps people and society and improves the world.

\_\_\_\_\_\_8. I am most interested in competitive situations where I have to overcome obstacles and solve problems.

\_\_\_\_\_\_9. I am concerned with life balance and issues that are supportive of family.

# Quiz 9.3: Is proactivity anything more than academic rhetoric?

In answering this question, researchers undertook a two-year longitudinal study of 180 professionals and examined the role that a proactive personality had in shaping career success. Using well established instruments, they assessed four characteristics: (i) displaying voice or speaking up, (ii) being innovative, (iii) exhibiting career initiative, and (iv) displaying political knowledge of the organization. The study involved supervisors rating employees, external markers, as well as obtaining measures of employee’s personal style, behaviour, career progress, salary changes, and career satisfaction.

**Assessing Yourself: How Proactive are You?** *[[5]](#endnote-5)*

Defining your career rather than letting it unfold haphazardly illustrates the difference between being proactive vs. reactive. When individuals are proactive in defining their career, they are more likely to identify a career vision and the organizations they want to work in and the experiences they want to participate in developing on-going learning. They are constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve their life and excel at identifying opportunities. To reflect on your proactivity, rate the following statements on the degree they reflect your behavior. This test only illustrates the concepts and the actual test can be found on the WWW.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not at all | Some | Medium | Generally | Very frequently |

\_\_\_\_\_\_1. I am always looking for way to improve my life.

\_\_\_\_\_\_2. I immediately try to take action to fix things.

\_\_\_\_\_\_3. If I get behind something, I like to get on with it.

\_\_\_\_\_\_4. I am always looking for opportunities.

\_\_\_\_\_\_5. I believe that there is no obstacle that cannot be overcome with a little work.

\_\_\_\_\_\_6. I always seem to be able to find new opportunities.

# Suggested answers to quiz exercises

Quiz 9.1 results: Assess yourself: Six personality types of the Vocational Preference Inventory

Your top rankings should illustrate your personal profile and the type of job you would fit best in.

How accurately do you believe your top two rankings reflect your personality and interests? To delve a little deeper into understanding your preferences, you can connect to Holland’s assessment instrument or other online surveys. Each of these preferences has implications for the tasks you will feel more comfortable with. Based on Holland’s congruency theory, what occupations reflect your preferences?

* **Realistic orientation**.  *People with this orientation are more comfortable with manual and mechanical and physical activities, possibly using machines, tools, and objects. Examples of these occupations include paramedic, mechanical engineer, cook, industrial arts teachers, and carpenter.*
* **Investigative orientation**. *These people favour tasks that are inventive, logical, and analytical. They are analytical thinkers who want to understand things more than feeling people who might favour interpersonal and emotional tasks. Occupations include college professors, systems analyst, pharmacists, computer programmer, chemical engineers, or surgeons.*
* **Artistic orientation**.  *Artistic people are attracted to careers where they can use their imagination, self-expression, and creativity. They enjoy work in music, writing, performance and sculpture. They are more comfortable in occupations: photographer, musician, interior designer, author, architect, and advertising executives.*
* **Social orientation**.  *People with a social orientation value service to others, understanding, empathy, team approaches, and will sacrifice their personal goals for the sake of the organization. They are friendly, trusting, and warm people. Examples of occupations where they are comfortable include: occupational therapist, elementary school teacher, counsellor, nurse, personnel management, and police officer.*
* **Enterprising orientation**.  *Enterprising people are often ambitious, extroverted, enthusiastic, and enjoy selling, motivating, persuading and influencing others. They are more comfortable in occupations as lawyers, sales managers, project directors, financial planners, and public relations executives.*
* **Conventional orientation***. People with this orientation are more comfortable working with things or machines to meet precise standards. They are practical, structured, orderly and efficient, enjoy physical activities, possibly using machines, tools, and objects. Examples of occupations where they are comfortable include: accountant, mortgage processer, payroll clerk, investment analyst, and bookkeeper.*
* These **vocational preferences** reflect a person’s cognitive style or the preferences they have for certain types of information or ways of making decisions. Some people are realistic types and prefer to working with machines, tools, and things, while others have a preferences for artistic and musical tasks.

## **Quiz 9.2 results: Career Anchors**

According to Professor Edgar Schein, your career anchor reflects your self-perceived concepts, attitudes, and values more than anything else. A **career anchor** describes your talents and abilities, motives and needs, and attitudes and values and is one element in your ‘self’ concept which shapes the decisions you make in difficult times.[[6]](#endnote-6) A person’s life experiences are in a continual process of discovery and, over time, an individual will develop a more accurate and stable ‘career-self-concept’ or their ‘career anchor.’

As you learn about yourself, you will become clearer on your dominant career anchor. In some cases, individuals don’t learn about their dominant career anchor until later on in life. This was the case for Dr. Joe Lischeron, who started out in engineering and, at the age of 35, shifted his career direction. He enrolled in a PhD program in psychology in the U.K., and after working as a professor, he had a very successful 20 years career as an HR consultant.

Often, you learn more about your career anchor when you have to make a career choice, such as when Carol was offered a promotion but had to move to head office. She refused because she didn’t want to move away from her friends and family and the city she loved because of its opportunities for life balance and recreation. The need to make a career choice forced Carol to come to terms with her self-concept, attitudes, and values.

After completing the above ranking, focus on the statements you ranked the highest and lowest and review the career anchors they respond to. Each of these anchors has implications for what you focus on in your work and life. What are the implications of your career anchors for you career planning and development? What steps should you take to focus your present actions?

The following nine career anchors describe career directions different individuals find essential and meaningful.

1. ***Technical/functional competence***. Individuals with these values are excited by the content of the work and prefer that any advancement is in technical or functional areas of competence. Moving up as a manager is not something that is necessarily desirable as it is too political. *Implementation:* Develop in your work and mentor others.
2. ***General managerial competence****.* These individuals are motivated to become managers and are interested in general competencies related to (i) problem solving in analyzing information and making decisions under conditions where information might be uncertain or incomplete, (ii) motivating people through involving and leading people, and (iii) responding and being stimulated (rather than exhausted) during critical times. *Implementation:* Seek opportunities to lead projects or teams.
3. ***Autonomy/independence****.* Being independent is important. This person likes work situations which are not constrained by rules or schedules, and does not like working in organizations where salary decisions and promotions depend on others. *Implementation:* Work as an independent consultant or seek projects where you can work alone.
4. ***Organizational security****.* This person likes to be in an organization where there is job security and long-term tenure. This person likes to work in a situation where there common organizational norms or values. *Implementation:* Find work situations where there is more predictability and stability.
5. ***Geographical stability****.* For this person, relocating to a different geographical area is undesirable. Living and working in the same area is valued. *Implementation:* Seek work where there is less travel and need to relocate.
6. ***Entrepreneurial creativity***. This person values building or creating something that is their own project. The person is easily bored and will tend to move from project to project. Initiating new enterprises is more interesting than working in established enterprises. *Implementation:* Seek opportunities to get involved in developing something new.
7. ***Service/dedication to a cause****.* This person is primarily motivated to work in organizations or on tasks where there are opportunities to improve society. Changing the world, helping others, and working within one’s values are more important than their skills *Implementation:* Find organizations which are focused on improving society or have a cause.
8. ***Pure challenge***. Challenge, overcoming obstacles and solving complex problems is important, especially in winning over tough competitors. Competition and winning is everything. *Implementation:* Look for opportunities where you can solve problems and compete with others.
9. ***Lifestyle*.** This individual is motivated to find some balance between career and lifestyle. Paternity/maternity leaves, day care, and flexible schedules are important. Seeks organizations with pro-family values. *Implementation:* Find ways to establish flexibility in the work schedule and trading off work time for leisure time.

Each career anchor reflects core values.[[7]](#endnote-7) Ideally, we’d like to find job and life experiences which illustrate these values.

In implementing your career anchor, you can begin by assessing your job and life experiences and compare these with your core values. Is your primary career anchor of real value to your employer or a potential employer? Are there other jobs or life experiences which might fit your needs and values? Is your anchor dependent on certain economic conditions or political priorities? What would happen if the environment changed?

When you are more self-reliant in developing your career, you are more likely to be strategic in in selecting jobs, taking on assignments for longer term gains, or rejecting highly specialized jobs or isolated assignments that might restrict your visibility and long term career development. When you choose jobs which are inconsistent with your interests and values, there can be devastating implications. Career satisfaction is linked to loss of motivation, disinterest in career options, lack of application to career issues, and rejection career goals. Career dissatisfaction is different than job dissatisfaction which usually results from uninteresting work, frustration in the way the work in managed or designed, on the job nuisances, people problems, or a range of issues related to overwork, pay, lack of promotion or recognition.

**Quiz 9.3: Quiz results: How Proactive are You?** *[[8]](#endnote-8)*

The highest position score is 50. If you score more than 35, you might be considered highly proactive. However, ask yourself it others would agree that you are more proactive than reactive..

What are the implications of your proactive for you career planning and development?

What steps should you take to be more proactive?

Total your scores.

Your proactivity is likely to drive success in an indirect way. People who are more proactive are more likely to be innovative (e.g., in actively seeking out change and offering solutions). They demonstrate more political acumen in their organizations and take initiative in their careers (e.g., by seeking out feedback on their career and taking action). Because of these behaviors, they were more likely to experience a more satisfying and significant level of career progression. This evidence is most interesting as it illustrates that specific behaviors (beyond personality) might lead to career success.[[9]](#endnote-9)

This research sends a strong message to employees: Proactivity and taking charge of career development can lead to career success and satisfaction. Developing your own career plan might be one way to begin this process. The bottom line is that organizations are less likely to be able to provide the quality career planning services you need when you need it. So, beginning the process yourself is a logical step.

Being proactive recognizes a shift in responsibilities.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| From:  Being Organizationally Proactive: | To:  Being Personally Proactive: |
| Organizational learning: for career in organization | On-going learning: for life interests & career in variety of contexts |
| Know-how: for improving in the job | Learn how: for improving the capacity to learn continuously |
| Job security: for career in one organization | Employability: for career focused on life and work experiences |
| Organizational career: for moving up the organizational ladder | Self-reliance: for moving horizontally & vertically for life and work experiences |
| Work self: for work in organizations | Whole self: for life and work experiences |

# References

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6. Schein, E.H. (1990*) Career anchors: Discovering your real values*. San Diego, Calif.: Pheiffer and Company, p. 18. This test only summarizes the concepts and online tests can be found on the WWW. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Bateman, T.S., Crant, J.M. (1993). The proactive component of organizational behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 14: 103-118. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
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