

VALUES AND DRIVERS – WHAT IS YOUR CAREER ANCHOR?

Our values are our individual beliefs about what is good or desirable in life. They are our long-term guides and have a direct influence on our choices and how we interpret our experiences.

The psychologist Milton Rokeach argued that our values serve two main purposes.

1. They provide us with our standards – they are the criteria by which we determine whether or not something is praiseworthy or blameworthy.
2. They motivate our behaviour – we try to live up to our values and act accordingly.

When we are forced to act in a way that crosses our values, we are conflicted and unhappy.

Our work values are clearly aligned to our broader ‘lifestyle values’. They include a wide range of things, such as security, competence, creativity or adventure. They are a central part of our ‘career anchors’ – a concept which will be looked at next.

It is clear that different people want different things from their careers. The way that each individual defines ‘success’ in their careers is also diverse. For some, it is the traditional definition of career success – a large salary and a senior role, but for others it can be about achieving a whole range of different things. Some people thrive on excitement and new challenges, or the technical or intricate nature of their work. Others may be looking for stability and security, or may seek as much autonomy as possible over their working day.

If you can identify what it is that drives you and what you value in terms of your career, you will find it easier to set your career goals and consider a development plan to help you to achieve them.

Career Anchors

Edgar Schein, the organisational psychologist and MIT professor, first defined career anchors in the 1960s. In order to understand our anchors, he suggests that when looking at our careers, it is useful to recognise that we have both an internal and an external career.

- **The internal career:** this is our subjective idea about life and work and our role within it. It is what drives us, our ambitions, hopes and aspirations.
- **The external career:** this is more objective and represents the realistic possibilities available to us.

Your ‘career anchor’ is described as an internal compass that guides and defines your ‘internal career’. It is your motivator or driver and is the one thing you will not give up, even in the face of difficult choices.

Every new experience presents an opportunity to learn. If we want to make the most of these learning opportunities, we need to move beyond merely categorising them as good or bad, useful or not, fun or not. To benefit truly we need to ask ‘what have I learned about myself?’ One way of

doing this is to consider our reactions to differing scenarios and experiences. Schein suggests that in order to identify and understand our anchors, it is useful to consider our reactions in relation to three domains.

- **Skills and competencies – the things we are good at.** We can reflect on and seek feedback from others to discover what we are good at.
- **Motives – the things we want.** With each new experience we should come closer to understanding what it is we really desire. From early on in life many of us know what we want. However, experience will often temper these aspirations and/or provide us with new ambitions.
- **Values – the things that are important to us.** With each new encounter we can elicit more information about what it is we value in terms of our careers, both in the sense of what we are looking for in our work, but also with regard to the type of organisational climate that fits best with our values.

Schein believes that these three areas – competence, motives and values – form our ‘career anchors’.

Career development is about achieving flexibility and continuously evaluating and developing your skills in order to remain employable and fulfilled over the long term, regardless of who you are working for, and what industry you are working in. We also know that we are all very different and are motivated by different things. Some of us thrive on being innovative, others may seek stability.

Schein identified eight career anchor themes and suggests that we will all have prioritised preferences for them:

- technical/functional competence
- general management competence
- autonomy/independence
- security/stability
- entrepreneurial creativity
- service/dedication to a cause
- pure challenge
- lifestyle.

The Career Anchors questionnaire on the next page will help you to identify your Career Anchor/s.

Career Anchors Questionnaire

On a scale of 1 - 4 (1 low, 4 high) rate how the following statements apply to you.

1. I want to be really good at my job, one of the best, an expert.	TF
2. I really feel most satisfied when I am able to manage the work of others to achieve a common goal.	GMC
3. Ideally I want to do things my way and to my own timetable.	AI
4. I would much rather build my own business than be the boss in someone else's.	EC
5. I believe that security and stability are much more important than having the freedom to choose how I work.	SS
6. My ideal career will enable me to integrate all of my needs – whether work, personal or family.	LS
7. It is important to me that I use my talents to further the greater good.	S
8. I get a kick out of solving the unsolvable or winning against the odds.	PC
9. I will only feel really successful when I have the freedom to define my work.	AI
10. I feel most satisfied and fulfilled when I am able to use my expertise, talents and skills.	TF
11. I would really like to start my own business one day.	EC
12. I would be very uncomfortable working in an organisation that took a lot of risks. I prefer to work for an organisation that offers stability and security.	SS
13. I would rather seek employment elsewhere than move to a role that seriously undermined my ability to serve the greater good/others.	S
14. I prefer to work on projects that really challenge my problem-solving skills and have a competitive element.	PC
15. I would rather find a new job than accept a role that puts constraints on how I do my work.	AI
16. Balancing my work with my family and personal commitments is more important to me than a senior position.	LS



17. One day I would like to be the boss, in charge of a whole organisation.	GMC
18. Reaching a position of seniority in my area of expertise is far more important to me than becoming a more senior general manager.	TF
19. I want to make a difference in my career. I will only be truly satisfied if I feel I have made a real contribution to society.	S
20. Working on difficult problems is more important to me than achieving a high-level position.	PC
21. My preference in choosing a role would be to seek out opportunities that minimise any interference with my personal life (family, friends etc).	LS
22. I would feel really fulfilled if I was able to create an enterprise that was primarily the result of my ingenuity, skills and efforts.	EC
23. Job security and financial independence are really important to me.	SS
24. I would rather become a general manager with broader responsibilities than become a senior functional manager in my area of expertise.	GMC



Career Anchors: score chart

Record your scores in the grid below.

TF TECHNICAL/ FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCE	GMC GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE	AI AUTONOMY/ INDEPENDENCE	SS SECURITY/ STABILITY	EC ENTRE- PRENEURIAL CREATIVITY	S SERVICE/ DEDICATION TO A CAUSE	PC PURE CHALLENGE	LS LIFESTYLE
1.....	2.....	3.....	5.....	4.....	7.....	8.....	6.....
10.....	17.....	9.....	23.....	11.....	13.....	14.....	16.....
18.....	24.....	15.....	12.....	22.....	19.....	20.....	21.....
TOTAL.....	TOTAL.....	TOTAL.....	TOTAL.....	TOTAL.....	TOTAL.....	TOTAL.....	TOTAL.....

What are your top two or three? Read through the descriptions of Schein’s career anchors. Do you think your score reflects what is important to you?

Description of Career Anchors

Technical / Functional competence

- This kind of person likes being good at something and will work to become a guru or expert. They will commit themselves to specializing in their field. They like to be challenged and then use their skill to meet the challenge, doing the job properly and better than almost anyone else. They may be willing to be 'functional managers' but will not value the concerns of general management. If the work does not test their abilities and skills, they will very quickly become bored.

General Managerial competence

- Unlike technical/functional people, these individuals want to be managers; and not just to climb the ladder, or earn more money. They find that it is management per se that interests them. They like problem-solving and dealing with other people. They thrive on responsibility and ideally will look to rise up through the organizational levels so they can be in a position to make major policy decisions. To be successful, they will need analytical, emotional, interpersonal and intergroup competence.

Autonomy/ Independence

- Some people come to recognize that they find it really hard to be bound by other people's rules, procedures, working hours, or dress codes. In short, all of the things that come with working in any kind of organization. Primarily, these people have a need to work under their own rules and steam. Regardless of the type of work, they want to do things in their own way and at their own pace. They like clearly delineated, time-bound work within their area of expertise. As such, they will often gravitate towards careers that afford them as much autonomy as possible.

Security / Stability

- Security-focused people seek stability and continuity as a primary factor of their lives. We all need varying degrees of security at different points in our lives, however for some this is the predominant orientation throughout their lives and will certainly guide their career decisions. They will often seek out stable organisations that provide the greatest opportunity for job security. They also tend to prefer stable, predictable work tasks. They also need to believe that loyalty makes a real contribution to an organisation's performance.

Entrepreneurial Creativity

- People who have this anchor, have an overriding need to create new products or services. Whilst creativity exists in one form or another in all the groups, for the entrepreneur creating a new venture, product or service of some sort is essential to their sense of success and fulfilment. They are obsessed with their need to create, are restless and continually require new creative challenges. They like to run their own businesses, but differ from those who seek autonomy in that they will share the workload. Ownership is more important than making money, although this is viewed as a key measure of success.

Service / Dedication to a cause

- Some people will pursue a career because they want to embody their core values in their work and careers. As such, they have a keener orientation towards their values than any talents or competencies. Their choices will be based on a desire to improve the world in some way. They will want work that allows them to influence their employing organisations in the direction of their values. Service-oriented people are driven by how they can help other people more than using their talents (which may fall in other areas).

Pure Challenge

- Some people are driven by challenge. They will define success as overcoming tremendous obstacles, solving the unsolvable or winning out against impossible odds. They will seek constant stimulation and difficult problems that they can tackle. Most people will want a degree of challenge in their work, but for this type the challenge is the only thing that matters. Such people will change jobs when the current one gets boring and their career histories can be very varied.

Lifestyle

- Initially it appears that the notion that one's career anchor is organized around lifestyle is a contradiction in terms. However, many people who are highly motivated towards a meaningful career, find themselves in situations that mean their careers must be integrated into their total lifestyle. This is an evolving process, ergo people who find themselves in this situation want flexibility above all else. When seeking employment they are more likely to be interested in an organisation's attitude towards personal/family concerns, than the sector or area of expertise. They may even take long periods off work in which to indulge in their passions.