

Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 16, 1989

PLANNING FOR CAREER SUCCESS: IS WHERE YOU ARE GOING WHERE YOU REALLY WANT TO BE?

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Introduction

It is not uncommon for college students to give little real thought to Job and career objectives until the realization hits them about the beginning of their senior year that they will soon have to find a job. This experiential exercise was designed to permit you to assess much earlier whether "where you are going" (the job and career you are preparing yourself for) is "where you really want to be" (what you are really working to accomplish). It will give you the opportunity to reevaluate job and career plans while there is still time to refocus your education and experience.

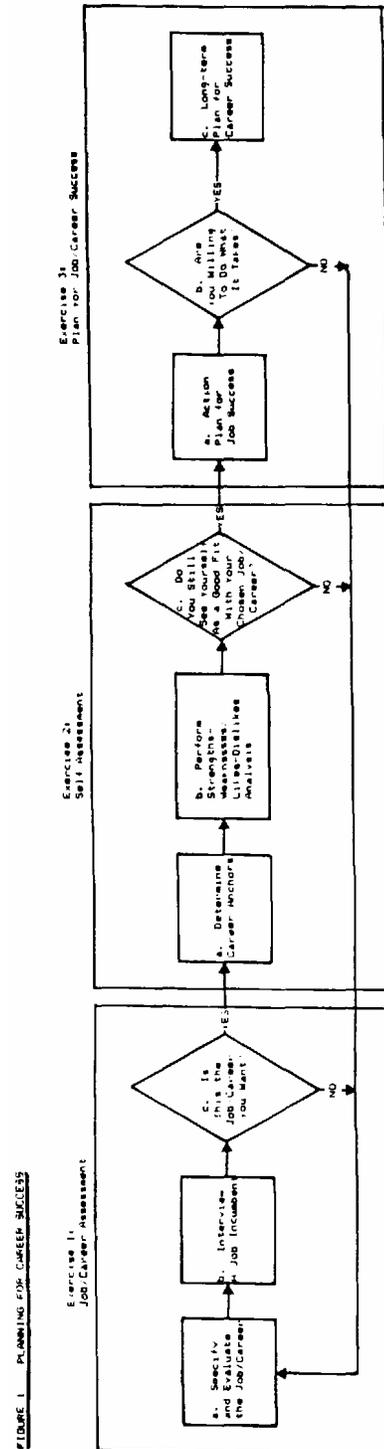
The framework below represents a comprehensive, step-by-step individual career planning model. As you will soon discover, it will help you judge the accuracy of your present job/career perceptions, systematically evaluate how well your present job/career objective; mesh with your personal characteristics, and develop short-term plans and long-term strategies for career success. The model provides the framework for the three exercises that follow. (NOTE: The instructor's material that supports this experiential exercise appears at the end of the exercise.)

Exercise 1: Job/Career Assessment

- a. Identify the job you hope to secure after completing college. Using the following questions, jot down in the space provided below your perceptions of what that job would be like.
 - 1) Nature of the Work:
 - Describe the kinds of things you would be expected to do in this job.
 - 2) Conditions of Work:
 - What kinds of hours would you be expected to work?
 - Does the job offer security?
 - What is the work environment like?
 - Are there elements of the job that may be unpleasant?
 - 3) Worker Qualifications:
 - Is previous experience required?
 - Is there any preference given to any particular group of individuals?

¹ Adapted from Edmond Billingsley, *Career Planning and Job Hunting for Today's Students* (Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear, 1978), 33-34.

² While the paper is worded as an exercise, space for recording student reactions is not provided due to space limitations in this proceedings.



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- 4) Worker Relationships:
 - Would you be working alone or with other individuals?
 - Would there be a lot of competition among fellow workers in this job?
 - Are there opportunities in the job to develop close personal relationships?
 - 5) Pay, Training, and Promotion:
 - What would the expected pay be for this job?
 - What would be the normal promotional steps?
 - How long would these promotional steps take?
 - How would the pay be affected with each promotional step?
 - 6) Physical Qualifications:
 - What physical qualifications would be required for the job?
 - 7) Work Experience:
 - What experience would be required for the job you seek?
 - What special skills must you possess to qualify for the job?
 - 8) Educational Requirements:
 - What level of education would be required?
 - 9) Psychological Qualifications:
 - What aptitudes, abilities, personality characteristics, and so on would be conducive to success in this job?
 - 10) Equipment Requirements:
 - What items such as tools, clothing, car, and so on must be supplied by the employee?
 - 11) Performance Evaluation:
 - How would you be evaluated on this job?
 - Who would evaluate you on this job?
 - When and what kind of feedback would you expect to receive?
 - 12) Employment Opportunities:
 - To what extent are workers in demand today for this kind of job?
 - Where is the greatest demand geographically and industry-wise?
 - What is the employment outlook for this job in the next three to five years?
- b. Contact (either in person or by phone) an organization in the area with the type of job you hope to secure after completing college. Identify within the organization an individual who holds the job you seek and who can provide answers to questions regarding this job and career. Use the questions that follow as an interview guide.³ Record his/her responses for later evaluation.
- 1) Nature of the work
 - Does the job or career you are interested in exist within this organization?
 - Is it an entry-level job or above?
 - Ask for a brief description of the kinds of things an employee is expected to do.
 - 2) Conditions of work
 - What kinds of hours are you expected to work? (Question whether overtime, night work, regular hours, irregular hours, weekends, etc. are required.) Are you paid for overtime?
 - Does the job offer security? Is it seasonal or irregular? When people leave this job for another organization, what are the usual or prevalent reasons given?
 - What is the work environment like? Are there any hazards?
 - Can the job be challenging enough to hold your attention and motivate you?
 - Are there elements of the job that might be unpleasant, such as heat, noise, and so on?
 - 3) Worker qualifications
 - Is previous experience or training required? What is the source, nature, and length for such experience and training?
 - Is there evidence of any preference given on the basis of age, sex, or race?
 - 6) Worker relationships
 - Do you work primarily alone or with other people in this job?
 - Is there a lot of competition among fellow workers in this job, such as commissions or promotions?
 - Are the relationships between employees on the job formal or informal?
 - Given the nature of the work, are there opportunities to develop close personal relationships?
 - 5) Pay, training, and promotion
 - What are the maximum, average, and minimum wages for this job?
 - What are the normal promotional steps for this job? How long do the steps take on the job? Does a formal career planning program exist? Average? How does pay change with each promotional step?
 - Does the organization support a mentorship program, formal or informal?
 - 6) Physical qualifications
 - Are there any visual, height, strength, stamina, speech, or appearance requirements?
 - 7) Work experience
 - What experience, if any, is required for entry-level and higher-level jobs?
 - What special skills must one possess to qualify for this job?
 - Are there any skill tests given for this job?
 - 8) Educational requirements
 - Does entry into this job require a high school diploma, associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate, or postgraduate work?
 - Does advancement on the job require formal education, advanced degrees, special classes or special training?
 - 9) Psychological qualifications
 - What aptitudes, abilities, personality characteristics, and so on are needed to be successful at getting and mastering the job?

³ From Edmond Billingsley, Career Planning and Job Hunting for Today's Students (Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear, 1978, PP. 33-34).

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-Are there screening exams or psychological tests given? What is the nature of such exams?

- 10) Equipment requirements
 -What items, such as tools or clothing, must be supplied by the employee?
 -Is an automobile required?
- 11) Performance evaluation
 -When are employees evaluated on this job? Does it vary with length of service?
 -Who is expected to conduct these evaluations? Are superiors trained in formal performance appraisal methods? Does a formal evaluation system exist? When and in what form can the employee expect to receive feedback on his or her performance?
 -Are career planning and performance appraisals separate or simultaneous?
- 12) Employment opportunities
 -To what extent are workers in demand today in this type of job?
 -Where is the greatest demand, geographically or industry-wise?
 -Is employment likely to increase, decrease, or stay the same in the next three to five years?

c. Is this the job/career you want? Now that you have had a more realistic preview of your job/career interests (part b above), compare it to your perceptions of what the job/career would be like (part a). Given this comparison, are you still interested in pursuing such a career path? If so, the next logical step involves self-assessment (Exercise 2). Otherwise, from the perspective of career planning, you should now reconsider your Job/career choice, specify (in the space provided below) an alternative job/career, and start over with part a of exercise 1.

Exercise 2: Self-Assessment

a. Determine Career Anchors.

Complete the following 44 item questionnaire⁴ by circling the number that best describes your feelings about each statement. Then follow the instructions provided to complete Part a of the exercise.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree 4
1) I would leave my company rather than be promoted out of my area of expertise.				
2) Becoming highly specialized and highly competent in some specific functional or technical area is important to me.	1	2	3	4
3) A career that is free from organization restriction is important to me.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree 4
4) I have always sought a career in which I could be of service to others.				
5) A career that provides a maximum variety of types of assignments and work projects is important to me.	1	2	3	4
6) To rise to a position in general management is important to me.	1	2	3	4
7) I like to be identified with a particular organization and the prestige that accompanies that organization.	1	2	3	4
8) Remaining in my present geographical location rather than moving because of a promotion is important to me.	1	2	3	4
9) The use of my skills in building a new business enterprise is important to me.	1	2	3	4
10) I would like to reach a level of responsibility in an organization where my decisions really make a difference.	1	2	3	4
11) I see myself more as a generalist as opposed to being committed to one specific area of expertise.	1	2	3	4
12) An endless variety of challenges in my career is important to me.	1	2	3	4
13) Being identified with a powerful or prestigious employer is important to me.	1	2	3	4
14) The excitement of participating in many areas of work has been the underlying motivation behind my career.	1	2	3	4
15) The process of supervising, influencing, leading, and controlling people at all levels is important to me.	1	2	3	4
16) I am willing to sacrifice some of my autonomy to stabilize my total life situation.	1	2	3	4
17) An organization that will provide security through guaranteed work, benefits, a good retirement, and so forth, is important to me.	1	2	3	4
18) During my career, I will be mainly concerned with my own sense of freedom and autonomy.	1	2	3	4
19) I will be motivated throughout my career by the number of products that I have been directly involved in creating.	1	2	3	4
20) I want others to identify me by my organization and job.	1	2	3	4
21) Being able to use my skills and talents in the service of an important cause is important to me.	1	2	3	4
22) To be recognized by my title and status is important to me.	1	2	3	4
23) A career that permits a maximum of freedom and autonomy to choose my own work, hours, and so forth, is important to me.	1	2	3	4

⁴ Adapted from "Reexamining the Career Anchor Model," by T. J. Delong, *Personnel*, May-June, 1982, pp. 56-57.

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4
24) A career that gives me a great deal of flexibility is important to me.				
25) To be in a position in general management is important to me.	1	2	3	4
26) It is important for me to be identified by my occupation.	1	2	3	4
27) I will accept a management position only if it is in my area of expertise.	1	2	3	4
28) It is important for me to remain in my present geographical location rather than move because of a promotion or new job assignment.	1	2	3	4
29) I would like to accumulate a personal fortune to prove to myself and others that I am competent.	1	2	3	4
30) I want to achieve a position that gives me the opportunity to combine analytical competence with supervision of people.	1	2	3	4
31) I have been motivated throughout my career by using my talents in a variety of different areas of work.	1	2	3	4
32) An endless variety of challenges is what I really want from my career.	1	2	3	4
33) An organization that will give me long-run stability is important to me.	1	2	3	4
34) To be able to create or build something that is entirely my own product or idea is important to me.	1	2	3	4
35) Remaining in my specialized area, as opposed to being promoted out of my area of expertise, is important to me.	1	2	3	4
36) I do not want to be constrained by either an organization or the business world.	1	2	3	4
37) Seeing others change because of my efforts is important to me.	1	2	3	4
38) My main concern in life is to be competent in my area of expertise.	1	2	3	4
39) The chance to pursue my own lifestyle and not be constrained by the rules of an organization is important to me.	1	2	3	4
40) I find most organizations to be restrictive and intrusive.	1	2	3	4
41) Remaining in my area of expertise, rather than being promoted into general management, is important to me.	1	2	3	4
42) I want a career that allows me to meet my basic needs through helping others.	1	2	3	4
43) The use of my interpersonal and helping skills in the service of others is important to me.	1	2	3	4
44) I like to see others change because of my efforts.	1	2	3	4

Now, compute your mean response for each of the following career anchors using the item numbers listed below the respective lines (for example, for "Technical Competence" sum your responses to statements 1, 2, 27, 35, 38, and 41). Then divide each anchor total by the number of items for that anchor to obtain your subscale score for the eight career anchors. After your instructor has provided you with an explanation of the meaning of career anchors and how the subscale scores are interpreted, continue on to part b of this exercise.

Technical Competence	#1, 2, 27, 35, 38, 41	÷ 6 = _____
Autonomy	#3, 18, 23, 36, 39, 40	÷ 6 = _____
Service	#4, 21, 37, 42, 43, 44	÷ 6 = _____
Identity	#7, 13, 20, 22, 26	÷ 5 = _____
Variety	#5, 12, 14, 24, 31, 32	÷ 6 = _____
Managerial Competence	#6, 10, 11, 15, 25, 30	÷ 6 = _____
Security	#8, 16, 17, 28, 33	÷ 5 = _____
Creativity	#9, 19, 29, 34	÷ 4 = _____

- b. Perform strengths-weaknesses/likes-dislikes analysis. In light of the information gleaned from Exercise 1 pertaining to your job/career goals, list your perceived strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes (SWLD) in the appropriate sections below. Strengths are one's attributes, skills, talents, and characteristics (physical and/or psychological) that contribute to one's effectiveness in a job. Weaknesses, on the other hand, are those some elements that detract from one's effectiveness. Likes are things that a person discovers enjoyable; dislikes are self-imposed restrictions. Try to be totally honest with yourself to obtain the most objective understanding of the factors that may significantly affect the outcome of your career path decision.
- c. Are you a "fit" with your chosen career?
 - 1) Given the outcome of the self-assessment exercise (parts a and b above), do you still see yourself as a good fit with your chosen job/career? Explain.

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- 2) Can you think of other job/career alternatives that are consistent with your self-assessment profile (parts a and b above)? Explain.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Likes	Dislikes

have gained from the preceding exercises and information provided in your text, meet again in your discussion group to develop a list of "guidelines" that, if adhered to, should lead to long-term career success.

- 2) Explain what you have gained from involving yourself in this experiential exercise.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES

Purpose of the Experiential Exercise

This experiential exercise was designed to provide students with:

1. A hands-on experience in the planning and development of their own career strategy.
2. A clearer understanding of job and career opportunities in organizations.
3. An investigative framework that will enable them to minimize unrealistic job/career expectations.
4. An increased self-awareness and understanding of one's own capabilities and deficiencies as they relate to one's job/career objectives.
5. An increased awareness of the types of courses that might be taken and related work and intern experiences that might be emphasized to more fully prepare themselves for their selected job and career.

Exercise 3: Planning for Job/career Success

- a. In part b of Exercise 2, you identified your strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes (SWLD) as they relate to your chosen job/career.
- 1) Explain what you specifically can do to capitalize upon your strengths in preparation for that job/career.
 - 2) How do you intend to overcome your deficiencies in preparation for that job/career? Explain.
 - 3) How do you intend to cope with what you dislike about that job/career? Explain.
 - 4) Meet with a group (preferably 3-5 other individuals with similar job/career objectives) to brainstorm other ways of addressing the above issues.
- b. Now that you are aware of what it will take to be a better "fit" with your chosen job/career, do you think you have the ability and willingness to do what is necessary to build on your strengths, cope with your dislikes, and overcome your weaknesses? If your answer is NO, from the perspective of career planning, you should now reconsider your job/career choice, specify (in the space below) an alternative job/career, and start over with part a of Exercise 1.
- c. Will you attain long-term career success?
- 1) Based upon the experience and knowledge you

How This Experiential Exercise can Be Used

This experiential exercise consists of three separate but related parts. Since job/career planning is an individual matter, certain parts of this experiential exercise (e.g., self-assessment) should be assigned to individual participants as an in-class project. Other parts of the exercise can be more enlightening as a group assignment and/or outside project. Figure 2 presents all potential formats in which various parts of the exercise can be handled. To complete all parts of this exercise normally requires at least two 50 minute class periods.

Figure 2
ASSIGNMENT FORMATS

	Outside			
	In-class	Class	Individual	Group
Exercise 1:				
Part a	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Part b	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Part c	Yes	No	No	Yes
Exercise 2:				
Part a	Yes	No	Yes	No
Part b	Yes	No	Yes	No
Part c	Yes	No	Yes	No
Exercise 3:				
Part a	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Part b	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Part c	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

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Sample Results

In Exercise 1, Job/Career Assessment, participants are asked to compare their perceptions about various aspects of their chosen job/career with more realistic information obtained from an actual job incumbent. While there are no specific solutions to this exercise, it enhances participants' awareness of their continuing interest in their chosen job/career. As a result of this exercise, some participants may use the instructor as a sounding-board for refining or modifying job/career goals.

Exercise 2, Self-Assessment, contains three parts. Part a requires that participants complete a questionnaire in order to determine their career anchors. Career anchors are "a syndrome of motives, values, and self-perceived competencies which function to guide and constrain an individual's career." The participant's dominant career anchors are those with the highest calculated subscale scores. The meanings of different career anchors are presented in Figure 3. Figure 3 can be duplicated and handed out or used as a transparency master.

Figure 3
POSSIBLE CAREER ANCHORS

1. Managerial Competence. Individuals with this anchor wish to demonstrate (a) interpersonal competence or the ability to influence, supervise, lead, manipulate, and control people toward the most effective achievement of organizational goals; (b) analytical competence or the ability to identify, analyze, and solve complex conceptual problems under conditions of uncertainty and incomplete information; and (c) emotional stability or the capacity to be stimulated by emotional and interpersonal crises rather than becoming exhausted or debilitated by them.
2. Technical-Functional Competence. Individuals with this anchor organize their career around the challenge of the actual work they are doing; it is the technical or functional area and the analytical work that "turns on" this individual.
3. Security. Individuals with this anchor tie their careers to a particular organization as a way of stabilizing and ensuring career security.
4. Creativity. Individuals with this anchor express a strong need to create somethings of their own.
5. Autonomy and Independence. Individuals with this anchor are concerned about their sense of freedom and autonomy.

6. Service. Individuals with this anchor are concerned with helping others or working on an important cause.
7. Identity. Individuals with this anchor emphasize status and title in their careers; they value the prestige that accrues to a particular job or career.
8. Variety. Individuals with this anchor want an endless variety of challenges; they are motivated by being able to use their talents in a number of different ways.

Source: E. H. Schein, Career Dynamics (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1978) and T. J. DeLong, "Reexamining the Career Anchor Model," *Personnel* 59 (May-June 1982), p. 50.

Part b of Exercise 2 involves participants in a self-assessment of their strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes (SWLD) as they relate to their present job! career objectives. A sample of SWLD analysis is presented in Figure 4. The instructor may wish to share this with participants as a handout or transparency, either before or after completion of this part of the experiential exercise.

The instructor may wish to conduct a general discussion of Part C of this exercise. SWLD analysis usually generates a considerable amount of discussion.

Exercise 3, Plan for Job/Career Success, involves development of both short-term action plans for job success (Part a) and long-term strategies for career success (Part b). Figure 5 below provides a list of potentially promising means or action plans for overcoming weaknesses and improving the "candidate-job fit." This also may be shared with participants in order to bring to their attention options that they may not have considered on their own.

The instructor may also wish to comment on the fact that dislikes are, at times, a function of one's present shortcomings. They may, thus, be rectified once the weaknesses are overcome. It is also noteworthy that sometimes one's only alternative is to simply learn to cope with certain unpleasantnesses of a job. Finally, other undesirable features of a job may be alleviated through organizational change.

A list of guidelines for long-term career success is presented in Figure 6. Upon completion of Part c (section 1), you may wish to distribute Figure 6 to participants (as a hand-out), or use it as a transparency master. This list of "guidelines" often generates extensive discussions.

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Figure 4
SAMPLE SWLD ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Hard worker	Tend to be close-minded
Responsible	Inefficient time manager
Honest	Tend to nitpick
Religious	Hot tempered (sometimes)
High morals	Nervous in unfamiliar places
Take criticism well	Can't stay put in one place
Give constructive criticism	very long (i.e. desk, classroom, etc.)
Patient	Very opinionated
Very prompt	Put things off until last minute
Dependable	Bog down on detail in interesting subjects and overlook detail in less interesting subjects
Conservative	Poor in mathematics
Enjoy people	Allow friendship to affect decisions and judgment at times
Active	Too serious at times
Like to work	Possessive
Work well under pressure	Bored easily
Good judgment	Tend to preach at times
Slow to anger	Stubborn
High degree of empathy	Daydream
Help others	Judgmental
Go an extra mile	Quick to speak out before rationally analyzing facts
Kind	Open mouth without engaging brain
Very neat and orderly	Have hard time remembering names
Confident	Tend to overemphasize and exaggerate
Persistent	Spelling
Like to read	On occasion make snap judgments about situations and people's characters
Like to work with hands	Tend to downgrade self
Like to travel	Like to spend money
Like to make friends	Quick to correct people (even superiors) when wrong
Do things own way	Impatient reading technical material; skim through, missing important detail
Write well	Clock watcher
Don't smoke, drink, etc.	
Don't hold grudges	
LIKES	DISLIKES
Like to travel	Do not want to work for a large firm
Would like to live in California	Will not work in the North
Like to be own boss	Do not like to work behind a desk all day
Would like to live in a large city	Do not like to wear suits all the time
Enjoy watching football and baseball	
Enjoy playing golf and tennis	

Source: R. Wayne Mondy and Robert M. Noe III, Personnel: The Management of Human Resources (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1987), pp. 341-342.

Figure 5
MEANS OF OVERCOMING WEAKNESSES

Part Time or Summer Jobs
Internships
Student Organizations & Clubs
Voluntary or Community Service
College Courses
Class Projects
Mnagement Development Programs
Seminars & Workshops
Guidance Counselling

Figure 6
GUIDELINES FOR LONG-TERM CAREER SUCCESS

1. The basic foundation of success is found in good performance that pleases one's superiors. However, since all performance is not easily measured, you must be careful to determine the real criteria by which you are evaluated and be vigorously honest in evaluating your own performance against these criteria.
2. Strive for positions that have high visibility and exposure in which you can be a hero observed by higher officials.
3. Develop relations with a mobile senior executive who can be your sponsor.
4. Learn your job as quickly as possible and train a replacement so that you can be available to move.
5. Nominate yourself for other positions. Modesty is not necessarily a virtue.
6. Before taking a position, rigorously assess your strengths and weaknesses, what you like and do not like. Do not accept a promotion if it draws on your weaknesses and entails mainly activities you do not like.
7. Leave at your own convenience but on good terms without practicing criticism of the organization.
8. Do not stay under an immobile superior who is not promoted in three to five years.
9. Accept the facts that responsibility will always exceed authority and that organizational politics are inevitable. Establish alliances and fight necessary battles, restricting upward battles to very important issues.
10. Recognize that you will face ethical dilemmas no matter how moral you try to be. Therefore, from time to time, examine your personal values and question how much you will sacrifice for the organization.

Source: Ross A. Webber, "Career Problems of Young Managers," California Management Review, Summer 1976, p. 29.