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Enabling career success as an emergent process[☆]



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Life ain't a dress rehearsal.

Lawrence T. Holman

A career is a person's evolving sequence of work experiences over time. Although there are many definitions of career success, most of them construe it as the culmination of a person's objective attainments (e.g., pay, promotions, and status) and feelings of personal satisfaction and accomplishment with his or her career to date.

Such definitions may readily cue you to conceive of your career success as a **cumulative outcome**: something to be optimized, such that at the end of the day – whenever that occurs – you will be pleased with what you have accomplished and with your overall career. Questions that might stem from conceiving of your career success as a cumulative outcome include:

- Am I content with my financial status?
- Will I be set to retire comfortably?
- Have I been promoted or otherwise duly rewarded for my contributions?
- Have I attained a nice level of social status through my work?
- Am I satisfied with my work and what I have accomplished?
- Have I achieved my overall career goals?

Conceiving of career success as a cumulative outcome is valuable insofar as doing so can focus, motivate, and sustain you in pursuing your career aspirations. There are, however, some potential shortcomings of this approach – especially

with regard to goals in the objective domains of pay, promotion, and status. First, what you attain will be the fruit of not only how hard and well you work, but also of factors largely beyond your control such as workplace politics, economics, and policy changes. Second, when multi-millionaires are asked how much money would be enough to satisfy them, they often respond “just a little more.” This illustrates the tendency for people to reset their aspirations to be *just out of reach*, thereby precluding ever feeling like they have truly *made it*. Third, while most great and worthwhile human achievements are at least partly the result of short-term sacrifices made for the sake of long-term gains, a sustained, concerted focus on high objective career goals can prove costly in terms of other important facets of life, including family and personal relationships, physical, spiritual, and emotional health, as well as overall happiness.

Career success can also be viewed as being more about the quality of the journey than the destination. This approach is analogous to focusing more on whether you are *self-actualizing* than on whether you have *attained self-actualization*. Conceiving of career success as an **emergent process** is in line with the notion of a career as an evolving sequence of work experiences over time. It also underscores the message of our opening quotation that life is best savored along the way.

Given that most working adults spend more of their waking lives engaged in work than any other activity, the quality of day-to-day experiences along the way is an important aspect of career success. Viewing career success as an emergent process rather than a cumulative outcome brings to mind a rather different set of fundamental questions about your career. These include:

- Am I working in a role and organizational culture that feels right for me?
- Have I seriously considered what career success means to me?

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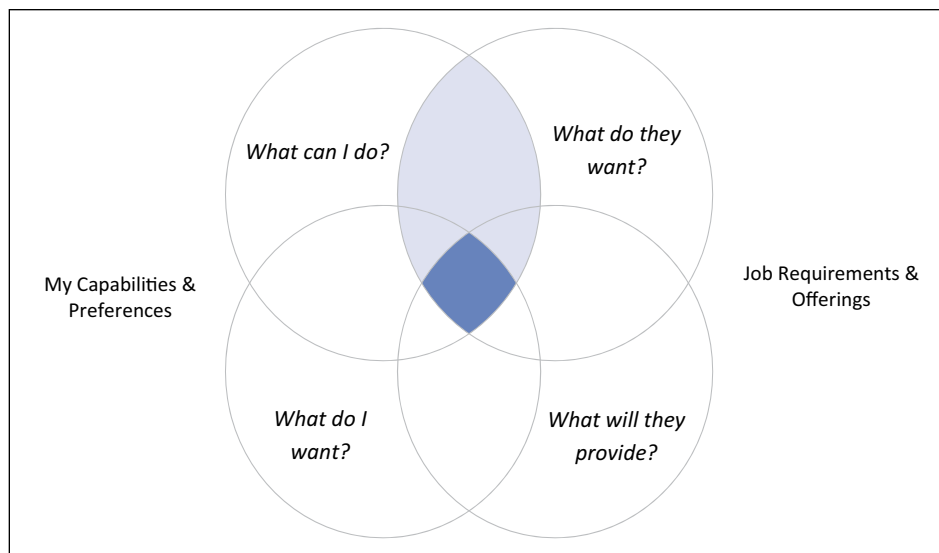


Figure 1 Four questions for finding your career fit.

- Am I being duly recognized and rewarded for my work?
- Am I developing myself and my work roles in ways that benefit all concerned?
- Am I engaged in mutually supportive relationships at work where I help and am helped by others?
- Am I future-proofing my career by anticipating and preparing for the career shocks I might encounter?
- Do I have a good balance between my work and other aspects of my life?

Addressing these questions could be considered a way of exploring the overarching question: *What would I do to have a more successful career if I thought about it as an emergent process?*

We suggest that career success is best viewed as both a cumulative outcome and an emergent process, though in many instances the latter will be more enabling of career success. In the rest of this article, we thus discuss a range of career concepts that you may apply in trying to answer the fundamental questions related to career success as an emergent journey.

AM I WORKING IN A ROLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE THAT FEELS RIGHT FOR ME?

Find out what you like doing best and get someone to pay you for doing it.

Katherine Whitehorn

In his landmark 1909 book, *Choosing a Vocation*, Frank Parsons argued that working in a role that accords with your “enthusiasms” and where your natural abilities are fully exercised and developed provides the foundation for a useful and happy life. Such a role ideally enables you to fully invest yourself in your work, and provides a meaningful sense of contribution, achievement, and joy, along the path to attaining your financial and other career aspirations.

Of course that is much easier said than done. Parsons thus laid out some robust principles for identifying a good *fit* between people and work roles. He outlined, for instance, that the three ingredients for making a wise job choice are:

- “a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes
- a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work
- true reasoning on [the relationships between] these two groups of facts.”

These three broad considerations for seeking or crafting a work role that *feels right* for you provided the foundation of over a century of developments in vocational guidance, which is now more commonly referred to as career coaching or career management. The first element that Parsons identified to have a more successful career can be divided into the two questions on the left side of Fig. 1. Parsons’ second element may be unpacked in terms of the two questions on the right side of Fig. 1.¹

Managing your career by finding a good career fit involves striving to identify and/or craft a job such that there is a substantial overlap between what *they want* and what *you can do*, as well as what *you want* and what *they will provide*. In such roles, your capabilities meet the job requirements and you are provided with a substantial degree of whatever you *most* want from your career (e.g., meaningful work, convenient location and hours, developmental opportunities, friendly colleagues, and/or a certain level of salary). Next we discuss each of these four questions and some tools to help you in the ongoing career management task of answering them.

¹ In this figure, “they” refers to whoever you might work for.

What Can I Do?

This question is about your capabilities; that is, what you are able to do, achieve, and contribute at work. It is generally answered in terms of your educational attainments, experiences, strengths, knowledge, skills, abilities, and work-role related accomplishments. While people often have a reasonable sense of what they can do, their awareness of their capabilities can be substantially enriched through developmental initiatives such as 360 degree feedback, career coaching or workshops, formal psychometric assessments, or the excellent *Reflected Best Self* (RBS) process developed by Laura Morgan Roberts and her colleagues.

What Do They Want?

In this question, “they” refers to any organization or career stakeholder (e.g., actual or potential customer or client) who may enable you to work toward realizing your career aspirations. Organizations want individuals with the capabilities and inclinations to work effectively to attain organizational goals. Other career stakeholders, such as your customers, clients, partners, bosses, colleagues, and employees also have needs and expectations that you need to understand and address in order for your career to survive and thrive.

A robust process for ascertaining what “they” want is the *Job/Role Analysis and Planning Tool* developed by Ed Schein and John Van Maanen, as described in their article on this topic. Using this tool involves investigating and systematically mapping out your responses to the following questions with regard to each work role you examine:

- Who are the major internal and external role stakeholders and what are their expectations?
- What are the types of knowledge, skill, and other attributes required to excel in this role (see the continually updated website <http://www.onetonline.org/for> such details about 1000s of jobs, together with other useful information such as the extent to which they are in demand)?
- How are the skill and other role requirements likely to evolve over the next 2–5 years?
- What major challenges for effective performance am I likely to encounter?

Such information may be gleaned through sources such as networking, discreet enquiries, surveys, presentations, feedback, blogs, business analysts, mentors, and company reports.

What Do I Want?

Developing self-insight by systematically answering and routinely revisiting this perennial question is needed to thrive in your career. There are many excellent, widely available models and processes for doing so. One simple though powerful approach is to answer the following eleven questions:

- What are my life goals?
- What makes me feel most alive?
- What truly gives me joy?

- What makes me angry?
- What skills do I most enjoy using?
- What skills do I least enjoy using?
- What kinds of people do I most enjoy spending time with?
- When I retire, what am I likely to be most proud I did?
- When I retire, what am I likely to be most proud I did *not* do?
- What would I like to be remembered for at my funeral?
- What type of roles, situations, and people do I hope to avoid?

In our experience, writing out your responses to such questions is much more useful than just thinking about them. Subsequently discussing your responses with a partner, trusted colleague, spiritual advisor, and/or coach can further help you discern and connect with your true life goals at a given point in time.

What some people discover they most want is to make a positive difference in the world by trying to determine and work in accordance with their *calling*, perhaps by following Frederick Buechner’s advice to seek:

...the place where your deep gladness... and the world's deep hunger meet.

Depending on your skills and inclinations, there is an almost limitless array of roles and contexts in which you might strive to do this. The world has a “hunger” not only for more poverty prevention, a sustainably livable planet, as well as healthy and productive workplaces, but also for new and improved goods and services. Opportunities thus abound for scientists, engineers, and scholars; educators, entertainers, and artists; managers, entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs; production, maintenance, and safety workers; and people with many other backgrounds to strive to recognize and deliver some aspect of what the world most wants and needs.

Another valuable approach for developing your self-insight into what you want from your career is to ascertain your *career anchor*, defined by Schein and Van Maanen as the one thing you would be most reluctant to give up or compromise, and thus what a role must provide in order for you to find it satisfying. Based on longitudinal, systematic career history interviews with several hundred people at various career stages, Schein and Van Maanen describe the following eight career anchors:

- **General Managerial Competence**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to demonstrate your competence as a general manager of others and climb to higher levels in an organization
- **Technical Functional Competence**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to further develop and apply your skills in a particular line of work
- **Entrepreneurial Creativity**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to create your own enterprise or organization
- **Autonomy/Independence**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to define your own work and way of working
- **Security/Stability**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to have employment certainty or long-term job tenure

- **Service/Dedication to a Cause**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to pursue work that you believe contributes something of value to society
- **Pure Challenge**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to work on solutions to seemingly difficult problems, to win out over worthy opponents, or to overcome difficult obstacles
- **Lifestyle**, whereby you would not give up the opportunity to integrate and balance personal and family needs while meeting the requirements of a work career.

Schein and Van Maanen's article on *Career Anchors and Job/Role Planning: Tools for Career and Talent Management* outlines the nature of career anchors, different methods of determining your career anchor, and a range of unfolding workplace dynamics (e.g., restructuring and globalization, changing organizational forms, and technological developments) with implications for the careers of people with different career anchors.

What Will They Provide Me?

Discovering your place under the sun – a role that is a good fit for you – involves determining what different career options would provide you in terms of *intrinsic rewards* (e.g., stimulating projects and colleagues; learning and development opportunities; and/or scope to live your career values) and *extrinsic rewards* (e.g., job security; flexible work practices; salary; awards; status; and/or promotions). The specific intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that matter most in determining your personal fit to a work role will of course depend on how you answered the question: *What do I want?*

Insights into what a particular career option might provide can be gathered through avenues similar to those used to ascertain what “they” want, as reviewed above, as well as from www.glassdoor.com, where employees and former employees provide anonymous reviews of companies and their management. An additional facet of the *Job/Role Analysis and Planning Tool* is to investigate what valued rewards you may receive from various career stakeholders of a role you are considering (e.g., Will the role be flexible? Interesting? Well-supported?).

What you will receive from working in a particular role will depend not only upon the role itself, but also on the context in which it is embedded. In their article, *Discerning Career Cultures at Work*, Tim Hall and Jeff Yip define an organization's *career culture* as the shared norms, assumptions, and artifacts that shape the meaning of careers within an organization. They distinguish types of career cultures based on two dimensions. The first dimension is the extent to which the career cultures value *assimilation* into a shared organizational identity, typically through strong socialization practices, versus *differentiation* that celebrates and enables career success through unique contributions. The second dimension addresses the extent to which career cultures focus on *intrinsic rewards* (e.g., autonomy, comradery, meaningful work) versus *extrinsic rewards* (e.g. awards, status symbols, high salaries).

Based on these two dimensions, Hall and Yip propose the following four prototypical career cultures:

- **Apprenticeship cultures**, characterized by assimilation and intrinsic values
- **Prestige cultures**, characterized by assimilation and extrinsic values
- **Protean cultures**, characterized by differentiation and intrinsic values
- **Merit cultures**, characterized by differentiation and extrinsic values.

Working in a career culture misaligned with your career preferences can be frustrating and demoralizing. Thus, Hall and Yip provide helpful examples of the four types of career cultures and describe how to discover the career culture of an organization where you work or are considering joining. They also provide advice on how to assess your fit with an organization's career culture. Last, they offer guidance for individuals and organizations to deal with instances in which career culture signals are mixed.

What an employer might provide you can be negotiable, enabling you to establish what Denise Rousseau, Maria Tomprou, and Maria Simosi call an *idiosyncratic deal* (*i-deal*) with your employer. In their article on *Negotiating Flexible and Fair Idiosyncratic Deals (I-Deals)*, they explain that *i-deals* are customized employee arrangements that can provide access to valuable opportunities for growth and advancement, more interesting, challenging, and meaningful work, and/or arrangements that help you balance your work with other aspects of your life, or ease your transition to retirement.

I-deals typically involve mutually beneficial arrangements in one or more of the following five realms: (i) development opportunities, (ii) desired tasks or ways of working, (iii) flexible work schedule or location, (iv) reduced work hours, and/or (v) financial compensation. They can be negotiated either *ex-ante* (i.e., before joining an organization), *ex-post* (i.e., after doing so), or based on a threat to leave the organization. Not surprisingly, people who take personal initiative and have good political skills are most like likely to attain and enjoy the potential benefits of successfully negotiating an *i-deal*.

Rousseau and her colleagues outline the nature, benefits, and threats to both employees and employers of *i-deals* involving each of the five realms, as well as the three different times when they might be negotiated. They also draw on Rousseau's award-winning research to provide valuable practical guidance about how both employees and employers can prepare for, negotiate, and implement *i-deals* in a manner that avoids the significant negative repercussions of *shady deals* – special employment arrangements that are perceived as preferential treatment (i.e., favoritism or deals that benefit the manager more than the organization) or *rule-breaking* (i.e., *i-deals* that violate company policies or practices).

HAVE I SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED WHAT CAREER SUCCESS MEANS TO ME?

It is never too late to be what you might have been.

George Eliot

How successful is your career? What indicates the extent to which your career is successful? In his 2005 article *Experiencing Career Success*, Peter Heslin discussed how, for instance, a high income does not necessarily equate to feeling successful in your career, or a relatively low income to feeling unsuccessful, as well as related practical implications for defining and working to realize your personal definition of career success.

The imperative to carefully think through what success means to you, as well as what you are and are not willing to do to attain it, is cogently underscored by the following personal observation that renowned Harvard Business School (HBS) scholar Clayton Christensen reported in his 2010 article, *How Will You Measure Your Life?*

Over the years I've watched the fates of my HBS classmates from 1979 unfold; I've seen more and more of them come to reunions unhappy, divorced, and alienated from their children. I can guarantee you that not a single one of them graduated with the deliberate strategy of getting divorced and raising children who would become estranged from them. And yet a shocking number of them implemented that strategy. The reason? They didn't keep the purpose of their lives front and center as they decided how to spend their time, talents, and energy.

There are many different ways to determine the purpose of your life. Christensen reports that the process he followed, while trying to complete a particularly demanding Rhodes Scholar program at Oxford University, was to consistently:

... spend an hour every night reading, thinking, and praying about why God put me on this earth. That was a very challenging commitment to keep, because every hour I spent doing that, I wasn't studying applied econometrics. I was conflicted about whether I could really afford to take that time away from my studies, but I stuck with it – and ultimately figured out the purpose of my life. Had I instead spent that hour each day learning the latest techniques for mastering the problems of autocorrelation in regression analysis, I would have badly mis-spent my life. I apply the tools of econometrics a few times a year, but I apply my knowledge regarding the purpose of my life every day. It's the single most useful thing I've ever learned.

The impetus to work at discovering the purpose of your life may be driven by a personal decision, as it was for Christensen, or it could also be triggered by a career shock, such as an economic development that alters your perceived career prospects. Matt Salzberg (as quoted by Christensen) commented that as he was graduating from the HBS Class of 2010:

The financial crisis helped me realize that you have to do what you really love in life. My current vision of success is based on the impact I can have, the experiences I can gain, and the happiness I can find personally, much more so than the pursuit of money or prestige. My main motivations are (1) to be with my family and people I care about; (2) to do something fun, exciting, and impactful; and (3) to pursue a long-term career in entrepreneurship,

where I can build companies that change the way the world works.

It's important to keep in mind, however, that people tend to want different things at different stages throughout their career.

In contemplating what career success means to you and thus how you will allocate your time, talents, and energy, it can be useful to consider what various streams of research have revealed about factors people consider when evaluating their career success. Research in the US by Kristen Shockley and her colleagues found that people often evaluate their overall career success in terms of how content they are with their level of:

- Recognition
- Quality work
- Meaningful work
- Influence
- Authenticity
- Personal life
- Growth and development, and
- Personal satisfaction with their career.

Perhaps the most comprehensive study of what career success means to people all around the world – beyond the affluent nations and well-educated individuals that have been the focus of most prior studies – has been conducted by the Cross-Cultural Collaboration on Contemporary Careers (5C Project). In their article, *Career Success Across The Globe – Insights From The 5C Project*, Wolfgang Mayrhofer, Jon Briscoe, Tim Hall, Michael Dickmann, Nicky Dries, Anders Dysvik, Robert Kaše, Emma Parry, and Julie Unite discuss what they learned from their cross-national qualitative study of career success. In the 5C Project, this team conducted in-depth interviews about what career success means to people from a diverse range of socio-demographic backgrounds and all the major culture clusters. It revealed that people from around the world tend to evaluate their careers in terms of their preferred combination of:

- Financial security
- Financial achievement
- Learning and development
- Work-life-balance
- Positive relationships
- Positive impact, and/or
- Entrepreneurship

This ongoing research has important implications for individuals, managers, organizations, as well as for counselors, coaches, and consultants. A merger between organizations or business units, for instance, might be facilitated by surfacing and managing differences in norms regarding what career success means within the respective merging entities.

Mayrhofer and colleagues present some useful strategies that can help you to define, balance, and work toward attaining whatever career (and indeed life) success means for you.

AM I BEING DULY RECOGNIZED AND REWARDED FOR MY WORK?

It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent.

Madeleine Albright

In an ideal world, people would be duly recognized and rewarded for their contributions within the workplace. In reality, a wide range of factors create an uneven playing field in terms of access to opportunities to make noteworthy contributions in organizations, as well as the extent to which people are recognized and rewarded.

Education, dispositions (e.g., intelligence and personality), prior work experiences and achievements, as well as networks, each play a pivotal role in becoming aware of and being seriously considered for the most sought after jobs and developmental opportunities. So do less legitimate and often illegal considerations including age, gender, race, family status, and sexual orientation. Such dynamics can be demoralizing and grossly unfair, yet they also pose challenges to be tackled constructively when personally subjected to them, as well as real opportunities to help shape more respectful, fair, and productive workplaces.

In their article, *Women's Career Advancement: Issues and Opportunities*, Tammy Allen, Kim French, and Mark Poteet discuss how women often confront a range of double binds about their careers and how they enact them. For example, when choosing to have a family while pursuing a career, women sometimes face cynical messages about whether they can handle the demands of work and are adequately committed to their role as a mother. Such messages are not only unkind but also inherently unfair as they are seldom directed toward men who choose to be a parent – indeed men are frequently rewarded for doing so in terms of being considered more stable and dependable. To add to this unfairness, women are liable to be considered excessively aggressive for demonstrating ambition and expressions of assertiveness that are generally rewarded when shown by men.

Although there is a groundswell of awareness about such issues in social media, as well as some educational institutions, employers, and media outlets, Allen and colleagues note that sexist dynamics and outcomes (such as a disproportionate percentage of the most well-paid and illustrious jobs being occupied by men) continue to be rife. They offer a range of suggestions to help women counter such dynamics and progress in their careers, such as to:

- Build your network and seek mentors who will advise, support, and sponsor your career development
- Identify, study, and emulate the paths of other women who have blazed paths similar to your career aspirations
- Seek and take on challenging assignments, as these increase your perceived readiness for promotion
- Negotiate with both your partner and your employer the sharing of duties in the realms of housekeeping, child care, and elder care
- Resolutely dismiss cultural and media messages that serve to limit what career options are “normal” or “desirable” for women to pursue.

Men, organizations, media outlets, and governments also have important roles to play in dissolving the cultural, policy, and other factors that can constrain the career experience and advancement of women, as well as the reputation and productivity of organizations and societies. For more details about the issues, dynamics, and opportunities involved, see the article by Allen and her colleagues. Actively working to increase fairness and equity within the workplace can be a source of pride for both women and men.

AM I DEVELOPING MYSELF AND MY WORK ROLES IN WAYS THAT BENEFIT ALL CONCERNED?

Managing your career is 100% your responsibility, and you need to act accordingly.

Robert Kaplan

New graduates and people who read books or attend workshops on career management are routinely told that they need to take responsibility for their career development. Whereas in the past, when employees often expected a long-term employment relationship with developmental opportunities for increased responsibilities, there is now a greater onus on employees to be responsible for their career development.

You can take responsibility for your career by actively striving to *discover* your answers to the four questions in Fig. 1, in order to find your career fit. You can also actively *develop* your capabilities and thus how you answer the first question, “*What can I do?*” Most skill development happens on the job – often by being proactive in taking on tasks and projects beyond your formal job description. When people are proactive, beyond attending formal training, they look for ways to improve their job and the way things function in their workplace. This can mean going beyond the call of duty by initiating or joining projects involving critically important tasks such as developing new systems, managing change, managing boundaries between workgroups or organizations, or dealing with diversity. When people take on challenging, highly visible, and potentially risky assignments, they can develop competencies that are valued at higher levels of the organization, and thus increase their likelihood of promotion to have greater responsibilities, salary, and status . . . if things go to plan.

Attempts to be proactive, however, sometimes backfire. Unexpected costs or consequences can include turf rivalries, jealousy, resentment, stress, burnout, or people resisting new initiatives. In their article, *Wise Proactivity: How to be Proactive and Wise in Building your Career*, Sharon Parker and Jenny Liao provide an insightful model of wise proactivity that can help you determine the types of proactivity likely to work well for you and others.

Parker and Liao begin by noting that although being proactive is important for career success, many people get stuck in a rut by being passive rather than proactive, due to mindset traps that limit their ways of thinking. To help you assess whether you are holding yourself back, Parker and Liao describe ten mindsets that could trap you into thinking you lack (i) the ability to initiate a proactive change, (ii) a reason to initiate a proactive change, or (iii) the enthusiasm to

initiate a proactive change. They then provide valuable solutions to overcome each trap. People are more likely to be proactive at work, they argue, when they experience three internal motivations: *can do* motivation (belief that they can make changes), *reason to* motivation (internal reasons to be proactive), and *energized to* motivation (enthusiasm and energy to be proactive).

Given that the risks from being proactive can sometimes outweigh the potential benefits, Parker and Liao introduce the notion of *wise proactivity*. This concept illuminates the imperative to be sensitive to the influence of your actions upon others in your work environment. A proactive initiative is likely to be wise if it meets the three criteria of being:

- *Contextually-sound* – likely to “make sense” and have a positive impact on the business unit, organization, or other relevant context
- *Other-focused* – likely to be deemed helpful and/or considerate of others affected by the initiative, given their priorities
- *Personally-sound* – in alignment with your values, strengths, interests, passions, and career goals.

Parker and Liao provide a set of diagnostic questions to use when considering a particular proactive action or project. Systematically answering these questions can help you to evaluate and/or improve the wisdom of pursuing an opportunity to be proactive that you are contemplating undertaking.

Given that it is often difficult to know whether and how proactive actions will be perceived by important stakeholders, it can be helpful to seek guidance from others when answering the questions posed by Parker and Liao. Schein and Van Maanen’s *Job/Role Analysis and Planning Tool* could also be useful in evaluating and crafting potentially wise proactive initiatives.

Overall, Parker and Liao’s model provides a useful reminder that when acting on Kaplan’s advice to take full responsibility for managing your career, it is worth going the extra mile to find ways of doing so that will also work well for others you encounter along the way.

AM I ENGAGED IN MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK WHEREBY I AM HELPED AND HELP OTHERS?

The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.

Steven Spielberg

Most people have, at least to some extent, a fundamental psychological need to feel connected to people they care for and who care about them. Relationships at work can not only meet this important need, but can also provide opportunities for learning, growth, excitement, psychological support, professional development, and career success. Mentoring relationships can be a particularly potent source of such benefits in organizations.

Traditional mentoring relationships have two prime functions: career support and psychosocial support. *Career support* involves a mentor trying to help a protégé settle into and

advance within an organization by providing sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. *Psychosocial support* involves a mentor working to enhance a protégé’s sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a work role by providing friendship, counseling, role modeling, acceptance, and confirmation.

In her article, *From the Ordinary to the Extraordinary: High-Quality Mentoring Relationships at Work*, Belle Rose Ragins discusses the assumptions behind traditional mentoring relationships where a presumably more experienced mentor works with a less experienced protégé, so that the wisdom, savvy, affirmation, opportunities, and other benefits flow in one direction from mentor to protégé. Such relationships are predicated on the notion that there is little the protégé can offer the mentor, beyond gratitude for the career and psychosocial assistance provided.

By contrast, Ragins explains that *high quality mentoring relationships* jettison the teacher-student metaphor and instead rest on the assumption of mutuality, where mentors and protégés can learn from each other. The basis of giving in high quality mentoring is less a tit-for-tat exchange than a generous provision of what the other party might need, without the explicit expectation of repayment. High quality mentoring relationships thus provide additional benefits beyond the career support and psychosocial benefits of traditional mentoring; they can also offer increased vitality, creativity, identity, authenticity, meaning, as well as personal and professional growth for protégés and mentors alike.

To facilitate the development of high quality mentoring relationships, Ragins provides insights into their creation, what protégés and mentors expect and are willing to do to grow and sustain their relationship, how high quality mentoring relationships can be particularly useful for stigmatized minorities, as well as what managers, trainers, and consultants may do to foster such relationships within organizations. The types of mentoring cultures Ragins discusses are somewhat akin to the *apprenticeship* and *protean* career cultures identified by Hall and Yip in *Discerning Career Cultures at Work*, though less like the *prestige* and *merit* career cultures they discuss. Leaders within *prestige* and *merit* career cultures might thus especially profit from closely studying and following Ragins’ guidance in order to allow the extensive benefits of high quality mentoring relationships to flourish within their teams, work units, and organizations.

AM I FUTURE-PROOFING MY CAREER BY PREPARING TO DEAL WITH CAREER SHOCKS I MIGHT ENCOUNTER?

Life is what happens . . . while you’re busy making other plans.

John Lennon

Although having a career plan can provide a valuable source of inspiration and guidance in enacting your career, perhaps the most common thread in our discussions with people about *their* career is that careers rarely unfold as intended or imagined. Unanticipated developments within both yourself (i.e., evolving career aspirations) and your career context (i.e., being caught up in a downsizing) can radically alter the expected trajectory of your career.

In their article *Developing Career Resilience and Adaptability*, Scott Seibert, Maria Kraimer, and Peter Heslin define *career shocks* as distinct and impactful events that trigger deliberation about potential career transitions, such as acquiring new skills, searching for a new job, changing occupations, or retiring. The triggering event may be expected (e.g., having a child) or unexpected (e.g., being fired). Career shocks can be positive (e.g., an unexpected promotion or international job offer) or negative (e.g., being informed that you did not receive an expected promotion). People differ in how they respond to career shocks in terms of both their resilience and adaptability. Seibert and colleagues note that *resilience* is the ability to bounce back from shocks, by continuing to make progress toward your current career goals with the resources and strategies you have already developed. *Adaptability* involves reformulating your goals and/or strategies to adapt to new work and career realities.

To help you anticipate and be well-prepared to deal proactively and effectively with potential career shocks, Seibert and colleagues draw on their research to outline a wide range of possible career shocks you may encounter. They also detail practical, valuable *psychological* and *behavioral* strategies to help build your capacity to respond to changes in your career. Specifically, Seibert and colleagues provide concrete guidance in applying psychological strategies that can help you:

- Manage your distracting emotions
- Nurture your growth mindset, and
- Re-balance your career goals.

The behavioral strategies they recommend for increased resilience and adaptability focus on how to:

- Develop an effective relationship with your boss
- Undertake suitable training and development opportunities
- Seek job challenges and fit, and
- Develop an effective career network.

Given that it takes time to apply these strategies and for their positive fruits to materialize, we recommend developing and routinely revisiting a *written plan* regarding how you will systematically apply, review, and fine-tune your application of these tools for enhanced career resilience and adaptability. Further ideas for securing the opportunity to implement the four behavioral strategies are provided by Ragins regarding *From the Ordinary to the Extraordinary: High-Quality Mentoring Relationships at Work*, Rousseau and colleagues in *Negotiating Flexible and Fair Idiosyncratic Deals (I-Deals)*, Kossek's suggestions for *Managing Work-Life Boundaries in the Digital Age*, as well as by Allen and colleagues in *Women and Career Advancement: Issues and Opportunities*.

DO I HAVE A GOOD BALANCE BETWEEN MY WORK AND THE REST OF MY LIFE?

No one ever said on their deathbed, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office."

Harold Kushner

Although many working adults spend most of their waking lives at work, they have other life domains that are also important to them. Most people also want to regularly spend quality time with their family, with their friends, and/or pursuing personal interests; that is, time when they are mentally, emotionally, and physically engaged in activities beyond their work. Time is, however, inherently limited and irreplaceable; there are only 24 hours in a day. Thus, many people face the issue of how to best allocate their time and energy across competing life domains. Work-life balance issues can become particularly salient for working parents who often need to consider how best to combine parenthood with being an employee who desires a certain level of career success.

Organizational scholars have devoted much attention to the issue of how people combine work and nonwork roles. Traditionally this effort focused on the fixed pie effect of time such that family and work seem prone to interfere or conflict with each other. Despite recognition of the real constraints associated with time demands, scholars have more recently argued that experiences in one domain can enhance experiences in another domain. Skills learned from being a parent may, for instance, help a person become a better team leader or member. Conflict management skills learned at work may similarly be applied within the home. Beyond skills, moods can also spill-over from one domain to the other, such as joyful experiences at home enhancing your engagement at work, or vice versa. Such cross-fertilization of moods can be both positive and negative, where stress (or joy) at work spills over and disrupts (or enhances) family relationships. Given such dynamics, many scholars tend to converge on the notion that employees may profit from actively managing their work-nonwork boundaries – a task made increasingly complex given the ubiquity of mobile communication technology devices that facilitate work-related activities seeping into and disrupting nonwork activities.

In her article on *Managing Work-Life Boundaries in the Digital Age*, Ellen Kossek discusses various approaches you can use to manage the boundaries between the work and nonwork domains of your life. She outlines how:

- *Separators* attempt to keep work and nonwork activities distinct from each other and seek to limit the extent to which work interrupts nonwork activities, and vice versa.
- *Integrators* are comfortable blending work and nonwork roles and thus have a more permeable boundary between work and nonwork than separators.
- *Cyclers* tend to alternate between separating and integrating, depending on the demands from each domain at different points in time.

In her thought-provoking article, Kossek describes the potential costs and benefits of each style, noting that the ideal style for a person depends not only on that individual's preferences and work context, but also on the expectations of anyone they share their life with and their employer; in particular, their manager. Kossek offers a web-based tool to self-assess your boundary management style. The resulting report enables you to reflect on how well your boundary management style is working for you and to experiment with other boundary management approaches. Given the

increasing importance of managing work-nonwork boundaries for employee well-being and productivity, both leaders and employees can benefit from collaborating to create effective strategies for enhancing employees' life-balance.

One approach to creating an effective boundary management strategy is to strive to negotiate an *i-deal* that allows for reduced work hours or flexible work scheduling or location, by following the guidelines outlined in Rousseau and colleagues' article on *Negotiating Flexible and Fair Idiosyncratic Deals (I-Deals)*.

The article by Allen and colleagues, *Women and Career Advancement: Issues and Opportunities*, describes some of the unique challenges faced by women, especially mothers who attempt to seek career success and parental success. That article concludes with individual, employer, and societal recommendations that can lead to greater gender equity in the workplace, as well as helping women (and men) create a better balance between work and the rest of their lives.

CONCLUSION

Never confuse motion with action.

Benjamin Franklin

We proposed an emergent process conceptualization of career success as an alternative to focusing on career success as objective and subjective outcomes. To that end, we have raised seven fundamental questions to consider when thinking about career success more as an *emergent process* than a *cumulative outcome*; that is, more a function of what we *do* and *experience* along the way in our careers, than what we *have* as a result. This is not to imply that outcomes do not matter. Yet how people experience both their day-to-day and overall career is often a function of much more than their income, status, and other outcomes they have accrued. We have thus endeavored to explore the overarching question: *What would I do to have a more successful career if I thought about it as an emergent process?* We have outlined in broad brushstrokes how you might go about addressing the seven questions and have hopefully inspired you to explore them more fully.

There are two distinct though related lenses through which to read this special issue. The first is to take a very personal journey through it, asking which ideas, concepts,

models, and tools would be most useful for you to fine-tune and/or reframe how you view and proceed with managing your unfolding career. This could involve, for instance, identifying any gaps between your current and ideal emergent career (i.e., what a "perfect" week in your career might entail) before reading to find career concepts or tools to help close those gaps.

The second lens focuses more on discovering ideas that you might use to wisely and gently enable the emergent career success of your employees, colleagues, family members, and/or friends – whomever most needs your help. The world is full of people who could do with a helping hand. You may enable others' emergent career success in many ways including:

- appreciating their strengths and sharing your observations about what they do well and seem most passionate about
- suggesting how they might work toward finding their career fit
- offering encouragement, insights, and help attaining the bravery that can arise for both protégés and mentors in a high quality mentoring relationship
- providing advocacy and sponsorship to help others gain access to valuable mentoring and other career opportunities
- acting proactively to reform inequitable practices regarding how career opportunities are allocated.

To be truly helpful to another person, first focus on trying to understand what that person hopes to do or achieve, as well as what *they* think might help them to attain their objective(s).

Given the frequency with which people mention that helping others is an important facet of them being successful in their career, we recommend reading this special issue through both lenses.

To truly benefit from the stream of potentially useful ideas that arise for you, we suggest adhering to the age-old advice to:

Never leave the site of an insight without writing down and committing to your next steps...

Source unknown



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To help you learn more about what you want and the expectations of others around you in a particular job, see Edgar H. Schein and John Van Maanen, “Career Anchors and Job/Role Planning: Tools for Career and Talent Management” in this issue. For additional details on how to diagnose the nature and implications of different organizational career cultures, see Douglas T. (Tim) Hall and Jeff Yip, “Discerning Career Cultures at Work” in this issue. For guidance on “Negotiating Flexible and Fair Idiosyncratic Deals (I-Deals)”, see Denise M. Rousseau, Maria Tomprou, and Maria Simosi’s article in this issue.

For further ideas on managing your career, see “Experiencing Career Success” by Peter A. Heslin, *Organizational Dynamics*, 2005, 34, 376–390. For details of the career success measure developed by Kristen Shockley and her colleagues, see Kristen M. Shockley, Heather Ureksoy, Ozgun B. Rodopman, Laura F. Poteat, and Timothy R. Rullaghan, “Development of a New Scale To Measure Subjective Career Success: A Mixed-Methods Study,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, in press. Clayton M. Christensen’s article “How Will You Measure Your Life?” appears in *Harvard Business Review*, 2010, 88(7/8), 46–51. A discussion of how the seven internationally applicable meanings of career success manifest

within different cultural contexts around the world is presented by Wolfgang Mayrhofer, Jon P. Briscoe, Tim Hall, Michael Dickmann, Nicky Dries, Anders Dysvik, Robert Kaše, Emma Parry, and Julie Unite in “Career Success Across The Globe – Insights From The 5C Project” in this issue.

A discussion about career challenges women may face and what can be done to address them is provided in “Women’s Career Advancement: Issues and Opportunities,” Tammy D. Allen, Kimberly A. French, and Mark L. Poteet. To learn more about “Wise Proactivity: How to be Proactive and Wise in Building your Career,” see Sharon K. Parker and Jenny Liao’s article on that topic in this special issue.

Insights regarding how to form, sustain, and support high quality mentoring relationships are provided by Belle Rose Ragins’ article, “From the Ordinary to the Extraordinary: High-Quality Mentoring Relationships at Work” in this issue. See Scott E. Seibert, Maria L. Kraimer, and Peter A. Heslin, “Developing Career Resilience and Adaptability,” for examples of career shocks and how to develop your resilience and adaptability to handle them. Finally, for ideas and strategies for “Managing Work-Life Boundaries in the Digital Age,” see the article in this special issue by Ellen E. Kossek.

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