

Decision Dynamics



Presents

CareerView™

Varied Themes of Career Success

A Career “Tower of Babel”

When it comes to careers, one person’s career Heaven can be another person’s career Hell. Yet, we act as though the “good career” is the same for everyone. Consequently, we lack the perspective and words needed to speak a career language that everyone understands. In the world of careers, we live in a “Tower of Babel.”

Career unrest creates massive problems for employers. Dissatisfaction can spread like a contagion into all the nooks and crannies of an organization. Productivity suffers, tempers flare, people spruce up their resumes and, soon, people begin to leave, often led by the most valuable players.

Often, the problem is resistant to cure. Actions are taken, but the unrest just pops up somewhere else.

In many instances, the maddening persistence of career unrest stems from the fact that the causes for career dissatisfaction can differ from person to person in dramatic ways. The very circumstance that creates career frustration for some can mean career satisfaction for others.



Defining Alternate Concepts of Career Success

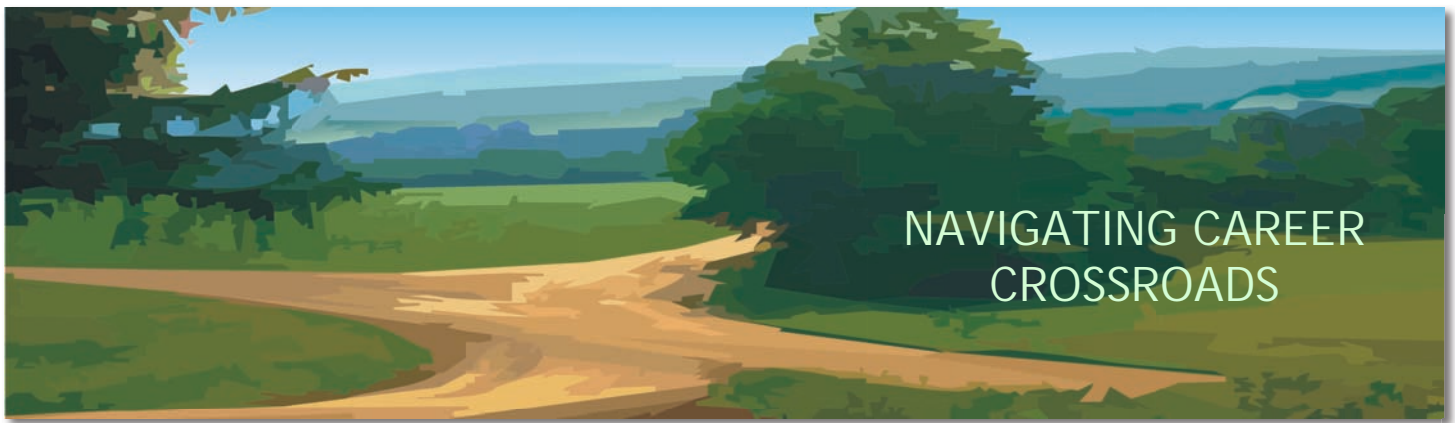
Career concepts are ideas that describe different types of careers. Inasmuch as people differ in their views about career success, career concepts represent different ways of describing the “ideal career.” We find that most of these differences stem from different views about:

- The *stability* and the *duration* of a person’s choice of career field - does it change, or does it remain the same once the choice is made? If it changes, how often does it change?
- *Direction of movement* in a career - does the person move vertically, up “a ladder,” or instead does the person move horizontally or laterally into new positions?



“John has had such a great career . . .”

Ever heard someone say something like that? What springs to mind? What does a “great career” mean to you? Perhaps, these words give rise to thoughts of promotion to the highest level on the management ladder, with all of the accompanying authority, status and perquisites. Or, instead, the words may suggest the attainment of international recognition as the premier authority within a chosen field. Maybe, quite differently, you think of the successful career as one in which a person has developed many different skills and broad knowledge and now is using those capabilities to help other people grow and develop. Or, quite differently, you might see career success as the ability to move easily and often from one interesting challenge to another with complete freedom to select and choose the projects you take on. As you can see, a career that means success for one person can mean something quite different to someone else.



NAVIGATING CAREER CROSSROADS

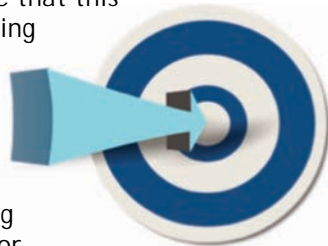
Our research shows that four basic concepts capture most of the variation in how people view the ideal career.

Four Career Concepts

Taking into account, stability and duration of career field choice, and direction of movement, our CareerView assessment focuses on the following four career concepts:

Expert Concept

This, perhaps, is the most traditional way of viewing an ideal career. According to this concept, a person makes a choice of a career field and then sticks to it for the long term. The only change that this concept involves is developing deeper knowledge and expertise and moving, in effect, from apprentice to journeyman, to master. Typically, this choice represents a life-long commitment to a vocation or profession. The essential feature of the Expert concept is that there is a particular kind of work that forms the central focus of a person's career and this focus comes to play an essential role in the person's sense of identity. For instance, a person sees one's self as *being* a doctor, a lawyer, an information systems architect.



Linear Concept

This is another relatively traditional way of viewing the ideal career. The Linear career concept places great importance on rapid movement up "the ladder" to positions of increasing responsibility and authority. Staying in one job or at one level in an organization is seen as very undesirable, or as a sign of failure. In societies that emphasize upward mobility, this is a very common conception of success. To people who wish to have Linear careers, this often is the *only* definition of career success that has real meaning. As might be expected, many senior executives and business leaders see success in this way.



Spiral Concept

The Spiral concept is less traditional than Linear or Expert as a defined career pattern. The Spiral career entails periodic, major changes in the nature of the work that one performs - changes that might cross occupational boundaries. These changes take place on the order of every five to seven years. Spiral moves involve shifting from one field into another, where the new field draws upon skills and knowledge already developed, but requires acquisition also of new skills and knowledge.



Transitory Concept

The Transitory concept is even less traditional than the Spiral concept in the pantheon of careers. Nonetheless, the transitory career pattern does describe the careers of many people. The Transitory career has been called a "consistent pattern of inconsistency." It involves frequent moves, or the order of every two to four years, in just about any direction. A key feature about a transitory career move is that it shifts from one type of work to another, which is unlike anything the person has done previously. Often, people with this kind of career pattern don't even think of themselves as having a career. Instead, they believe themselves simply to be "having a good time!"



Career Motives: Foundations for Career Concepts

The person who sees the linear career as ideal might view the Expert career as the worst of all possible career tracks. By the same token, the person who sees the Expert career as most attractive might view the linear career as wholly undesirable. So, one person's Heaven can be another person's career Hell!

Different preferences reflect important differences in the motives that drive people's conceptions of career success. Not surprisingly, the four career concepts are associated with different underlying work motives. This is because each career concept pattern offers the potential for a unique set of rewards. So, a particular career pattern may appeal to some people because its rewards fit their work motives especially well.

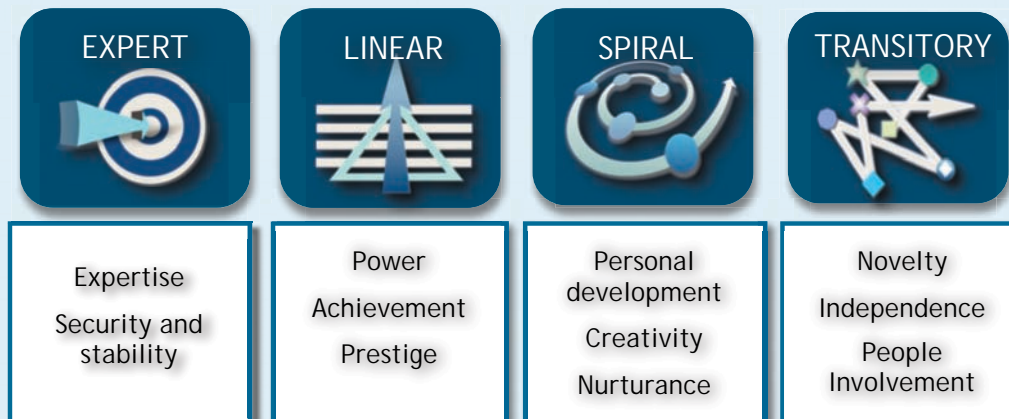
EXPERT MOTIVES. People who prefer the Expert career often have a strong *competence* motive. They attach great importance to opportunities that deepen their competence and sense of expertise. By pursuing an Expert career, a person can have the opportunity to sharpen and refine expertise in a particular area or discipline over the course of many years. Frequently, a secondary motive underlying the Expert concept is *security*, which provides the stability, needed to focus on developing competence without distractions or anxiety.

LINEAR MOTIVES. The motive most strongly associated with the linear career is *power*. The next most important motive is *achievement*. That is, people with this combination of motives desire the power to make important things happen. Important accomplishments, in turn, pave the way to *prestige* - the third motive in the linear career. For people committed to the linear career, there often are many other motives, too. But, these three typically lead in their importance and significance.

SPIRAL MOTIVES. For those who prefer the Spiral career experience, *personal growth* is likely to be very important. A person can greatly expand one's repertoire of skills and abilities by periodically moving laterally into new, but allied, fields that build on previously developed capabilities. People following a Spiral track also are highly attracted to opportunities for *creativity* and innovation. Less obviously, but often, these same people appreciate opportunities to assist others to grow and develop. Therefore, the *nurturance* motive is significant as well.

TRANSITORY MOTIVES. Transitory careers involve lots of change. Accordingly, people who prefer a career defined by the transitory concept frequently have strong novelty motives. The old, adage, "Variety is the spice of life," probably was coined by a Transitory. People following a transitory track dislike routines. They highly value their independence and freedom, preferring to work according to their own rules. Generally, they are quite social. So, an opportunity to go off and work on a new project with a new group of people is very appealing. So are opportunities to work as trouble-shooters.

Career Concepts and Associated Career Motives



CAREER CONFUSION It is not uncommon for people to follow particular career tracks only to find, late in life - or never - that all along they have been following someone else's career! Their career tracks fit others much better than themselves - parents, close relatives, teachers. Most of us get abundant "career advice" from others, and often that advice is better suited to the people giving it than to the people receiving it. This shows up in our CareerView assessment as a misalignment between one's career concepts profile and one's career motives profile. Consequently, the CareerView assessment often exposes an important discrepancy between one's head and one's heart!

VARIETIES OF CAREERVIEW PROFILES - Generating Self-Insight

ALIGNING CAREER VISION WITH CAREER VALUES

CareerView profiles come in many varieties. The profiles show how one views the ideal career (concepts) and the career values (motives) that are important to that person. Often, one's career vision isn't well supported by one's values. CareerView deepens and refines one's insights into these relationships. The two profiles here show examples. One shows that the person's vision of the ideal career is unlikely to bring real satisfaction, while the other shows that the person's vision and values are closely aligned.

Sample CareerView Profiles



ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER CULTURES

The variety of career concepts, with distinct underlying motives for each, suggests the need for organizations to recognize these differences. Aggressive and productive career development systems respond effectively to these differing career ambitions. Organizations aiming for improved productivity, quality, and growth find innovative ways to satisfy these career needs.

Key Clues to Career Cultures

"Decision Dynamics' CultureView™ Survey reveals consistencies and inconsistencies in how the organization manages & develops careers."

	STRATEGY	ORG STRUCTURE	REWARDED BEHAVIOR	KEY REWARDS
EXPERT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain market share; Market lead for quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat pyramid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Reliability Accuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits Specialty assignments Equipment & Resources
LINEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased market share & dominance; Aggressive growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tall, many layered pyramid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Productivity Cost control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion Span of authority
SPIRAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversified products & services New business ventures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matrix Cross-functional teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creativity People development Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lateral moves Cross-functional training Sabbaticals
TRANSITORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets of opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ad hoc teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation Quick results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash bonuses Temp assignments Flexible work arrangements

Motivation makes the difference!

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