Anișoara Pavelea

PLAN YOUR CAREER

AND TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FUTURE!

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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Chapter 1

Careers, professions, and occupations

The term career has different meanings for sociology, psychology, economics, and education scholars. For sociologists, careers have been studied in relationship to social mobility and social stratification, occupations, status passages, power and control, or the influence of race, gender, ethnicity, origin, and education. For economics, careers are linked to income, active workforce, and unemployment rates, or retiring plans. For educators, they are relevant in the transition from school to work, in relationship to educational choices and school curriculum. For public policy, careers are linked to diversity, equity and inclusion, fair access to resources, reskilling and upskilling or lifelong learning. For psychologists, especially the organizational ones, patterns, trajectories, contingencies, transitions and turning points are studied, along with the accumulation of cultural capital, and work relationships between employers and employees focusing on roles and procedures, leadership, reward systems and performance management, productivity, satisfaction, engagement, values, skills, wellbeing, and burnout. For career psychologists and counsellors, the focus is on individual traits, abilities, skills, motivations, values, interests, needs and the person – environment fit, the implementation of self-concept, career stages and individual agency, social learning, information processing, planning, and decision making, or sense-making using narratives and metaphors.

A career consists of a sequence of major positions held during the course of a lifetime, including prevocational and post vocational activities, together with complementary roles, such as familial, civic etc. (Super, 1976). Prevocational activities, like sports, extracurricular activities, or volunteering, are chosen by students before deciding on which career path to embark. Post vocational activities refer to situations such as being a substitute teacher after retiring from an educational position, collaborating with an NGO as a consultant, doing baby-sitting activities for a friends' niece or nephew, volunteering at an animal shelter or overseeing a choir at a retirement center. The career can start long before choosing a university major and long after leaving the world of work. Careers, says Super, "exist only as people pursue them; they are person-centered (p. 20)."

Other authors offer similar definitions, stating that a career covers the different roles of an individual (student, employee, community member, parent, etc.), the different pattern of behaviors

in family, school and society, and the suite of stages of one's life (marriage, retirement etc.), all these considered as a unitary, indivisible whole (Schifirneț, 2004). We can think of two dimensions of one's career: the objective one, representing a series of positions and roles fulfilled in organizational settings, and the subjective one, encompassing one's personal perceived qualities, skills, and experiences that enable him/her to choose a career path and to seek personal development.

A profession refers to the degree gained through formal education, while the occupation is the qualification actually exercised in the workplace (Schifirneț, 2004). Occupations are social activities that are remunerated, recognized, and socially rewarded as useful for the worker and for society. For some people, their occupation can overlap with the profession, while for others these two may differ. Let's look att some examples:

Situation	Profession	Occupation
The profession is identical to the occupation	1. Primary school teacher 2. Social media manager 3. Accountant	1. Primary school teacher 2. Social media manager 3. Accountant
The profession is different from the occupation	1. Doctor 2. Lawyer 3. Psychologist	1. Hospital manager 2. Senator 3. Secretary of stat

For someone who is in the exploration phase and initiates a career decision-making process, gathering information about professions and occupations is extremely important, as it can clarify educational and occupational alternatives that are congruent with one's interests, values and needs, facilitate the identification of new alternatives, reduce stereotypes and myths about certain professions and occupations, allow the identification of pros and cons when evaluating certain career choices, and provide a valuable opportunity to familiarise with the world of work (Lemeni & Miclea, 2020). Being aware of the educational and occupational requirements for each position, training and credentials, the neccesary skills and knowledge, the nature of work, schedule, associated benefits, promotion opportunities, work roles and tasks, workforce characteristics, like wages and employment trends, job openings and related occupations, can be incomensurable advantages in the job market.

Being able to identify the different stages of career planning and career decision-making, understanding how the self-concept and the vocational identity develops in time, relying on self-knowledge and accesing sources of self-efficacy building, identifying values and personality types, career anchors and motivations, mastering the art of interviews and networking to build a personal brand or taking advantage of job crafting techniques, can empower the individul seeking career success to explore different options and to implement career choices.

If you have recently graduated from college, started an entry-level job, worked in the same industry for the last ten years or think of upskilling and choosing a different career path, this book might be of help. If you are a parent and do not know how to guide your child in making wise career decisions or if you are mid-career and plan to make a change, the following chapters might bring some light and hope into your life. I would like you to think of this book as food for thought, as an invitation to start asking yourself relevant questions, put information in the context of current social, political, historical, and economic changes, and hopefully engage in a design thinking process that will help you shape a meaningful career.

The world of work is continuously changing and the recent pandemic has shown us how vulnerable we are to change. The *Future of Jobs Report 2023* issued by the World Economic Forum presents the challenges businesses are expecting to navigate due to recent labor-market changes influenced by geopolitical volatility, economic uncertainty, rising inflation and increasing prices. After the pandemic, workers preferences have changed; now the focus is on job security and flexible hours, work-life balance, training opportunities and diversity, inclusion, and equity strategies. The report says that "the green transition, technological change, supply-chain transformations and changing consumer expectations are all generating demand for new jobs across industries and regions. However, these positive drivers are offset by growing geoeconomic tensions and a cost-of-living crisis" (p. 18).

Another recent report from Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in UK identified five key trends for people professions who aim to thrive in 2030, revolving around:

1. Internal change and adapting business models, structures and processes.
2. Technological and digital change, including AI, robotics, automation, people data and analytics.
3. Equality, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism strategies and changing demographics.
4. Diversifying employment relationships.
5. The role of sustainability, purpose, and responsible business.

Romania is no different from other countries in the region. The global challenges have impacted the local market on several aspects. According to the National Institute of Statistics, 19 million people are currently residing in Romania. The active population amounts to 7.6 million persons, of which 5.5 million are employees. Three million and a half are working in the services sector, and 1.8 million are employed in industry and construction. The employment rate is higher for men (66.8%) compared to women (57.4%). The real GDP growth in 2023 was around 2%. The national unemployment rate is around 5% with significant regional disparities. The main types of businesses on the labour market are limited liability companies (SRL), joint-stock companies (SA), partnerships (SNC), simple partnerships (SCS), joint-stock partnerships (SCA), sole traders (PFA), individual businesses and family businesses. Most people work in multinational companies, profit or non-profit state-owned companies, private companies and NGOs. Acording to The National Employment Agency (ANOFM) data, most vacancies at national level in 2023 were for unskilled workers, couriers, commercial workers, security guards, goods handlers, drivers, assistant cooks, and salespersons.

Education and training in Romania is still an ungoing project. Based on the *2022 European Commission Education and Training Monitor*, the education and training systems registers poor performance, early childhood education and care is problematic, early school leaving remains high, improving teacher policy is a must. Rural-urban gap remains critical and special attention should be given to Roma children. A large proportion of students lack basic skills, and even though the rate of tertiary education attainment increased, it is still the lowest in the European Union.

Participation in the labor market of women, young people, persons with disabilities, low-skilled people and Roma remains limited. Youth unemployment is on the rise. The rate of young people not in education, not in training is higher than the European one (19.8 compared to 11.7%). The unemployment rate of low qualified people is significantly higher (44.9%) than the one for people with tertiary education. Labor and skills shortages and mismatches remain pressing challenges worsened by negative demographic trends in Romania (European Commission, 2023 Country Report Romania). While a minority of Romanian students excels and 40.000 are studying abroad, almost 40% of 15-year-olds do not master basic skills in reading, math, and science according to PISA results, and 1 in 5 students leaves school before completing higher secondary education (OECD Romania 2017, in Filip et al., 2022).

In this context, finding a job, taking career decisions, and owning a career is increasingly challenging. With the constantly changing job market, geopolitical volatility, migration and economic changes, career planning becomes a necessity.

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Chapter 2

The career planning process

Planning a career doesn't take long, but implementing a career plan is a durable process. One can start with a thorough SWAT analysis, then move on to identifying career opportunities and finding adequate strategies to seek these opportunities and investing time and effort into fulfilling career objectives. Before even thinking of a career plan, some utmost important steps need to be followed. First, self-knowledge and self-evaluation. If you are to start with this crucial step, you might want to examine your interests, abilities, skills, personality, values and motivation, or personal resources. Second, a fair understanding of the world of work and career options is needed. Only after that, a career decision process can be initiated. And after analysing a variety of career options, taking into consideration the influence of significant others, a career plan can be drafted and implemented step by step.

According to Harris-Bowlsbey et al. (2002, in Niles & Bowlsbey, 2015), this process of career planning includes seven steps:

1. Being aware of the need to make career decisions
2. Knowing and re-evaluating the self-concept
3. Identifying occupational alternatives
4. Gathering information on the identified alternatives
5. Making provisional decisions on selected occupations
6. Choosing an educational trajectory
7. Implementing the professional decision.

One of the most important career development theories was proposed more than four decades ago by Donald Super. Life-Career Rainbow and Lifespan Development Theory was the result of Super's integration of previous career models, as he humbly admits: "There is no Super's theory; there is just an assemblage of theories that I have sought to synthesize" (Super, 1990, p. 199). Building on previous theories that integrate biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural aspect into career development, Super focussed on the content, process, and outcomes of career choice and development throughout the human life course. "Today, without question", say Brown & Lent (2021, p. 96), "life-span, life-space theory ranks, along with the theory of vocational personalities and work environments, as one of the most influential, empirically supported, and

widely applied of the foundational theories of career choice and development". Super has identified five developmental stages, each with specific responsibilities and unique roles. They are:

1. **Growth** spans from birth to 13 years old. This is the age when children identify with significant others and start forming an initial vocational self-concept. They start asking themselves: Who am I? The answer to this question is related to one's mental representations of his or her personal strengths, limitations, values, interests, abilities, talents, and personality traits. Family, school and play offer valuable opportunities for self-discovery. Growth comes with a series of developmental tasks for children regarding developing concern for the future, control over decision-making, conviction to achieve, and competence in work habits and attitudes (Savickas & Super, 1993).
2. **Exploration** traverses the age between 14-24 years old and involves the crystallization, specification, and implementation of the vocational self-concept. These are the ages of adolescence and emerging adulthood, when one develops a clear and stable self-concept, identifies ability levels and occupations, implements educational and vocational choices, explores different occupations, and starts forming a vocational identity. This is when most internships, volunteering experiences, part-time work, curricular and extracurricular activities occur, providing an excellent opportunity to broaden one's perspective about the world-of-work, the career decision making process and occupational differences.
3. **Establishment** is the third stage, set between 25-44. This is the time when most employees secure job positions, focus on job satisfaction, work productivity, interpersonal relationships, and work adjustment. Some might pursue higher-level positions or enter leadership roles. Balancing job requirements with family responsibilities becomes salient at this stage. Earning money is as important as having a meaningful career and bringing one's contribution into the world.
4. **Maintenance** follows and brings a whole new perspective on sustainability issues. One might ask himself or herself about the personal role in an organization, about work relationships, about work-life balance, continuing in an established position or within the same organization or field of work. For some, maintenance is about securing the already held job position, as job proficiency might be the main reason here. For others,

maintenance provides new insights into the necessity to update knowledge and skills, to enhance performance or unprecedented innovation strategies to keep work exciting and engaging. Still, for some job dissatisfaction may be a strong motivating factor to make changes and move forward.

5. The fifth stage, **disengagement**, usually comes at around 65 years old. Elder individuals start decelerating workloads, start planning for the retirement, organize and secure finances, and begin thinking more about their role in family and community. Retirement looks different for the elderly, ranging from loss to transformation (Sargent et al., 2011). Eight metaphors have been used to describe the different meanings of retirement:

	Metaphor	Definition
1	Loss	Lack of purpose, fear of being forgotten, threat to one's identity
2	Renaissance	New beginning, new chapter, endless possibilities
3	Detox	Cleansing experience, getting away from stressful jobs
4	Liberation	Being released from work constraints and restrictions, freedom
5	Downshifting	Shifting gears, gaining time, slowing down and pacing
6	Staying the course	Continuing engagement and contribution, using skills in different settings
7	Milestone	Achieving goals, reaching new pinnacles
8	Transformation	New identity, positive adaptation to a new role and lifestyle.

Life stage success requires career maturity and career adaptability. It depends upon one's ability to be ready for and have the resources to cope with different career transitions, work traumas and a diverse range of developmental tasks (Savickas, 2005).

Super (1980) also talks about nine major roles, presented in chronological order as follows: child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and annuitant. Sometimes, these roles overlap. Too much or too little emphasis on any of these roles, but also their combination at different times in life may breed different mental problems. Work-role loss may cause depression, anxiety, and lower well-being (Paul & Moser, 2009), while over-engagement and role conflicts may lead to burnout and exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001). The interaction between these roles may at times be supportive and complementary, or conflictual and straining (Halbesleben et al., 2009), leading to seeking a career counsellor or career coach, but also to accessing psychotherapy or psychiatric services.

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Chapter 3

The vocational identity

What do you want to be when you grow up? A puzzling question everybody is asked one point or another. The answer to this question is shaped in time, after several changes and adjustments, after a circumscription and compromising process (Gottfredson, 1981, 2005), and depending on the experiences we face, people we come to know, information we get and opportunities we encounter. The answer to this question has to do with how we define our identity. Identity formation is the result of the interplay of biological, psychological, sociological, and historical factors. It is a component of the self-concept, providing the answer to the question "Who am I?", in relationship to different areas of life or ideology (for example, work, school, education, or religion). It can be defined as “the sense of personal uniqueness and the sense of self-sameness across different times and contexts” (Erikson, 1968). Identity formation becomes the most important task in adolescence, but it continues through emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) and later (Kroger, 2015). “Adolescence has been identified as the period when most of the “work” of identity formation takes place”, says Vondracek (2006), but “as more individuals pursue midlife career changes or serial careers, their views of who they are and what they do (i.e., their vocational identities) invariably changes as well. Thus, the task of vocational identity formation should never be considered finished once and for all. Individuals have the capacity to reinvent themselves and their careers from early adolescence through old age” (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006, p.372).

Building on Erikson’s identity theory, James E. Marcia developed **the identity status approach**, which after being the most prominent model for decades, has then been replaced by Crocetti’s and Porfeli’s lines of work. Marcia was the first to introduce two different dimensions of identity: crisis, later called exploration, and commitment. Based on these two dimensions, Marcia distinguished between identity achievement (commitment following exploration), foreclosure (which involves a commitment without exploration), moratorium (exploration without commitment), and identity diffusion (where both exploration and commitment are absent).

The three-factor model of career identity (Crocetti et al., 2008) integrates three identity processes:

(a) **commitment**, defined by assuming stable choices related to certain areas of development and by the self-confidence individuals derive from these choices;

(b) **exploration**, seen as actively reflecting on commitments and possible choices, seeking additional information, and discussing with others about possible choices;
(c) **reconsideration of commitment**, or comparing current commitments with possible alternatives, because current commitments are no longer satisfactory.

Porfeli et al. (2011) took this model and tried to develop it, stating that each of the three dimensions subsumes two subdomains:

	Dimension	Subdomains
1	Commitment	Commitment making
		Identification with commitment
2	In-depth exploration	In-depth exploration
		In-breadth exploration
3	Reconsideration of commitment	Commitment flexibility
		Self-doubt

Commitment making refers to the level of certainty about a career choice one is going to make, while identification with the commitment is related to the way a vocational choice is integrated into one's self-concept. Exploration has two different sides: in-depth exploration, which happens when an adolescent learns specific aspects about a possible career path, and in-breadth exploration, involving learning general aspects about multiple careers. Reconsideration of commitment consists of commitment flexibility, meaning that one might be open to changes in occupational choices and preferences, but also to a lot of self-doubt, uncertainty and anxiety when confronted with career planning and career choices. The three processes are interrelated.

From the combination of the three big dimensions, six identity statuses can be outlined:

1. **Achieved status** (high score on commitment and deep exploration, as well as low score on reconsideration of commitment): I have informed myself, evaluated alternatives and decided to go in a direction, and even after making a choice, I continue to inform myself about this. Research shows that establishing an achieved identity status is associated with enhanced self-esteem, adjustment, life satisfaction, competence, academic adjustment, and performance (Porfeli et al, 2011).

2. **Foreclosed or forced identity** (relatively high commitment score, moderate score on exploration and low levels of self-doubt and commitment flexibility). e.g. I choose theological seminary because my father and grandfather went in that direction, and I am

not looking for more information about this option. Or both of my parents are lawyers, they have a law firm, and since it is a family business, in time I will oversee it.

3. **Moratorium** (low commitment score, medium exploration score and high commitment reconsideration score): I have already made a choice, but I don't think it was the best, I am researching other options and I know for sure that I must go in a different direction.

4. **Postponed** (or searching moratorium), with high scores on all three: I am looking for information from various sources (family, friends, relatives, etc.) about the college I think I want to attend, but without delimiting a few clear alternatives and assuming a choice.

5. **Diffuse** (low scores on commitment and exploration and medium scores on rethinking commitment): I don't care much about this decision, I don't get informed, I don't look for solutions, and I'm generally uninvolved.

6. **Undifferentiated** (scoring very close to the averages on each of the three dimensions).

Each of the six identity statuses includes a series of specific characteristics. As previously stated, those with an achieved status experience high level of self-efficacy, use defense mechanisms to a lower degree, can function under stress, register high levels of motivation and self-respect, and high levels of engagement. Those with foreclosed identity experience high levels of conformity, frequent changes of aspirations, high anxiety and defenses, external locus of control, are oriented towards distant future, are preoccupied with satisfying significant others, and receiving validation from them, and experience severe anxiety when separated from family. Those in moratorium are used to rely on denial, projection, and identification as coping mechanisms for anxiety, suffer from general indecisiveness, are skeptical, analyze information from various sources and integrate different perspectives, tend to be more dependent than others, tend to adaptively withdraw, find ease in developing close friendships, but often fear getting into a stable relationship with a partner. People in postponed or searching moratorium engage in active exploration without commitment, find alternative commitment options, and do not seem to rush into making a final decision. Those with a diffuse identity register a low level of autonomy, decreased self-esteem, have no firm commitment, and fear the idea of assuming a decision, experience academic maladjustment and are more prone to peer pressure; they express low levels of conscientiousness and tend to have a dependent decision-making style, often face avoidant coping mechanisms and procrastination, have difficulty in establishing attachment with others and are less likely to accept personal responsibility for their own lives.

Vocational identity can be assessed by using the Utrecht Management of Identity Scale (U-MICS; Crocetti et al., 2008) or Porfeli's Vocational Identity Status Assessment (VISA, Porfeli et al., 2011). The results are not relevant by themselves, as they must be interpreted in relationship with an average and a standard deviation.

The U-MICS test includes 13 items, scored on a Likert scale from 1 (completely false) to 5 (completely true). Of these 13 items, 5 assess commitment, 5 exploration, and other 3 – reconsideration of commitment. The scale has been developed to assess educational identity (including items such as: My education gives me security for the future, I often talk with other people about my education or I often think that a different education would make my life more interesting) and interpersonal identity (i.e., friendship, My best friend gives me security in life – for commitment, I often talk with other people about my best friend – for in-depth exploration, and I often think that a new best friend would make my life more interesting – for reconsideration of commitment).

Porfeli's VISA contains 30 items, with 10 for each of the three dimensions of career exploration, commitment, and reconsideration, and five items for each of the two subscales per dimension. All VISA subscales employ a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items for VISA: career commitment making - I know what kind of work is best for me, identification with career commitment - My career will help me satisfy deeply personal goals, in-breadth exploration – I am keeping my options open as I learn about many different careers, in-depth exploration – I am trying to find people that share my career interests, career self-doubt - When I tell other people about my career plans, I feel like I am being a little dishonest, and career flexibility - I will probably change my career goals.

Understanding these dimensions of identity and looking into our own identity formation can facilitate self-knowledge, which is the first step of building a career. It might be a little difficult in adolescence, but with a little bit of guidance and support, we can make sense of our thoughts, emotions, and actions, and we can develop an accurate image of our own objectives, of our values and aspirations. Role models are important in this stage of development and open conversations with family, friends, teachers, school counsellors, or coaches can help us explore different career paths.

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Chapter 4

Design thinking for career development

Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, the co-authors of *Designing your life* (2017) suggest using design thinking for career planning. The two have codesigned the Life design lab at Stanford University with the intention to help people figure out what they want to be when they grow up. Widely used in engineering, business, innovation, and education, design thinking is a creative, structured approach to problem solving (Féja et al., 2023). It is generally defined as "an analytic and creative process that engages a person in opportunities to experiment, create and prototype models, gather feedback, and redesign" (Razzouk & Shute, 2012, p. 330).

Design thinking is an innovation methodology for products and services, but it can also be applicable to our most significant project, that is our life. It is a set of mindsets, based on five principles: re-framing, curiosity, radical collaboration, mindfulness, and bias towards action. Burnett and Evans suggest starting with things you are curious about, things you would like to explore. Be open-minded and seek opportunities. Then use re-framing to think differently of an old problem. When you are trying to do something new, you need to be mindful of the process, so don't be afraid of mistakes; they help you move forward. They show you ways to improve. Don't just focus on the final destination but be aware of the journey. "No plan for our life will survive the first contact with reality", says Bill Burnett in his famous Ted Talk, held at Stanford University (May 20, 2017). When you get stuck, ask for help. The answer is out there in the world, so we need to collaborate with others to find solutions to our problems. You need a team, a community, a tribe. Then, once you find your people, start acting. Don't just think, do. Test things. Prototype. Fail and start over. Re-run the process as many times as it needs.

Building on cognitive and positive psychology, Burnett and Evans approach the dysfunctional beliefs behind career problems and apply the innovation principles and techniques to help us avoid "gravity problems" and focus on real issues. This way we will bring out the many possible version of ourselves, identify alternative and choose the most suitable side. Therefore, this is a five-step process, involving distinct stages focusing on:

1. Empathy
2. Defining problems
3. Ideating

4. Prototyping
5. Testing

Burnett and Evans believe people need a design process to figure out who they are and who they want to become. They encourage people to find a coherent story, based on who they are, what they think and what they want to do in the world. So, how do you start?

You should start with your work view and life view. What is your view of the world? Why do you think people go to work? Why do you? How do you know you are doing a good job? What is the relationship between work and money? What is the relationship between experience, personal development, and work? Your life view, on the other hand, includes your opinions about the world and how it works. What makes your life worth living? What is the most important thing for you? What gives meaning to your life? The good thing about our life view is that it grows with us, it changes in time and gets a whole new meaning with age. In adolescence you might be preoccupied with fame and fortune, in emerging adulthood with friends, romantic relationships, and job promotions, in adulthood with starting a family and being able to spend quality time with your children and so on. You also must look at the relationship between these two concepts. Do they complement each other? Are they in conflict? Is there a work-life balance or are there areas where you need to compromise? Do they push one another? Do they align?

For some, defining the problem they are facing is quite a struggle. So, they get stuck with gravity problems. These are things you can not change. Burnett and Evans say, “you cannot solve a problem you are not willing to have”. This is just a circumstance in your life. In this situation, even though it is difficult, you must accept this situation and move on, focus on real problems. On circumstances you can and are willing to work on.

You are then encouraged to imagine the broader picture and explore all the lives you can have. Most people think they can have about 7 to 10 lives. But unfortunately, we only get one. Still, we can imagine different lives and ideate our future. “There are more versions of ourselves, and they are all correct”, says Burnett. To be more specific, you can start by ideating three distinct lives:

- The **actual** life: the thing you are doing right now. If you would continue doing the job you are doing now for five years, how would your life look then?
- The **alternative** life: what can you do if the thing you are doing right now goes away?

- The **ideal** life: what would you do if you knew no one would laugh? If you had enough money and you wouldn't care about what people thought.

Once you do this, you can envision different alternatives. You identify things you left behind or forgot about. Then you can think of ways to bring those things back, retake hobbies, get back to school, start your own company, change your workplace, find partners etc.

Exploring the three alternatives that Burnett and Evans recommend is a good option. Let's take a closer look at these three lives.

1. First, your **actual life**. Start by focusing on the most important areas: health, work, fun, and love. Do you live by the saying "mens sana in corpore sano"? Is there something missing? What about work? How much time do you dedicate to your job? How satisfied are you with your current work? How engaged? How productive? What about fun? Do you make time for it? What kind of activities do you do just for fun, for the simple pleasure of doing them or for recharging your batteries? How often do you take time for them? Where do you do these activities? With whom? This leads to the last area, love, and relationships. We are social people, therefore one of our basic needs is being in connection with others. Do you feel you are seen, understood, connected, loved? How is your relationship to your partner? Your kids? Your larger family? Friends? Colleagues? Community members etc. Look at these four areas and try to identify red flags. Where do you need to work on? Have you neglected one of them? Have you devoted too much time to another? How can you balance them better? Which is the main problem you need to focus on?

One suggestion from Burnett and Evans would be to start doing more of the activities that make you feel more energized and engaged, and less of those that make you feel exhausted and that could lead you to burnout. Identify those times in day when you are more focused and the ones that make you feel good. Start observing your activities and use the AEIOU technique: what activities did you do, what environment where you in, who were you interacting with, what objects were you using, and who were the users, for whom were you doing these activities. Write down these activities for a whole week, then extend this observation period to the next twenty-one days. Then start to see consistent patterns of activities that engage you and energise you. Now imagine a way of doing these activities more in the next five years of your life. Do simple sketches with symbols for these five categories: activities, environments, interactions, objects, and users. Now you have a pretty good image of how your next five years might look like.

2. Next, imagine your **alternative life**. What would you do if your job would vanish? What if robots would take over and your work would be no longer needed. One of my students showed me how to write a scientific article in five minutes, using ChatGPT. It can do a lit review within seconds; it is that fast. And suddenly my work over the last years, was put in a totally different context. This gave me a whole new perspective on academic writing. I saw people using AI to design good business presentations within seconds or researchers running statistics procedures in minutes, a work of months or years for some. If you are a teacher, imagine AI takes over and your job is no longer needed. Machines will gather information, synthesize it, write handbooks in 10 minutes and then designing effective course presentations for online classes in seconds. What if your job would no longer be paid? What else would you do? What type of job would you search for? What career would you pursue?
3. Afterwards, see yourself doing the thing you would like to do if money and image would no longer be an issue. This is your **ideal life**. How would your life look like if you did what fascinated you? This might lead you into the life you could do if you would look beyond the fear of judgement and the fear of making money. Draw five boxes and again imagine your life over the next five years. In your wildest dreams, what would your life look like? There is a very small chance it will change in that direction, but it will give you a good idea of what you dream of, what you are aiming for.

An excellent recommendation would then be to start prototyping different careers. This involves asking interesting questions. It deals with asking yourself important questions. Is this what I want? Do I still want this? How have things changed in time? Then you need to sneak up on the future and find out whether this is what you want. You need to gather relevant information before choosing a career path. You can first use **prototype conversations**, as there are people who are doing now what you think is possible for you too. People are doing today what I want to do in my future. Also, people resonate after hearing meaningful stories. If you have always dreamed about getting back to school, a good idea would be to find similar people who have returned to university and discuss with them about the pros and cons. Of course, your situation might be very different from theirs, but gathering this kind of data, from several people is going to give you fresh prospects and insights. Hearing about their experience and putting together different perspectives will enable you to make better decisions.

You can then prototype experiences. If you want to make good decisions, you must gather options, narrow them down to a working list, make a choice, evaluate your choices, and them implement the best one. The idea is that you don't really know what you want before you start doing it. Start with a short internship, a volunteering experience, a one-week shadow experience or a part-time job. Start somewhere!

Oftentimes, people are afraid of making mistakes. But building a career is a lifetime process. You will most definitely fail at times. You will deal with disappointment and experience downfalls. You will at times feel like this is a roller coaster, with ups and downs, and different speeds, with fear and excitement, but also with happiness and thrill. So, looking more into your ideas and preconceptions about failure and success, into weaknesses and areas of growth, into personal resources and lessons learned after blunders, might be a very good idea. Burnett and Evans suggest using the following grid:

Failure	Blunder	Weakness	Opportunity for growth	Lesson learned

People usually want to get the ideal job from the start. They imagine that there is an ideal workplace for them, just waiting to be discovered. This is a myth. There are no ideal places of work pre-designed especially for you, that you just need to find. People usually find a company, go to an interview, get rejected a few times before being hired, then start working with a group of people they have never met before, are expected to have good results and be satisfied with their work and benefits, be productive, get job promotions etc. It would be nice if life would look like this, but it is just a fantasy. It rarely happens. What is the most common situation is that people start adapting to job environments, get a sense of what the company is like, what people are interested in, what the organizational culture supports or discourages, then start job crafting.

Career centres have started using design thinking in their workshops for students, as career counsellors are aware of the fact that students who are encouraged to embrace failure by trying things (early and often) have a unique opportunity to learn about themselves, ask for help, and are more curious about life's opportunities (Catrino, 2022).

Design thinking is just one useful tool for one's career planning process. It is highly effective, because "design doesn't just work for creating cool stuff like computers and Ferraris; it

works in creating a cool life. You can use design thinking to create a life that is meaningful, joyful, and fulfilling. It doesn't matter who you are or were, what you do or did for a living, how young or how old you are - you can use the same thinking that created the most amazing technology, products, and spaces to design your career and your life. A well-designed life is a life that is generative - it is constantly creative, productive, changing, evolving, and there is always the possibility of surprise" (Burnett & Evans, 2018, in Féja et al., 2023).

So, to sum up, what Burnett and Evans are suggesting is to be curios, don't be afraid to test things, re-frame problems, bear in mind the fact that career building is a process, so do not surrender to frustration, don't get lost and do not give up, and last, but not least, when you get stuck, ask for help. That is find a team, build a community, connect with others, find a mentor, network, and keep family and friends close. And good luck!

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Chapter 5

Self-knowledge

Self-awareness is an essential component of career planning and is usually the first step in any career counselling intervention. It encompasses the exploration and integration of a realistic and accurate perception of one's interests, values, motivations, limitations, and lifestyle preferences. It requires a fair amount of time that one takes to develop insights into themselves, who they are, what they stand for, what they are passionate about, what they believe in, how they see the world, what is their role on this planet, what drives them to fulfil this role and how they plan on living their lives meaningfully.

Most of the major career development models have taken into consideration self-awareness as a necessary step in making career choices and shaping careers. "With changes in the psychological contract and traditional organizational opportunity structures, changes in the meaning of career success, and greater awareness of the impact of family and lifestyle issues on one's career, employees have been compelled to design their own personal and career development plans. This has been accompanied by limited assistance from organizations for the development and management of these career plans. In such rapidly changing and uncertain times, there has been an increased pressure on employees to develop a set of career competencies that would enable them to develop insights into themselves and their environment. Such career competencies are believed to be important in achieving career success and satisfaction" (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006, p. 710).

Individuals who are self-aware can set appropriate career goals, are able to develop career strategies, and to self-monitor, self-evaluate and manage their career. Self-awareness is usually developed through **self-exploration**. Individuals seek information about their natural talents, personal qualities, interests, values, abilities and skills, attitudes and beliefs, motivations, and schemes. Self-exploration involves a wide array of different contexts, from family and friends to school and extracurricular activities, or professional environments.

Different techniques and instruments have been developed in time for self-exploration. Individual assessment tools, such as the Vocational Preference Inventory, Strong Interests Inventory, the Self-Directed Search, the General Aptitude test Battery, the NEO-PI, the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, the Rokeach Value Survey, and the Lifestyle Inventory have been designed

for interest, values, aptitudes, personality, or lifestyle evaluation. Depending on the budget of the client, on specialist's training or infrastructure, on the cultural context and many other variables, counsellors can select among hundreds of instruments. Within the organizational settings, several companies provide individuals the opportunity to implement self-exploration through career workshops, workbooks, or assessment centres' activities. Formal feedback coming from performance appraisals or informal employees' active-feedback seeking is also valuable.

But self-assessment can be hindered by several factors, including one's personality, self-esteem, schemas, cognitive biases and so on. They can be identified in counselling or therapy, but this usually happens when life satisfaction in general decreases and the individual's wellbeing is impacted. Because self-assessment involves judgments and evaluations about the self, they impact the individual threefold: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural.

How do we develop our self-concept and self-awareness and what is the occupational self-concept? The **self-concept** refers to the sum of a person's beliefs about his or her attributes (Kassin et al., 2011). It is the cognitive component of the self and is made up by cognitive molecules called self-schemas. What we think of ourselves does not always match with what specific others think of us. Self-knowledge starts with introspection, a looking inward at our own thoughts and feelings. But introspection is not always the key to knowing your true self, as it sometimes improves the accuracy of self-knowledge, while in other cases it diminishes it. So, we combine introspection with social perception, and we start learning about ourselves the same way outside observers do - by watching our own behaviour. For some characteristics, it is easy for us to place ourselves in the social space. Let's say we try to find out whether we are short or tall, so we compare ourselves with the mean height and conclude that we are either under it, so we are short, or above it, so we are tall. The more we derive from the norm, the more informative the situation is. But what about kindness or empathy? What about how religious we are? Or how funny? For these attributes, we use social comparison. When we are uncertain of our abilities or opinions - that is, when objective information is not readily available - we evaluate ourselves through comparisons with similar others. Autobiographical memories are also important for our self-concept. We tend to usually remember either transitional firsts, or reminiscent peaks. So, these experiences gain prominence in our lives and shape our perception and memories. Last, but not least, the cultural factors can heavily influence our self-concept.

Self-knowledge and self-awareness shape our self-esteem, which impacts our self-presentation. Self-esteem refers to the affective or emotional component of the self, while self-presentation is the behavioural element. We are concerned about the impressions we convey, and this tendency is extremely important in employment strategic self-presentation. We use both ingratiation, to get along with others, and self-promotion, when we want to get ahead of others, when we want to be perceived as competent, likeable, moral, and when we want to gain influence, power, sympathy, or approval. Sometimes, we use self-verification to fulfil our desire to have others perceive us as we truly perceive ourselves, and while some of us are low monitors and have a low tendency to regulate our behaviour to meet the demands of a social situation, others are struggling with others perception of themselves and become chameleonic in their social interaction, and this seems to pay off, as high self-monitors have been proven to receive higher performance ratings and more promotions and are more likely to emerge as leaders (Day et al., 2002). In the end, we must agree with social psychologists who say that we have a multifaceted self that needs to be unveiled in different social contexts.

The **occupational self-concept** integrates one's general beliefs and feelings about himself or herself in the working context. Let's look at an example. Say we have an adolescent girl, Cristina, who is very good at school, has excellent grades in all subjects, but is particularly interested in arts. Her parents do not encourage her to pursue a career in arts as they do not see it as a good option and would rather have her choose between medical school and finance. Even though she receives great feedback from her arts teacher, she might develop strong negative feelings towards her parents, but still decide to conform and compromise by choosing architecture as a career path. As in this example, some career development theories emphasize the importance of developing, synthesizing, compromising, and implementing self-concepts. Tina has developed her love of arts from childhood, has pursued this dream up until adolescence, as her parents perceived arts classes to be recreational activities. When she had to decide what high school to choose, her parents started reconsidering her options and forced her to analyse other more prestigious or lucrative alternatives. Tina continued searching for a compromise and settled for architecture, a choice that would combine her love of arts with her parents' inclination for financial stability. So, Tina started developing her self-concept in childhood and then crystallized it during adolescence, following a three-tiered stage model: formation, translation, and implementation. She first differentiated herself from others and has identified with her arts teacher. She used this adult

role model to test the reality, but her parents had a strong influence on her career choices. She then compared her attributes to the available role models and decided she is not going into finance or medicine, as her parents would like, but would rather find a suitable alternative. With the intention to find a career in arts, she then chose the next best option, architecture.

As Tina moved through the career decision-making process, her self-concept changed. She started with the awareness and self-appraisals. She then gathered information about her options, discussed with teachers, friends and family, received encouragement from some, but disapproving feedback from others, she identified her values and priorities, her interests, her motivation, and made the decision to eliminate the undesired options and compromise. She chose to commit to architecture and now thinks of ways to establishes contingency plans, internalize the positive aspects of the decision, and reduces the negative aspects. Her occupational self-concept will continue to evolve as she enters the world of work and performs different work roles.

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Chapter 6

Personality

People have always been puzzled by the unique features of feelings, behaviours and thoughts that distinguish a person from others. Today we call this unique pattern personality and consider it to be a product of both biology and environmental influences. Different theories have been developed to explain what personality is and how we can describe individuals based on their personality, but one model currently widely spread among researchers is the HEXACO model, that evolved from McCrae and Costa's (1997, 2003) Big 5 Personality Traits theory.

The five-factor personality theory states that our personality is a combination of basic tendencies, characteristic adaptations, and our self-concept. Personality develops in time. Still, while the basic tendencies are consistent, the characteristic adaptations are subject to change, both because of dramatic environmental influences and due to changes associated with aging (McCrae & Costa, 2003). No personality is better than other. Societies need diverse types of people. As the authors of this theory state: "Cultures need members fit for war as well as peace, work as well as play…" (McCrae & Costa, 2003, pp. 51-52).

Big 5 is a trait theory of personality, meaning that it defines personality through stable and lasting behaviours patterns and conscious motivations. It tries to explain the trait of a person and how these traits might influence his/her decisions. The five traits can be easily remembered is we use the acronym OCEAN, which stands for: openness to experiences, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. After conducting studies in different cultural settings, the big 5 model received a sixth characteristic, honesty-humility. The E from extraversion, became, X, and neuroticism was replaced with E from emotionality. Therefore, the new acronym: HEXACO (Kelland, 2015). What does each trait refer to?

1. **Openness** to experiences, intellect or culture characterizes curious people, who are comfortable trying out new things. They enjoy creative activities and explore different ideas and experiential outcomes. People with high scores on openness to experience, are descried as original, creative, imaginative, independent, and liberal. They prefer variety and seek new opportunities to discover novel experiences. They become absorbed with art and nature, are intellectually curious and love to learn, use their imagination and are interested in unusual, unconventional people and ideas. On the

other hand, people who register low scores, are seen as conservative, down-to-earth, conforming, and routine oriented.

The openness to experience scale consists of four sub-scales, namely:

- The aesthetic appreciation scale assessing one's enjoyment of beauty in art and nature.
- The inquisitiveness scale scores one's tendency to seek information about, and experience with, the natural and human world. These are people who like to travel, to discover new places and people, and who are curious about natural and social sciences.
- The creativity scale identifies one's score regarding the preference to innovate and experiment. It characterizes people who have a high inclination for originality, innovation, and self-expression.
- The unconventionality scale describes one's willingness to accept the unusual, to seek eccentric people and ideas, to be receptive to novelty and to avoid conformism.

2. **Conscientious** people pay attention to details, are very organized and prefer planning ahead, finish important tasks right away, enjoy having a set schedule, re-reading assignments and double checking everything. These are individuals who are very tidy, who organize their time and space, work in a disciplined way to achieve their goals, strive to do a better job than others, take their time when they must decide and consider different perspectives. People with low scores on conscientiousness are, on the contrary, more relaxed, place little emphasis on organizational skills, avoid difficult tasks, are ok with mistakes, and make impulsive decisions.

   The HEXACO test includes four sub-scales for conscientiousness, namely:

   - The organization scale, analysing the tendency to seek order, especially in the physical surroundings.
   - The diligence scale, looking at the tendency to work hard, to be disciplined and motivated to achieve goals.
   - The perfectionism scale, describing people who are attentive to details and do not tolerate errors in their work.

- The prudence scale, assessing the tendency to inhibit impulses and deliberate carefully before taking a decision.

3. **Extraversion** describes people who are sociable, are comfortable being surrounded by others, say things before thinking them through, enjoy being the centre of attention, who prefer and are energized by outside stimuli. The opposite of extraversion, introversion characterizes people who are more reserved, who prefer looking inwards, who feel drained after interacting with others, who need quiet spaces to recharge their batteries and who feel better being by themselves, taking time to reflect and organize thoughts.

   Four sub-scales go under extroversion:

   - The social self-esteem scale. High scorers on this scale tend to see themselves as worthy, popular, and having likeable qualities.
   - The social boldness scale describes one's tendency towards comfort or confidence with a variety of social situations. These are people who are not shy, who find it easy to talk to strangers and speak in public.
   - The sociability scale assesses one's tendency to enjoy social interactions. These people find it easy to talk to others, pay visits, attend parties, be surrounded by large groups of people in noisy environments.
   - The liveliness scale characterizes optimistic people, who are enthusiastic and dynamic.

4. **Agreeableness** is the fourth trait of the model and describes one's tendency to control one's temper, to cooperate and communicate with others, to negotiate, to be tolerant, to forgive others and to be lenient in judging their mistakes. These are people who are usually described as soft-hearted, trusting, and helpful.

   The four sub-scales of agreeableness include:

   - Forgiveness or the tendency to forgive others, to trust them, to re-build relationships and to move on after differences.
   - Gentleness assesses a tendency to be lenient with others, to be mild, to avoid judging others, and making them feel uncomfortable.

- Flexibility looks at one's willingness to compromise and navigate through personal differences, to be understanding and reasonable, to accept and to accommodate others' suggestions.
- Patience describes one's tendency to remain calm, to hold a high tolerance to frustration, and not to lose temper in heated situations.

5. **Neuroticism**, later called emotionality, describe people's tendency to experience higher highs and lowers lows. They are more susceptible to feeling anxious in response to life's stressful situations, need the support of others in time of distress, feel insecure and fear experiencing physical dangers, experience dramatic shifts in mood, are usually perceived as extremely empathic or sentimental.

   Four sub-scales combine to describe one's emotionality trait:

   - The fearfulness scale describes one's fear of danger and physical harm. People who score low on this are described as brave, courageous, fearless, and tough.
   - The anxiety scale assesses one's tendency to worry for a diversity of situations, to be preoccupied with multiple, sometimes even minor problems, that add up and hold a constant level of anxiety.
   - The dependence scale describes one's need for emotional support, the need to share burdens with others, to seek help or advice from others.
   - The sentimentality scale assesses the strength of our emotional bonds with other people. Those who score high at this scale feel strong emotional attachments and display empathy towards other people.

6. **Honesty-humility** refers to one's tendency to promote his own interests above the ones of others, to be modest and sincere or deceitful, to obey rules, and to be humble regarding the personal benefits or advantages of life. Low scorers on this dimension enjoy manipulating others for personal gain, are inclined to break rules, prefer luxury, and seek wealth, feel entitled to earn more than others, and to enjoy certain privileges. This dimension is measured by four scales:

- The modesty scale characterizes one's propensity towards entitlement. High scorers on this sub-scale perceive themselves to be ordinary people, not claiming special treatment or privileges.
- The sincerity scale examines the tendency to be sincere, genuine, and authentic in interpersonal relationships.
- The greed avoidance scale assesses one's inclination to possess luxury goods, to own high social status, to be wealthy.
- The fairness scale looks at one's tendency to avoid fraud, cheating, stealing, corruption, and manipulation.

Lee and Ashton (2013) have published a wonderful book on the H factor. It is entitled *The H Factor of Personality. Why Some People are Manipulative, Self-Entitled, Materialistic, and Exploitive—And Why It Matters for Everyone* and examines the importance of honesty and humility in different aspects related to one's life, such as attitudes about society, politics and religion, tendency to commit crime, personal interest and perspective on money, sex, and power, choice of partners and friends.

The Hexaco test can be completed at www.hexaco.org in less than ten minutes. It gives you an overview of your personality, by looking at these six basic tendencies and their underlying facets. The scores are presented in percentiles. The average score is 5, therefore two-third of people score between 4 and 6, one sixth below 4, and one sixth above 6. The test offers valuable insights into one's personality dispositions, but one should not neglect the role of characteristic adaptations and the influence of aging on the self-concept.

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Chapter 7

Building self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a concept launched and intensively researched by the Canadian American psychologist Albert Bandura, who taught psychology for a long time at Stanford University. He is the author of one of the most influential theories in psychology, social learning theory, and one of the most cited psychologists of all times. Bandura published three books that have significantly impacted the work of psychologists all over the world. They are: *Social learning and personality development* (1963), *Social foundations of though and action: a social cognitive theory* (1986) and *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control* (1999).

Bandura proposed that self-efficacy expectations refer to a person's beliefs concerning his or her ability to successfully perform a given task or behaviour. Self-efficacy is not general, but domain specific, meaning that one must identify first the relevant behavioural area regarding which he or she will assess the level of efficacy. For instance, one can know he or she is good at math, but has poor language skills, is excellent at arts and music, but is completely useless when it comes to social interactions. A researcher could be very knowledgeable but could have difficulties in explaining his research findings to children or people outside his field of expertise. A basketball player could be winning the championship, but it doesn't mean he will be equally good at swimming. One could be highly proficient in school, but if he or she lacks the practical experience, and might find it difficult to get a job.

Self-efficacy expectations have three main behavioural consequences: approach versus avoidance behaviours, quality of performance of behaviours associated with the target domain, and persistence in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1978). For example, if as previously mentioned, someone believes that is completely inapt for social interactions, he or she will avoid situations when could meet new people or be required to talk to strangers, will have low quality social conversations and therefore could attribute his low performance to the lack of social skills, and in time will have a tendency to give up readily when faced with social encounters.

The avoidance or approach behaviours are extremely important for career development, as they will draw the line between actions people are willing to try or not. Let's say someone has a low academic self-efficacy. This will have an impact on both choosing a major or an educational institution and, on the long run, on one's career choices. This person will be reluctant to competing

for highest ranked educational institutions, will fear failure, will perform worse than others in test situations, will be extremely worried about his or her assessments, will be hesitant in approaching internship opportunities or contacting mentors, will avoid initiating prototypical conversations and participating in networking events that could make a huge difference on their opportunities to meet suitable employers and will lack the proper information for career decision-making. In time, this will lead to fewer opportunities and chances to be hired and this person will surrender to failure and end up not even trying to find a better job.

"The power of efficacy beliefs to affect life paths through selection processes is most clearly revealed in studies of career choice and development (Lent et al., 1994). […] People who have a strong sense of personal efficacy consider a wide range of career options, show greater interest in them, prepare themselves better for different careers and have greater staying power in their chosen pursuits" (Bandura, 2000). Therefore, self-efficacy is extremely important for career decisions, not only in the initial stages of a career, but also later. From an early age, children begin to distinguish between male-dominated versus female-dominated jobs, which leads to a circumscription of career choices based on gender (Helwig, 2001). Hacket & Betz (1981) have shown that female underrepresentation in male-dominated jobs could be attributed to self-efficacy and socialization-based differences between male and female. Mechanisms underlying gender differences in career self-efficacy expectations have also been studied (Matsui, 1994; Matsui et al., 1989; Sweida & Woods, 2015). This is particularly relevant for pay expectations and career aspirations, as increased self-efficacy can raise the entry-level pay expectations of women, while it can reduce the peak career pay expectations of men (Hogue et al., 2010). Also, women who have a strong occupational self-efficacy tend to have statistically significant higher career aspirations (Hartman & Barber, 2020).

Gender differences in self-efficacy are also relevant for vocational activities (Post-Kammer & Smith, 1985). A student might be interested in applying for the pedagogical high school, but as 95% of their students are female, he might reconsider this option. In this case, combining career interests with self-efficacy assessment could be a possible solution, as for someone who has a strong interest in an activity, self-efficacy could be built by selecting the adequate activities and developing a strong motivation for overcoming obstacles.

Previous studies have also shown significant gender differences in self-efficacy when it comes to math, with males being significant more confident than female students (Huang, 2013;

Junge & Dretzke, 1995; Louis & Mistrele, 2012; Pajares, 2005). This has a huge influence as math is valued as one of the most important subjects in school, and the grades students receive have a long-term impact on their educational achievement and career choices.

Self-efficacy is also important as it impacts not only one's accurate self-appraisals, but also the process of gathering occupational information, goal selection, making plans for the future, and problem solving (Betz et al., 2003). So, how can we build self-efficacy? Bandura believed there are four sources of information useful for developing a strong self-efficacy:

1) **past performance accomplishments** or experiences of successful similar actions,
2) **vicarious learning or modelling**, meaning that you can learn a behaviour by observing others performing it or their stories about how they succeded in doing that activity,
3) **verbal persuasion** or positive feedback, encouraging you to do more of that activity or to improve your performance and results,
4) **emotional arousal**, registered either as lower anxiety in connection to that behaviour or high enthusiasm and energy when performing an activity.

Let's think of an example. Say someone is a kindergarten teacher and is looking for a second job. The first option would be to either tutor students, work in a recreational centre for children or organize private anniversary parties. After a thorough examination of the alternatives, this teacher finds that the last one is paid better and thus considers giving it a try for two weeks. It's not like it would be the first time she organizes parties for children, as to a smaller scale, they happen monthly at school. She has also organized all her nieces' and nephews' parties in the past, so previous accomplishments encourage her to pursue this option. She usually feels energized and quite happy when attending parties with lots of people, likes music and noisy spaces, feel comfortable in being surrounded by children and enjoy doing activities with and for them. Parents and relatives always thank her for the work she is doing, and they seem to appreciate her effort. She feels like this comes easy to her as her mother was also a teacher and her father, who was pastor, organized community centre activities all the time. So, this job seems like a perfect match for her.

Self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectation and goals are the three building-blocks of **social-cognitive career theory**, developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett in 1994, based on Bandura's social cognitive theory. SCCT tries to answer questions like how do basic academic and career interests develop, how educational and career choices are made, and how academic and

career success is obtained. The main idea of this theory is that people develop academic and career interests in time, because of the combined influence of their personal inputs (predispositions, gender, race, health status) and background environmental influences, which lead to learning experiences that impact their self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. Interests influence choice goals, choice actions and in the end, the performance domains and attainment.

Let's look at an example. Let's say a child is very energetic, active, dynamic, so his parents decide to sign him up for the basketball team. He goes to gym five times a week for several years, he receives great feedback from his coach, goes to tournaments and wins titles, is selected among the top five players in his team, feels good every time he is on the court and does not skip training sessions. His father used to play basketball, but not professionally. They go to basketball matches, watch basketball on tv, his father even bought him a basketball panel where from time to time they shoot some balls or practice slam dunks. In time, the child thinks of following a vocational path, attending sports high school, and then applying for a sports scholarship at a university that has a very good basketball team, not too far from his hometown. His effort and persistence, his determination pays off. He is first selected in the juniors' team, then joins the seniors', and is paid for doing what he loves. The university diploma offers him a plan B, in case things go wrong, he is injured or does not make it to the big team. He also signed up for the referee classes and plans on getting his license.

SCCT has later been extended to study satisfaction and well-being in academic and career-related settings (Lent & Brown, 2006a, 2008), and how people manage common developmental tasks or uncommon challenges across the career lifespan (Lent & Brown, 2013). Lent described his theory as "a fairly recent approach to understanding the career puzzle. It is intended to offer a unifying framework for bringing together common pieces, or elements, identified by previous career theorists - such as Super, Holland, Krumboltz, and Lofquist and Dawis—and arranging them into a novel rendering of how people (1) develop vocational interests, (2) make (and remake) occupational choices, and (3) achieve varying levels of career success and stability" (Lent, 2005, p. 101). Thirty years later, SCCT is still one of the most comprehensive and influential theories in career development.

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Chapter 8

Skills-soft and hard. Skills of the future

Skills are behaviors or competencies that people can learn. In their CVs, people usually include hard and soft skills. The main difference between these two is how we came to develop them. The hard skills, also known as technical skills, are those gained through specific training, life experience or education. For example, a graphic designer is required to master skills like computer design, desktop publishing, video creation and editing, graphics or photo imaging software, and web platform development software. An engineer is expected to develop skills like database user interface, industrial control software, word processing software, analytic or scientific software. A clinical psychologist or family therapist needs accounting skills, electronic mail software, medical software, and how to make effective visual presentations. On the other hand, each of these three, the graphic designer, the electrician, and the psychologist, need a series of soft skills, like active listening, complex problem solving or judgement and decision making. But while the graphic designer cannot do his job without communicating effectively in writing, the electrician rarely does so.

Hard skills are easy to prove with certificates, education degrees, or awards. They include specific knowledge and abilities required for success in a job. Hard skills are closely related to knowledge, therefore can be easily trained, and measured. Foreign languages are assessed in the Common European Framework of References for Languages system, abbreviated in English as CEFR, using six levels: A1 beginners, A2 elementary, B1 intermediate, B2 upper-intermediate, C1 advanced and C2 proficiency. They describe the level of proficiency in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Soft skills, on the other hand, characterize one's relationships with other people, or are reflecting how you approach life and work. They are personal-driven and subjective skills, hard to measure. They are oftentimes related to your personal characteristics and traits and are difficult to prove. "Soft skills represent a dynamic combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, interpersonal, intellectual, and practical skills. Soft skills help people to adapt and behave positively so that they can deal effectively with the challenges of their professional and everyday life" (Haselberg, 2012, in Succi & Canovi, 2012). For a software developer, hard skills include knowledge of development language such as Java or C++, data analysis skills, mathematical and

numeracy skills, while soft skills revolve around communication, leadership, flexibility, decision-making and creativity.

For a long period of time, research has focused on hard or technical skills and on the know-how required by employers (Ciappei & Cinque, 2014). Education systems were inclined to prepare young people for their future occupations mainly by accumulation of all necessary hard skills, but studies show that soft skills are as important a wage determinant as hard skills (Balcar, 2016). Only recently, a shift of perspective from hard to soft skills has changed the rules of the game. Some argue that "in many situations, skills and attitude have taken precedence over technical expertise. Stand-alone technical knowledge is not a base for stepping up the success ladder" (Sharma, 2018, p. 26). Employers nowadays discuss more and more the need to develop employability skills, as soft and hard skills work best together.

While in the past, a degree or a university qualification was sufficient for someone to find a job and to consider this route as a sure one to success and employability (de Weert, 2007, in Succi & Canovi, 2020), the current situation has changed, as graduates are required to develop new skills, to adapt to the uncertain, volatile, complex world of work. One will change his career path multiple times across the lifespan. Many move abroad, work from home, relocate, accept lower positions, or make temporary or permanent job changes. With the challenges of globalization, migration, increased job insecurities, layoffs and AI, changes in higher education system, and the shift to knowledge economy, employability skills will be a constant topic on the public agenda (Sin & Neave, 2016, in Succi & Canovi, 2020).

Universities are not the only factors responsible for the development of individual skills. Even though employers have been constantly criticizing graduates' lack of transferable skills for the last three decades (Clarke, 2017), shifting blame is not constructive. Employers and universities need to join efforts in increasing students' awareness of the importance of both hard and soft skills. Students also have an individual responsibility in searching contexts where they can develop a wide set of skills that will allow them to adapt to the constant changes of the labor market and to improve their employability (Succi & Canovi, 2020). But what do we understand by employability skills? Cleary et al. (2006, in Sharma, 2018) define general employability skills as follows:

- Basic/Fundamental skills: Technical, knowledge of task, hands-on ability.

- Conceptual/Thinking skills: Planning, collecting, and organizing information, problem solving.
- Business skills: Innovation and enterprise.
- Community skills: Civic and citizenship knowledge.
- People-related skills: Interpersonal qualities such as communication and teamwork.
- Personal skills: Attributes such as being responsible, resourceful, and self-confident.

Employability skills enhance one's chance to be hired. They are the skills almost everyone needs to master to get a job (UKCES, 2009, in Nägele & Stalder, 2017).

This definition has changed in time, and now we are discussing about the skills of the future and how we can prepare today's students for the jobs of tomorrow. No matter what the job is, employers usually look for a balanced combination of knowledge, attitude, and skills (Sharma, 2018). It is in time that one comes to gain knowledge, develop a good work attitude, and master the skills required on the job market. We build our skills starting from aptitudes. They represent one's potential or natural ability to learn and to obtain higher performances in a given domain. To excel in statistics, for example, one must have aptitudes for math and logic. For poetry, one might be gifted in areas related to linguistic and artistic aptitudes. Someone with linguistic aptitudes, might also think of jobs such as linguist, translator, copy editor or interpreter, speech coach or journalist. Therefore, as we can see, the same aptitude can be involved in several activities. Our performance in an occupation is based not on a single aptitude, but rather on a set of aptitudes combined. Unfortunately, between one's real, objective aptitudes and his perceived-subjective ones might be a gap, leading to unfortunate career decisions.

For someone to excel in an area, it is not sufficient to have the proper aptitudes, but one also needs to develop these aptitudes through exercise and practice. Based on his or her aptitudes, one can search to gain declarative and procedural knowledge, which practiced will transform into skills. The term skill has been used interchangeably with competency, even though its definition is wider, referring to one's "ability to respond to a complex demand by combining one's internal resources (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes)" to meet the requirements of a given situation or context (McGuinness, 2018, p. 11).

If someone seeks to develop communication skills, for example, he or she needs to start by identifying his or her communication abilities (for example, understanding oral and written messages) and linguistic aptitudes, then develop knowledge in communication, operate effectively

with this knowledge, practice in a wide array of situations and, as a result, be able to transfer these skills into new contexts, such as a job interview, a book presentation or sending thank you notes to clients.

Employers are constantly criticizing graduates' lack of transferable skills (Clarke, 2017). An entire line of research has tried to answer questions like: What is the value of these transferable skills, the employers keep asking for? How can they be fostered through education and training both in universities and at work? Nägele and Stalder (2017) have shown that transferable skills can and should be developed in both environments. Beside extracurricular activities, volunteering, service-learning projects, experiential learning in general, and involvement in other activities, such as mentoring, peer-to-peer training can facilitate the development of transferable skills. Especially for adolescents and emerging adults, learning from peers is a significant activity, as it can be perceived as sharing good practices from similar others, connecting with like-minded individuals, and relating to their experiences and lessons learnt.

Universities especially can set the tone, by developing strong strategies on soft skills training. Embedding soft skills into curriculum may be the best decision for universities looking to provide employable graduates. Emphasizing the important role of training in the teaching-learning process, including hand-on activities and experiential learning opportunities, team assignments, peer evaluation, community immersion programs, inviting guest lectures from the industry, providing internship opportunities, informing students of global trends and challenges, motivating students to complete their education with massive open online course, or promoting technology are just few of the solutions (Sharma, 2018). Combining vocational orientation, curricular and extracurricular projects and activities increase the level of engagement among students, develop a "can-do attitude" and foster proactivity in students (Chell & Athayde, 2013). Building this innovative mindset could be the key.

Skills development is a lifelong process. It starts in the family, continues with formal education, and is completed by informal and nonformal education opportunities and later practiced in several contexts such as volunteering, work, and community service. In the complex world we live in, jobs are designed to accommodate different combinations of abilities, personality, knowledge, values, motivations, and styles. Let's take a comparative look at two different jobs and the requirement for each, according to O*Net, the *US Occupational Information Network*, listing

hundreds of jobs definitions, by organizing the most important abilities, interests, knowledge, skills, work activities, work styles and values.

	Graphic designer	**Lawyer**
Abilities	• Originality • Fluency of Ideas • Near Vision • Written Comprehension • Oral Comprehension	• Oral Expression • Oral Comprehension • Written Comprehension • Speech Clarity • Written Expression
Interests	• Artistic	• Enterprising, Conventional, • Investigative
Knowledge	• Design • Computers and Electronics • Fine Arts • Communications and Media • Language skills	• Law and Government • Language skills • Customer and Personal Service • Administration and Management • Personnel and Human Resources
Technology skills	• Computer aided design CAD software • Desktop publishing software • Graphics or photo imaging software • Video creation and editing software • Web platform development software	• Accounting software • Data base user interface and query software • Document management software • Information retrieval or search software • Presentation software
Soft skills	• Active Listening • Speaking • Active Learning • Critical Thinking • Writing	• Active Listening • Speaking • Reading Comprehension • Critical Thinking • Complex Problem Solving
Work activities	• Thinking Creatively • Working with Computers • Getting Information • Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates • Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships	• Getting Information • Evaluating Information to Determine Compliance with Standards • Making Decisions and Solving Problems • Providing Consultation and Advice to Others • Resolving Conflicts and Negotiating with Others
Work styles	• Attention to Detail • Dependability • Adaptability/Flexibility • Cooperation • Innovation	• Analytical Thinking • Dependability • Integrity • Attention to Detail • Stress Tolerance
Values	• Achievement • Independence • Recognition	• Recognition • Achievement • Independence

Work context	• Electronic Mail • Spend Time Sitting • Time Pressure • Telephone • Work With Work Group or Team	• Electronic Mail • Indoors, Environmentally Controlled • Telephone • Face-to-Face Discussions • Impact of Decisions on Co-workers or Company Results

Still, it can be quite confusing to choose from these extensive lists of jobs when you have so many variables to take into consideration. A thorough self-knowledge, a strong self-efficacy developed in time, a good sense of one's characteristics, but also a fair knowledge of the world of work and decision-making, supported by quality vocational guidance activities can facilitate the transition from school to work. Normalizing expectations and connecting training in education with professional activities can help students navigate the career planning process. This requires, as I have mentioned earlier, an innovative mindset, an open mind, disciplined activity, and a firm personal responsibility. Looking ahead and trying to make predictions based on the changes around us forces us to think of what the jobs of the future will look like. What skills will be required by the time we finish formal training?

Trying to identify the future skills, a systematic scoping review was conducted by Kotsiou et al., (2022). They define the term future skills as "knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and competencies that are intended to prepare learners to thrive in the face of an uncertain future" (p. 174). The list of future skills most frequently mentioned in the literature are grouped by the authors of this study into nine meta-categories or clusters of skills. In the table below, you can see some of the skills falling under each of these categories:

	Meta-categories	**Commonly mentioned skills**
1	Higher-order thinking skills	Decision-making Problem-solving Critical thinking Systems thinking
2	Dialogue skills	Collaboration Communication Empathy Listening
3	Digital and STEM literacy	Computational thinking ICT literacy Digital citizenship Online safety

	Meta-categories	Commonly mentioned skills
4	Values	Ethical reasoning Citizenship Global awareness Sustainability
5	Self-management	Resilience Positive attitude Emotional intelligence
6	Lifelong leaning	Learning to learn Active learning Metacognition
7	Enterprise skills	Creativity Entrepreneurship Curiosity
8	Leadership	Courage Responsibility Goal-orientation
9	Flexibility	Executive functioning Adaptability Agility

Will they guarantee a better adaptation to the world of work, or will they change even more so? The World Economic Forum (Future of Jobs Report, 2023) has made for the last years a list of the most desirable 10 skills on the labor market. This top is renewed every year and in 2023 included:

1. Analytical thinking
2. Creative thinking
3. Resilience, flexibility, and agility
4. Motivation and self-awareness
5. Curiosity and life-long learning
6. Technological literacy
7. Dependability and attention to detail
8. Empathy and active listening
9. Leadership and social influence
10. Quality control.

As we can see, the first two are cognitive skills, followed by self-efficacy skills (resilience, motivation, curiosity, and dependability), two skills representing working with others (empathy and leadership), and only one related to technology. This image proves once again the importance of soft skills in the labor market. The same report shows that in the next five years, AI and big data, along with leadership and social influence will be the key

competencies employers will be looking for. The fastest growing jobs will be in AI and machine learning, sustainability, and business intelligence. Bank tellers, clerks in general and cashiers or vendors will constitute the fastest declining areas of employment. Tasks completed by machines will grow from 34% to 43%. Almost half of workers' core skills (44%) are expected to change within the next decade. Eighty-one percent of organizations surveyed by The World Economic Forum agree that they will be investing in learning and training at the job and 80% plan to accelerate the automation process. Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs are a priority for most organizations. These will focus especially on women, gen Z and people with disabilities. Green transition is expected to drive job growth. Jobs such as sustainability specialists, renewable energy and system engineers are expected to be more attractive. Companies believe that the return of investment in skills will be observed primarily in the form of enhanced cross-role mobility, increased worker satisfaction or enhanced worker productivity.

We now know what the future skills look like, but how do we develop them? Research shows that these future skills are transdisciplinary, meaning that in universities they "have the potential to be incorporated into existing curricula and nearly all subjects" (Kotsiou et al., 2022, p. 183). But integrating these future skills into curricula needs to be an everyday practice (Pellegrino, 2017) and I agree with Kotsiou when he says we need to make students aware of challenges of the VUCA world. Employers must understand that the market changes faster than formal education institutions can adapt. Curricula does not change overnight. Students have the personal responsibility of finding opportunities that suit their own interests, motivations, skills, values, of pursuing these opportunities and choosing the best possible option, but also bearing in mind that there is no ideal decision and that one's actions are depending on the information he or she has at a given moment in time, on the structure of opportunities, on the competition, on the political, economic, social and technological factors, and that the analysis of all these factors involved in the decisional process will most definitely change in time. Therefore, adaptability and flexibility are highly demanded skills nowadays, some even argue that flexibility has become "a sine qua non of the contemporary workplace" (Bal & Izak, 2020).

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Chapter 9

Career interests

Defined as "stable patterns of occupational preferences" (Holland, 1973) or as "trait-like preferences for activities, environments, and outcomes that motivate goal strivings and achievement" (Jones et al., 2021, p. 590), career interests have been extensively researched in career guidance. *Holland Codes* or *Holland occupational themes* (1997) provides a useful framework for understanding career interests. John Holland, an American psychologist, believed that "the choice of a vocation is an expression of one's personality" (1973, p.6). When an individual chooses a career and an organizational setting that matches his career interests, there is a higher chance that he will feel motivated to fulfil his tasks, will have better performance and persistence in the workplace, and will be more satisfied with the job (Holland, 1959; 1997). Therefore, when a person chooses a work environment that is congruent with his career interests, he will experience more positive work attitudes and behaviors.

Even though Holland has organized career interests to fall under six categories, he stated that the simple reduction of career interests to such a small number of types is wrong, and that it would be better to say that the combination of these types leads to no less then 720 possible different personality patterns. Holland (1997) states that, for any personality type, the occupation that contains similar characteristics gives the individual great satisfaction, because people look for professional environments and occupations that allow them to exercise their skills and abilities, and to expresses their opinions and values.

Holland's theory can be synthesized into four ideas:

1. In Western societies, most people fall under one of six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, entrepreneurial, and conventional.
2. Corresponding to the six personality types, we can identify six work environments: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, entrepreneurial, and conventional.
3. People seek work environments that allow them to exercise their skills, to express attitudes and values, and to adopt suitable roles.
4. Behaviours are determined by the interaction between one's personality and the work environment.

Holland initially named the six categories: motoric, intellectual, esthetic, supportive, persuasive, and conforming (Nauta, 2010), but then relabeled them as: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Entrepreneurial, and Conventional (Holland, 1997). Each of the six types included in the Hexagon model or RIASEC, as it was labelled, can be characterized in terms of interests, abilities, activities, and values.

Realistic interests involve working with instruments, tools, and equipment, doing manual labour, working with hands, or in outdoor environments. Jobs like construction workers, plumbers, farmers, architects, chemists, dentists, photographers, personal trainers, drivers, veterinarians, zoologists, firefighters, park naturalists and surgeons can fall into this category. Realistic people are usually perceived by others as practical, mechanical, and active. They enjoy hand-on activities, like working with animals, tools, or machines. In their spare time, they may enjoy activities like hunting, fishing, carpentry, driving vehicles, making jewellery, playing sports, or landscaping. You can often find realistic people in outdoor settings, in athletic facilities, farms, or in the military. They possess skills like building and repairing, using tools, solving concrete problems, or growing plants. They have great manual dexterity and like working with engineering and technology. They value things they can use and are pragmatic.

Investigative interests involve enjoying crosswords, researching, playing strategy games, attending lectures, conducting experiments., discussing theories and books. Investigative people are seen as curious, scientific, and intellectual. They enjoy gathering information, analysing data, and solving complex problems. They usually prefer working in museums, universities, medical facilities, libraries, laboratories, or at computers. They have excellent problem-solving skills, love natural sciences, prefer activities involving thinking abstractly, statistics, philosophy, or researching different topics. Investigative people value information and scientific results and pursue jobs like doctor, lawyer, engineer, mathematician, biologist, physicist, librarian, philosopher, or web developer.

Those with an **artistic** type, enjoy creative activities, like crafts, dance, art, drama, music, or writing. You may find them in museums, music and art festivals, concerts, art galleries, theatres, televisions, in newspapers or publishing companies. They are usually described as creative, expressive, original, and independent. In their spare time, they prefer activities revolving around photography, cooking, hosting events, dancing, making movies, painting, drawing, graphic design, crafts, travelling, or learning languages. Some of their strongest skills include architecture, musical

ability, foreign languages, culture, creativity, communication, media design. As they have strong artistic abilities, they value creative arts, and tend to seek environments that are less structured, conventional, or predictable, and have a high preference towards personal expression. Some of the jobs that are recommended for artistic people include: chef, fashion designer, photographer, artist, dancer, choreographer, musician, poet, creative writer, storyteller, proofreader, translator, PR, or trainer.

Social interests characterize people who are helpful, trustworthy, and friendly. They enjoy helping people, and you may find them in jobs that are fulfilled by social workers, counsellors, nurses, priests, speech therapists, teachers, doctors, psychologists, physical therapists, nutritionists, sociologists, or tutors. They advocate for social justice, care for others, they entertain people, talk to others, listen to them, and offer advice. You can find them in health care, community centres, counselling centres, universities and classrooms, places of worship, or human resources. They are good at empathising, solving social problems, communicating with others, and volunteering.

Entrepreneurs are ambitious, sociable, and energetic. They like to persuade others, to lead, to sell, and to take responsibility. They enjoy debating, volunteering for political campaigns, joining boards of clubs, making speeches, investing in stock market, developing advertising and marketing campaigns. They enjoy negotiation, public speaking, management, sales, marketing, leadership, and strategizing; therefore, they prefer to activate in marketing and PR, advertising and politics, media, or management. They are very effective in persuasion and group leadership. They seek opportunities for risk-taking and advancement. Entrepreneurial type of people chooses jobs like broker, entrepreneur, politician, salesperson, marketing or advertising specialist, paralegal, real estate agent, management consultant, and lawyer.

Last, but not least, **conventional** people seek activities that involve following a pre-structured set of plans. They see themselves as practical and orderly. They prefer structuring systems, and enjoy working with numbers, data, or machines. They love charting family histories, keeping track of finances, programming software, playing on computers or card games, organizing collections, or building websites. Prefer to activate in financial institutions, technical support centres, archives, and libraries. They usually possess organizational skills and knowledge in mathematics, statistics, computer programming, economics, finding patterns and charting trends. They like working with numbers and written records and seek environments where they can use

their attention to detail, and organizational skills. Some of the jobs suitable for the conventional type include librarian, archivist, office administrator, technical writer, editor, financial planner, accountants, and bank tellers.

Lemeni (2004) beautifully summarizes the interests corresponding to each type, the preferred activities, the necessary skills, and the values guiding their behavior:

Types	**Interests**	**Activities**	**Abilities**	**Values**
Realistic	Machines, tools, outdoor	Working with machines, tools, constructions, repairs	Technical ingenuity, dexterity, physical coordination	Tradition, realism
Investigative	Science, theories, ideas, data	Lab work, solving complex problems, research	Mathematics, writing, analysis	Independence, curiosity, learning
Artistic	Self-expression, appreciation of art and beauty	Musical composition, writing, visual arts	Creativity, musical talent, artistic expression	Beauty, originality, independence, imagination
Social	People, teamwork, service, welfare	Teaching, counselling, social support	Communication, listening skills, understanding, guidance	Cooperation, generosity, service, care
Entrepreneurial	Business, politics, leadership, influence	Sales, management, negotiation	Public speaking skills, persuasion, leadership skills	Risk-taking, status, competition
Conventional	Organization, data, finance	Organization, IT, procedures	Mathematics, data analysis, information register, attention to details	Accuracy, stability, efficiency

Career interests can be identified using some of the most used commercial inventories like *Vocational Preference Inventory* (VPI; Holland, 1965), *Self-Directed Search* (SDS; Holland et al., 1994), *Vocational Campbell Interest* and *Skill Survey* (CISS; Campbell, 1995), or *Strong Interest Inventory* (SII; Strong et al., 2004).

If we rely on Holland's theory of vocational choice, there are three aspects of the career types one might consider when choosing a career. First, the congruence between the personality type and the work environment. Congruence indices are useful for determining how the rank-ordering of an individual's interests aligns with the rank-ordering of interests of a given occupation (Brown & Gore, 1994). Social types of people prefer working in social environments,

entrepreneurs prefer entrepreneurial jobs and so on. Holland believed that high congruence is a good predictor for job satisfaction and job performance, but later research has failed to confirm this hypothesis. Career interests have been proven to be moderately related to higher task performance, training performance or persistence in the workplace (Hoff et al., 2020), job choice and choice of goals (Hoff et al., 2020), lower turnover and fewer turnover intentions (Van Iddekinge et al., 2011), but tends to be strongly associated with feelings of self-efficacy in the chosen domain (Rottinghaus et al., 2003).

Second, internal consistency of the scores that make up the pattern of personality is to be taken into consideration. Let's say someone scores highest at two subtypes like social and artistic, and another at social and realistic. Subtypes with adjacent codes (e.g. SA) have been proven to be more consistent over time that those that are in opposite positions (e.g. SR). The closer these subtypes are on the RIASEC hexagon, the more consistent they are.

Level of consistency	**Diadic patterns**
Low	RS, IE, AC, SR, EI, CA
Medium	RA, RE, IS, IC, AR, AE, SI, SC, EA, ER, CS, CI
High	RI, RC, IR, IA, AI, AS, SA, SE, ES, EC, CE, CR

Third, differentiation represents the degree to which the career types that characterize an individual or the work environments in which they act are well defined. The difference can be calculated numerically if we subtract the smallest VPI value or SDS of a type from the largest. The greater this difference, the greater the crystallization the interests of the individual. A high degree of differentiation indicates a greater ease in career decision-making. Let's say someone has a SAERIC type, with the following results (social 95%, artistic 80%, Entrepreneurial 75%, followed by realistic 20%, investigative 10%, and conventional 5%). This would be considered a differentiated profile, allowing the individual to identify workplace environments that are more suitable for his career interests. One good example here would be a communication graduate, who plans on opening an afterschool facility, offering arts and crafts classes, public speaking, and graphic design workshops for high school students.

If you are wondering what contributes to career interests, nature and nurture contribute both. They emerge during childhood, then grow in adolescence, become stable in emerging

adulthood, and then remain the same over one's lifespan, as research has shown (Low et al., 2005; Van Iddekinge et al., 2011). Therefore, some argue that there are dispositional components to them, combined with personality. Significant others reinforcement of earlier interests and repeated exposure to activities cultivating these interests (Low et al., 2005), may lead in time to enhanced preferences for specific types of activities. Self-efficacy beliefs also contribute to career interests, along with positive feedback, and vicariant observation (Sheu et al., 2010). High achievements in one area and consistent positive outcomes related to that area may encourage the individual to seek future similar experiences, thus accentuating in time and crystallizing career interests.

If this is the first time you hear about career interests, I strongly recommend you take a career interests test to identify your type and then think of career decisions you made in the past and how these career interests have influenced your decisional process. Can you easily identify activities you have pursued for a longer period? Do you recall extracurricular activities you have taken when you were in school? What kind of feedback did you get from your parents, friends, teachers? Did you come back over time to some activities you enjoyed more? Do you see any connections between these activities you have taken? How did you choose your high school? What about your major in university? What occupations have you thought about? Why did you choose a specific occupation or organization after graduation? What types of activities do you enjoy doing now? What are your hobbies? What kind of things do you do well?

After completing a career interest inventory, you won't necessarily get new information about yourself, but you will be able to organize the information you have, you will know more about occupations that match your interests and personality, and this might be a good start for occupational exploration and immediate career decisions.

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Chapter 10

Values

Values refer to things we hold dear to our heart and consider to be of utter importance for us. They act as a guiding compass, showing us the direction and the steps we need to follow to meet our goals and objectives. Numerous definitions have been given to the concept of values, but I would like to draw your attention towards Schwartz's perspective. He sees values as "desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, which serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity" (Schwartz, 1994, p. 21).

Values are linked to personal choices. They represent areas of action with significance for an individual's life, expressed verbally. Oftentimes, they express ways in which you would like your life to look in different areas. Values serve as fundamental principles in life, guiding behaviours and influencing people's decisions (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Based on your values, specific goals and behaviours are defined, and obstacles can be identified. Our values are crystallized through social models and personal experiences. They are the core foundation of our whole existence. We base our entire self-evaluation, but also the evaluation of others around us, on personal values.

So why are values important? First, they help us find a constructive direction. When we are no longer running from anything, what are we heading towards? Second, they are an indicator of our own motivation, even though they are significantly culturally conditioned. Society usually indicates desirable values, but it is up to the individual to decide whether he will live his life according to societal values and norms, or he will depart from the pre-established set of values. Third, values offer us a steady direction, as they do not change easily, and remain somewhat stable throughout a longer period of life. And last, but not least, values orient us towards certain goals, but while goals can be achieved, values do not have a finality, as they can only be aspired and envisioned, without being fully reached at any given moment.

Schwarz (1992) lists the five main features of values:

1. They are beliefs, linked to affect.
2. They pertain to desirable end states of behaviours, therefore they can motivate actions.
3. They guide selection or evaluation of behaviours and events.
4. They remain stable across context and time.

5. They are ordered in terms of relative importance.

Schwartz's theory of basic human values, also known as the *Circumplex model*, assumes that there are ten universal values, classified into motivational types. They are:

1. Power: social status, prestige, control, or dominance.
2. Achievement: personal success through competence according to social standards.
3. Hedonism: pleasure or sensuous gratification for self.
4. Stimulation: excitement, novelty, challenge.
5. Self-direction: independence of thought and action, creating, exploring.
6. Universalism: understanding, tolerance, protection of all people and nature.
7. Benevolence: preserving and enhancing the welfare of people.
8. Tradition: respect and commitment to cultural or religious customs.
9. Conformity: restraint of actions and impulses that may upset or harm others or violate social norms.
10. Security: safety and stability of society, relationships, and self.

People decide what is good or bad, justified, or illegitimate, what is worth doing or avoiding, based on the consequences for their values. We rarely do this consciously. We usually become aware of our values when the pursuit of one value has consequences that can be congruent with, or in conflict with, other values. When values clash or get into conflict with each other, we are facing an excellent opportunity to clarify our values.

When we have competing values, like achievement and benevolence, we experience an internal conflict. But we become aware of the fact that we usually tend to pursue competing values through different acts, at different times, and in different settings. Oftentimes, when we are faced with a conflict of values, we are recommended to start exercising behavioral changes to align our actions and beliefs with our values. If values serve as compasses, the engaged actions represent the phases or the steps of our journey. One can always choose among different patterns of actions, but choosing requires assumed responsibility. Setting a personal objective, simple, measurable, achievable, and realistic. Verbalizing and publicly assuming an objective increases the chance of pursuing it. Values can act as powerful motivational forces when our actions and objectives are aligned with them.

Another interesting perspective on human values lies in the work of Richard Barrett. Based on previous research advanced by Maslow (pyramid of human needs), Deci & Ryan (self-

determination theory), Ryff (psychological well-being), and Seligman (PERMA model and flourishing), Richard Barrett (1998) developed a new model of values, based on the full spectrum of need underlying the human motivation and behaviour. He believes that seven well-established levels of needs can be distinguished in the development of personal consciousness. Each of these levels contains a particular category of needs that is inherent in the human condition. The seven existential needs are the main motivational forces of man, the ones that generate values - the most important things for each of us. As a result, seven types of internal dialogues are born:

Level	**Value**	**Motivation**	**Personal focus**	**Excessive self-focus**
1	Service	Service to humanity and the planet	Compassion, humility, future generations	
2	Making a difference	Making a difference in the community	Collaboration, mentoring, empathy	
3	Internal cohesion	Finding meaning in existence	Authenticity, creativity, passion, integrity, trust, alignment, honesty	
4	Transformation	Continuous growth and development	Adaptability, courage, teamwork, adaptability	
5	Self-esteem	Building a sense of self-worth	Pride in self, self-confidence, self-reliance, positive self-image	Arrogance, power, status, rigidity
6	Relationship	Harmonious relationships with others	Family, belonging, friendship, communication	Blame, jealousy, gossip, conflict, judgment
7	Survival	Physical survival and safety	Health, nutrition, financial stability, self-defence	Greed, violence, corruption, control

Full-spectrum conscientious people hold values at all seven levels indicated by Barrett. They are aligned with these values and enact them in everyday life. It is important to know your values, to be able to rank them and to define what they mean for you. Freedom for instance, for one person might mean being able to travel, to make choices, to be independent, while for another person might refer to being able to think independently, to act according to one's principles, not to be constrained and micromanaged. We are looking at the same value, but the personal perspective on what it means could be very different. Safety could mean living in a peaceful society and having one's basic needs satisfied, having a roof over one's head, food on the table, clothing, and clean water, while for others it could encompass long-term financial safety, psychological comfort, and

securing a job. Once you can operationalize these values, you will be able to set specific goals and objectives, and then evaluate them based on your values.

Psychologists have advanced numerous instruments assessing personal values. Besides the most famous *Valued Living Questionnaire* (Hayes et al., 1999), Schwartz Value Survey or the (Schwartz) Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz et al., 2001), or Barrett's Personal Values Assessment (2017), lists of questions can be used as valuable tools for identifying one's values (Brown & Brooks, 1991). Try asking yourself:

- With whom do you prefer spending your free time?
- How do you choose your friends?
- What do you search for in a job?
- What kind of people do you admire?
- What criteria do you follow when choosing a car, house, or clothing?
- Which was the best decision you ever made? What about the best decision? Why?
- Which is your most cherished memory? Why?

Having detailed answers to these questions might help you gain a better understanding of your personal values. Be completely honest with yourself when answering them and you will be surprised of the rich input you can get. Self-understanding is the first step in pursuing your dreams. Once you understand the reasons behind your work, the ranking of your personal and work values, you will be able to analyse career options and to better make career decisions.

Especially in the workplace, values are tremendously important, as they can influence job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover. Value congruence is associated with satisfaction among employees, with mutual trust and liking, enhanced communication and information exchange within work settings (Rounds & Leuty, 2021). Work values have been defined as "shared interpretations of what people want and expect from work" (Nord et al., 1990). They help us understand the meaning of work and the reasons why people work. Our choice of a career is related to work values and many of our work-related outcomes are influenced by work values. Once we identify our work values, and compare them to different rewards offered by occupations, we are better equipped to explore to a set of occupations and then make career choices.

Values have been conceptualized by Dawis and Lofquist's (1984) Theory of work adjustment as parts of the work personality, together with abilities and needs. They are seen as

"second-order needs" that reinforce important conditions for job satisfaction. Measured by Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (Rounds et al., 1981), work values can be grouped into six categories:

	Work values	**Needs**
1	Achievement	Ability utilization, achievement
2	Comfort	Activity, independence, variety, compensation, security, working conditions
3	Status	Advancement, recognition, authority, social status
4	Altruism	Coworkers, social service, moral values
5	Safety	Company policies, supervision-human, supervision-tech
6	Autonomy	Autonomy, creativity, responsibility

A decade later, in 1995, Super and Sverko conducted the Work Importance Study, trying to find out the rewards people seek in major life roles across cultures. They have analysed both work roles and non-work roles and created a five-value orientations model, including: the importance of economic conditions and material career progress, an autonomous way of living, inner-oriented goals for personal development, social interaction, and the importance of risk.

	Orientation	**Values**
1	Utilitarian	Economics, advancement, prestige, authority, achievement
2	Individualistic	Lifestyle, autonomy, creativity, variety
3	Self-actualization	Ability utilization, personal development, altruism, achievement, aesthetics, creativity
4	Social	Social interaction, social relations, variety, altruism
5	Adventurous	Risk, physical activity, authority

Barrett believed that the degree of alignment between employees' personal values and the organizational values lies at the centre of organization's readiness to change (Barrett, 2017), and reinforced the idea that this alignment can be a good predictor for organizational success (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Why is this idea important? Because if you would like to make career changes, starting from your values could be an excellent decision. Once you understand your values, you will be able to compare them to the organizational values and culture, needs, and rewards systems, you will be able to rank them, to analyse conflicting values, to sometimes compromise and accept things you can not change related to your work, or to know where to draw the line and decide to change the organizations, the role or the team.

In counselling, values can be derived from interests. Clients can identify reasons behind their interests, but they may not be able to look beyond the simple list of interests and name the

underlying values behind their actions on their own. The counsellor is trained to analyse this list of reasons, to find repeated themes, and to clarify client's core values. Homework assignments and reflection activities will help clients make sense and integrate implicit and explicit values in their decisions and link values with career choices. Based on Colozzi's (2003) Depth Oriented Values Extraction technique, Julia Yates (2019) provides a useful example in her *Career Coaching Toolkit*:

Hobbies or interests	**Reasons for enjoying the interests**	**Recurrent themes**
Volunteering for a helpline	Feeling connected with other volunteers Hearing stories Understanding more about the world A sense of pride doing something good for others Contributing to having a varied life	Connecting with others Stories New and different experiences
A recent visit to a local musem	Feeling of discovering something off the beaten tourist track Hearing stories of residents in the past Becoming more knowledgeable about the town	Enjoyment of learning

It is easier for most of us to list expressed values like respect, fairness, or autonomy. They are the first answer to the question: What are your most important life or work values? But it is the implicit values that we sometimes must seek to identify, as they are often hidden and difficult to consciously pinpoint. These implicit values can hinder the decision-making process, as they are oftentimes in conflict with the expressed values. Imagine that someone has listed two expressed values related to fairness and camaraderie, but this person works in an environment characterized by fearful competition, loose rules and procedures, and significant financial stakes. He might identify a strong conflict between his personal values and the organizational ones, and discussing about this conflict with a trained professional might offer new insights into the influence of core values on his career decisions.

Here are some exercises you can take to clarify your values:

1. Name three famous people you admire and consider to be role models, then provide arguments for your choice. Why did you choose these three? What makes them relevant for you? What kind of qualities do you see in them?
2. What do you like doing when you have a few days off from work? Which are the activities you never postpone? Why do you consider them to be so important? What drives you to come back to them and prioritize them over others?

3. Choose your top five values and identify for each of them a corresponding belief and behaviour. For example, one might choose:

Value	Belief	Behaviour
Competition	Competent people have higher wages, better career prospects, and take risks more often.	I play sports once a week, participate in contests and take professional challenges often, even with the risk of failure.

4. Card sorting is another good opportunity to identify and rank one's values. It involves selecting the values that apply from a list of many. Say you start with a list of ten values in the first round, then you are asked to lose two of them. Then another two, and so on, until you are left with your two most important values. The exercise could be quite difficult, as every time you are required to give up on two of your values, you feel like you are losing a part of yourself.
5. One interesting creative exercise is the eulogy. First popularised by Daniel Harkavy (2016), it is a useful tool for making sense of your life and planning your future. Focus on the culture you lived in, on your education and the important locations where you have lived, on relationships with significant others, on your personality, professional achievements, and hobbies. This exercise is usually an intimate one, so you might not feel like sharing it with others. If you take it on your own and still consider it to be too difficult to process, you may take the same exercise, but under the shape of a toast or a short speech in your honour, held at a wedding, after a job promotion, or on your retirement day.

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Chapter 11

Personal strengths

Distancing himself from the previous psychological studies on pain, trauma and negative experiences, Martin Seligman founded the positive psychology movement. The main idea of positive psychology is that everyone is different, holding both strengths and weaknesses in various degrees. It is this combination that makes us unique. Once we identify and cultivate our strengths, we will be able to live a more fulfilling life.

Encouraging children from early ages to acknowledge their strengths and others' can help them build self-awareness and self-confidence, but also become more tolerant towards others, accepting differences between individuals (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and growing on the idea that weaknesses are not insurmountable. They can become better if they work on it.

Defined as built-in capacities for particular ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving in a way that allows optimal functioning in the pursuit of valued outcomes (Linley & Harrington, 2006), personal strengths can be grouped under six virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. This list of 24 core strengths, as Peterson and Seligman (2004) call them, can be identified in any individual, and it is not their ranking that matters, but rather the unique combination of them.

Virtues	*Wisdom*	*Courage*	*Humanity*	*Transcendence*	*Temperance*	*Justice*
Strengths	Creativity Curiosity Judgement Love of learning Perspective	Bravery Persistence Honesty Zest	Love Kindness Social intelligence	Appreciation of beauty Gratitude Hope Humour Spirituality	Forgiveness Modesty Prudence Self-control	Teamwork Fairness Leadership

Many people are not aware of their core strengths. When asked in a daily interaction or in a high-stake job interview, most people struggle with the answer and offer either a vague response or oftentimes focus on what they are not good at. In Peter Drucker's words: ''Most people think they know what they are good at. They are usually wrong. More often, people know what they are not good at - and even then more people are wrong than right'' (Drucker, 1999, p. 164). Still, research shows that personal strengths are extremely important in various contexts. Being able to

identify them and to use them in everyday situations has been proven to increase vitality and motivation (Clifton & Andersen, 2001), to strengthen self-confidence, engagement, and productivity (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and to help individuals focus on goals and get a stronger sense of life direction (Hodges & Clifton, 2004). For students, being aware of character strengths can increase life satisfaction (Rust et al., 2003), facilitate higher levels of learning course content and higher performance (Cantwell, 2006), develop personal and academic confidence, motivation, interpersonal understanding, and positive relationships (Anderson, 2004).

Using a strengths-based perspective in the workplace can as well be beneficial, as organizations that focus on employee strengths during their performance reviews can increase productivity to more than 30% (Corporate Leadership Council, 2022), thus leading to lower turnover of staff (Asplund et al., 2007).

If you are not aware of your personal strengths, take Seligman's online VIA strengths and virtues test, then once you have the list and ranking of these strengths, ask yourself the following questions: Do you feel this strength is a part of your authentic self? How do you see this strength displayed in everyday situations? How did you develop this strength? How can you identify new situations when it can be expressed? What personal projects did you design in the past that were focusing on this combination of strengths and how can you continue expressing them in the future?

While Peterson and Seligman (2004) considered that strengths are a good indicator of one's virtues and that they are directly associated with well-being, Donald Clifton focused mainly on talent. Clifton, also a psychology professor, developed another comprehensive measurement for strengths, Clifton Strengths Finder (Asplund et al., 2007). He was intrigued by the fact that usually most feedback we are receiving tends to accentuate the negative in our performance. "It is a paradox of human psychology", says Roberts et al. (2005) "that while people remember criticism, they respond to praise. The former makes them defensive and therefore unlikely to change, while the latter produces confidence and the desire to perform better." Clifton suggested therefore that people should concentrate on personal strengths and find ways to foster excellence. After conducting a diverse set of interviews in various educational and workplace settings, Clifton concluded that talents can be operationalized, and studied, as they can be developed and enhanced in work and academic settings. Clifton viewed strengths as extensions of talent. People combine personal talents with skills, knowledge, and effort to provide near-perfect performances in a

specific task. After completing the Clifton Strengths Finder, one can identify his five signature themes, the one where he scores higher.

Clifton indicates a list of 34 strengths themes that can be organized into four categories as follows:

Executing	Influencing	Relationship building	Strategic thinking
Achiever	Activator	Adaptability	Analytical
Arranger	Command	Connectedness	Context
Belief	Communication	Developer	Futuristic
Consistency	Competition	Empathy	Ideation
Deliberative	Maximizer	Harmony	Input
Discipline	Self-assurance	Includer	Intellection
Focus	Significance	Individualization	Learner
Responsibility	Winning over others	Positivity	Strategic
Restorative		Relator	

If you do not like online questionnaires or standardized measures of personal strengths, Rettew & Lopez (2009) suggests an alternative way of discovering your strengths: *the positive introduction*. It involves "telling a story about yourself at your best". The one-page story should be a reflective, "in depth-account of a discrete period of time, including where you were, what you were doing, who you were with, what sounds you heard, what you smelled, etc." (Rettew & Lopez, 2009, p. 6). You are then encouraged to review the story and try to select some of the strengths that emerge. Do the same exercise for about a week, and then try to identify in the seven stories you have written which are the most frequent strengths, why you value them and how you can cultivate this list of personal qualities.

You can also build your strengths from personal performance evaluations. Remember your last test score, essay, or other type of academic assignment? What were the positive aspects suggested by the teacher? What areas of improvement were recommended? What was your personal learning objective? Did you achieve it? What qualities enabled you to do so? What hindered you from achieving your goals and objectives? Focusing on the positive perspective can be quite motivating, but do not lose sight of areas of improvement. Be realistic, but do not forget to celebrate the good times, be grateful for your accomplishment no matter how small and be appreciative of your progress.

In the context of work, positive psychologists encourage us to think about our core strengths on four levels:

1. Is it **relevant**? Humor is crucial for an event planner who deals daily with stressful situations, with deadlines and people he has never met before. Connectedness and empathy are relevant when you want to apply for a social media manager position in a NGO dealing with cancer prevention, but they may not be the most relevant for someone applying for a strategic communication management position. In this case, being analytical, futuristic, and strategic are more relevant.
2. Is it **true**? Many candidates for a job adapt their CV to mirror the job description, but oftentimes they list skills they do not have. An experienced HR can trace these skills and easily identify the qualifications and experience one has regarding a specific skill. Make sure you stay away from uncomfortable, even embarrassing situations when you are asked to provide evidence for a skill you know should not be on your list.
3. Is it **demonstrable**? Let's say you apply for a job in event planning, and you have written put on your CV skills like good organization skills and project management. The interviewer will ask you to provide examples for contexts where you have had the chance to develop and exercise these skills. You might say that you have organized a students' conference, a Career Fair, and implemented a mentorship Big Brother project for the students' association for the last two years.
4. Is it **adaptable**? Some students might have worked during the summer in a camp organizing workshops for children, or in a restaurant as a bartender, or in a clothing store. These are all situations when he/she could gain skills like teamwork, communication, interpersonal skills etc. They are all transferable to a job in the advertising industry, for example if you plan on working as an account manager, your work will include dealing with new customers, presenting briefs, persuading clients, solving conflicts, where communication, teamwork, and adaptability that you have gained in seasonal jobs are quite useful.

To demonstrate personal strengths in job interviews, you can use the STAR model. STAR stands for:

- **Situation**: describe the context of work, roles you have fulfilled and other relevant aspects regarding the time, place, and people involved.
- **Task**: give examples of specific assignments, tasks, requirements you had to fulfill that can demonstrate the skill you seek to describe.

- **Action**: explain which were your actions, what you did to do the task and meet the objectives of the employer.
- **Results**: present the output, outcomes, and impact of your work in the situation you have previously described.

Let's take a closer look at an example of a situation when you could use the STAR technique. Imagine you are invited for a job interview for a position of graphic designer in a small advertising agency. The job description requires three years of experience in a related job, desktop publishing software and video creation. You will start by stating that you have worked for an NGO as a graphic designer for the last four months, you have been part of a small team of five people supporting animal shelters and foster services for cats and dogs, in the same city where the current job is advertised. You are an advertising graduate, with five online courses on Adobe, QuarkXPress and AJAX, Google ads and Illustrator. There you had to do TikTok posts, renew the Facebook page, design layouts for print publications, like brochures and leaflets, and do some short animations to post on the NGO's blog. Your Facebook page received good feedback with increased number of followers (provide numbers whenever they are useful), that your Tik Tok community doubled and that you have reached a new age segment. The NGO board is so satisfied with your job, that they allow you to get an intern to train and help with the numerous ongoing activities.

The PERMA model

Seligman later developed the PERMA model, stating that that people pursue five distinct components of wellbeing and happiness, which are the basis of a fulfilled life. Each of these five elements are pursued for their own sake and are defined and measured independently of each other (Seligman, 2012). They are:

- Positive emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment/Achievements.

But what does Seligman mean by each of them?

1. **Positive emotions** refer to "pleasant or desirable situational responses, ranging from interest to contentment to love and joy, distinct from pleasurable sensations and

> undifferentiated positive affect; they are a marker of wellbeing and happiness" (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009). The list of positive emotions includes love, joy, awe, excitement, delight, astonishment, hope, amusement, interest, compassion, pride, gratitude, and many others. People usually find it difficult to name the exact emotions they are experiencing, as their repertoire of emotions is reduced to only a short list of ten to fifteen.

Fredrikson and Losada (2005) indicate a 2.9:1 ratio of positive to negative emotions. People who are above this tipping point, called the Losada line, are those who supposedly are more likely to flourish and build positive resources. We know that both types of emotions (positive and negative) are necessary for survival. They all have adaptive functions. But us human beings most often tend to focus exclusively on how to reduce emotional discomfort (negative emotions) and forget how important it is to induce positive emotions as well. Too often we forget what gives us pleasure in life. How difficult would it be for you to come up with a list of everything you dislike in life? What about a list of everything that pleases you? When was the last time you felt a positive emotion? What emotion was this? In what context did it happen? Were you alone or accompanied by others? Who was with you at that time? Where were you?

The PERMA model tries to emphasize the importance of experiencing positive emotions frequently. These positive emotions can be derived from several areas of life: personal life, professional life, art, hobbies etc. numerous research suggests that positive emotions could be the main indicator of wellbeing, as it is positively associated with resilience, life satisfaction, social rewards, mindfulness, physical health, and extensive work outcomes (Coffey et al., 2016).

One exercise you can take is the *gratitude alarm*. It's a very simple one that only requires a clock, a pen and paper and your attention for a few minutes every hour. At the beginning of your day, set up your alarm to go off every hour for the next 12 hours. Take a sheet of paper and draw a big clock with the 12 hours on it. Every time the alarm goes off, think of one small thing that you are grateful for. It could be something you were thinking at in that corresponding hour, something you reminded of, something that happened or that you were doing. Let's say your daughter just called and you hang up the phone, right before the alarm clock started. You might write down: I am grateful for my family or I am grateful my family is healthy. At 8 p.m., you start gathering the table, you might think: I am grateful for my financial stability, and so on. Do this exercise once a month, once a week, or any time you feel it might be useful.

2. The second component of the PERMA models is **commitment or involvement**. It refers to doing an activity or a task for pleasure or just to having a positive experience, not because it has to be done (out of obligation, for money, because it is our competence or responsibility). In other words, in this case, the degree of involvement in an activity is largely based on intrinsic motivation.

Commitment is associated with the state of *flow*, an optimal experience, in which the individual has a task to complete, which is achievable, exciting and which requires a special aptitude. For this, we focus on what we do, we have clear goals, we are immersed in this activity, and we have control over our own actions. We are no longer concerned with our own person, and time seems to dilate. Hours become seconds, and seconds expand to the size of hours. In other words, in the flow state, people experience a deep feeling of joy, creativity and complete involvement. Do you ever think of times when you feel that you are seriously involved in what you do? Do you feel happy because of the activities you carry out at work or in your free time? How often does this happen? The more motivated you are to do something with pleasure, the higher your performance will be. The same happens in other areas of our life. Are you able to identify these activities? Do you have eight to ten activities that bring you joy and excitement, that you feel energized by, that you can fulfill apparently without any effort, that you come back to whenever you need to recharge your batteries? Which are they? When do you pursue them? Are there any activities that you have enjoyed doing in the past, but did not attend recently? Are there any you would like to restart? How difficult was it for you to list them? Did you identify all ten or less?

In professional activities, work engagement has been defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that encompasses vigor, dedication and absorption" (Schaufeli, 2002). Vigor is related to the amount of effort one puts in an activity, to his or her motivation to succeed and to the mental strength required to fulfill the task. Dedication involves solid commitment, enthusiasm, and sense of purpose, while absorption means being completely immersed in an activity to the point of losing track of time. We now know that 40% of work engagement comes from personality traits and recent studies support the idea that personality characteristics, along with core self-evaluations and psychological capital are associated with work engagement, which in turn predicts employees' performance and mental health (Tisu et al., 2020).

3. When Seligman says **positive relations with others**, he means having authentic relationships. The secure attachment formed in early childhood with the parent is the basis of all our relationships from adulthood. How many people do you have very close, positive relationships with? In the family, at work, in the circle of friends? What are the most meaningful relationships for you? What are the most important? How often do you spend time with these significant others? Is it quality time?

Such relationships are, in fact, the major support in life. They are the people you can rely on in good times and bad times, in stressful moments, in difficult situations, and who are able to offer you emotional and instrumental support. They are the ones who give you a shoulder to cry on, but also the once who honestly rejoice with you when you are successful.

There might be times when things don't go as expected, when nothing works and sometimes others are to blame, but playing the victim doesn't help. Try to accept the idea that it is much easier to change yourself than to change others. After you have identified the causes, start working on these issues and fix them one at a time.

4. The fourth component of the PERMA model looks at **meaning**. Having a purpose in life is important to be able to feel satisfied, fulfilled, and happy, but meaning does not come for free, it needs to be nourished. On a professional or academic level, if at any moment you feel that your work has no meaning, it is worth investing time and energy to find those aspects through which you can give it meaning, because then you will work with more energy, you will be more productive, more appreciated, and respected, and, in time, much happier.

We are at our best when we understand that we are doing something that contributes to the common good. Personal meaning can derive from religious belief, ideas about the good of the community, family, politics, creation, or professional development (Kallay, 2011). What you find to be meaningful can be futile for another, therefore it is important to look deep down inside, search for your values and live up to them, be true to yourself and do your best to pursue your hopes and dreams.

5. The last element is **achievement or the feeling of accomplishment**. Looking back at your life, at what we have accomplished so far, list those results you are most proud of. They do come out of what gives you meaning. They are important to you, even if they may seem minor to others.

Sometimes, however, even though we have achieved a lot in life, because society imposes on us a set of expectations regarding the achievements that we should display in every stage of our life, we realize that these expectations, on the one hand, are not achievable, on the other hand, they don't suit our needs. What achievements have you had lately? Who did you celebrate them with? What purpose do they serve? How long did it take to achieve them? Was it worth it? Or do you need to change your goals and objectives?

What can we learn from the PERMA model?

1. Remember to adopt a positive perspective every time you can. Treasure emotions, both positive and negative, as they make you feel alive and connected.
2. Find the things that make you happy and engaged in a particular task activity or relationship, that give you the state of flow.
3. Focus on your relationships with family and friends and find ways to connect.
4. Search for meaning and lead a life of purpose.
5. Savor your accomplishments and strive for further achievement.

Previous research shows significant positive associations between each of the five PERMA components and life satisfaction, physical health, vitality, satisfaction with the job, and commitment within organizations (Kern, Waters, Alder, & White, 2014).

The better we feel, the happier and more well-disposed we are, the more the momentum with which we engage in professional activities increases, we become more productive, we manage to establish closer relationships of collegiality, friendship, and collaboration, etc. On the other hand, the better we work, the more appreciated and respected we will be, which, over time, will contribute to the consolidation of positive self-esteem, will lead to increased confidence in our own abilities. Such improvements will have a positive effect on wellbeing - that is, we become even happier. The PERMA model is a method by which this positive spiral can be triggered, which can help you improve the quality of your professional and personal life.

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Chapter 12

Career decision difficulties

Career development involves four main stages:

1. Knowing yourself (your values, interests, your personality type, personal strengths, traits, skills, expectations)
2. Exploring options (starting prototypical conversations with people from various fields, conducting occupational research, analysing industry trends, and taking academic decisions)
3. Getting focused (making career decisions, setting objectives, and engaging in an active career planning process)
4. Taking action (gaining experience, connecting with employers, networking and career management).

It is a lifelong process, oftentimes not linear, involving multiple decisions. It might seem easy, but it requires a lot of effort and decision-making skills, that not all of us might master. Choosing an educational institution, a major, choosing an occupation or switching between jobs, deciding to take a maternity leave, or becoming an entrepreneur, choosing and accessing training opportunities, reskilling or upskilling are all career decisions presenting a diverse array of difficulties and indecision.

Career indecision could be related to poor decisional skills, conflicting interests, undefined career goals, uncertainty, but it could also be an indicator of general indecisiveness. “The terms career indecision and indecisiveness have been distinctively used to refer to two types of difficulties that individuals experience in the process of career decision-making. Career indecision is usually considered a normative developmental phase in career decision-making, primarily encompassing cognitively related difficulties. Indecisiveness, in contrast, is typically regarded as a more chronic state in the individual, related to emotional and personality-related difficulties (Gati, 2013, in Udayar et al, 2020).” Some say that indecisiveness is “a form of indecision that persists over time and situations” (Gati, 2013, in Udayar et al., 2020) and that indecisive people are “individuals who seem to have difficulties in making all sorts of life decisions, whether they are of great or little significance“ (Crites, 1969, in Udayar et al., 2020). Prolonged or chronic career indecision has been proven to have a detrimental effect on one’s mental health and well-being.

Career indecision has been shown to be correlated with age and educational experience, and an amount of indecision might be, in some cases, beneficial, as it allows adolescents and emerging adults to explore possible alternatives. Self-evaluations have been shown to represent critical factors in relation to career decision-making difficulties. These self-evaluations include one's global evaluations, such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, and situational evaluations about the self and one's abilities, such as process and content-related self-efficacy.

In Romania, for example, an adolescent is expected to decide on a high school at age 14, to choose a college major at 18 and pursue a career by the end of the five-year Bologna process. Cognitive psychology, on the other hand, shows that until the age of 25, the brain goes through significant changes. Arnett states that the age of emerging adulthood is continuously prolonging and that major life decisions tend to be postponed, too.

Itamar Gati (2010) and his team of Israeli researchers have tried to explain the complex image of career decision difficulties, by focusing on no less than 11 dimensions:

1. Information gathering (comprehensive vs. minimal): how meticulous one is in collecting and organizing information.
2. Information processing (analytical vs. holistic): how thoroughly one analyses and processes the information.
3. Locus of control (internal vs external): whether one considers holding control over his/her own future and career decisions.
4. Effort (high vs. low): referring to the time and mental energy one decides to invest in the career decision process.
5. Procrastination (high vs. low): the extent to which one avoids or postpones the initialization and the finalization of the decisional process.
6. Speed (high vs. low): the amount of time one needs to reach a final decision once the initial information has been analysed and processed.
7. Consulting others (often vs. rarely).
8. Dependency on others (high vs. low): the extent to which one takes responsibility for his/her own decisions.
9. The desire to please others (high vs. low): the tendency to satisfy others' expectations (parents, friends, or teachers).
10. Expectations for the ideal occupation (high vs. low).

11. Compromise (high vs. low): the extent to which one tends to be flexible regarding the alternatives when faced with obstacles and difficulties.

Gati proposes CDDQ – Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (Gati, Krausz & Osipow, 1996) as a global evaluation for one's career decision difficulties. It was designed to measure one's overall severity or degree of career indecision. After completing Gati's questionnaire, we get a full profile of the difficulties we are facing, with scores ranging from 1 to 9. A level of 1 on all dimensions would be associated with the ideal decision maker, a person who is aware of the need to make career decisions and willing to reach such a decision, able to decide using a systematic decision-making process and to find a solution that is optimally compatible with his or her goals. CDDQ addresses three broad categories of difficulties: lack of readiness, lack of information and inconsistent information, further organized into ten subcategories:

Difficulties prior to the decisional process	Lack of readiness	Lack of motivation
		General indecisiveness
		Dysfunctional beliefs
Difficulties encountered during the decisional process	Lack of information about the	Decision-making process
		Self
		Occupations
		Additional sources of information
	Inconsistent information	Unreliable information
		Internal conflicts
		External conflicts

So, these career decision difficulties may occur before initiating the decisional process or during this process. Oftentimes, the lack of motivation can hinder the decisional process. Many might consider that there is no rush in taking a decision or that it is not the right moment. This lack of willingness to take a decision may postpone the entire decisional process, thus after a while, the panic monster will arrive and not everyone makes good decisions in the heat of the moment.

General indecisiveness indicates a general difficulty in making decisions, in various areas of one's life. One might repeatedly change his or her mind, might be hesitant and fear failure or committing to a single option. Oftentimes, they feel like their significant others should back up their decision and validate their choice, but this might not always happen.

Dysfunctional beliefs include irrational beliefs and expectations about career decisions and a distorted perception of the career decision-making process. One might believe that he/she only chooses once, or that this career option is necessarily a life-long commitment, which amounts to a lot of pressure.

Lack of information about the decision-making process, about the self, the occupations, and the lack of additional sources of information may be encountered during the decisional process. For many students, their parents have taken the major decisions without even consulting them or discussing the pros and cons, therefore their children might lack some knowledge about the steps of the decisional process or about how to reach decisions wisely. For example, one might not be aware of his/her own interests, values, abilities, skills, strengths, and weaknesses, and how to identify suitable career opportunities. Some might not know which jobs are available in their area, what kind of abilities are required for a specific occupation, what type of personality might be more advantageous, how to choose based on their interests and how to match their characteristics with specific occupations. Others might not know how to find relevant information, how to select sources of information and how to weigh data based on source credibility.

In other cases, there might be too much information available, inconsistent information or conflicting ideas about a career option. It might be very difficult to reconcile internal and external conflicts. External conflicts usually refer to the gap or the discrepancy between one's preferences and those of their significant others. One student might plan on studying arts, but he might be discouraged from this option as the parents have a negative image of artists in general. For some, choosing a major might become a family war, with the father encouraging a series of choices and the mother, a completely different one. It is also difficult for students who excel at all subjects and have teachers who try to convince them to follow in their footsteps. A student who has taken part in school contests both in math and in literature might be very confused about what high school to choose. Other students, who are more entrepreneurial, might consider university to be a waste of time, as they want to have access to financial resources, but their parents might see long-term education as a better long-term option. For some it is a matter of low self-confidence, and just because their sports teacher tells them they have extraordinary talent, it might not mean they will have the guts to go through the tryouts. Some might consider two options apparently unrelated, like arts and informatics, and lack the information about occupations in advertising or UX/UI that combine their preferences. Others have enjoyed math classes throughout the entire high school,

but received a low score on the final exam, so they might have the impression that this means there's a possibility they will struggle with university math. Others might have a first option, but their parents have made it clear that unless they choose medical school, they won't pay for the studies.

These ten career decision-making difficulties are grouped by Gati's team based on the period, the source of the difficulty (cognitive or affective), the positive or negative impact on career decisions, and the type of intervention required to address them.

Personality has also been proven to predict career decision difficulties (Martincin & Stead, 2015). Among the five traits of the McCrae-Costa model, neuroticism is rated the highest and neurotic individuals are expected to be more prone to career difficulties due to characteristics like anxious, hostile, insecure, moody, or impulsive. Agreeable types are the opposite, as they are more flexible, pleasant, cooperative, and compassionate. Conscientious individuals tend to be meticulous, to pay attention to details and think through, but also usually expecting to make the right decision from the first attempt. Extroverts might need more time to weigh decisions and to talk them through with friends and family, as they are usually more outgoing and social. Those who score high on openness to experiences are more likely to need extra time for deciding as they are usually more creative, curious and imaginative, have broad interests, take several options into consideration and do not like being rushed into a firm decision.

In an excellent 2020 article published in *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Kulcsar, Dobrean and Gati present a comprehensive tableau of career decision-making difficulties, focusing on the antecedents, the effects of the challenges and difficulties, on the process and on the decision. Their research is a valuable tool for career counsellors looking for relevant assessment instruments and seeking to tailor specific individual interventions. With a little help from specialists, career decision difficulties can be overcome, and better decisions can be made.

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Chapter 13

LifeLine exercise

LifeLine is a powerful reflection tool, often used in counselling and career coaching. The lifeline approach is deriving from life course (Elder, 1998) and life events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) research traditions. Focusing on time and place, the life course perspective analyzes our lives from both a historical and a biographical perspective, while life events research concentrates on identifying pivotal incidents and circumstances leading to significant life changes.

Psychologists have used the lifeline exercise as a means to construct a narrative identity, designating "an individual's evolving and cohesive internal story of the self" (McAdams, 2008, p. 242). Creating a coherent story of ourselves enables us to situate ourselves in the social landscape of adulthood, navigate the complex world around us, and find meaning in our lives (McAdams et al., 2008). Internalizing significant narratives (McAdams, 2006) and being able to frame difficult experiences from the past as necessary transformative experiences through which, even though one has suffered deeply, has also gained valuable insights about the self, can lead to increased subjective wellbeing due to experienced personal growth (Bauer et al., 2008). Gaining this heightened sense of purpose is what Simon Sinek (2011) refers to as "finding your why". In McAdams (2008, p. 242) words: "Put differently, the stories we construct to make sense of our lives are fundamentally about our struggle to reconcile who we imagine we were, are, and might be in our heads and bodies with who we were, are, and might be in the social contexts of family, community, the workplace, ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, and culture writ large."

The lifeline exercise enables a context of discovery (Reichenbach, 1938, in McAdams, 2012), where patterns, themes, images, metaphors, and qualitative characterizations about one's life may be explored, and thus facilitating a better understanding of one's personal story.

This exercise allows you to review significant decisions, to recall past events, to identify significant people who have been there for you in difficult times, but also those you were missing when you needed them the most, to identify key incidents and patterns of thoughts and behaviour, to reframe some of the things that have happened to you in the past and to shape a bigger picture of your life so far.

Start by taking a plane sheet of paper, set it on landscape, draw a horizontal line across the middle of the long part of the page. This is the axis that will mark your life in years, starting from

the left, with your infancy and going to the far right, marking your current age. Then, on the left side, draw a vertical line indicating on the top, moments when you were happy, satisfied, fulfilled, encountered a positive event, and in the bottom left, times when you were most unhappy, unsatisfied, or miserable. Take time to note the significant changes in your life. Place each roughly in the place corresponding to your age, and above or below the line corresponding to whether you felt "happy, satisfied, fulfilled" or "unhappy, frustrated, unsatisfied" at the time. After you have completed all these major life events, connect the dots with a line. Take your time, do not rush.

Now look at the whole image and try to organize events into larger periods of time, for example: childhood, puberty, adolescence, emerging adulthood, and so on. Or you might feel like organizing them according to educational levels: infancy, kindergarten, primary, secondary, high school etc. If your life were an autobiographical book or a movie, what title would you give it? Now find proper titles for the main chapters.

You might want to consider answering some of the following questions:

- What experiences have I had in my life/career to date?
- What significant events brought fond memories? Process what significant events brought painful memories.
- What messages were heard?
- What values were imparted and assimilated by significant people and meaningful events?
- What skills/knowledge/attitudes/behavior have I developed along the way? Where have been the turning points?
- When have I learned the most? How can this understanding help me regarding my future development?
- What would I pick out as milestones/significant achievements?
- Which individuals have been most important in my life/career to date?

Reflection is the key here. You need to think beyond the mere experiences, go in depth and try to process memories step by step. The most important question is: Do you notice any patterns emerging? You might want to take a closer look by focusing on:

- **background** – Who are you? Where are you in relation to others in your family and workplace?
- **key figures** – Who are the significant people in your life? Who were the key figures in your life and career and how did they influence your life/career/thinking?

- **values and norms** – What were the dominant cultural values and norms of your family and work settings? How have your values influenced your actions in the past? How have they changed? Why?
- **life events** – What are the significant life events you experienced? Which are the highs and the lows? How have they shaped the person you are today? What would you change if you had the opportunity to travel in time?
- **learning** – What has been your experience of learning so far? What important lessons do you recall? Are you able to see the learning and the valuable lessons you took from the stressful events in your life? What are you grateful for? How can you make peace with your past? Which are the most important takeaways? What can you do differently from now on?

  Once you have an answer to this question, continue by answering the following:

- What resources did you use to move out of the lows and to progress?
- Constants – is there something that is there all the time, some sort of personal quality?
- Is there something about you that appears from time to time?
- Can you see something that sometimes has blocked your thinking, behaviors and feelings?
- If someone else were describing this to you, how would you feel about it?
- What's still unfinished, what is your next challenge?
- How do you feel about your patterns – weaker/lessened? Or stronger/increased?
- How would you like the feeling to be?

The narrative perspective has been used increasingly in career guidance during the last decades. Starting with Savickas (1997), Cochran (1997) and Peavy (2000), and continuing with Brott (2005) or McMahon (2010), narrative career perspective has gained momentum, becoming a useful resource for career counselors. It comes with a diverse array of instruments, like the abovementioned lifeline exercise, but also life-space genograms, life space maps, life roles circles, life roles assessment, life role analysis (Brott, 2005), or strategies for positive life stories (Peterson & Stebleton, 2007). Other authors (Toporek & Flamer, 2009) have explored the role of CVs as narrative career instruments. In their book, *Stories of careers, learning and identity across the lifespan: Considering the future narrative of career theory,* McMahon (et al., 2010) focuses on life and career stories of individuals, how they are constructed and communicated, internalized and integrated into the idiosyncrasies of each individual. Career stories accompany us across the

lifespan and enable us to give meaning to our experiences. “Career stories are contextually located within the lives of individuals. Beginning in early childhood, career stories represent a recursiveness (ongoing interaction) between life experiences and the individual’s attempts to make sense of those experiences. In essence, individuals continually seek to derive meaning from their life experiences, and their construction of stories represents the primary way in which individuals come to understand their experiences. In the telling of stories, individuals locate themselves as the primary narrator and character of their stories, and in this way, identity is constructed over time. Thus, storytelling represents a recursiveness between life experience, the construction of identity, learning, and meaning making. The agency of individuals is represented in the construction and telling of those stories and, because life is complex and multifaceted, lives are multistoried. Thus, no single story may adequately represent the totality of an individual’s life experience” (McMahon et al., 2010, p. 3), but his story can represent an excellent first step into gaining a better understanding of previous experiences.

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Chapter 14

Career anchors

In 1978, Edgar Schein, a Swiss-born American professor of organizational development, psychologist, and business theorist, introduced the term **career anchors**, referring to a combination of personal talents, motivations, and values, reflecting facets of our personality that become increasingly stable over career. Schein called them *drivers* and thought each person has two or three that are most important, and that finding a job that is congruent with one's values will increase work motivation and will lead to increased satisfaction and fulfilment in one's work life.

Schein considered that the professional identity is shaped around values and career motivations which the individual would not give up when he is in a position of choice. In 1996, Schein said "A person's career anchor is his or her self-concept, consisting of 1) self-perceived talents and abilities, 2) basic values, and, most important, 3) the evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to the career" (p. 80). Identifying career anchors depends on everyone's experience, as one comes to realize which are these anchors only when faced with decisions aiming fundamental changes or when is confronted with issues related to self-image.

Schein first identified five career anchors:

1. **Technical competence**

People interested in technical competence value professional expertise and base their career on work identity related to previous work experience and expertise, on a specific set of skills or knowledge. They are most satisfied when they can use these skills and when people recommend them for their expertise. The actual content of their work is their main focus in a career. They rarely change their area of activity, thus horizontal mobility among this category is extremely low. Developing these skills and the expertise they bring is the most important reward for people with technical competence as a main career anchor.

2. **General managerial competence**

Those who are drawn to managerial competence seek to lead others, to occupy managerial positions, allowing them to take responsibility and decide for others. They are extremely satisfied when chosen in roles where they can run teams, organize people, influence decisions, implement strategies and actions. They are motivated by power, by coordinating teams, and bringing out the best in others. They might start by developing technical competence, but if the organization does

not open leadership roles, they might be inclined to make career changes, moving to other companies where their leadership skills are acknowledged.

3. Security and stability

Those driven towards financial security and stability, look for solid jobs. They usually get to a point in their career where the desire to secure their position in the company, their role in the organization or their financial and professional freedom are particularly strong. They might say pass to jobs that imply a relocation. Sometimes, they might consider upskilling if it brings long-term stableness. Given the market trends, the increasingly competitive job market and the growing demands, this career anchor gains ground.

4. Entrepreneurial creativity

People displaying entrepreneurial creativity are seen as creative and original. They usually prefer working alone and using their artistic and innovation skills. Are motivated by the will to create new, interesting things, to develop new products and services, to bring a new vibe to old ideas. "They may want to use their own skills, ideas and talents to create something that is identifiably their own" (Yates, 2019, p. 61). Financial success is usually perceived as an indicator of their accomplishment. Danziger et al. (2008) tested Schein's model and came up with a nine anchors framework, separating the two: entrepreneurship and creativity. The first one designates setting up a business, innovating or creating something new of value, by devoting the necessary time and effort, whereas creativity involves using the imagination and original ideas to create something unique.

5. Autonomy and independence

Those who choose autonomy and independence as their main career anchor find it easier to navigate the world of work nowadays. They do not rely on an organization to build their career, but rather look for freedom to make their own choices. This could mean for some choosing their employer or type of work, selecting their projects, selecting work arrangements that are suitable for them, and setting their own goals and objectives. Independent and autonomous individuals may reject job promotions or other opportunities that for others might seem desirable, if they fear that their freedom might be compromised. "As many people age," says Schein (1996, p. 82), "their autonomy needs increase, leading to fantasies of opening up their own businesses, becoming consultants, working part-time, and, in other ways, reducing dependence on any particular

organization or job." If they consider opening their own business, they usually do it not for financial gains or networking, but with the desire to be their own boss.

At a closer look at Schein's career anchors, DeLong (1981) suggests three more. These are:

a) *Identity*: working for a strong, well-known company, people start building their identity on organizational features. They appreciate being perceived as a member of this organization and associate their personal image with the brand or the reputation of the employer.

b) Helping others: these are people who seek to help others. Using their professional skills and abilities, they usually dedicate time serving the community and trying to make the world a better place.

c) *Variety:* people valuing variety are searching for career challenges. They perform multiple activities that enable them with new possibilities for professional growth and upskilling prospects.

In 1990, Schein also introduced three new career anchors to his initial list of five, adding:

6. Service and dedication to a cause

People who dedicate their life to service or to a cause see themselves as a part of a larger community, where everyone has a role to play. They might be involved in fundraising campaigns, in sustainability projects, in lobbying or advocacy activities, in community service or volunteering for a cause. They are interested in using their skills and abilities for helping others and their main satisfaction comes from bringing their contribution for a more positive world. "As the world becomes more conscious of large-scale problems such as the environment, the growing gap between the developed and the underdeveloped world, the problems of race and religion, product safety, privacy, overpopulation, and social responsibility issues around health and welfare, new kinds of organizations and careers are being created to address these issues" (Schein, 1996, p. 85). Migration and war are two current global challenges that need to be seriously considered nowadays as they are influencing not only the world of work, but our entire existence.

7. Pure challenge

Individuals anchored in pure challenge are constantly searching for new opportunities. They are not afraid of taking responsibilities, searching for complex problem-solving tasks, and

competing with others for the mere joy of proving to be more competent. “They are keen to solve the unsolvable, move the immutable, and beat the invincible” (Yates, 2019, 62). They can work in a range of different environments, are excited by novelty and variety, and become easily bored when things are too easy. Therefore, career shifting is frequent among this category of individuals.

8. **Lifestyle**

Individuals choosing lifestyle as their main career anchor tend to see their career as just one piece of the larger puzzle, integrating personal, family, and career concerns. They make career choices based on the desired lifestyle, often bouncing between taking children from school, going out with friends, implementing professional activities, practicing hobbies and other meaningful activities that give them a sense of wholeness.

Revisiting the concept of career anchors, Schein (1996) later stated that: “The concept of career anchor becomes especially applicable in today's turbulent world as more and more people are laid off and have to figure out what to do next in their lives” (p. 81). This statement couldn’t be truer after the spread of the Covid-19. With the massive market changes and unemployment rates, with the “great resignation” (Bloomberg, May 10th, 2021) and the proliferation of remote jobs, the base of security and stability will have to move from depending on the organization to depending on oneself, as Schein said. Working in the public sector is also changing due to digitalization, decentralization, and government restructuring. It used to be that securing a job in the central administration would mean a lifetime career, but things are pointing to a different direction. Shifting from the public sector to the private one or to the third sector is the new reality. Being prepared for the changes induces using AI and globalization puts a new perspective on career anchors, as Schein envisioned them in the 70s.

If a person finds it difficult to identify these “patterns of self-perceived talents, motives and values that serve to guide, constrain, stabilize and integrate individual careers”, as Schein (1978) defined them, one good explanation could be that he or she has not gained sufficient work experience. Career anchors become clear when one is faced with significant career changes, such as promotions, layoffs, relocations, or other critical incidents. Having to choose on how to deal with family, social, or professional changes, allows us to reanalyse our needs, motivations, abilities, talents, values, and our entire self-concept.

The close relationship between one's personal and professional life, strongly influences the constant re-evaluation of career anchors. Analyzing the work-life relationship, Zedeck & Mosier (1990) identify five possible perspectives:

1. *Spill-over*: work-life relationship is a close one, with work satisfaction leading to family happiness, but also with dissatisfaction with the job influencing one's image of the self, others, and family. Job stressors influence family interactions and resource allocation.
2. *Compensation*: implies a reciprocal relationship, as accomplishments from work can compensate for the lack of achievement in the other. This compensation may be supplemental, when the lack of work experience is pursued in family activities, or reactive, when one seeks leisure activities or needs rest after a hard week.
3. *Segmentation*: separates work from home, as two distinct areas of one's life. This separation might act in time, space, or functions. Succes related to one of them has nothing to do with the other. Compartmentalization is the key here, as family space could be perceived as a realm of intimacy, warmth, and affectivity, whereas work is competitive, impersonal, and instrumental.
4. *Instrumentalization*: indicates that one area could be an instrument for the other. For example, financial safety at the job could lead to family stability and happiness.
5. *Conflict*: inter-role conflict due to different requirements and norms between family and work may lead to stress, inefficiency, and absenteeism.

The list has been extended to other theories pertaining to work-life balance, such as: enrichment theory, facilitation, resource drain and resources conservation theories, human capital, ecology systems, border theory, boundary theory, overall appraisal theory etc. Work-life balance has been researched extensively during the last decade and several metanalysis indicate the multilevel approaches need to be considered (Le, 2020; Rashmi & Kataria, 2022). With the boost of remote jobs after Covid-19, work-related extended availability has gained momentum. It refers to the availability of employees for work-related matters in their leisure time and has been proven to have negative consequences on well-being and private life (Thörel et al., 2022). Further research needs to be conducted to understand not just the antecedents and consequences of work-life balance, but also the mechanisms (Gragnano et al., 2020; Haar & Brougham, 2022).

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Chapter 15

Employer or employee?

Most graduates usually think of ways to identify the best employer and then seek opportunities to find a good job. But there are some who take risks and become entrepreneurs. There is no single path after graduation, as the variety of opportunities show us every single day. But the mindset is extremely important. If the only model you have been exposed to is being a good employer, then this is what you aim for. On other cases, if you parents run a family business, they might pressure you to examine the possibility of continuing the tradition. For others, entrepreneurship looks pretty attractive. Which one will you consider? And are there other options that you are not familiar with? How can you find out more about these alternatives?

Most universities encourage students to find viable apprenticeship and internship opportunities. Most of them require an amount of time spent in real work environments, where you get the chance to test your abilities, to acquire new knowledge and skills, to meet new people and to get a good grip of what your future job might be like. The more diverse environments you access during your studies, the more options after graduation. Some might not be interesting or attractive for you, but at least you have given them a chance and found out that you are not cut out for them.

Internships

Internships or practicum experiences help students gain short-term work experience and explore a career interest, an occupation, or an industry. They allow students to combine academic education with real-life experience. It can include working on a project, fulfilling work duties like any other employee or collaborating with an employer to design new ideas or products.

Some graduate programs offer the possibility of choosing between a group of partners, where the students can activate as interns. A strong collaboration between the university and internship providers can help students manage their academic and work tasks better, can offer a flexible schedule and guidance from both academic staff and for-profit companies, government agencies or NGOs. Internships are also useful for employers, as they get access to a pool of candidates, can select the most talented, and strengthen their relationship with academic institutions. For the universities, these collaborations provide useful information about the

industry, the requirements of the employers, their expectations, offer valuable practical case studies and new ideas for enriching academic programs, or research ideas.

Internships offer important benefits, such as work experience, knowledge of the industry, training and mentoring, counselling and guidance, networking, money, skills, and future employment opportunities (Crișan et al., 2015). Callanan and Benzing (2004) found that the completion of an internship assignment is linked with finding career-oriented employment, but not with a higher level of confidence over personal fit with the selected position. Still, the list of skills improved upon during internships is extensive. Yue Zheng and Stephanie Bluestein (2021) show that for Public Relations and Journalism students, internships are a means of developing skills like working under pressure, time management, oral communication, problem solving, use of equipment and software, creativity, sensitivity to diversity, visual communication, ethical decision-making, news, and PR writing, or understanding of legal issues.

The distinction between paid and unpaid positions should be made, as internships can be both a stepping stone to a certain career or industry, but also potentially exclusionary and exploitative. Hunt (2016, 2017) showed that when accessing paid internships, besides receiving an income for their work, UK students have access to creative or graduate level jobs. But committing to unpaid internships positions can lead to lower pay in the short and medium term for them. Students find unpaid internships as less developmental, and would rather prefer committing to paid positions, which increase their motivation and engagement (Hunt, 2020).

Not all students consider the idea of searching for internships. The reasons for not applying for an internship can include the lack of resources (time and money), lack of self-confidence, lack of awareness of internship-related resource, lack of knowledge regarding the application process, or the current work arrangements (Zheng & Bluestein, 2021). The sources used to find internship opportunities may involve job-searching websites, professors, friends, colleagues or family members, social media, guest speakers, department's newsletter, and University Career Centre. So, if you are asking how you can find an internship and where to start, a good idea would be to first visit your university's Career Centre. They usually have a list of internship opportunities for several domains. You can also discuss with student organizations' representatives, ask colleagues who have fulfilled internship positions in the past, find good recommendations, look for NGOs offering short-term positions to students, or exploring other similar opportunities. Before narrowing down the list of options, ask yourself what type of internship would you like to secure?

What is your motivation to go into an internship? What skills would you like to develop and what type of knowledge do you strive to get? How long will the internship be? What type of tasks are you looking for? Once you have identified your top three internship offers, read thoroughly the internship description, search information about the company, discuss with former interns, and decide after evaluating the pros and cons for each offer. The internship you will get involved in might be your first step to finding a job and developing a successful career, so choose wisely.

Finding a job

Job search consists of gathering information about potential jobs, identifying, and evaluating alternatives, and choosing among them. It involves both planning the job search and implementing the process. Some people put a lot of effort into finding a job, while others do not find the energy, the time, or the necessary persistence. While some plan the process thoroughly, preparing CVs and sending e-mails to employment agencies or individual employers, attending career fairs, and discussing with others about job opportunities, others are less inclined to devoting their attention to this activity. Networking, in particular, can be an excellent opportunity to increase job prospects. There are several individual differences (such as personality, motivation, commitment, self-efficacy, perceived control etc.) and situational variables (social support and financial need) that predict job search behaviours, and its consequences (such as the probability, the speed, and the quality of employment one may obtain) (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006).

After graduation, many students with a short-term orientation settle for McJobs, trying to pay their bills and usually change a few jobs before finding their path. Twenty years ago, the situation was very different: there was an increase in the number of university graduates, the employers were taking into consideration a diverse group of candidates, the students were more experienced and mature, many of them had relevant work experience, there were less jobs than candidates, and many European graduates were relocating to countries where the wages were higher, and the benefits - diversified (Jenner, 2000). Waller et al. (2017) show that with the expansion of higher education and the polarisation of jobs, the labour market has become increasingly competitive, and students now struggle to find early labour market opportunities.

Today, after the pandemic and the big resignation, fewer students decide to engage in long-term university education preferring short-term training, employees choose hybrid workplaces, companies favor candidates who are willing to learn new skills, individuals who are moulded after

the company's organizational culture, but after upskilling them, staff retention strategies need to be redesigned, diversity, sustainability and inclusion are extremely valued, work-life balance is gaining momentum, technology and AI are highly praised (Forbes, 2023, December 18) and metacognitive abilities like design thinking, self-discipline, entrepreneurship and autonomy are encouraged for dealing with the VUCA reality (Miclea, 2019, February 19). Current employees are expected to change on average 18 jobs, 6 careers, and 15 homes in a lifetime (McCrindle, 2023). People are constantly rethinking their routines, decide to quit their jobs and break away from others' expectations (Feiler, 2023).

Switching from the private to the public companies, or from any of these two to NGOs or entrepreneurship is a fact. Dealing with a lot of uncertainty, with change and transitions, with complexity and ambiguity, finding new strategies to adapt to the workplace dynamics, upskilling and reskilling, relocating, and dealing with different cultural settings are all part of the new reality. It might seem that we have more options, but the truth is that companies are rethinking their retention strategies and focusing on identifying suitable candidates. The competition is uneven in many domains, with IT&C and services still being the most sought for areas, and with the reality check of more migrant workers accessing a vast array of jobs. Thirty or twenty years ago, Romanians were choosing the American dream or moving abroad for short periods of time, finding seasonal jobs, and supporting families with their income, but for their children these options are no longer attractive. They have witnessed the positive and the negative consequences of families living apart, the increased divorce rates, the abandonment of children and the neglect of the elderly, migration of highly skilled workers, stereotyping and discrimination, and the danger of radicalisation (ÖGfE Policy brief 10, 2023). Today, emigration for studies could be the only limited choice for very few of them.

Remaining in Romania means that you will have to compete with a diverse group of candidates from different countries, age groups, with distinct expectations and characteristics that are very different from your own. Understanding the labour market, the expectations of the employers, the dynamics of the workforce, the generational cohort characteristics and the advantages and disadvantages of each category, might be extremely valuable. Where can one find such information? Start by searching HR trends reports, such as undelucram.ro or catalyst.ro, attend career fairs, read articles from the media, once you have a short list of relevant employers, search the companies' websites, conduct prototype interviews with people working in the same

area you plan on working or for companies that you consider to be ideal employers, visit the university career centre, listen to podcasts and find relevant blogs or vlogs, social media pages or other digital resources and networks that might provide valuable opportunities. Look beyond the public image of a company. All their materials look bright and shiny, but the corporate culture and the day-to-day reality might be very different from what you see in the media or in leaflets and brochures. Try to have an accurate image of the workplace by discussing with other people who have worked there in the past or who are currently employed. One employee is not a representative sample. Try to discuss with their competitors as well. Find several, reliable sources.

Companies differ in terms of their organizational culture, structure, number of employees, placement, training opportunities, salary and benefits, mission and vision, values, opportunities for promotion. Likewise, candidates' motivation is very diverse. For some, the medical insurance might be of highly priority, for others salary and benefits, for some work-life balance or sustainability efforts are on the top of their list and so on. It is important to know your top priorities and to list them appropriately, to compare job offers and company features. Some areas might seem more attractive, like IT, financing, or engineering, but what if you are not aiming for any of these? Do you need to reskill? Competition for some domains is fierce. In others, companies might be bagging for candidates to give them a chance. Employer branding strategies are increasingly important for recruiting in today's market, as they provide companies with opportunities to attract top talent, boost employees' confidence and satisfaction, and fuel business success. Still, if you do not want to work for others, entrepreneurship might be a fair alternative.

Starting your own business

Many of us have business ideas in mind, but it doesn't mean they will become reality. **Entrepreneurship** involves recognizing business opportunities, managing resources, and starting up a business (Pintea & Crișan, in Lemeni & Miclea, 2004). An entrepreneurial mindset can be developed after being exposed to direct entrepreneurial experiences, such as opening your own business, acquiring knowledge about market dynamics, workforce, work norms and legislation, relationships with partners and contractors, or to indirect experiences, like finding role models and learning from the experiences of other entrepreneurs, listening to podcasts, getting advice from mentors and business angels.

Besides having a good business idea, you must put some effort into registering, launching, and growing it. Katherine Haan (*Forbes Advisor*) recommends 11 steps to follow when you decide to start your own business:

1. **Determine your business concept** – start with two important elements: something you are good at and something that might be profitable. You might start with a few important questions: What do you like doing? What do you hate doing? What are you good at? What do others recommend you for? What kind of jobs do others praise you for? If you would give a five-minute speech, what would it be about? Is there something you have always wanted to do, but lacked the courage or the resources to start? What type of business would you like to start? Is it a blog, a podcast, a restaurant, an online shop, a consultancy firm? What will you offer – services or goods? Do you have the proper funding? Will you have partners or work on your own? What skills and expertise do you have?
2. **Research your competitors and market** – do primary and secondary research, conduct a SWOT analysis, and define your unique selling proposition.
3. **Create your business plan** – this involves organizing all the information you have into a solid business plan, including: an executive summary, the company's description, a market analysis, the organization and structure of the company, mission and goals, products and services, background summary, marketing, and the financial plan. It might be a good thing to also think of an exit strategy (like selling the business or passing it down to family members). Also, start planning for taxes.
4. **Choose your business structure –** it is going to be a limited liability company, a limited liability partnership, a corporation, or a sole proprietorship; they all have pros and cons you need to take into consideration.
5. **Register your business and get licenses –** you might want to start by choosing a wise business name, get an employer identification number, get permits, and appropriate licenses. You can choose to do this by yourself or hire someone who can go through these steps a lot faster and easier.
6. **Get your finances in order –** every business owner will advise you to open a bank account and hire a good accountant. You will also need to estimate your start-up costs and determine an approximate break-even point.

7. **Fund your business** from internal sources, like personal savings, credit cards or other funds from friends and family, or external sources, including business loans, grants, angels, investors, venture capital, or crowdfunding.
8. **Apply for business insurance –** choose an experienced agent with extensive expertise, as you will thank him later. He will recommend several types of insurance coverage, such as liability insurance, property, employee practice liability and workers' compensations, business interruptions etc. These are some risks people don't usually think of, especially in the start-up phase, when they only see possibilities, and the motivation and enthusiasm are extremely high.
9. **Get the right business tools –** accounting and customer relationship management software, credit card processor and point of sale, virtual private network, merchant services, email hosting etc.
10. **Market your business -** create a website and optimise it for SEO, create relevant content or hire consultants for this, develop a social media strategy.
11. **Scale your business -** meaning you will need at some point to envision ways of growing your customer base and revenue. Start by building a strong team, hire additional staff, choose contractors and freelancers, identify potential partners, and think of expanding your business online.

Entrepreneurship is distinct from **intrapreneurship**. While "entrepreneurs possess the ability to identify and capitalize on opportunities to start new business ventures, intrapreneurs apply these same skills to venture creation within an existing organization" (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006 p. 285). Studies on entrepreneurship have approached so many variables, that it is almost impossible to think of a typical entrepreneur. Still, more recent research shows that it is not their distinct traits that set them apart, but rather the way they think. Entrepreneurs tend to have a different perception of risk influenced by overconfidence, illusion of control and the belief in the law of small numbers, hindsight bias, base-rate fallacy, and many others, who do not act individually, but rather combine into patterns of cognitive biases influencing their decisions (Baron, 1998; Hietschold & Voegtlin, 2022; Kraft et al, 2022; Zhang et al, 2020). Entrepreneurs tend to be more confident in their knowledge. They believe themselves to be skilled and to be able to control outcomes, therefore they tend to use limited information in decision-making. Entrepreneurs tend to focus on their skills, needs and preferences and to use them to create

something new, innovative, original, being driven by financial independence and success, status, and recognition, or for the mere joy of doing things differently, of gaining autonomy or personal growth and development.

Two types of entrepreneurs have caught the attention of researchers; they are **serial**, and **portfolio entrepreneurs**. The first ones create a business, manage it, improve it, and then sell it to someone else. The second, tend to operate several businesses simultaneously. Also, we can see more **second-career entrepreneurs**, individuals who usually in midlife, rethink their whole situation and decide to change career and venture out on their own. It is not only the case of men, but recently an increasing number of **female entrepreneurs** have taken advantage of entrepreneurship opportunities, and in the search of more flexible work arrangements or financial gains, have started their own business. **Social entrepreneurship** is also on the rise and governments continue to encourage these kinds of innovative, long-term solutions to social problems. Still, three categories are underrepresented in the entrepreneurial landscape: women, minorities, and youth.

Research on entrepreneurship is very diverse and meta-analytical studies are now able to provide a more comprehensive perspective of entrepreneurial success (Allen et al 2021; Jiao et al, 2023; Zhao et al., 2021). Social capital or network resources play a significant role in growing entrepreneurship initiatives, and we will try to see some of the advantages of networking in the next chapter.

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Chapter 16

Networking

Networking may seem confusing for many, but rest assure, it is not different from building social relationships in general. It refers to a set of behaviors used to develop and maintain social relationships that can provide information, influence, guidance and support to individuals in their careers. The academic definition of professional networking refers to "a series of goal-directed interpersonal interactions with one or more network contacts that build and maintain professional relationships and that comprise the mutually beneficial exchange of resources that are instrumental for work and career success" (Porter et al, 2023). Attending social and professional events, maintaining contacts with people inside or outside the organization one is working for, participating in community activities, being invited as a guest speaker in a meeting or simply increasing one's list of contacts can increase one's visibility and turn into career prospects. Engaging in successful networking activities can increase career outcomes, such as advancement opportunity, interesting collaborations, career mobility and satisfaction.

By developing your social capital, you can benefit from useful information, expertise, guidance and advice, friendship, and support (Seibert et al, 2001). This is how you can have access different opportunities that your entire personal and professional network gathers. Three sources have been found to influence the effects of social resources on career success: access to information, to resources and career sponsorship (Seibert et al., 2001). The strength of the network lies not only in numbers, but more importantly in the quality of network composition. So, it is not a matter of how many people you know, but rather whom do you accompany yourself with.

In the current context of a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world of work, with more fluid career patterns, with an increasing number of people reskilling and upskilling, with the shifting dynamics of technological changes, of globalization and increased migration, networking can become a useful career management tool. Previous research has shown that quality networking can increase salary progression, promotion, and career mobility (Durbin & Tomlinson, 2011; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Stumpf, 2014; Wolff & Moser, 2009).

Social networking sites have provided new opportunities for building social capital, including both bridging and bonding (Liu et al, 2016). Bridging refers to information or new perspectives, new worldviews obtained from weak, wide relationships, lacking depth, while

bonding social capital involves social emotional support and resources coming from strong personal connections (Spottswood & Wohn, 2020). Especially for people who want to expand their list of contacts online, some platforms like LinkedIn (Davis et al, 2020; Ma & Leung, 2019; Utz, 2016) or Facebook have been proven extremely useful (Tobin et al, 2020; You & Hon, 2019). Instagram and Twitter are also on the rise, along with ResearchGate or Academic.edu (Spottswood & Wohn, 2020). For underrepresented and minority students, social networks provide both information-related social capital, and social support which facilitates academic success (Mishra, 2020).

Five types of networking behavior have been shown to contribute to career outcomes. They are maintaining contacts, socializing, participating in community, increasing internal visibility, and engaging in professional activities. Among these, the last two especially have been proven to contribute significantly to career promotions and perceived career success (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Also, differences of perception between men and women have been identified in relationship to the utility of networking behavior as a career-enhancing strategy.

Motivation for networking has been shown to predict the actual networking behavior (Porter et al, 2023). Six types of reasons for engaging in professional networking have been identified:

1. **Affiliation** – these are individuals who enjoy connecting with people or groups, building new relationships, and knowing many interesting people. Thus, they perceive networking as fun and enjoyable.
2. **Prosocial** types of people find satisfaction in helping others, mentoring them, offering guidance and counselling, facilitating other's career progression, and introducing contacts to one another, etc.
3. Those who choose to network for **status**, seek acknowledgement, visibility, reputation, and respect in a formal or informal hierarchy.
4. **Learning and performance** is an important drive for those who want to acquire knowledge and skills, to engage in personal learning and development, to collaborate with others, identify best practices, and find alternative approaches to work.
5. **Career management** refers to some's intention to network to maintain their jobs, to acquire new job offers or promotions, or to stay professionally connected.

6. **Social-normative** motivation is characteristic to people who see professional networking as a required part of the work role or as a professional obligation necessary for career success.

Based on their research, Porter et al. (2023) have developed the *Professional Networking Motives Inventory* (PNMI), comprising of 28 items, measuring networking motivation. Items are rated on a 5- point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

Now that you know these reasons to network, which one is more important for you? And what types of networking behavior do you engage in more often? Do you prefer online or offline networking? Have you considered extending your professional network? How? And what type of career outcome did you get out of networking so far?

On a more practical approach, there are countless tutorials on the internet showing you how to prepare for a networking event, how to engage with others, how to select the proper netiquette, how to build online profiles and so on. As always, practice makes perfect!

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Chapter 17

The career interview

What is a job interview? Traditionally, the job interview has been defined as “a selection tool allowing interviewers to gather and evaluate information about applicants” (Judge et al., 2000). It is also an information exchange between a candidate and a potential employer (or their representative), aiming for mutual understanding. Job interviews provide employers with opportunities to find and recruit suitable candidates for open roles at their companies.

How do you get to a job interview? There are several routes to obtaining a job interview. First, you can search for job ads. They are highly accessible, easy retrievable, but you can face fearful competition, especially for the ones posted online. Pay attention to job requirements and identify job openings that match your skills and experience, otherwise you will easily become frustrated after applying for countless jobs and being overlooked in the selection process. Some companies are offering their own selection platform, listing open positions and contact information on the website.

The second route goes through recruitment companies. They offer matching based on job requirements and other preselected categories of information using algorithms. Oftentimes, recruiting services are perceived as shortcuts in the selection process, reducing the time spent by each company or candidate. The larger the recruitment company, the larger the database and the sample of potential employers or candidates.

Third, one might use his or her personal network. Prototype conversations, as recommended by Burnett and Evans, are one such useful method. Spreading the word among friends and family is helpful. Posting on LinkedIn or other professional social networks might be effective. Attending networking events, like career fairs, industry meetings, alumni associations and other similar events is always a good idea.

Did you know that employer branding plays an important role in the selection of employers by candidates? Research shows employer branding makes it easier to recruit, saving time and money. A LinkedIn study from 2011 shows that the bottom-line impact of employer branding can be seen through over a third reduction in organizational turnover, 50% more qualified job applicants, and 50% cost-per-hire reduction. Three out of four job seekers consider an employer’s brand before applying for a job. Employer knowledge (including familiarity, reputation, and

image) has been proven to strongly predict both interest in applying for a job, and actual number of applications (Collins, 2006). Seventy-two percent of recruiting leaders worldwide agreed that employer brand has a significant impact on hiring (Global Recruiting Brands for SMB, 2016). Many companies seek to develop a value proposition stating they are "a great place of work" (Minchington, 2010, in Dabirian et al., 2019), "an alluring workplace" (Lloyd, 2002) or "an employer of choice", meaning a place where people prefer to work (Armstrong, 2006). What do companies offer under this umbrella term? Excellent working environment, challenging work responsibilities, competence development, and work flexibility (Copenhagen Business School, 2009, in Sokro, 2012).

Once you find this place of work, you will probably apply for a job opening. The next step - the job interview. There are different types of interviews (Harris, 1989) you might be asked to participate in. First, there is the **behavior description interview**, that asks the candidate to describe their typical performance in a specific situation, not necessarily the maximal one. This kind of interviewer believes that the best predictor of future behavior or performance is past behavior. Second, **situational interviews** ask the candidates to state what they would do in a given situation. This type of interviewer usually assumes that intentions are related to actual behavior. For example, one interviewer might ask: "Your child caught a cold and needs to stay at home for the day. Your parents are out of town, and you would usually ask your mother to take care of the child, but today this is not an option. You need to hand in an important report to your manager this same day. What would you do?" The **comprehensive structured interviews** are the most elaborate, and include questions based on situations, job knowledge, job simulations and worker requirements.

Numerous variables can influence the outcome of a job interview: interviewer training, demographic variables, non-verbal behavior, interviewee's age, gender, experience, personality, motivation, and other characteristics, including physical attractiveness, clothing, personal scent, perceptions of the interviewer, and interviewee training. Interviewer's biases may have a strong impact on how the job interview unfolds. Confirmation bias, primacy-recency effect, contrast effect have no room in the job interview. We are all humans and therefore we make mistakes, but training can help the interviewer avoid these pratfalls and act objectively. However, practice makes perfect!

Structured interviews have been proven to be more effective than the unstructured ones. Campion et al. (1997) suggest taking into consideration fifteen components of structure that may enhance the content of the interview or the evaluation process. These are:

- for the content:

1. Job analysis: including critical incidents or contrasts between high and low-performing employees are most common methods used to develop job interviews.
2. Same questions: standardizing questions by using structured or semi-structured interview grids.
3. Limit prompting: prohibition of any prompting, follow-up questioning, or elaboration.
4. Better questions: situational responses, past behaviour questions, job knowledge or background information related to work experience, education and other qualifications are recommended.
5. Longer interviews and larger numbers of questions in the interview allow gathering more information on the candidate.
6. Control ancillary information: may come from resumes, application forms, previous interviews, test scores, recommendations etc.
7. No questions from candidate: some interviewers prefer to have control over the interview and do not allow questions from the candidate until after the interview.

- for the evaluation of the interview:

8. Rate each answer or use multiple scales: interviewers decide whether they will rate each answer, based on a simple grid or an extensive one, or will make multiple ratings at the end.
9. Anchored rating scales: involve, using a detailed scale, that might include the scaled example, a description of the situation, evaluations from poor to excellent, and comparisons between candidates (top 20% to bottom 20% of the candidates).
10. Detailed notes: extended or brief notetaking, during the interview or at the end.
11. Multiple interviews (from one to five) allow sharing perceptions between interviewers, avoiding biases, better recall of information and increased accuracy.
12. Same interviewer(s).
13. No discussion between interviews.

14. Training, including purpose of the interview, writing, and selecting questions, job requirements, rapport building, using scales and evaluating answers, notetaking, hiring decisions.
15. Statistical prediction: combining ratings across interviewers and different methods used to make final decisions.

Preparing for the interview

First, gather all the necessary data about the job and the organization. It would also be useful to have some information, if possible, on the interviewer. Ask what type of interview is going to be and how you can prepare for it. It shows interest and proactivity. Choose your clothing wisely, as office attire varies by industry. Try to identify the employers' needs and how you can contribute to the organizational objectives.

Performance during the interview

The interview might be face-to-face in a coffee shop or at the office, could be over the phone or through zoom, skype, teams, meet or any other platform. It can be conducted by a robot or by a human being. It can include preselected questions, or it can be an unstructured one, depending on all the factors we have listed above. Rest assured, if someone invites you to an interview, you have the necessary skills and experience for the job. Pay attention to the questions and try to be honest, brief, and positive when answering them. Don't forget to ask questions, too. Some of the most often used questions for a job interview revolve around: your description in a few words, previous work experience, skills, coping mechanisms, education and training, motivation, and personal objectives. Just run a quick Google search and you will find thousands of sites indicating lists of job interview questions.

Most of the interviewers focus on job performance, personality, and character. Some interviewers prefer to include brainteasers in the interview. These are questions like: If you had the ability to travel in time, where would you first go and why? How many stacked pennies equal the height of Eiffel Tower? If you could get rid of any country on Earth, which would you choose and why? These questions have no right or wrong answer. They usually allow the interviewer to identify thinking styles, argumentation techniques, and ability to improvise. Previous research

shows that 70% of the hiring decisions are taken during the first five or ten minutes of the job interview.

How does an interview look like, and which are the stages of a job interview? It usually starts with creating a relaxed atmosphere and building a professional relationship. Second, is the introduction to the beginning of the evaluation process. Third, comes the body of the interview, with detailed answers to the most important questions addressed. Fourth, we have the confirmation and validation of previous information gathered, and last, the end of the interview, where the candidate is allowed to ask questions and if asked, receives feedback.

After the interview

There are also some steps you can follow, after the interview. First, send a thank you note the next day. Evaluate your performance and reflect on the most important takeaways. What did you learn about the company? What about the job? Is there a match between their requirements and your qualification and experience? Sometimes, you might be called for a second round of interviews, so it is important to receive feedback and to ask how to prepare for the interview. Who is going to be the interviewer? How many candidates have been selected? Do you need to prepare ancillary information? In extremely rarely occasions, you might receive an offer on the spot, but it does not mean you need to answer right away. Ask for some time to consider the offer and make sure you are informed of the company's timeline and the deadline for your answer. If, on the other hand, you are not selected for the job and the interviewer does not provide any feedback as initially agreed, you may follow up and send an e-mail or give them a call. Reaffirm your interest in the job opening and ask for the new timeline.

Don't forget that HR people represent a heterogenous group of professionals. Some of them have a degree in psychology, some in sociology, others in communication or engineering, some have completed extensive training and education, others have followed a shortcut, finishing a short-term course, some have decades of experience, others are newcomers in this industry and fulfill entry-level recruitment positions. What are all of them expecting from candidates? It's simple. They are all looking for a good match between the candidate and the job description, people with relevant work experience, strong values, and high self-esteem. And they want to get this in the shortest possible time.

Hiring the wrong candidates can have consequences for the HR team as well. Not only in terms of time efficiency, but also in terms of costs, productivity, and image loss. Several hiring mistakes have been proven to have a strong impact on the recruiting team. The most common mistakes include: using a generalist instead of a specialist, limiting the list only to active candidates, failing to provide sufficient feedback, selling the position, the company or the culture to the candidate, not committing to the search or moving too slow, skipping reference checks or relying too much on references, maintaining a steady pipeline of candidates, asking too many leading questions, evaluating candidates under the pressure to fill in the position as soon as possible (Arms & Bercik, 2016; Lousig-Nont, 2003).

It is important to acknowledge our mistakes, to learn from them and try to improve our performance in the future. Experience develops over time!

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Chapter 18

Building a personal brand

Tom Peters published in 1997 *The Brand Called You*, an article that has received great attention from the press and academic scholars, as it introduced the idea of self-branding. Put it in his words: "We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You." This idea of getting ownership of one's career and taking responsibility for how we present ourselves in the labor market has sparked the interest of many and with the rise of social media, new directions of research emerged. The phenomenon of personal branding has flourished in "a particular set of economic, social, and cultural influences which have led to the valorization of individualism, reflexivity, self-promotion, entrepreneurialism, and self-governance", says Jennifer Whitmer (2019, p. 2), professor of sociology at Department of Sociology, Gerontology, and Gender Studies, California State University Stanislaus. With the more competitive labor market, the rising precarity of work, and the spread of communications technologies, personal branding has gained momentum and is now seen as a necessity (Baym, 2015; Gandini, 2016; Scolere et al., 2018). Still, some researchers are skeptical about this type of self-presentation, as it does not focus on personal qualities, but rather encourages individuals to put the emphasis on self-packaging. "Success is not determined by individuals' internal sets of skills, motivations, and interests but, rather, by how effectively they are arranged, crystallized, and labeled—in other words, branded" (Lair et al, 2005, p. 308).

A comprehensive definition of personal branding is offered by Rampersad (2008). He sees a personal brand as "the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions created in the minds of others when they see or hear your name (p. 34)". This personal branding process consists of four stages:

1. Formulating a personal ambition (vision, mission, and key roles)
2. Defining and formulating a personal brand (SWOT analysis, brand objectives, specialization, services, dominant attributes, domain, personal brand statement, personal brand story, logo, and slogan)
3. Elaborating and implementing a personal balanced scorecard (personal critical success factors, personal objectives, personal performance measures, targets and improvement measures and actions)

4. Cultivating personal ambition, personal brand, and personal balanced scorecard (plan, deploy, act, challenge).

Personal branding used to perceive as an instrument largely tied to career success of established workers, or people with strong personal identity, but it seems that with the rise of social media, personal branding became accessible to a diverse group of individuals, including young people seeking for entry-level employment. Branding practices of different professions have been analyzed, including chefs, faculty, artists, fashion models, advertising, or tourism professionals (Jacobson, 2020; Monareng, 2020).

This seems to be the new reality. Individuals compete for jobs, companies develop employer branding strategies, recruiting companies promote the concept of personal agency and recommend candidates to find their unique selling proposition, to brand themselves and to effectively manage audience perceptions. Personal branding forces workers to confirm Foucault's idea of "enterprising self". A new image takes shape, that is the one of "an independent, resourceful, creative, and aggressive professional […], agile in a fluctuating job market, responsive to any opportunities, self-motivating, and self-promoting." (Lair et al., 2005, p. 318).

For the individuals working in creative industries, and MarCom especially, building a strong personal brand is extremely important. Candidates usually focus on personal identity when they are looking for a job (Marin & Nilă, 2021), and personal experience, social skills and credentials displayed on social media are useful tools for developing a personal brand. LinkedIn especially has been proven to change the traditional recruitment process (Carmack & Heiss, 2018; McCabe, 2017; Peter & Gomez, 2019; Waller, 2020). Social media is just one such key tool available today for enhancing a personal brand. Combined with offline networking, personal blogging, video, and photo sharing, commenting on blogs and forums, using social rankings, social bookmarking, or social objects, such as business cards and badges (Harris & Rae, 2011).

Building on Goffman's theory of impression management (1959), recent studies show the importance of authenticity, but also the interplay between front stage and backstage performances, between real face-to face interactions and computer-mediated communication. The candidates create a marketable self-image that can leverage important economic opportunities. And the advantages of a strong personal brand can make the difference in the recruiting process. When you are a graduate student and you plan on finding a job, you will be surprised how many other students are seeking job opportunities. Therefore, it is not enough to know that you are competent, but you

need to convince others of your superpowers. Every interaction we have with other people is an opportunity to advance our agenda, to create a memorable experience and to model others' expectations from us.

Personal branding presents a multitude of benefits, like increased social capital, a strong differentiation from the competition, increased self-confidence, visibility, and reputation, along with recruitment opportunities, financial benefits, and promotion opportunities.

William Arruda, founder of Reach personal Branding and author of *Career Distinction*, *Ditch. Dare, Do!*, and *Digital YOU*, lists nine important benefits of personal branding: fame, minimized imposter syndrome, attraction of opportunities, increased energy, joy, wealth, career control, goal achievement and confidence (Forbes, 2021, March 21). You are aligning who you are with what you do and how you do it.

The first step of personal branding is **self-awareness**. You need to know who you are, what you do, what do you stand for, what do you have to offer. People who have a strong brand have a realistic image of all their qualities and flaws. If you want to gain this realistic image, ask yourself the following questions:

- What do others see and appreciate in me?
- When working in a team, what types of activities to I enjoy most?
- What roles do I fulfil?
- If I would ask others, what would they recommend me for?
- Which is the most successful project I have ever accomplished?
- What am I most proud of?
- In what area have I gained expertise so far?
- What skills do I possess?

After answering this series of questions, write down your top 5 strengths, your superpowers. They might be related to being a good listener, solving problems, creative, being the soul of the party, having entrepreneurial skills, extensive knowledge in a certain area, speaking five languages etc. The list is different as we are all different individuals.

So, what is your unique value proposition. What are your natural talents, your passions, and your skills? What are you good at and have always been? What have you learned along the way? If you were dropped in the middle of nowhere and had no money, friends, or relatives, what could you do? When you walk into a bookstore, what section do you find yourself gravitating

towards? Magazines, books, toys. What type of books do you choose? Why? Let take an example of a unique value proposition: I use my natural talents of listening to others and connecting with them and my counselling skills to help students find their career path. Or I use my critical thinking, public speaking, and humour to entertain people in stand-up comedy shows. This will also ask for niche identification. What unique strengths and expertise do you have that can impact your interest and the need of the marketplace?

Another exercise you might want to do starts from the people you admire. Imagine one of the celebrities you appreciate is Barack Obama. You like him because he is different, he is well-articulated, kind, tolerant and smart. These are traits you value in others and consider to be important for a role model.

One simple exercise can be based on your name. Let's say your name is Monica. For each letter, find a superpower: mature, organized, intelligent, creative, ambitious. Or your name might pe Peter, which stands for perseverant, enthusiastic, trained, excellent speaker, reliable. The simple exercise of finding qualities that are triggered by your name could be an indicator of the strengths you are aware of.

The next step would be to validate this image of yours with other people who might give you constructive feedback. Ask your family, friends, colleagues, clients, managers what they appreciate in you, which are your strengths, but also what improvements can you make in the future, which areas do you need to focus on, what obstacles do you need to overcome.

The second step involves **defining your aspirations and determining your goals**. Maybe you are in your fifties and have a leadership position in your company and would like to be liked by their peers or by the industry. Maybe you are in our forties, and you already have a business and what do build a personal brand that shows who you are and what distinguishes you from others. Or maybe you are in your thirties and want to find better job opportunities and show employers that you can add value to their company. So, personal branding is for everyone, but brand building can be different depending on each person's goals and audience. If you have no idea how to define your aspiration, do this quick exercise. Imagine you are attending an event ten years from now and the presenter needs to introduce yourself to the audience. What do you want her to say about you? How would you like to be described?

Third, **uncover your audience**. You are trying to determine who is it that you want to add value to. What are those people's lives and what problems do they have. If you have already

understood what your goals are and why you want to build a personal brand, you will understand also who your audience is.

Next, **understand your competition**. Identify direct and indirect competitors. Build relationships and expand your network, so that you can elevate your brand profile. Choose a differentiation strategy and try to understand why your audience listens to you, why they pay attention to your offer. You need to find your own perspective, your personality, your qualities, and personal confidence. Your unique voice. Put yourself in a category of one, as Arruda says. Identify your attributes and find others who can relate to you. Find your brand personality and pay attention to your authentic self. Define the attributes who you are comfortable with and that will appeal to your audience. Deliver those attributes. Be yourself, your true, authentic self.

The following step involves **effectively communicating your personal brand.** First, create a personal brand statement. This includes your visions, your unique value proposition, your work experience, and your desired opportunities. Use social media effectively and engage in the platform you enjoy most (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.). now it is important to start giving value. Forget about asking and calls to action. Let people see your value. Go into social groups, network, engage with others online and offline, deliver your experience. Help people, comment, like, share, post, understand your audience, and help others with their problems.

Next step, **collaborate with your peers**. Online and offline. You want to take a list of competitors and identify who they are, what they do, how they deliver, how do they engage with their audience. Let them know who you are, what your reputation is. Develop individual relationships and let others trust you and do business with you. Don't procrastinate. The right time is right now. Network, and get up to date with relevant events in your domain. Show up and engage. Keep sharing your personal brand.

Last, how do you **measure your personal brand** effectively? Start with your SMART objectives. Let's come back to the previous examples. If you are an individual in your thirties and want to get a social media manager position by the end of the year, start talking to people, build your online presence, network with others working in the same area, list job opportunities, apply for them and if you get a job by the end of December, it means your personal brand has been effective. If you are an entrepreneur in your forties, let's say you have your own event planning agency and would like to get more media presence, you might think of being a TedX speaker and share your own experience with other entrepreneurs, while also receiving media coverage. If you

are a leader in your industry, let's say you are the top executive in one of the most famous companies in your domain and would like to get your voice heard more, you might consider applying for a management position in the Professional Association of your industry. This will provide you the opportunity, the visibility, and the position to influence others and set trends for the years to come.

To sum up, personal branding is about "establishing a unique personal identity, developing an active communication approach of one's brand identity to a specific target market and evaluating its impact on one's image and reputation, to fulfil personal and professional objectives" (Khedher, 2014, p.33).

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Chapter 19

Job crafting

Today's business world changes at a rapid pace and employees need to keep up with the constant changes in their job's roles, tasks, and projects (Grant & Parker, 2009). Employees face more and more challenges and opportunities at work; therefore, they are required to adapt to and initiate numerous job-related changes (Demerouti, 2014). They might be asked to take new responsibilities, to change the nature of the job, to work in teams, but also to be individually proficient, to initiate projects, to carry out tasks, to monitor their performance and to implement not only individual, but also strategic organizational changes that will lead to personal satisfaction and increased performance, or organizational effectiveness. Acknowledging the importance of this employee proactivity, Amy Wrzesnievski and Jane E. Dutton (2001, p. 180) have introduced the term job crafting, referring to "the actions employees take to shape, mold, and redefine their jobs". Once they understand how their work contributes to the overall achievement of organizational goals, employees can implement significant changes, that can lead to increased sense of meaning and greater autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Oftentimes, the fulfilment of these needs is more important than money or other job benefits, such as having a medical insurance, a car, a laptop, or a gym subscription. When their needs are not being met, employees try to make changes in their job tasks and characteristics, and this is how job crafting starts.

Job crafting is about "making physical and cognitive changes in the task or relational boundaries of one's own work" (Wrzesnievski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179). Changing task boundaries involves adjustments related to one's number, type, sequence, or scope of job tasks. Let's say one is a teacher, but he also asked to take the responsibility of being students' tutor and academic advisor. This means taking new responsibilities, like one-on-one meetings with students who face academic challenges, and with their parents, organizing trips for the whole class and other teambuilding activities, getting to know students on a personal basis and understanding the challenges each one faces, teaming up with colleagues to address necessary actions, designing class projects etc. this means he or she will have to take fewer, more or different tasks than the ones usually prescribed by their job description. It takes time and effort, it required the redesign of one's schedule, dimensioning tasks and prioritizing them, fulfilling new roles, and meeting new

standards. Changing relational boundaries means quality and quantity of interactions with people at work. An academic advisor might be asked to organize semestrial meeting with parents, collaborating with the school counsellor, identifying role models, and inviting guests in class, organizing field trips or job shadowing activities etc. This means less time spent in teachers' room, discussing with colleagues, or engaging in other activities. Therefore, one can choose to what extent he or she will approach colleagues or get involved in work group social activities. Cognitive task boundaries imply a change of perspective. You might think of transforming the way to see your own job, as before you were focusing on teaching students and assessing their performance, while after getting to know them better, you can now understand what they are going through, you can see how different they are, you get to know their hobbies, their interests, their worries and hopes, their expectations and not only their thoughts and behaviours, but also their emotions.

So, according to Wrzesnievski and Dutton, job crafting includes three **dimensions**:

1. Task crating
2. Relational crafting
3. Cognitive crafting.

Bruning and Campion (2018) differentiate the role-based crafting of Wrzesnievski and Dutton (2001) from the resource-based job crafting of Tims and Bakker (2010). Analysed through the Job-Demands Theory (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001), job crafting can be conceptualized as a proactive employee behaviour specifically targeted at job characteristics (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Therefore, one can either change the job demands, the jobs resources or both. Job demands, such as work pressure, role overload, role ambiguity or conflict, lack of organizational justice (Comcare Australian Government), are defined as "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). A surgeon faces long hours and sitting or standing for long periods of time, a clerk puts up with the challenges of highly repetitive and monotonous tasks, with high amounts of work, a client service assistant is responding to dissatisfied or aggressive clients, a priest deals with emotional struggles and traumatic experiences daily, a kindergarten teacher is asked to work with large groups of children of different ages and so on. All these job demands if not supported by job resources may lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, diminished performance, or disengagement from work. Job resources are important as

they facilitate the achievement of work goals and stimulate personal growth, learning and development. They may include social support, job autonomy, feedback, and skills.

Job crafting is different from taking personal charge and initiative at work, as it refers primarily to the intention to derive personal fit, satisfaction, identity, and meaning from work (Tims & Bakker 2010). While personal initiative leads to organizational effectiveness, job crafting may sometimes have a detrimental effect on employee and organizational performance.

It is also possible for one to combine individual job crafting with collaborative job crafting. While the first one has been associated with increased enjoyment at work, work identity, intrinsic motivation and sense of meaning, cope with adversity, increased work-life balance, reduces stress, and enhanced job performance (Grant & Parker, 2009), the second has been proven to increase team efficacy, team control and team interdependence (McClelland et al, 2014).

Different job crafting measurements have been tested. Laurence (2010) job crafting scale is inspired by the work of Wrzesnievski and Dutton (2001) and assesses physical, relational, and cognitive crafting. Slemp and Vella-Brodrick (2013) and Bindl et al. (2014) have developed their own versions of the scale. Tims et al. (2012) takes into consideration the input from job-resources theory and measures four dimensions of job crafting: increasing structural job resources, social job resources, challenging and hindering job demands. Petrou et al. (2012) tried to see whether job crafting is confirmed at a day level and showed significant both within and between differences in daily job demands, resources and challenges.

Which are the antecedents of job crafting one might ask? Which are the job practices related to job crafting and what kind of work outcomes to they lead to? These are three questions Wang, Demerouti, and Bakker (2016) have tried to answer. After reviewing a decade of research in job crafting, they list three categories of job **antecedents**:

- personal attributes (proactive personality, self-efficacy, and individual temperament),
- job characteristics (job autonomy and work pressure)
- person-job misfit.

What **types** of job crafting to employees choose?

- seeking resources
- seeking challenges
- reducing demands
- task crafting

- relational crafting
- cognitive crafting.

Two **levels** of job crafting can be identified, as previously mentioned: individual and team-level job crafting. Concerning the **outcomes**, numerous dimensions have been previously studied, including here:

- immediate individual outcomes (work engagement and need satisfaction)
- long-term individual consequences (person-job fit, work meaning and identity)
- immediate organizational outcomes (job performance and job satisfaction)
- long-term organizational outcomes (job design and organizational commitment)
- potential negative outcomes (counterproductive work behaviour, stress, and frustration).

A more recent review of research on job crafting, conducted by Zhang and Parker (2018), presents an even more comprehensive perspective of the hierarchical structure of job crafting. They combine the two perspectives of approach crafting, involving a series of effortful and directed actions to seek positive aspects of work, and avoidance crafting, performed with the intention to escape from negative aspects of work. Both types can be cognitive or behavioral, and both can be focused on either resources or demands, thus leading in the end to a model of eight types of job crafting.

Leaders in organizations can stimulate job crafting practices as they are in the position of developing personal resources of their employees (such as self-efficacy, competence, persistence, self-confidence), they can design resourceful jobs with urgency to craft (with a focus on employees' personal strengths and high job demands associated with active jobs), build a trusting and supportive work environment, and promoting employee organizational identification (Wang et al., 2016) and alignment with the overall organizational strategy (Tims & Bakker, 2010).

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