

Career Anchors

Edgar Schein's Careers Anchors tool will build on your thinking about your values by looking in more detail at what is important to you in your career. Hold it lightly – it's just a tool to get you thinking about what's right for you and what your individual career success will be like.

Use these links to find out more:

<https://www.businessballs.com/self-management/career-anchors-edgar-schein/>

<https://www.careeranchorsonline.com/SCA/about.do?open=prod>

<https://rapidbi.com/careeranchors/>

Schein talks about each of us having an internal career and external career.

Your internal career is characterised and anchored by things like your values, motivations, goals and competencies. 'A subjective sense of where one is going one's work life'

The external career is the objective view of how you progress through an organisation and / or occupation: 'the formal stages and roles defined by organisational policies and societal concepts of what an individual can expect the in the occupational structure'

Some sectors have well defined structures and rules for progressing – like the military or civil service. Others – including academia – not so much, although there is some structure. There are some defined pathways and some things that must be done, such as publishing. In the absence of a defined pathway, it's important that you take ownership and design and direct your own path. So it's important to understand:

1. What's important to you in your career, and
2. the sector you are working in,

so you can manage and progress your career pro-actively.

What Schein proposes is that your internal career can be 'anchored' by the detail of what is important to you. So for example for one person it might be money / security – for another it will be achievement – for another balance – and depending on what your career anchor(s) is, or are, there are things that you cannot do without – that you would not give up.

The following is a very brief summary of each anchor. If you would like to explore the anchors in more detail, you will need to look at the links above, or buy the [Career Anchors](#) book.

As you read the summaries, consider which of them feel like they apply to you, how they could relate your situation / your future career and how they might help you design your career.

Anchor	Summary	Would not give up
Technical / Functional competence	This person likes to be an expert at something and will work to develop their skills and become masterful in that area.	The opportunity to develop and apply the relevant skills.
General managerial competence	Wants to be a manager. Likes problem solving and dealing with other people. Likes responsibility.	The opportunity to integrate the efforts of others and be responsible for the output of a particular unit.
Autonomy / Independence	Needs to work alone and to their own rules; to feel free and independent in their career.	The opportunity to define their own work in their own way.
Security / stability	The primary need is security and stability. Avoids risk and likes consistency. Need a sense of a stable career so can relax.	Employment security or tenure in a job or organisation.
Entrepreneurial Creativity	Like to run their own projects / enterprises. Will share workload unlike those who like autonomy, but ownership is important.	The opportunity to create an organisation or enterprise of their own, built on their own qualities and attributes.
Service / dedication to a cause	Driven by how they can help other people. May work in public service.	The opportunity to pursue work that achieves value eg making the world a better place, solving environmental problems, curing diseases etc
Pure challenge	Like to tackle and overcome difficult problems and challenges	The opportunity to work on solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems or difficult obstacles
Lifestyle	Looks at the whole pattern of living. Likes balance and an integrated life	A situation that permits balance and integration of personal, family and career needs.

