Key Factors in Career Orientation

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Abstract

Over time, the factors determining career orientation have been subject to many research specialists. As a result, there are several approaches in the specialized literature which have attempted to establish a correlation between individual characteristics of employees, career guidance and their performance in the work they do.

In this context, this article aims to analyze the scientific approaches to the professional orientation of individuals and their career development, in order to provide those interested with a clear vision of the phenomenon and the necessary elements for the development of coherent programs of career management.

Keywords: Career, Key Factors in Career Orientation, Theory of Competences, Theory of Career Anchors, Career Type Theory, The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

Introduction

In order to achieve objectives, it is imperative that organizations should be increasingly concerned with ensuring the quality of the employees and view this as a long-term strategic investment because in today’s complex and dynamic economic environment, the human resource is the one that makes the difference in competition between organizations.

To this end, organizations must attach particular importance both to the knowledge of their workers’ intangible characteristics (knowledge, needs, aspirations, skills, values, behaviours) in order to be able to direct their owners and position their individual characteristics to best meet the objectives of the organization and to the development of the human potential, by ensuring the employee career development (qualification opportunities, skills training, coherent system of promotion based on professional development and results), attempting to maximize the human potential and thereby increase organizational performance.

The Concept of Career

"Career is an evolutionary sequence of activities and professional positions that a person follows, as well as the attitudes, knowledge and skills associated, which develop over time" (Lefter and Deaconu (coordinators), 2008, p. 287).
Career includes both the professional life and the personal life of an individual, and the links between them. Career development is an individual process that depends heavily on individual characteristics (skills, values, preferences, needs), career expectations (expectations that are influenced by every experience lived), and the organization, manager or position.

**Key Factors in Career Orientation**

Career is a dynamic process, the selection and temporal evolution of which are influenced by many factors, including (Căprărescu, Stancu and Anghel, 2009, p. 61):

- Individual’s personality;
- self-perception;
- level and type of individual motivation;
- organization’s attitude towards employees;
- extent and pace of changes in the external environment;
- changes in the labor market.

Following studies based on the differences between individuals, scientists have developed a series of patterns for career orientation, whereby "People choose their profession because of life experience, interests, needs, values and other characteristics of their personality. Research has shown that individuals with the same occupation have similar preferences in relation to work" (Manolescu, Lefter and Deaconu (coordinators), 2007, p. 398).

One of the scientific approaches in relation to vocational guidance and career development of individuals is the *skills theory*. According to Dreyfus, its promoter, there are five stages of competence, each displaying certain characteristics, characteristics as follows:

a. *novice* - at this stage, the employee performs work rigidly guided by rules learned without taking into account the uniqueness of the conditions generating the situations they are facing;

b. *advanced starter* - at this stage, the employee performance increases due to added experience from previously learned rules, and the working conditions are perceived as having similar importance;

c. *providing competence* – at this stage the employee uses standardized work procedures and they have a clearly improved situational perception, being able to discern between objectives (to select and concentrate on more important tasks, at the expense of those of lesser importance);

d. *specialist* - the employee vies the situations faced as a system, carefully observes them may deviate from the norms and rules learned, if necessary;

e. *expert* - at this stage, the employee is able to understand work situations in depth, managing to perform intuitively, through a series of plans and stratagems;

According to specialized studies, in their career, the employee goes through a sequence of stages, the number of which varies from three to six, from one author to another. Most
authors (Manolescu, Lefter and Deaconu (coordinators), 2007, pp. 404-409; Lefter and Deaconu (coordinators), 2008, p. 293) also support the existence of four phases, which are related to the adult life stages, and which indicative limits, as follows:

- **the exploration phase**, occurring in people aged up to 25 years interested in acquiring knowledge, developing skills and exploring several employment options, depending on their talents, aspirations, possibilities, preferences and values;
- **The consolidation stage** (fixing) is specific to an age range of 25-35 years, when people reconsider their position in the organization. The employees with potential can benefit of promotion opportunities which are suitable for them. Also at this stage, career plans are designed. Still at this stage, some employees may be exposed to conflict between their roles professionally and non-professionally.
- **Mid-career or advancement phase** corresponds to the approximate age of 35-55 years, when individuals reassess the importance given to professional and personal life and focus on meeting the need for esteem within the organization through professional goals proposed. Still at this stage, sometimes individuals can even become mentors.
- **late career or the release phase** (retirement withdrawal) may be seen in people over 55 years of age, when career development is slow or even stagnant and employees consume more energy to clarify some issues which do not seem to be of relevance for their professional life; others may share the knowledge and experience acquired as mentors in this stage, as well.

One of the most popular and generally accepted approaches to career is the theory of career anchors, formulated in 1975 and subsequently developed (in 1980) by Edgar Schein. The author and his followers considered that the fact that people are attracted to a specific career choice is determined by the goals, values and personal needs, highlighting a number of five patterns called "anchors" of their career. This psychological concept "refers to man's self-image, their self "which encloses, in a "transfigured way, their condensed motives, values, aspirations, beliefs about their innate skills and abilities or those developed through work". (Craiovan, 2006, p. 208). The career anchor theory is presented in Table no. 1:

**Table no. 1 - Career Anchors**

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<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>technical, functional skill</td>
<td>- people belonging to this type prefer technical and operational occupations; they are interested in the content of labor, in improving their abilities and personal skills in an area which is clearly established; these persons are not interested in positions of leadership; - professional recognition: individuals dominated by this anchor are dedicated to quality work, they value the feedback of professionals and they cherish the</td>
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| 2. | managerial competence | - this category of people are dominated by the desire to lead, to promote to high managerial positions; although such people believe that specialization is a mistake, they admit that a successful managerial career involves a combination of talent, skills and competencies in the following areas:
   a. analytical (ability to analyze, synthesize, integrate solutions to complex problems comprising several fields, even with a dearth of information);
   b. interpersonal (ability to oversee, control, influence, motivate and effectively lead others);
   c. emotional (ability to mobilize, to make important decisions in a short time; to act effectively under stress and to exercise power responsibly, without guilt and demotivation in interpersonal and organizational crises);
   - favorite activities are the varied, challenging ones, involving high responsibility;
   - these people want to be well paid, they prefer to be judged by a domestic equity criterion (to be better paid than those employed in lower positions in the organization) and they appreciate immediate rewards (bonuses);
   - professional recognition: they value frequent promotions, the meritocratic system and signs of status (luxurious offices, cars, etc.). |
| 3. | security / stability / safety | - individuals with this anchor are traditional, conformist, they easily acquire their organization's values, and they respect its rules. Such people are fair and their prevailing value is that of security, reflected in professional recognition of colleagues more than the one coming from the management;
- favorite fields: consulting, research, project management;
- remuneration claimed: in accordance with their competences shown by their level of education and work experience, they value external equity (their salary should compare to that obtained by people with similar skills from other organizations), the so-called "portable benefits' (life insurance, earlier retirement, and so on); they do not value material rewards, career advancement, power |
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<th>Anchor</th>
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<td></td>
<td>long-term job security in an organization which is financially stable;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- preferred reward system: with constant and predictable payments, according to experience reflected in seniority, but also life insurance or retirement programs;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- favorite promotion system: well-established formal system based on seniority;</td>
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<td>- they choose to be recognized for their loyalty and consistency of performance;</td>
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<td>4. independence, autonomy</td>
<td>- persons with their career anchor included in this segment value the most autonomy and the absence of any constraints (schedules, clothing, imposed rules, etc.). They are intuitive, with great mobility, aimed at taking advantage of opportunities offered by the labor market, confident in their own style and pace of work adapted to their personal criteria;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- suitable fields: art, media, academic, project management, self-employment, independent;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- they accept any benefits from their performance at work (wages, bonuses and others);</td>
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<td>- their favorite principle of promoting: increasing their autonomy;</td>
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<td>- forms of recognition agreed: letters of recommendation, awards, medals;</td>
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<td>5. entrepreneurial creativity</td>
<td>- individuals in whom this component is dominant are creative, inventive, and they are in a state of continuous anxiety, keen to develop projects, to obtain something new, which belongs to all; often, these individuals can develop their own businesses or they can become inventors of business or products, but they are bored by tasks and they may be weak managers, despite their entrepreneurial spirit. They cherish strength, mobility and they are interested to gain more value on wealth as a sign of success;</td>
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<td>6. the lifestyle anchor</td>
<td>- people characterized by this anchor are often employed professionals who are constantly aiming to strengthen the balance between work and personal life. They highly value flexibility in an effort to meet the requirements of career and personal life;</td>
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<td>7. the competition anchor</td>
<td>- these persons are drawn to various professions, which should be increasingly challenging. They consider their career a never ending competition, a means to conquer</td>
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8. cause-dedication anchor

- people in this segment prefer jobs where they can put into practice their own values, those based on their expertise;
- favorite occupations are those involving altruism, social work, medicine, education, environmental protection, and so on;
- these people are payment based on merit and on performance and they seek promotions that increase their autonomy.

Other specialists (John Holland, in 1973), based on studies on innate talents of individuals have identified several Occupational typologies, whose main characteristics are described in Table no. 2.

**Table no. 2 - Type of Career Theory**

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<th>NO.</th>
<th>SPECIFICATION</th>
<th>FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES</th>
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| 1.  | The realist   | - specific to people with practical skills (technical, mechanical), who prefer a tidy work environment and occupations that do not require creativity or spontaneity, shy people, not very prepared and qualified, aggressive, materialistic, emotionally stable, conformist, lacking insight, with good traction without socializing skills;  
- preferred activities: educational and social; |
| 2.  | The artist   | - can be are characterized by imagination, intuition, power of transfiguration of reality. They are also disordered, independent. They lack practicality; they are emotional, maverick introspective, submissive. They can also be described as adept of self-expression through imagination, specific to an artistic environment;  
- preferred activities: unsystematic, ambiguous, which require artistic skills in point of music, literature, dancing, drawing, etc. |
| 3.  | The social   | - the individual is friendly, talkative, sociable, flexible, a good negotiator, idealistic, altruistic, with verbal and relational skills that reject control, domination, manipulation. The person is not interested to protect themselves using formal approvals;  
- preferred activities: activities involving collaboration with other people and information, those requiring frequent social interactions involving fatigue, marketing, |
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|   | counselling, therapeutic activities;  
|   | - the specific work environment: informal, little systemic or ordered;  
| 4. | The entrepreneur  
|   | - affinity for action and involvement in the work, innovation, risk taking, independence, autonomy, working with people, desire to direct and control. This type is an introverted person, optimistic, confident, ambitious, highly impulsive;  
|   | - preferred activities: the theoretical ones, involving abstract thinking, that requires leadership, interpersonal, project management, organization skills;  
|   | - motivational factors: social recognition, power;  
| 5. | The conventional  
|   | - characterizes individuals with a legal, orderly spirit, who find rules suitable, who do not usually prove outstanding flexibility, imagination and spontaneity or special competition skills, people who wish to operate in a strictly organized, stable environment, (without risks or challenges) with effective assessment procedures. These are careful people, socially conservative, but practical and effective;  
|   | - such individuals prefer subordinate positions and activities involving manipulation, data systematization, repetitive tasks, detailed procedures, accounting, finance;  
| 6. | The enquiring  
|   | - these are complicated people, messy, lacking common sense, who demonstrate independence, originality, impulsivity;  
|   | - preferred activities: those involving knowledge, understanding, acute sense of observation, good capacity of analysis, research, development, consultancy;  
|   | - they do not like monotonous activities, stereotyped, not showing a remarkable degree of complexity and novelty.  

Using the conclusions of the studies, Dr. Howard Gardner, a professor at Harvard University in the U.S., created the theory of multiple intelligences, marking eight types of intelligence, namely:

- **linguistic intelligence**, which is the ability to express complex meanings in words and is developed by high-level people with professions related to literature and media (poets, writers of epic or dramatic works, speakers, announcers, journalists, etc.);
• *logical-mathematical intelligence* or the ability to perform complicated calculations and complex mathematical operations, to operate with abstract symbols for concepts and concrete objects, to translate information in a graphical form, to perceive cause-effect relationship, to formulate patterns or examples, to assess the outcome of actions. This type of intelligence is specific to scientists, accountants, engineers, IT developers, and so on;

• *spatial intelligence* is common in people who "view space" three-dimensionally, such as sailors, pilots, sculptors, architects, etc., and it is manifested by the ability to read and interpret graphs, charts, maps, to modify or recreate mental images or objects in space, to design various bodies, to provide quick and creative solutions in the use of parts in an assembly, and so on;

• *bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*, which gives people the ability to handle objects with physical dexterity and to perform tasks with great finesse, precision or grace. This type of intelligence can be found in: sportsmen, dancers, craftsmen, surgeons, and so on;

• *musical intelligence*, which is evident in people with occupations in the field of music (composers, musicians, conductors, music critics, involved in the production of musical instruments), with the ability to perceive tone, rhythm, melody;

• *interpersonal intelligence*, which is to be found in individuals practicing in one of the fields of art, education, politics, social (they manifest an ability to understand other people's lifestyle as a whole, their feelings, motivations, behaviors. They also prove an ability to relate with others using both verbal communication, and the non-verbal ability to influence the opinions and actions of people with different ages and education levels, for directing towards interests and objectives. This can be translated in the ability to mediate);

• *intrapersonal intelligence*, consisting of the ability to perceive and understand aspects related to one's own person, and to use this knowledge to plan their life and guide the presence of other people. This type of intelligence is especially met in theologians, philosophers, psychologists, and so on;

• *naturalistic intelligence*, to be found to a great extent in people such as botanists, farmers, environmentalists and hunters, who observe different patterns in nature, and who identify, analyze and classify objects by the attributes they pose, studying the evolution and natural systems, or the manner they interact with the environment.

**Conclusion**

Career management is an important part of human resources management in any organization as employee development throughout their career contributes to the success or failure of the employer.

Developing human potential should be a strategic option for any organization, because the quality of the human resources greatly influences the success of the organization and the ability to adapt to environmental changes.
References


