

Career Anchors

Often people select a career for all the wrong reasons, and find themselves unhappy at work because the role isn't compatible with their true values. This results in feelings of unrest, discontent and low productivity. Understanding what motivates us and gives us satisfaction at a fundamental level is very important.

Edgar Schein, an organisational psychologist, suggests that every one of us has a particular orientation towards work and that we all approach our work with a certain set of priority and values. He calls this concept our 'Career Anchors'. He identified 8 career anchors that define people's preferences for certain types of work. These are described below.

Career Anchor	Characteristics
Technical/functional competence	This kind of person likes being good at something and will work to become a guru or expert They like to be challenged and then use their skills to meet the challenge, doing the job properly and better than almost anyone else
Managerial competence	These people want to be managers and thrive on responsibility They like problem-solving and dealing with other people To be successful, they also need emotional competence
Autonomy/independence	These people have a primary need to work under their own rules and 'steam' They avoid standards and prefer to work alone
Security/stability	These people seek stability and continuity as a primary factor of their lives They avoid risk and are generally 'lifers' in their job
Entrepreneurial creativity	These people like to invent things, be creative and most of all to run their own businesses They differ from those who seek autonomy in that they will share the workload They find ownership very important They get easily bored
Service/dedication to a cause	Service-orientated people are driven more by how they can help other people than by using their talents They may work in public services, for charities or in support functions
Pure challenge	People driven by challenge seek constant stimulation and difficult problems that they can tackle Such people will change jobs when the current one gets boring, and their career can be quite varied
Lifestyle	Those who are focused first on lifestyle look at their whole pattern of living Rather than balance work and life, they are more likely to integrate the two They may even take long periods of time off work in which to indulge in passions such as travelling