

# CareerView Concepts

## Roadmaps for Career Success

### An Overview

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## CareerView Concepts

### Alternative Perspectives about Career Success

#### Alternative Perspectives on Careers

The basic idea behind the CareerView assessment is that career success can mean wildly different things to different people - so much so that one person's career heaven often represents another person's career hell. So, the assessment is designed to identify your particular vision about the ideal career.

In this paper, we give an overview of four fundamentally different career concepts that appear to often appear in different people's ideas about the "good career." These are the four career concepts that are the foundation of the CareerView assessment. Together, they can be used in different ways to describe most any kind of career path.

To begin our discussion of alternative concepts about careers, let us propose the following scenario. Suppose you are returning to your office from lunch. As you approach the corner you note the "Don't Walk" sign is illuminated and you join the milling crowd waiting for the light to change. As you stand there you hear bits and pieces of conversation from those around you. One particular discussion

between two people positioned close to you catches your interest and you listen more intently.

Just as the light changes and the crowd moves forward you hear one of them say, "you're right Evelyn, John has had a very successful career. I just heard that he . . ." That's all you are able to understand before the two are so far away that you can no longer hear their conversation.

As you reflect on what they had to say about John and his successful career, what comes to your mind regarding his success? What does "successful career" mean to you? Does it mean John has just been promoted to the executive suite, with all its power, status and perquisites? Or, possibly, you imagine John receiving an internationally recognized award as the premier authority within his chosen area of expertise.

Quite a different view of John's successful career might be one in which he has fulfilled his commitment to develop a multitude of skills, all of which he can bring to bear to help other people, living a life of social contribution. Or, again quite differently, it may mean John has a series of one fascinating job after another, all over the world.

As you can see, without any additional information beyond the assertion that his career has been successful, it's possible to form some very different images about the kind of career that John actually has had. We find that "career success" means very different things to different people. Yet, we often talk about and think about careers as though we all have the same concept of what a successful career is.

## **Self-Insight and Career Planning**

People form their own concepts of what career success are about in many ways. In an ideal world we would all arrive at our definitions of success based on a clear understanding of ourselves as individuals and what it is that we want to get out of the many years that we will spend in the world of work.

However, the truth of the matter is that many of us find it very difficult to disentangle our own personal needs, motives and values from the messages that we receive from other people about what we ought to want and what kind of career we should be seeking.

Given the fact that people differ in their needs and values, it is not surprising that we often get a lot of advice about our careers that is well-intended but doesn't take into account who we are as unique persons with our own needs and motives. Much of this advice may be much better suited for someone else than it is for us as individuals with our own personal needs and motives.

In our research and consulting on careers, we often find that people busily plan and pursue careers based more on what others want for them than what they themselves have chosen. In some cases, we find people who have been highly successful according to one definition of success only to discover that the definition that formed the blue-print for their career plans was never right for them. So, despite their apparent success, they have never achieved much of a sense of personal satisfaction from their careers.

As it turns out for these people, the essential, but missing, ingredient in their career planning was self-insight. They made their plans, aggressively pursued their goals, but never with a solid understanding of how their plans and goals fit their own personal objectives. They just assumed that they were doing the right things. But, all the while they never realized until too late, that they were working with someone else's conception of success, not their own.

We hope to help you avoid making this kind of mistake. We find that the best way we can help you is to equip you first of all with a clear understanding of some of the major ways in which "successful careers" can differ, so that you will have a roadmap to guide you in your career planning.

Secondly, we want to arm you with an unusually high degree of self-insight so that you will be able to use your career roadmap to plot the course that's right for you, personally. If our efforts are successful, you will be able to tailor a career plan capable of bringing you far more personal satisfaction than the average person is likely ever to achieve.

## **Career Concepts Defined**

Career concepts are ideas that describe different types of careers. People often differ from one another in the way they think about careers and in the types of careers that they believe are most desirable. We find that most of these differences stem from different views about:

(1) The *stability* of a person's choice of career field -- should it change, or should it remain the same once the choice is made?

(2) The *direction* of movement in a career -- should a person move vertically (up a "ladder") or instead should a person move horizontally or laterally into new positions?

(3) The *duration* of a person's stay in a particular career field -- how many years should separate any major moves?

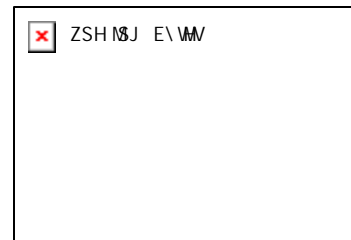
People's answers to these questions can be used to describe four fundamentally different types of careers or, as we call them, career concepts.

## The Basic Four Career Concepts

We find that four fundamentally different career concepts seem to capture a large part of the differences in the ways people think about the ideal career. We define each of the four basic concepts in the following paragraphs. Then, we will show you how these basic concepts can be combined to describe just about any kind of career pattern that a person might care to think about.

### Linear Career Concept

The Linear view of career success revolves entirely around making upward progress. Under this definition of success, one is successful according to how high one rises in a hierarchy where successively higher positions involve successively increasing levels of responsibility and authority. This up-the-ladder career concept is part and parcel of "rags to riches" and "pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps" stories." To be a success one must make upward progress steadily and preferably swiftly.



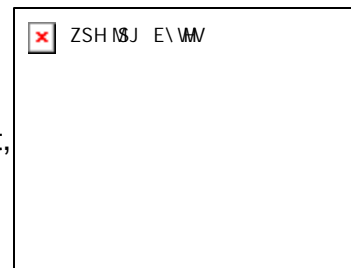
In the Linear view, the worst of all fates is to be "stalled" in one's career by reaching some sort of plateau and then moving no further. To do so would mean "career death" by becoming "deadwood."

Many people who personally subscribe to the Linear career concept as their model of success view the upward moving pattern as the obvious and only acceptable definition of a successful career. They often find it very difficult to imagine how anyone could define success differently.

In many organizations, the term "career development" is considered synonymous with the Linear pattern of upward movement. And, inasmuch as the career development programs ordinarily are designed or approved by people at the higher levels of the organization who are likely to see success in Linear terms. In the U.S., in particular, these people have simply assumed that upward advancement is what any "career-minded person wants."

### Expert Career Concept

The Expert view of success differs sharply from the Linear view. From the perspective of the Expert Concept, success results from finding a type of work that represents one's "calling" and then progressively becoming more and more skilled and competent in performing this work. From this point of view advancement means advancing one's *expertise* in one's chosen discipline or field of work. One's success is strictly a function of the level of technical expertise one has achieved, not how many people one supervises, the size of one's office, or



the number of executive perks one enjoys, or even the size on one's paycheck. Being very good at performing a particular kind of work is the bottom line.

The Expert career concept is a very traditional way of describing career success. Despite the emphasis that so many organizations traditionally have placed on the Linear concept, the Expert concept represents the career orientation of a large segment of the working population. In some circles, it is viewed as the only reasonable way of defining a career.

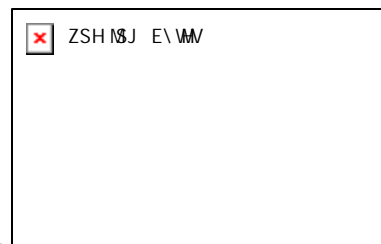
In fact, if you were to go to a vocational guidance counselor for assistance in planning your career, the counselor very likely would assume that you have come seeking assistance with the Expert career concept in mind (although she or he might not use these terms). Consequently, the counselor might give you assistance in identifying a career field or vocation that represents the best *type of work* for you. There probably wouldn't be much discussion of your climbing to the higher reaches of a management ladder, and even less of your eventually moving on to a different type of work altogether. The assumption would be that once you have chosen your field, you will stay in that field until you retire.

From a historical point of view, the Expert career concept has been around for a long time. It seems to be the entire philosophic basis for the traditional guild structure of occupations that originated in Europe during the Middle Ages, and which largely still exists today. Under this system, a vocational ladder has only three rungs: apprentice, journeyman, master. The most important and desirable form of career success is to achieve the designation of Master which means that one literally has mastered the most difficult and esoteric aspects of one's discipline.

For people who view success in Expert terms, the type of work they perform is an important, even central, part of their self-concept. Consequently, they tend to think of themselves as *being* an engineer, or a financial analyst, an attorney, or an accountant. Because of this, they have real reservations about moving Linear-fashion up a management ladder inasmuch as one generally gets farther and farther away from the technical work itself as one progresses up the ladder. So, ultimately achieving Linear success for an Expert-minded person has the dubious reward of getting farther and farther away from one's true self identity!

### **Spiral Career Concept**

Compared to the Linear and Expert definitions of success, the Spiral career concept is a much less traditional way of defining a successful career, although it probably has been unofficially with us down through the ages. From the Spiral perspective, a successful career means a progressive broadening of one's knowledge, skills and talents over time. As a



pattern of movement, the Spiral career usually begins with an individual making a choice to start his or her career in a particular field, but then making periodic moves into new fields and types of work. On the average, we find that these field moves occur every 5 to 10 years.

As one moves from field to field, there may be little or no upward movement on a career ladder. Instead, the key consideration is the new learning that one obtains by moving into a new type of work. The movements are not random, however; they have a definite pattern: Each new field of work (1) requires use of previously acquired skills or knowledge (so it is related in some important ways to a prior field in which the person has experience), and (2) it opens the door to opportunities to develop entirely new knowledge and skills. This is why we selected the term "spiral" to describe this career pattern. The career involves a spiraling outward from some central core of competencies.

Even though the Spiral career concept has never previously been recognized formally in the career literature, the concept does accurately describe the careers of many people who are seen as successful in terms of the breadth of experience they have achieved and the versatility and range of skills they have developed. The Spiral concept seems to be the embodiment of the "seven year itch" -- the old notion that every seven years or so many people get the itch to explore something new or to become involved in a new endeavor.

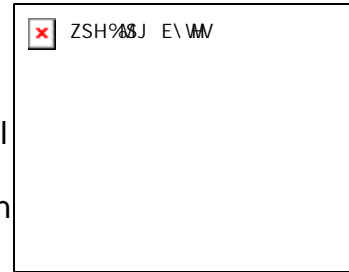
The term "self actualization" which was in vogue during much of the 1960s and 1970s also seems to capture important aspects of the Spiral career concept by portraying life ideally as a progressive realization and development within a person of all that the person is capable of doing. From the Spiral perspective, career advancement means advancing the range of one's capabilities.

Perhaps because the Spiral concept has not been included formally in the career and vocational guidance literature, many people who fundamentally want a Spiral career either do not pursue a Spiral career pattern, or even realize that a Spiral career progression is what they want until the Spiral concept is presented to them. Then, the recognition often comes to them in a flash: "Eureka! This is what I'm all about! This is what I want!"

Other Spiral career-oriented people know very well what it is that they are trying to do with their careers, although they haven't necessarily been willing to talk about it to others who may see careers only in Linear or Expert terms. But, once the Spiral career concept is presented as a legitimate and desirable way of thinking about career success, many people come forward who otherwise might have remained "closet Spirals." Often these people have felt all along that they were being held captive in straight-jackets in the more traditional career tracks they had been pursuing.

## Transitory Career Concept

The fourth career concept, Transitory, is even a less traditional way of defining career success than the Spiral concept. Yet, it too has almost certainly been the organizing principal for the careers of many people down through the ages.



The Transitory career involves a lot of movement. However, if there is a pattern of movement at all to the Transitory career, it can be described only as a "consistent pattern of inconsistency." From the Transitory perspective, the ideal career consists of a fascinating smorgasbord of experiences. People who pursue Transitory careers change jobs or type of work frequently, on the average of every 2 to 4 years, in order to partake of the widest possible array of experiences the smorgasbord has to offer.

Unlike the Spiral career concept which involves an orderly progression of related work experiences, the Transitory pattern is most clearly defined when a person moves from one type of work to another that is totally and completely different from anything the person has previously tackled. The newer and more distinctly different from previously held jobs or work performed, the better and brighter the opportunity will be when viewed from the perspective of the Transitory career concept.

Interestingly, we find that many people whose careers clearly show the Transitory pattern believe that they "don't really have a career." What this reflects is the fact that they have been working outside the traditionally defined frameworks for defining what careers are supposed to look like. And, they have intellectually (but decidedly not emotionally or motivationally) accepted the traditional definitions of careers. In some cases, we find people who have been following a Transitory career pattern (and who have been enjoying themselves) thinking that they "really ought to settle down and do something serious."

From our point of view, the Transitory career concept represents a real and legitimate way of defining a career. As a career concept it has definite characteristics: many diverse experiences, frequent movement, and little or no emphasis on upward movement. Most importantly, it describes exactly the type of career that many people want when they come to grips with their own personal needs and motives, without the interference of the "social programming" that most of us get in abundant quantities. For the unconflicted and confirmed Transitory career person, a career is a continuously fascinating adventure, start to finish.

## Career Concepts and Career Motives

How is it that people differ so dramatically from one another in the kinds of career experiences they want? For, when it comes to careers, as you can see, one person's Heaven truly can be another's Hell. For the Transitory career person, an Expert career would be akin to a life of bondage. Yet, for the Expert career person, a Transitory career would be a life of superficiality and, maybe, sheer insanity. What is going on that leads people to want such very different things?

This is a question that occupied us throughout much of our early research on career concepts. Gradually, through interviews and a number of large scale surveys, we were able to shed some light on the factors that give rise to different career concepts.

When we look at people who seem to be most clear about the career pattern they want, we find consistently that certain key underlying motives are at work. So, people who are most clear about wanting Expert careers have similar motives, and these motives are strikingly different from the motives of people who want Linear careers, or either of the other two types of careers.

On consideration, this makes a good deal of sense. The rewards of a Linear career are distinctly different from the rewards of an Expert career. In fact, each of the career patterns has its own set of rewards that distinguishes it from the other career patterns. Consequently, each career pattern fits certain work and career-related motives much better than it does other motives. And, this is what we see when we look at the motives of people who subscribe to different career concepts.

### **Linear Motives**

One of the most noteworthy features of the motives of people who are most committed to the Linear career concept is that their motives are many. They want a lot of many different kinds of rewards in their careers. Nonetheless, the motive most strongly linked to the Linear career is *power*. The power motive usually is followed in strength by the *achievement* motive as the second most important motive underlying the Linear career concept. In short, Linear career-oriented people want to maximize their ability to make important things happen. They want to be "movers and shakers." In today's organizations, the best way to do this is to climb the ladder to positions of greater influence and authority.

### **Expert Motives**

In contrast to Linear career-minded people, those who are committed to the Expert career have motives that are much more focussed. Most notably, and consistent with everything else about the Expert concept, they very much want to develop high levels of technical *expertise* in a specialized area of work. They want to become as knowledgeable and as skilled in their work as it is possible to become. In most cases, they want also to be recognized by others for their

expertise. But, for many Expert oriented people, the most important and essential ingredient is knowing for themselves that they are very good at their chosen field of work.

Second on the totem pole for most Experts (although this may be the key motive for some) is *security*. They want stable and predictable jobs and careers.

Our research on Expert career people shows that what they do *not* want is just about as important as what they do want. The stronger the commitment to the Expert career, the more people are likely to say that they do not want novelty, job mobility, or power over people. What they do want are secure situations in which they are free to develop and exercise their expert skills in their fields without other distractions. If they have these things they often are the most satisfied people in the organization.

### **Spiral Motives**

Spiral-minded people are like their Linear counterparts in that they usually want many things. However, when the strength of their motives is assessed, the motive that usually gets the highest rating is *personal growth* or the desire to steadily add more and more capabilities to one's repertoire of skills and abilities. This does not mean that Spirals want to be the "jack of all trades, but master of none" (as their Expert cousins might suggest!). In fact, they want to develop substantial skills in a variety of fields.

Following the motive for personal growth are several others that are in close competition with each other. These include *creativity*, or the desire for opportunities to invent and be involved in new developments and trail-blazing efforts, and *nurturance* as reflected in opportunities to help other people grow and develop. For this latter reason, Spiral career people often make excellent career mentors for others.

### **Transitory Motives**

"Variety is the spice of life." This old adage probably was coined by people whom today we would recognize as the Transitories among us. Accordingly, when we look at the motives of people pursuing Transitory careers, we find that variety or *novelty* is the prime motive. Also high on their lists are *independence* and *people involvement*.

What this says is that Transitories are strongly motivated to get involved in new projects or new enterprises with other people, particularly in situations where they are free to exercise their own judgment without being constrained by organizational structure, policies and rules. Many start-up businesses or small businesses where people have the opportunity to do many different things without the constraints of bureaucracy fit these motives particularly well. Not

surprisingly, many Transitories are entrepreneurs, independent consultants, or professional trouble-shooters.

## **The Challenges of Each Career Concept**

Just as each of the career concepts has its own set of potential rewards, each also has its own challenges that you should be aware of in planning your own career. For example, the Linear career today faces many challenges because of dwindling opportunities to move up the management ladder. This is in part a result of demographic trends where the huge "Baby Boom" population, now at mid career, are competing for the comparatively few positions in senior management. Those positions in turn are becoming even more scarce because of mergers and acquisitions, "flattening the pyramid," and other forms of corporate or organizational restructuring that have eliminated many management positions that otherwise would have provided "rungs on the ladder" of success.

The challenge of the Expert career is to avoid "technical obsolescence" brought about by very high rates of technological change. Often it is difficult for mid-career experts to compete with younger people just entering the workforce fresh from schools where they have been educated in all of the latest technical developments. Corporate and organizational restructuring programs are another threat, because they disrupt jobs, lead to lay-offs, and generally frustrate Expert career-oriented people's needs for stability and security.

The Spiral and Transitory career concepts are less threatened by the organizational changes taking place today. In fact, people pursuing spiral or Transitory careers generally benefit from restructuring programs that reduce hierarchy and bureaucracy because these programs tend to eliminate barriers to lateral movement.

Nevertheless, despite the changes that are afoot in organizations today, many still have policies and structures that are more supportive of Linear or Expert careers than Spiral careers. Traditionally, organizations have not been receptive to people moving from one discipline or field of work to another. So, a key challenge for people hoping to pursue Spiral careers is to find employers who will support their desire to expand the range of their knowledge and skills over time, particularly by periodically moving laterally to new positions that permit the development of new capabilities. This is becoming much easier than it was in past decades.

Transitories have faced even greater challenges in this respect, particularly in larger and more bureaucratic organizations that tend to type-cast people according to their training and background. In many organizations, a resume indicating a Transitory career pattern would be interpreted as an indication of "flakiness" or unreliability - even though these same organizations may need people who are willing to go anywhere, anytime, to tackle a new project or task.

However, because of the constant changes that are sweeping so many organizations today, the world of careers is rapidly becoming a much friendlier place for Transitories.

However, by far, the largest challenge facing us all is to plan and organize our careers to support the central motives that are important to each of us as unique individuals. This is where self-insight is a powerful and essential tool in career planning. Without it, the prospect of enjoying a personally rewarding career is mainly a matter of chance or luck.

In the next chapter, we will show you how you can use the results of your own Career Concept Assessment to achieve important insights into your career motives that will help you design a career plan and strategy for career satisfaction based on self-knowledge and not just luck and happenstance.

### Hybrid Concepts and Career Tracks

As we mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the four career concepts that we have identified can be combined in various ways to describe most any kind of career track. In the following table, we identify 6 common hybrid combinations and six kinds of career tracks with which they easily can be associated.

<b>Hybrid Career Concept Combination</b>	<b>Associated Management Career Track</b>
Linear/Expert Expert/Linear	Functional Manager
Linear/Spiral Spiral/Linear	Management Generalist
Linear/Transitory Transitory/Linear	Independent Business Owner/Manager
Expert/Spiral Spiral/Expert	General Consultant
Expert/Transitory Transitory/Expert	Independent Consultant

Spiral/Transitory	Entrepreneur or Start-up Specialist
Transitory/Spiral	

### **Linear - Expert Hybrid**

The Linear - Expert hybrid fits best with a career track that involves climbing a ladder in one field, using demonstrated technical competence in the field as a basis for advancement. This is what has been called the Functional Manager career track. In the past, this has traditionally been the most common and the surest route to senior management. Many organizations still favor this track as the route to the highest level positions. Typically, they place very high importance on technical expertise.

In selecting an organization in which to pursue the functional manager track, it's important to choose one in which the particular function or discipline in which you will develop your expertise is one of the most highly valued functions in the organization. For example, in high technology companies contracting to the Federal Government, engineering generally is the pre-eminent function and it is the one out of which most of the senior managers are selected. But, in a heavily marketing oriented company, most senior managers are selected from within the sales or marketing departments. In life insurance companies, senior executives often are selected from the actuarial departments.

### **Linear - Spiral Hybrid**

This pattern fits best with the General Manager career track that is becoming increasingly common in large organizations today. This track involves exposure to a relatively wide variety of assignments in different organizational units, where each assignment is followed by a promotion and another developmental assignment in a new area.

This general manager track is becoming more and more common as organizations work to break down the old "functional silos" that are thought to be responsible for parochialism and conflict in the organizations. Instead of selecting senior managers whose backgrounds are limited to one functional unit, some organizations intentionally rotate high potential managers through a series of positions in different functions and project/program units in order to develop executives with well-rounded talents and global perspectives on the business.

If the Linear - Spiral or Spiral - Linear hybrid fits you, then you should take steps to find employers that explicitly move up-and-coming managers through positions in different organizational units. And, you should make sure that the organization is large enough to contain a fairly broad variety of functions and work units to satisfy your need to broaden your repertoire of skills. Alternatively, you should

look for an organization that is on the cutting edge of a new technology or even a new industry where both the organization and the nature of the organization's products and services are bound to change over time.

### **Linear - Transitory Hybrid**

The Linear - Transitory combination fits best with a career track totally different from the ones we have just discussed. Typically, the Linear - Transitory career pattern fits best with a career as an independent business owner/manager, perhaps of a small, but growing company. These organizations are usually more flexible and can shift directions relatively easily. They also provide the opportunity for rapid advancement, rather than waiting in line for people to retire or die before getting ahead, as is the case often in large, stable organizations.

Owning one's own small business is a particularly good fit with the Linear - Transitory hybrid. In a small business, one usually has to "wear different hats." And, if you are the owner, you can steer the business in whatever direction you please as long as the money keeps coming in.

### **Expert - Spiral Hybrid and Expert - Transitory Hybrid**

Both of these hybrid career concept patterns are a particularly good fit with a career in consulting. The difference between them lies in the type of consulting that one does and in the kind of organization one uses as a base for one's consulting activities. The Expert -Spiral hybrid fits best with fairly complex consulting in highly specialized and esoteric disciplines or functions. In this case, the consultant might just as easily be an internal consultant within a large organization, or a consultant on the payroll of a large consulting firm. Desirable kinds of consulting activities or specialties could be helping to develop a new, high technology product or service, assisting an organization in developing a new business strategy or any other kind of new organizational innovation.

The Expert - Transitory hybrid is a good career concept pattern for an independent consultant, working on his or her own. Consulting projects usually are short and the consultant may be called upon to perform a variety of consulting services. Ideally, the Expert - Transitory consultant will have the opportunity to move rapidly from one consulting project to another, while applying a basic set of expert skills and knowledge in which the person is especially well versed. Quick-fix, trouble-shooting, and turnaround projects (such as cleaning up a company's accounting system, orchestrating a fund-raising campaign, or working out the kinks in a new production operation) fit the Expert - Transitory hybrid very well.

### **Spiral - Transitory Hybrid**

The Spiral - Transitory hybrid is the career concept pattern of the pure, professional entrepreneur who starts and sells one business after another. It also applies to the organizational "intrapreneur" who is seen as a new idea "spark plug" in an organization and who is given wide latitude to get new projects, products and/or services underway. The key here is lots of variety, creative accomplishment, and independence from stultifying organizational structure, policies, rules and procedures.

