

A Career Anchor Perspective of Employees in a Large Company

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Abstract. Career Anchors is a new concept in Career Development. At the heart of any successful job is a Career anchor. Some professionals have clear idea as to what their career anchors are but not everybody. A person can shape his destiny through a series of well planned and positive moves, well timed. People will not accept uncertainty regardless of their status and make their own efforts to structure and interpret the meaning of their commonplace experience of the world. There is a uncertainty faced by individuals as they start their professional lives. But it is also true that when you know where you want to go, any road will take you there. Career researchers have primarily focused on external motivators associated with organizational factors and material incentives. This study is an attempt to capture and give meaning to this exercise of managing and planning of careers and garner more currency to its application in the development of workforce. This career anchor study reveals the presence of rich and varied anchors in the company and speaks more of the organization for providing avenues for the development of the anchors over the years.

Keywords: career, career anchors, career development, career planning.

1. Introduction

Career anchors are distinct patterns of self perceived talents, attitude motives and values They guide and stabilize a person's career after several years of real world experience and feedback. Change is inevitable and has always been with man since the earliest of time, but it now seems that the pace of change has accelerated like never before. Organizations - be it business firms, not for profit, public limited companies, etc. - are all experiencing the heat of change. More and more traditional myths are getting shattered and more and more new orders emerging every day. The phenomenon is more palpable in the developing economies like India especially after they opened up their markets for global competition. As such, organizational environment that is undergoing changes has implications for the way employees are managed by the companies, and there is also a considerable impact on the way the HR system has run thus far. There is thus a need to look at the entire HR system afresh. The work described below is an attempt in this direction, which has been made to unravel the composition mix of the fuel on which any organization runs and design a career-oriented HR system which is reflexive in nature.

2. Career Anchor:

The aspect of career investigated was career anchors. The career anchor model developed by Edgar Schein, of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has received considerable attention. Schein (1978) coined the term career anchor to describe a constellation of self-perceived attitudes, values, needs and talents that develops over time, and which when developed, shapes and guides career choices and directions. It can be thought of as a central component of the self-concept that executives are unwilling to relinquish, even when

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forced to make a difficult choice. The career anchor is significant because it influences career choices, affects decisions to move from one job to another, shapes what individuals are looking for in life, determines their views of the future, influences the selection of specific occupations and work settings, and affects their reactions to work experiences (Schein, 1988). He postulated that individuals' career anchors gradually come to be their own definition of career success (Schein, 1974, 1978).

But what does one mean by Career Anchors? and what will one get by understanding them? Well it is a lot more meaningful to understand what my people value and what their motivations are before drawing up their stay in the organization in a linear fashion as has been happening all these years all over the corporations around the world. Career anchors are defined as those elements in a person's self concept which he/she would not give up even in the face of difficult choices. They represent the self perceived talents and abilities, basic values, and the evolved sense of motives and needs pertaining to the career. The career anchors guide people's career decisions and clarify some of the individual approaches to careers, individuals can only discover his or her career anchor through actual work experience, where self-perceived talents, motives, and values are tested or verified.

Career anchors refer to an individual's perceived needs, values, and talents, which determine career decisions (Schein. 1975).

A person's career anchor is his or her self-concept, which consists of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic values, and the evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to career. Self-concept acts as, stabilizing force once it is formed. People are generally not aware of their career anchors until they are forced to make choices pertaining to self-development (Schein 1996).

3. Genesis of Career Anchors

The concept of career anchors evolved originally from a study that was designed to understand how managerial careers evolved and how people learned the values and procedures of their employing organizations. It was a study that spanned more than a decade and a half and had genesis in the famous Sloan School of Management MIT in the early 1960s. The respondents were the alumni of master's programme and were interviewed initially during their second year of study and then, after six months, at their place of work and then later, after one year, which revealed a great deal about their transition from school to work organizations. All respondent were later asked to complete a questionnaire five years down the line after graduation and had follow-up interviews after 10-12 years of their working life. From these interviews came insights and a detailed chronological career history of the respondents. The actual events of the career histories proved to be highly varied, but the reasons that respondents gave for their choices and the pattern of their feelings about events proved to be surprisingly consistent. For each individual, underlying themes, of which he or she had often been unaware, reflected a growing sense of self, based on the earnings of the early years. When these people tried jobs that did not feel right to them, they referred to the image of being pulled back to something that fitted better - hence the metaphor of an anchor (Evans 1996).

4. The Development of Career Anchors

Career anchors/orientations are developed in the initial eight or ten years of executives, working life, based on the varied experiences that one faces in the workplace. In short, the entire idea of career anchors focuses on individuals' realization of his or her 'internalized' career perceptions. Schein, who originated work into individual career orientations, has identified eight career anchors that guide the career decisions of employees. (Schein 1990).

- **Security/Stability/Organizational Identity:** There are those people whose careers are anchored in the stability of employment in an organisation. This person becomes strongly identified with the company and seeks the security of a long term employment relationship.
- **Autonomy/Independence:** This anchor applies to people who have an overriding need to do things there own way, in their own time, and independent of others to the greatest extent possible.

- **Managerial Competence:** Managerially oriented employees seek higher levels of responsibility, growing opportunities to serve in a position of leadership, increasing contribution to the overall success of the organization
- **Technical Competence (TC):** This person is most motivated towards being very knowledgeable and producing highly effective work in some field of education.
- **Entrepreneurial Creativity:** These individuals need to create something on their own by developing a new product or service, by building a new business enterprise through financial manipulation, or by starting and building a business of their own.
- **Sense of Service/Dedication to aCause :** Employees who have a service orientation are dedicated to serve other people and to make the world a better place to live and work; more concerned with finding jobs which meet their values than their skills.
- **Pure Challenge:** This anchor assesses the preference for overcoming impossible obstacles, solving unsolvable problems, and winning against extremely capable opponents; very single-minded and intolerant of those without comparable aspirations.
- **Lifestyle (LS):** Individuals with a high score desire to develop a lifestyle that integrates family and career concerns, with concerns for self-development. Looks for organizations that have strong pro-family values and programmes.

Schein claims that each individual has only one true career anchor, which emerges after the person has accumulated a meaningful amount of life and work experience. When individuals achieve congruence between their career anchor and their work, they are more likely to attain positive career outcomes, such as job effectiveness, satisfaction, and stability (Danziger, Moore, & Valency 2008).

With an idea of understanding the pattern of belief and self-value that the executives have developed over the years, it was planned to carry out this career anchor study for executives and find out the anchors prevalent in the organization.

5. Methodology

A thirty five -statement questionnaire along with a few demographic variables thought necessary were captured on a website for the executives to respond. The survey was open for a period of forty-five days and participation from all major units and functions, specialist function like R&D, was ensured. To study the interaction effect of function on the development of career anchor, executives who spent considerable number of years in one function were also studied.

Also, additional information on qualification was taken for the purpose of understanding the interaction effect of education on the result. Further, information about the current function posting, maximum time spent in a function, etc. was also captured. A minimum criterion of 10 per cent representation ensued from all the major units and this was ensured before we closed the website and the survey.

6. Measures:

Technology played a tremendous role in managing responses for my study. The questionnaire was circulated to all executives in the company and in this regard an official communication was flashed throughout the company from its headquarters. There was no effort to restrict anyone from filling up the questionnaire and the site for the purpose was kept opened for a day more than what was actually planned, to have in more responses. Finally, around one thousand five hundred responses were received all across the unit. Out of these seventy responses were eliminated from the final analysis due to incomplete data. The participant of the study held a variety of positions and were of varied age groups reflecting considerable heterogeneity in the company as well as for the study. Table 1 represents the demographic characteristics of the sample.

The demographic data corroborate with the trend visible in the company in terms of age, years of experience in the company, and senior-level participation (those who are in M3 and M4 segment) which is close to 30 per cent. Therefore, we can safely assume that the findings would fairly reflect the company-

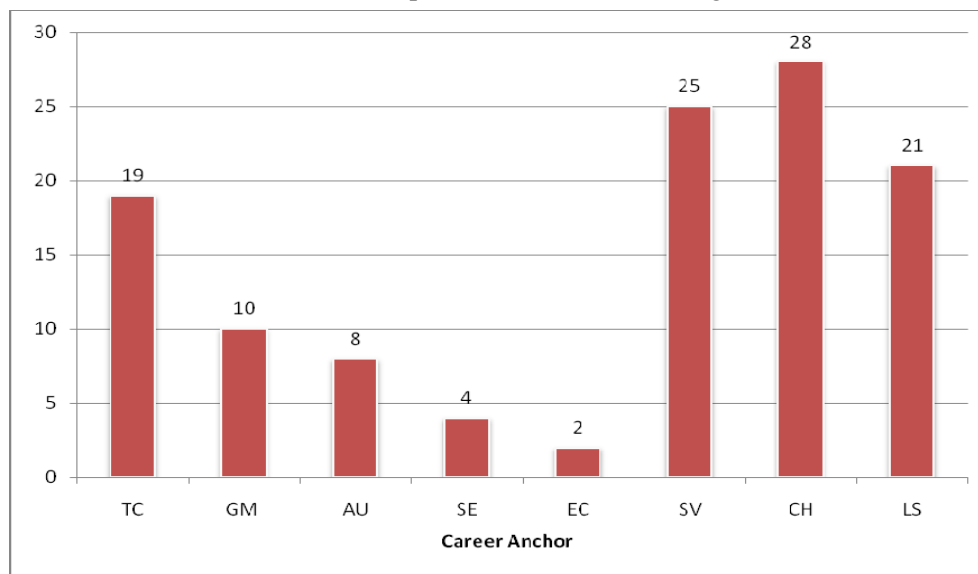
wide aspirations and feelings on the subject. Coupled with this is the fact that the sample size itself represents 15 per cent of the entire executive population which in itself is huge and by far the largest sample used for such a study). Senior executives that fall into M3 and M4 level (i.e., E6 to E8) form 31 per cent of the responses and represents substantial mix when compared to the entire population in this category (Refer Appendix for details).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=1441)

Variables			Sample
Gender			80%
Male			
Female			08%
Education			09%
Diploma			
BE/B. Tech			42%
CA/ IC WA/CS			07%
MBA/MSW			10%
ME/M. Tech			14%
PhD			2.3%
Organizational Level			93.5%
MI, M2 and M3			
M4			6.5% (93/1441)
Age	44 years.	Range = 22-59	
Mean	(9.78)		
Organizational Tenure (in years)		Range = 1-40	
Mean	20 years (9.46)		
Tenure in one Function		Range = 1-40	
Mean	15.6 (8.2)		
Tenure in second Function		Range = 0-15	
Mean	3.78 (2.0)		

Findings in a Nutshell:

The career orientations as found in the respondents are shown in Figure 1.



TC	GM	AU	SE	EC	SV	CH	LS
Technical	General	Autonomy	Security	Entrepreneurial	Service Value	Challenge	Lifestyl
Competenc	Managerial			Creativity			

Challenge and service anchors surfaced as the dominant anchors for the majority (more than 50 per cent) of executives. This was followed by lifestyle and technical orientation anchor.

7. Functional Analysis

- a. For Finance executives 'Technical competence' and for the HR executives 'Service orientation' emerged as the primary orientations. However, in both these functions 'Autonomy' showed more dominance as compared to other functions. For functions like marketing, project management., production and erection/commissioning, 'Challenge' has emerged as the primary orientation while R&D function exhibits 'Technical competence' as the primary orientation.
- b. For executives with doctorate and M.Tech. qualifications, technical competence and challenge emerged as the primary and secondary orientations.
- c. Female respondents showed technical and lifestyle orientations as major anchors. This means that in general, female executives desire to develop a composite lifestyle that integrates concerns for self-development, career concerns, and family concerns. They look for an organizational attitude that reflects respect for personal and family concerns which are dear to their heart.
- d. Age and grade do not reflec any effect on the development of orientations. Apart from the above findings the results also exhibit another very visible trend. All have a very low orientation in 'Entrepreneurial creativity' and also showed relatively low score in the 'Security' orientation. Interesting to observe was the glaring decline of entrepreneurial creativity with the increase in age. As one grew older in the company the drive for such anchor was visibly reduced. This could be a result of very few opportunities for the development of such anchors in the company. On the other hand 'Technical' orientation seems to become strong as the age progresses whereas orientations that not seem to change with age are 'Challenge' and 'Service'.

8. Conclusion

The results of the study provide interesting insights into the career orientation of the executives in the company. The findings reveal a rich diversity of career orientations held by the executives of this engineering enterprise, which is a spread all across the company. This is very good for this company like and reveals a rich diversity of the kind of people that it has. It is a heritage that it should keep and utilize for the benefit of the company. Further, organizations need to recognize the diversity of career orientations so that appropriate reward systems and career paths can be developed. This suggests that human resource planning must involve both organizational and individual interests and motives to encourage taking productive career decision. The career orientations concept offers some ideas jobs to respond to employee needs. Compatibility between career orientations and job settings produces high levels of satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as a low intention to leave the organization. Additionally, a variety of experiences and maximum feedback from each are likely to help individuals gain a clear and stable selfconcept far more quickly than they would from few jobs or minimal feedback.

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