FINDING YOUR CAREER ANCHOR:  
AN OVERVIEW OF EDGAR SCHEIN’S CAREER ANCHORS

Edgar Schein has developed one the best validated and most commonly used models for discovering career interests. His “career anchors” are a combination of motivation, attitude and values. He thinks these anchors are formed early in life and that they both guide and constrain an individual throughout an entire career. These anchors are what an individual “holds” to—an anchor would be the one career value an individual would not give up even in the face of difficult choices. See Shein's book, Career Anchors: Discovering Your Real Values, for more information.

Look at the various anchors described below. Think about the characteristics of people who are drawn to each anchor and their preferred pay, benefits and rewards. Can you identify the anchor that best reflects your career objectives and values?

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<tr>
<th>Anchor</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Preferred Pay, Benefits and Rewards</th>
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<td>Technical/Functional</td>
<td>You enjoy doing work that is content challenging. It is extremely important to you to increase your skills and expand your knowledge base. You prefer unrestricted facilities, budgets and resources to enable you to do your job properly.</td>
<td>Most successful when you are recognized as an expert in your field. You want to be paid for your education and work experience. An increase in rank is not as important as an increase in job scope or duties.</td>
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<td>General Managerial Competence</td>
<td>You want to manage or supervise people. You enjoy authority and responsibility. You are ambitious and thrive on analyzing issues, solving problems and being in charge of something complex. You enjoy the opportunity to make</td>
<td>You measure success by income level and expect to be highly paid. You believe in promotions based on merit, measured performance and strong results.</td>
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decisions and like directing, coordinating and influencing others more than perfecting a particular skill or way of doing things.

Security and Stability

Job security is of prime importance. You want to organize your life and career to ensure long-term continued employment with an organization you can rely upon. You prefer to work in an organization known for job stability and good benefits. You strongly identify with the objectives and the importance of your own organization. You prefer pay in steadily increasing increments based on length of service and favor benefit packages that emphasize insurance and retirement. You prefer a seniority-based promotion system, and welcome a published grade and rank schedule such as available in governmental jobs.

Entrepreneurial Creativity

You enjoy developing new products, services and starting and running your own business; you are very meaningful to you, and drawn to creating new organizations that are closely identified with you. You are restless and constantly require new creative challenges. Making money is a measure of your success. You prefer up and coming firms to well-established ones. Benefit packages are not meaningful to you, and traditional promotion systems only serve to limit your ability to move into key roles of creativity.

Autonomy and Independence

You desire freedom from organizational constraints. You do not want to be held to other people's rules, procedures, working hours, dress codes or other traditional norms. You dislike close "portable," such as testimonials, you strongly prefer merit pay for performance, immediate payoffs, bonuses and other compensations. You prefer types of recognition that are
supervision and want control over your own work. If you choose a traditional field, you will gravitate towards an independent expression of it, such as consulting, teaching, research and development, or working in remote field offices.

**Service/Dedication to a Cause**

You work primarily because of an overriding need to express your values. You are likely drawn to one of the service professions, such as librarianship, medicine, social work, or teaching. In a business that is more traditional, you would prefer working on environmental, human resources or scientific issues about your cause. You feel most successful when you can convince others to share in your values and ideas.

**Pure Challenge**

Your strongest desire is to overcome obstacles. You like to solve unsolvable problems and win against all odds. You are driven to seek ever-tougher challenges or opponents. You want intense challenge, constant self-testing and much variety in your work.

**Lifestyle**

You are seeking to balance work and the rest of your life. You look for employer flexibility, such as flextime, limited relocations, letters of commendation, prizes and awards, which mean more to you than new titles or higher status. Contract, project or part-time work is highly desirable to you.

You want fair pay for your contributions and portable benefits. Money *per se* is not an overwhelming issue for you. If you are promoted you want to move into positions of greater influence or increased visibility about your cause. You feel most successful when you can convince others to share in your values and ideas.

Your need for challenge overrides your need for pay, promotion and recognition systems. Your measure of success is your personal responses to self-imposed and external tests of your physical, intellectual and emotional stamina.

Your strongest need is for flexible benefits, especially those concerning leave arrangements. You are willing to
family-leave plans, day-care options and part-time work. You want to work for an organization that recognizes and respects the importance of family and personal situations. Sacrifice some job advancements or challenging assignments if you can set your own schedule and balance your work and personal responsibilities.