

CAREER ANCHORS – A POSSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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Starting from Edgar Schein's theory about the career anchors, this research paper pursues the identification of the career anchors of 25 managers from Mehedinți County, working in pre-collegiate educational institutions and in firms from the domains of manufacture, commerce, construction. Rigorously following the phases of a scientific research and using the adequate methodology, our research is in measure to demonstrate that knowing the career anchors of each employee is very useful. Knowing the professional anchor is important not only from the perspective of the employee but also from the point of view of the company, in order to place the right person in the right position.

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Introduction

The human factor represents the strategic element on which the optimal performances of the businesses around the world depend on. It is being estimated that the future will bring a rise in the human resources' flexibility, that there will be changes in the structure of the staff, in the significance of the professions and job functions. Preparation in a number of professions will grow further and new jobs and positions will appear. A new behavioral pattern and new values will be imposed so the human activity will have to rely more and more on competence, increased individual responsibility and increased efficiency. It happens more often that employees occupy a series of positions in different companies where they are needed. This fact makes it necessary for the employees to be preoccupied with their own career. The most important tasks that the manager has are to ensure that the best employees are kept in the company and to develop their potential. Therefore knowing the employees is very important.

A useful way to know the employees is to know their career anchor. This is the reason why our study is based on a research performed on the career anchors of 25 managers from the Mehedinți County. **Our objective** is to point out the agreement or disagreement between the career anchor and the job position occupied at the moment. It is important to observe in what extent the self-knowledge of an employee will help him in his career. We want our study to be useful for the human resources department in order to include the anchors test in the recruitment and selection process. This information gives the HR department the opportunity to establish better training programs and employ people on jobs that are right for them.

1. Schein's theory about career anchors

The professional career is perceived as: promotion, profession, a series of positions during one's life. A distinction has to be made between the **objective** career (includes staff development and implies promotions, specialization, motivation, human resources planning) and the **subjective** career (self-perception and the role that the job has in one's life).

Human resources literature speaks about two major theories: Holland's theory about career types and Schein's theory about career anchors. Holland's theory about career types identifies six different career patterns: conventional, artistic, realistic, social, entrepreneur and investigative. These are the six ideal career patterns. The way someone orientates for one or another depends on one's qualities although everybody has more than one quality. It is advisable that people try to find themselves in these patterns and plan their career accordingly. Our research has its base in Schein's theory about career anchors and this is why we will continue to pursue this approach.

Edgar Schein²⁰⁹ pleads that when one person knows themselves and has a clear occupational identity, they will have a clear perception of different talents, goals and values. Schein defined the career anchor of a person as a domain of personal concepts; one would never give up under any circumstances. He considered that career anchors develop and become clear at the beginning, as a result of education and experience. Being capable of identifying career anchors is indeed very important for an efficient administration of one's career. It's also important that the people within the company that are responsible of career management are aware of the fact that some anchors tend to prevail in their company.

209 Edgar Schein – researcher preoccupied with the professional career between 1979 and 1982, together with T.D. DeLong from Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah in order to establish the career anchors for students.

Schein identified 8 anchors: technical and functional competence; managerial competence, security, autonomy, creativity. Some add pure challenge and dedicating one's life to a cause or a life style.

In the same way anchors keep a boat from floating away, career anchors keep one focused on certain types of activities like the technical and functional competence, managerial competence, safety, autonomy and creativity. For those who developed a **technical/functional competence** the most important factor is the choice of a career is the actual content of the work. The possibility of a transfer to a domain that moves them away from their competence presents no interest to them. The person that develops a **managerial competence** focuses on reaching positions that imply higher responsibilities. The perspective that the occupied position offers is more important than the work content. What matters is the opportunity to develop analytical abilities and to gain useful experience. People with this anchor want to become managers. Other jobs are seen as ways to develop the needed competences in order to get a managerial position. **Safety** is an anchor that orientates people to occupy a secure position. People with this anchor need to maintain stability at work and they prefer jobs in firms or domains with low staff fluctuation. Those who have the **autonomy** anchor won't stay for a long in a domain or place that hasn't clear promotion plans. This type of person needs freedom and no constraints. Independence and freedom are more important than promoting. This type of people is able to decline a promotion if it means losing one's independence. **Creativity** is an anchor that focuses people on activities where they can create something on their own feeling satisfied by the fact that they create something new.

The differences that arise from these theories show that people are different and that they shouldn't be treated in the same way. A manager has to take all those differences into consideration when they organize and guide the human resource.²¹⁰

In order to find out what anchor suits best we can use a questionnaire and a test that contains 40 statements.²¹¹ Each statement is evaluated by a score from 1 to 6 depending on the measure in which the statement is true to that person. Finally the answers are arranged as a matrix. Then three representative statements from the statements with the highest values are chosen. 4 points will be added to each of those three values. In the end they are summed up along the column. The final score is divided by 5 and arranged in descending order.

2. Study about the career anchors of managers in Mehedinți County

Our study was realized in Mehedinți County on 25 managers from pre-collegiate educational institutions and company managers from domains like manufacture, trade and constructions.

The following **steps** were followed in the process of scientific research:

- the documentation is based on reference literature from the field of human resources.
- Formulating a research objective and preparing a hypothesis.
- Choosing pseudo-random samples.
- Adapting the questioned people with the terms of career anchors and the testing procedure.
- Statistical processing of the test and the questionnaire.
- Verification of the initial hypothesis.
- Drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations for the future.

Research methodology used was the free personal interview (Moscovici, 2007) based on the questionnaire. The chosen samples are pseudo-random. The results show the compatibility or incompatibility between the anchor of the subject and the position he holds at the moment as well as an analysis of the way one's values are tied to his career choices.

The results were interpreted from two perspectives: of the employee and of the company whose employees show certain anchors that were not known. Knowing one's career anchor, he can confront his opinion and decisions with what he values most depending on his self-perception.

The **hypothesis** of this research:

- If we apply the anchors test on managers, the result will be the MG anchor.
- If the managers have the MG anchor than they will be professionally satisfied.

3. The results of the research

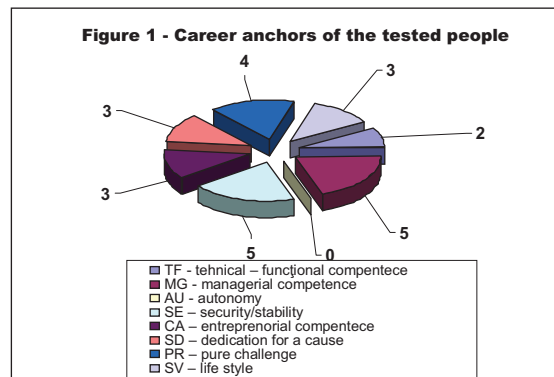
The qualitative interpretation of the results focuses mainly on the aspects about confirming or not the hypothesis up for discussion. Based on the quantitative interpretation of the anchors test and the interview based on the questionnaire, we have drawn all the information that we needed in order to reach our objectives and consequently the hypothesis that we formulated at first.²¹²

210 Oargă, V. (2005), Foray in human resources management, Augusta Publishing, Timișoara, pg.79-81.

211 Vlăsceanu, M. (2002), Career management. Learn how to build a career, comunicare.ro Publishing, București, pg.25-31.

212 Cioabă Ștefania-Raluca – Career anchors – a possibility of knowledge and self-knowledge, dissertation paper, session from February 2009, University of the West Timișoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (coordinated by Valentina Oargă).

In this research the chosen sample was made of 25 managers. Through the statistical processing we observed that only 5 out of the 25 managers have the MG anchor – managerial competence. Figure 1 shows the number of anchors that came out after the test.



These results don't agree with Schein's theory where managers will surely have the MG anchor. The small number of managers that have the MG anchor doesn't confirm the hypothesis from the beginning. Regarding the professional abilities, no matter the department where the person works or the anchor that came out from testing, we can find the following aspects: entrepreneurial spirit, stress resistance, positive motivation, good communication, abilities in solving conflicts, etc. These abilities can be found in managers with the MG anchor as well as in others with different anchors.

There can be different explanations for this situation. We can assume that only 15 people are general managers and that the other 10 people have managerial positions in different departments. No matter what anchor came out after the test, the questioned managers say that, that anchor represents them. At the same time they say that they can do their work as managers even if they don't have the MG anchor.

Regarding the second hypothesis, we can see after processing the questionnaire that not only managers with the MG anchor are professionally satisfied. Out of the 25 managers, 21 are professionally satisfied and 4 say that they are not satisfied with their job. One of the 4 managers that are not satisfied with their job is a general manager. His anchor is SV – life style. People with this anchor consider that family is more important than the career. In this manager's case, he says that his dissatisfaction comes from the fact that he spends a lot of his time with work and that the time spent with his family is too short. Although not all managers have managerial competence, the large majority (21) is professionally satisfied and wouldn't want to change that job even if they don't have the corresponding anchor.

At the same time they claim that they have the qualities that a manager needs, an aspect proved by the revenue of the company they work for, or the unemployment rate or the success they reached within the school, for the managers of educational institutions. From the 4 managers that aren't professionally satisfied with their job, 2 have the career anchor PR – pure challenge. From Schein's theory we know that this type of people search for challenges that are more and more difficult. They look for jobs where they can face higher difficulties. These people define their life through competitive terms. Considering these aspects, those managers' dissatisfaction correlated with a wish of change, Schein's theory is confirmed because every career anchor is a steady image of oneself even if there is no opportunity to prove this. The person who doesn't have the right anchor will always search for another job that suits his/her wishes.

4. Conclusion

Considering the small sample on which the research was performed in our country, this paper wants to be a small beginning in the study of this theme. Because of the small number of subjects in this sample, this paper is like a pilot study for the relationship between self-knowledge and career as well as the possibility that the career anchors represent a way of self-knowledge. The results we obtained are significant and represent a starting point for other larger researches in this domain that can draw finer lines in self-knowledge through the expansion of the tested sample. The small number of participants doesn't permit a generalization to all managers. Another situation that has to be considered is the fact that the questioned person's state of mind and desires at that moment influence the results. Certain needs can be very strong and they can affect the results of the research. This is the reason why it is better if the test is repeated after a certain amount of time has passed. Considering the results shown in the figures and tables, we can say that most managers from this research have a matching career anchor. The question that arises is if this identification is real because of the good self-knowledge or is this identification hazardous? There are multiple answers to this question if we consider that the questioned participants have managerial positions in different departments. Following the analysis of the tests we see that the directors of the educational institutions have the career anchor of SD – dedication for a cause, and the anchor of managerial competence. The people in

leading positions from the domain of education identify themselves with their anchor because they are successful in their job. Besides the anchor of SD and MG (in this order), we've seen the anchor of SE – security/safety. This anchor is due to the fact that teachers are titular in the institutions where they work appreciating the security of the job. According to the quantitative analysis we can identify the anchors of MG – managerial competence, PR – pure challenge and TF – technical competence in small and medium sized companies. Those managers consider that the anchor matches the job.

Through this research paper we followed the hypothesis that the career anchors are a way of self-knowledge. The obtained results confirm this hypothesis in most of the questioned subjects even if we consider the limitations that we mentioned before. The use of career anchors is recommended for human resources managers in order to fix the right person for the right job. Even if the results can't be generalized, they are a beginning of other researches in the domain of human resources and career management.

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