

Identify your career anchors and how well you perceive these to match your current job

Edgar Schein identified eight career anchor themes (see box below) and has shown that people will have prioritised preferences for them.¹ Schein identified these career anchors to enable people to recognise their preferences for certain areas in their job.

Understanding your preference will help you plan your career in a way that is most satisfying to you. For example, a person with a primary theme of security/stability will seek secure and stable employment over employment that is challenging and riskier. People will be more fulfilled in their careers if they can acknowledge their career anchors and seek jobs that are appropriate for these.

Schein career anchors	
Career anchor category	Traits
Technical/functional competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These people want to be managers • They like problem-solving and dealing with other people • They thrive on responsibility • To be successful, they also need emotional competence
Autonomy/independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These people have a primary need to work under their own rules and 'steam' • They avoid standards and prefer to work alone
Security/stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Wealth, for them, is a sign of success
Service/dedication to a cause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-orientated people are driven more by how they can help other people than by using their talents • They may work in public services or in areas such as human resources

Career anchor category	Traits
Pure challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 varied
Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

With the themes identified by Schein in mind, complete the table below – this will help you identify how well suited you are to your current job. By completing this tool, it may highlight that you are in the right sort of job or that you need a change if you are going to succeed in your desired career path. This may be a positive thing as it will give you insight into your future goals and objectives.

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Schein career anchor	How important is this aspect of your career to you (score out of 5 where 0 is nil and 5 is a great deal)	How does this match with your current post? (score out of 5 where 0 is nil and 5 is a great deal)
Technical/functional competence		
Managerial competence		
Autonomy/independence		
Security/stability		
Entrepreneurial creativity		
Service/dedication to a cause		
Pure challenge		
Lifestyle		

What next?

Is there a mismatch between what career anchors you rate as being most important to you and those that relate to your current situation as a general practice nurse?

- You could discuss the completed table: *Identify your career anchors and how well you perceive these to match your current job*, with your career mentor, partner at home or a trusted friend.
- If you find that most things you value are not part of your current job, this might give you the impetus to make some specific career plans and move on.
- If you find there is a good match, you are likely to be in the right job.

Reference

1. Schein E. *Career Anchors, Discovering your Real Values*. Oxford: Pfeiffer; 1996.