# PERSONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Implementation of successful career management

**Abstract**

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Abstract

People are used to getting an education and then working accordingly from year to year just to get a financially secure future. Which in itself is not a bad way and some are satisfied with just that. However, there are people who are willing to achieve, who want to succeed, but they do not know how or what. Sometimes it is hard to identify what one wants to do with their life, and since working life is a comprehensive part of people's lives, it would be ideal to match the needs and skills with work that gives feelings of accomplishment and meaningfulness.

The main purpose of this research is to find out what is a successful career development and what are the key factors in order to implement it. This research will discuss topics of personal career development and management, and meaning and purpose in working life. The goal is to find out comprehensive guiding lines that will give direction for those who want to understand themselves, their capabilities and opportunities, better and are willing to work for their career.

This research is a literature review of already existing studies about these themes. The key findings show the repetitive pattern of certain factors: self-knowledge, self-, career and environmental exploration, clear goal definition and planning. Since every person is an individual, everyone has to find out and adapt to the factors that will help them personally, but these guidelines will give an overview of the right direction.

Keywords

career, career development, career management, meaning

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Some people know from a very young age what they want – what they aspire to accomplish and achieve in life. Everyone has had dream careers when they were children, maybe even a new dream job for every year of age. However, that is only a small share of all the world's people who have a clear goal from the beginning and actually stay on that road. Preferences change, new things are learned, and people grow up and mature.

It is difficult to try to determine what kind of work one wants to do, especially since the education system in Finland makes it that people are asked to decide their career paths at a young age, without even having a real understanding of all of the possibilities. People do not know what they want to do and they do not recognize their own capabilities, weaknesses, or possibilities. Finding the right career path, something one is enthusiastic about and can confidently say they enjoy doing is highly challenging and, some would say, too idealistic.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to go through and evaluate the different aspects of some of the factors that affect career development and personal career management. The initial thought started from a question 'How to define what you want from your professional career?', which was inspired by a book written by a Finnish author Lauri Järvilehto (2013), who also works as a Professor of Practice and Working life at Aalto University. His book *Upeaa työtä! Näin teet itsellesi unelmiesi työpaikan*, freely translated as *Great Work! How to build up your dream job*, discusses the different topics of how to define one's passions, meaning of work and the calling. The book includes advice about self-exploration, identifying own values and also physical methods on how to clarify one's thoughts regarding these themes.

## 1.3 Thesis objective and research question

The motivation for this research came from the author's own interest in the topic of building up a satisfactory career. To find out some answers, one has to understand themselves, the possibilities, and how to plan out their career – how to perform successful career management and development. The main objective of this research is to find out the factors that help perform successful career development and personal career management.

In the beginning, the questions for this research varied from "How to define needs and wants for personal career development? How to define personal career goals?" as it was more focused on the concept of finding the "dream job".

The final research question shaped itself after some preliminary research on the surrounding topics.

The main research question: **How to implement successful career management?**

Supporting questions that help answer the main research question include:

- What is successful career development and management?

- What factors support personal career development and management?

- What makes work meaningful?

## 1.4 Methodology and thesis structure

This study is based on a literature review and aims to present an overview of the topic of career development and management. All of the sources on this research are critically reviewed for the most accurate and truthful information, mostly consisting of prior studies on related topics.

The first chapter introduces the thesis topic and some background about the motivation behind this research. The second chapter handles the basics of what factors build career development as a concept and explains the most common issues. The third chapter gives a more in-depth overview of individuals' career management and what should be considered in order to perform successful career management. In the fourth chapter themes of meaningful work and purpose are introduced as an integral part of overall personal career management and development. The fifth chapter includes discussion about the overall implementation of career development and management, whereas chapter six will conclude the answers for the research question and supporting questions, as well as some recommendations for further research.

## 2  CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

### 2.1  Definitions

One definition of career is *an individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations, that form a unique pattern over the individual's life span*, stated by Sullivan and Baruch (2009, 1543).

A career is about an individual's whole life and learning, whereas a job is short sequences tied to certain organizations. A career consists of multiple connected employments, opportunities, and experiences. (Gyansah & Guantai 2018, 40.) Career development is a continuous, lifelong process of learning, work, life, and management of these to accomplish the future that one is aiming for (Hakobyan 2017).

Career management is included in every step of career development. It is the act of managing all the learning, work and life in career development. Gathering data about one's self, realistic self-assessment, goal setting and career planning (Mackowiak & Eckel 1985, 554). After identifying the knowledge about the self, the next step is to define career goals and strategies that help to achieve the goals (Harold & Amit 2011, 24). Without active managing of career development, the set goals are most likely not achieved, even with a clear plan.

### 2.2  Career development

Career development offers a better base for individuals to utilize their skills and competencies for more suitable working positions. As people are working within their range of strengths and skills, that will usually lead to better results in their work. Since working life is such a huge part of peoples' lives, the quality of working life automatically affects the quality of overall life. (Kapur 2018.)

Career development within organizations is a joint force of both participants, the employee and the employer. Whereas an organization can help individuals in career development, the employer cannot do it without an individual's own investment – this also works the other way around. (Shaito 2019, 6.) In today's fast-developing world, constant development from both, individuals and organizations, is required.

### 2.2.1  Issues in career development

Not everyone has the same resources to start with. Although education is mostly free in Finland, in other countries the situation is different. Even with good grades or clear plans

from lower education levels, financial difficulties may become a problem that prevents individuals from proceeding with their plans. People with disabilities or other impairments are in an inferior position compared to average people to begin with. Working life has changed as technology develops quickly and recognition of skills is getting more common, which are not necessarily bad things. However, jobs like these where continuous development is necessary are not considered secure anymore since the already known skills and knowledge need to be improved continuously. Personal skills can be developed through learning, but an overall lack of the skills that are looked upon nowadays - such as communication skills, problem-solving, or leadership skills - can hinder personal career development. (Kapur 2018.)

### 2.2.2 Career development process

The career development process begins with identifying personal career needs and goals. That starts with self-knowledge and understanding which are going to be discussed further in chapter three. Next comes exploring the career options and opportunities, followed by integrating career needs to the opportunities as well as defining clear goals for education and career. Knowing what are the options will be helpful in decision making, as it is difficult to try to make a decision without a clear vision of what the goal could possibly be. Making plans with a definite, clear goal in mind will motivate a whole lot differently than unclear, vague goals. Once the goal is set and there is a clear plan on how to achieve that goal, it is time to take action, build up a network, get experience, and work towards the goal. (Shaito 2019, 9.)

## 2.3 Career exploration

Exploration of career can be defined as actions the individual takes in order to get information of either their own vocational characteristics or organizational characteristics and job information (Storme & Çelik 2017, 2). This includes exploration of one's self, as self-exploration and knowing one's skills, needs and goals is one critical point of successful career development.

Exploration expands awareness of an individual's own qualities and characteristics. The goal of career exploration is for the person to become more aware of themselves with self-exploration and the surrounding environment as a result of environmental exploration. Career exploration is associated with fewer difficulties in career decision-making, as the knowledge is higher and uncertainty reduced. (Storme & Çelik 2017, 2.)

The goal of self-exploration is to get to know one's self. It is the first step in overall career development, as mentioned before in the career development process. It aims for an individual to understand their personal strengths and weaknesses, skills, and values that are what decisions regarding career are based on. (Shaito 2019, 19.) This topic is discussed further in chapter three.

Environmental exploration includes getting familiar with the opportunities, types of industries and occupations, skills and experience necessary for certain positions or organizations, and other information about working life industries and how they work. Environmental exploration expands the understanding of the possibilities an individual has in their career planning process. (Shaito 2019, 19.)

## 2.4 Career management

There are various factors aside just from personal needs and interests that determine an individual's career choices. Edgar Schein has defined eight anchors of career management as autonomy/independence, security/stability, technical/functional competence, general managerial competence and entrepreneurial creativity, service to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle (Schein 1990). People usually identify with one or two of these anchors. Going against these personally identified anchors will usually result in dissatisfaction in working life. (Hakobyan 2017.)

People who value autonomy/independence usually aim for freedom in working life and are more likely to become entrepreneurs or otherwise self-determined. They seek occupations where they can decide when and how to work. However, this motive is not the same as entrepreneurial creativity – this is motivated by the will to create and develop new and interesting products and concepts. These people want to prove their abilities with successful outcomes. (Hakobyan 2017.)

Security in working life concerns people in long-run stability, for example from a financial or employment viewpoint. People who identify with this anchor may be willing to sacrifice their own ideas and follow exact orders for the security of having a job. The content of their work is not the most important factor. (Hakobyan 2017.)

Technical or functional competence refers to the technical aspects and the work itself. When one has a strong sense of their technical skills, they want to challenge and develop themselves within the said area of already identified skills. People with technical anchors as their drivers are competent with less general management as it would mean leaving their area of expertise. (Hakobyan 2017.)

With general managerial competence as their anchor, people value responsibility. The organization's success identifies in their own work as they like to be responsible and accountable for results. People who have service, or dedication, to a cause as their main anchor are the ones who want to work with something that achieves things of value – helping people, making the world a better place, solving environmental problems. What defines an individual's personal "things of value" is based on everyone's own values in life. (Hakobyan 2017.)

People find challenges in different things. People who want a pure challenge from their careers want to work on something that highly challenges their personal skills. People with lifestyle as their valued anchor want to find a situation that balances working life goals with personal life needs, family, and whatever they find valuable in their personal lives. (Hakobyan 2017.)

## 2.5   Career management components

Education, capability, network, and experience are identified as four components of career management (Owyang 2012). To get the best possible base for one's personal career it would be ideal to get all these components to match each other, like getting an education corresponding to the capabilities one has.

Education refers to school-learned training such as degree and courses as well as self-learned things and personal development. This includes things like reading and upkeeping with the ongoing trends of working life. Successful career planning usually includes corresponding education to the work that an individual has identified as their goal. Education gives an overview of the concepts and themes crucial for the field that one is aiming for. (Owyang 2012.)

Capability in this sense includes more than just personal data – such as skills – about an individual, which is a repetitive theme in career management. Capabilities do include personal data, but also strategic skills alongside tactical skills. Strategic skills like prioritizing, managing, knowing when to be involved, or how to delegate responsibility are mostly learned through experience. (Shaito 2019, 7.)

Getting a job through others without having to send out multiple applications is not uncommon. Continuously expanding networks and making new connections is essential to maximize the opportunities in a career. (Reed 2020, 26-28.) Upkeeping the already existing connections is as important as making new ones as favors and helping work both ways (Shaito 2019, 9).

The challenge with experience comes from the fact that many organizations want employees who already have the corresponding experience to the job they are applying for. However, most of the skills are learned and developed through experience. Gathering experience is a critical part of developing and managing a career towards the set goals.

## 3 KEY FACTORS OF PERSONAL CAREER MANAGEMENT

### 3.1 Personal career management

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are many aspects concerning career development as well as management. Whereas chapter two focused more on the overall concepts of career development and management, this chapter discusses personal career management more in-depth.

People struggle to figure out what to want in life. For most people working life is the majority of their lives and working decades on a job without the feeling of fulfillment and achievement can be unsatisfactory. Seen as the working part of life is an integral part of living, it automatically affects our overall lives. Especially during today's world, when work is going towards more self-directed, independent – the line between working life and personal life can diminish. Sometimes it is hard to separate where the feelings are directed and then both positive and negative emotions from work will also affect the personal life.

In that case, it would also be more ideal to have positive feelings influence life back home. To achieve a positive outcome from working life may be easy for some, but still many are struggling with questions like what and how. *What do I want from working life? How can I be happy with what I do when all of our youth we have been told to pick a career that will keep us alive and financially stable?*

In Finland, the education system makes students decide at a young age where they want to head in regards of professional careers. At the age of fifteen to sixteen students need to decide whether they want to go to high school or get a vocational degree, which determines the start of their career path. Since changing one's career path even at a mature age is possible, the decisions made at the age of sixteen are not permanent. Nevertheless, it would be more ideal to work towards goals that are satisfactory for the individual straight from the start.

### 3.2 Self-understanding

Defining what the personal goals are may be difficult and requires that one has a clear understanding of themselves before further career planning. Self-assessment is a critical factor for finding out personal needs and wants for a professional career. Understanding own skills, strengths, and weaknesses, as well as values, determine what would be the correct direction regarding the future's working life.

For realistic self-assessment, a person has to gather as much data about themselves as they can, preferably from many different sources. To truly understand one's own strengths and weaknesses, self-exploration is important.

### 3.2.1 Values

In their research of values in human life Sagiv, Roccas, Cieciuch & Schwartz (2017, 4) wrote that *all values represent goals, but not all goals are values*. For example, some common values could be health, wealth, achievement, honesty, love, success, security, creativity.

Personal values are an important part of what makes people individuals. Values are what steer people through life. They define a big part of the direction for the goals and methods one uses to achieve the said goals. Personal values usually stick throughout the lifetime and are not changing as a result of daily experiences, as they have a much deeper meaning in our lives. (Mackowiak & Eckel 1985. 555-556)
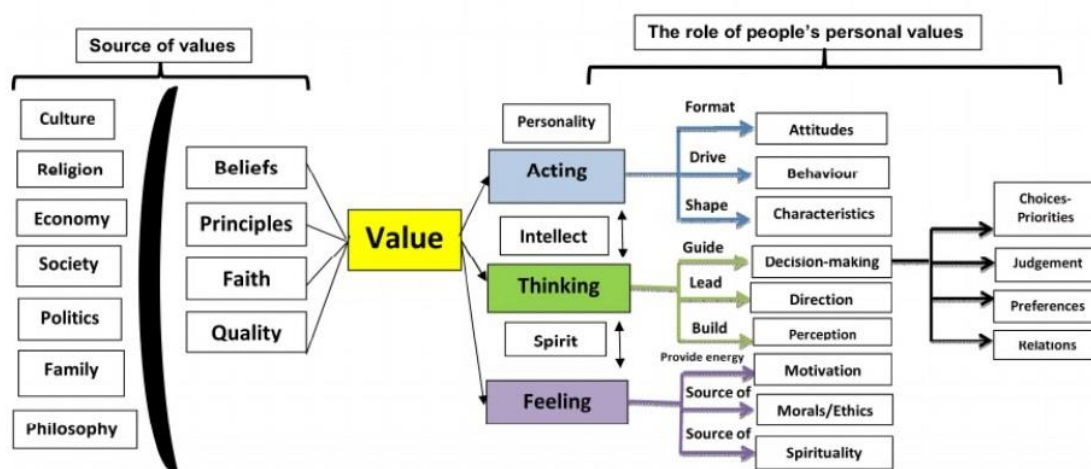


Figure 1. The role of people's personal values model (Mashlah 2017, 162)

Mashlah (2015, 162) proposed a model seen in Figure 1 that shows how values are perceived and built up. The model is based on literature and data he collected from narrative interviews. It shows the sources, what are the factors that build personal values for an individual and then the role of values in personal lives, how do they affect an individual's mindset, acts and feelings.

### 3.2.2  Interests

Without any interest, curiosity, work would be quite meaningless. Interest works as a personal motivation for doing something. Children make decisions based on interests, whereas when people mature, other aspects such as values and abilities are taken into consideration but interests still direct toward a successful and satisfying career. (Mackowiak & Eckel 1985, 556-557.)

### 3.2.3  Needs

Personal needs in working life define values. Whereas values are a more permanent part of what makes an individual, needs are based on values but they change regarding the environment and overall life and maturity. Personal needs might include safety, growth, autonomy, power. These depend on people's personal views. (Mackowiak & Eckel 1985, 556)

### 3.2.4  Realistic evaluation

To realistically evaluate one's own skills, strengths and weaknesses may be challenging. Throughout life, students are taught how to evaluate their own work but not everyone has a clear picture of how truthful the evaluations are. Seen as during higher education, the assessor in many cases is a professional in the field while students are still students with no corresponding experience, both have different viewpoints, and miscommunication can happen. Confidence in one's self also has an impact on how realistically one sees their own self and their abilities and that is something the individual has developed through their life, whether in a negative or positive direction.

### 3.3  Development strategies

Development strategy includes all the steps taken to achieve the goals that an individual has set for themselves. Whereas organizations are often helping their employees to develop and train to match the expectations of both parties, individuals should also partake in the process – it is their own career. (Shaito 2019, 13)

Successful career development starts, as discussed above, from self-understanding. In order to know what are suitable career choices for an individual, understanding the needs, strengths and values play an important role. After defining these, it is easier to explore the opportunities that are already somewhat matching personal expectations.

Goal setting is a relevant part of career development, no matter what strategy. These goals should be realistic, specific, and somehow measurable. Defining specific goals that are achievable and easily measured are overall more realistic. Corporate Finance Institute, CFI (2020) has defined SMART Goal setting that stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

SMART stands for **Specific**, meaning clear, defined and accurate. Corporate Finance Institute CFI made an example on how to specify goals with "W"s that should answer the questions of who, what, where, when, why. **Measurable**, as there have to be some defined indicators that will show the progress. **Achievable**: The goal should be challenging, but still achievable. **Realistic**: If the goal is believed to be achievable, it most likely is also realistic. **Timely**: The goal should have given time expectations. Deadlines help to get the feeling of urgency, which helps with motivation to achieve the goal. (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020.)

# 4    MEANING AND PURPOSE – THE CALLING

## 4.1    Meaning and purpose in working life

To find fulfillment and success, work should have meaning for the individual. The feeling of meaningfulness in working life has been associated with improved and more motivated performance. People value different things and their values and interests create a direction that leads them towards meaningful work.

One definition of meaning in work is *the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's being and existence* (Steger, Frazier, Kaler & Oishi 2006, 81). Purpose is defined as *people's identification of, and intention to pursue, particular highly valued, overarching life goals* (Steger & Dik 2010, 133-134). Meaning of work and meaning in work also have different meanings. Whereas *meaning of work* refers to what makes work meaningful, *meaning in work* ponders how meaningful it is. (Dik et al. 2014, 3.)

## 4.2    Applications of meaningful work

Meaning and purpose are getting more known concepts in career development, seen as these influence different aspects such as motivation, productivity, and overall wellbeing and mental health. Motivation and will to work result in greater outcomes. But how to find what really makes work meaningful for an individual? What makes people motivated to work for their achievements? Dik et al. (2014, 5) have defined six specific applications regarding meaningful work and purpose in working life: Strengths, positivity and flow, gratitude, work hope, job crafting, and perceiving and living a calling.

### 4.2.1    Strengths

Strengths correspond with the factors that are determined during self-assessment. People who work with jobs that correspond to their strengths are more likely to find their work meaningful and therefore appear more positive and motivated. People who are motivated and engaged in their work are usually having an increase in variables such as subjective well-being, hope, and self-efficiency. (Dik et al. 2014, 6.)

### 4.2.2    Positivity and flow

When people feel better, they work better. Emotions are a complicated aspect of life that not everyone can manage as well as one would wish – it can make differentiating both positive and negative emotions between working life and home difficult. Too much

negativity from work will most likely before long affect life at home and threaten overall wellbeing.

Positive emotions at work are not just about trying to be more positive or having happy thoughts. It is more about creating and seeking situations that generate positivity. Things such as problem-solving and helping behaviors are related to positive emotions – as well as job satisfaction and less likely intention of withdrawal. (Dik et al. 2014, 8-10.)

In a state of flow, a person is highly focused and goal-oriented. Often flow state helps to get positive results and success, as the person gets completely immersed in the task they are doing. A state of flow can be achieved when a person is doing something that matches their skills and finds the task challenging. (Dik et al. 2014, 8-10.) As a downside in flow state could count the easy loss of awareness and track of time.

### 4.2.3 Gratitude

Gratitude, defined as a feeling of thankfulness for certain things – of being thankful and giving thanks. When an individual recognizes that some external force has given them benefits of something, and they feel the appreciation for it. (Dik et al. 2014, 10.)

### 4.2.4 Work hope

Snyder (2003) defined hope as three steps: anchor points, pathways, and agency. An anchor point means the goals, whereas pathways are thought actions on how to accomplish these goals, and agency represents the mindset – motivation and willingness to achieve (Juntunen & Wettersten 2006, 94).

### 4.2.5 Job crafting

In an organization, it is as important for the employee to actively try to shape their working experiences to match their personal working life needs as it is for the organization to meet the expectations. Job crafting is defined as an active process of such actions. There are three strategies: task, relational, and cognitive crafting. (Dik et al. 2014, 14-16.)

Adapting resources, like adding or dropping tasks, diversifying responsibilities of such tasks, and changing time usage on certain tasks belong in the category of task crafting. Relational crafting refers to the relations surrounding the said tasks – when and how, or whom people interact with. Cognitive crafting requires flexibility from an individual and the ability to change their mindset according to the tasks. (Dik et al. 2014, 14-16.)

### 4.2.6   Perceiving and living a calling

A calling in a career management viewpoint means finding a career path that aligns with the deeper purpose of life and values. Perceiving and living a calling in working life has been notably linked to meaning at work and other positive outcomes. As a calling in working life is tied to a person's overall feeling of purpose in life, these people are more likely to also feel their work as meaningful. (Dik et al. 2014, 16-19; Järvilehto 2013, 14-23.)

Actively pursuing a calling people tend to experience an increase in overall wellbeing. People who are living a calling tend to be healthier and are less likely to suffer from burnout. They are also happier with their work and lives. (Järvilehto 2013, 16)

5   DISCUSSION

5.1   Successful career development process

*The outcome of successful career management should include personal fulfillment, work/life balance, goal achievement, and financial security* stated Hakobyan (2017) in her article about career development trends. So what counts as successful career development? To make career development and personal career management successful, one has to find out what are the factors that affect themselves personally. Each person is an individual, so there cannot be one exact way to achieve success.



Figure 2. Career development process

The recurring themes however will give some direction for everyone. The overall process, as seen in Figure 2, should include identifying career needs, exploring options, planning and setting clear goals, then taking action and managing these actions.

The importance of self-knowledge and understanding one's own values, interests, needs and skills is clear since no one can find a truly satisfying direction without knowing what they want. This is the fundament for everything else included in the process of personal career development. Exploring options and analyzing opportunities are purely based on the data that one has gathered about themselves. There are some practical examples of how to proceed with gathering this said data further in this chapter. Though it depends on an individual how they will utilize the information.

5.2   Identifying career needs – self-knowledge

As discussed in several parts of this research, all development starts from a person and their knowledge and understanding of themselves. Without fully and realistically understanding own values, skills, or needs, the direction of the career is unclear and uncertain. In long run, this will most likely result in dissatisfaction in working life, which will affect life as a whole.

**Practices to gather personal data**

*Self-description boxes*

In this practice, one should answer the question "Who am I?" by continuing the sentence "I am a person who…". After answering, the questions should be ranked by numbers, in order of importance. Then considering the relations between the patterns and motivations from answers that are linked to the factors that could give the sense of meaning and fulfillment. These are good questions to think through and writing them down will help to make the realizations more tangible. (Hakobyan 2017.)

*Look in the mirror*

In his book *Life's Work: 12 Proven Ways to Fast-Track Your Career* Reed (2020, 13-16) suggests an action of physically looking in the mirror and first learning how to appreciate one's self. Writing down what comes to mind while doing this exercise helps in making the realizations tangible.

After the mirror, comes identifying the passions – loves and hates. There are some questions by Reed (2020, 17) that help to identify the personal loves and hates, regarding both what to do or who to do it with:

- *What are you good at?*

- *What fascinates you?*

- *What do you put off doing?*

- *What annoys you when you see it done badly?*

- *If you were given a day to do whatever you wanted, what would it be?*

- *Which kinds of people do you enjoy spending time with?*

Then based on these questions an honest list of five loves and five hates should be done. These should explain some of the basic characteristics of an individual. (Reed 2020, 17-18.)

## 5.3   Meaning and purpose

Some could say that aiming for a career that has meaning for an individual, is fulfilling and gives feelings of both achievement and security sounds too idealistic. Some people are more used to work for financial security so that they can have a stable life, others value the concept of wellbeing and overall satisfaction in work. It mostly depends on peoples' values and what they find important but meaning and purpose in working life have gotten more known recently.

Those who find the meaningfulness in working life important should even further inspect their own values and the aspects that make their life enjoyable. Writing down these things will make them more tangible and easier to decipher. One practical example of how to do that was introduced by Järvilehto (2013) in his book that explores the themes of calling in working life.

Kutsumuskartta by Järvilehto (2013, 42-43), freely translated as Map of calling. The idea is to map out activities that one genuinely finds enjoyable – things that one likes to do. There can be as many things as comes to mind. A completed list of these activities then should be numbered from one to three. Every activity should get a value of 1, 2, or 3 depending on how often one has time to do that activity. Three is for the activities that are already done regularly and as often as one wants. Two means things that one would want to spend more time with if there were enough resources. Value one is then for the activities that, at the moment, one cannot carry out often enough or at all.

The list of enjoyable activities shows a clear pattern of what a person would do if there were no restrictions at all. The goal in life is to plan out a career and life according to these activities, so in the end, all of the activities get a value of three. (Järvilehto 2013, 46-47.)

## 5.4  Analyzing opportunities

Analyzing and searching information about options and opportunities that are based on the person's gathered data about themselves and the knowledge an individual has gotten from career exploration, both environmental and self-exploration. Educational institutes give only an overall view of all of the possibilities so one has to get further information by themself. Getting familiar with different job opportunities and what are the needed skills or necessary experience and knowledge for these occupations gives a clearer picture of what is to be expected. Then it is easier to know what to develop and how to present one's self accordingly to the expectations of the organization.

In Reed's (2020, 39-43) words, there are fast-flowing sectors and fast-flowing jobs. What are the growing fields at the time are more likely to help with an individual's career development. Today's rapidly growing sectors that have better chances with opportunities include for example artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data management, green energy, mental wellbeing and virtual reality. Many of these include fast-developing technologies, which is clearly one of today's trends.

That does not mean that everyone has to work with technology though. As Reed (2020, 41) stated, *gaming companies are not only in need of programmers, they are also crying*

*out for people with excellent interpersonal skills to help them sell their technology*. The only opportunities are not just in these fast-flowing fields, as there are also sectors that are not in rapid growth, but some of the roles inside may be.

## 5.5   Defining goals and planning

Making decisions and defining specific goals are important because vague goals like wanting to be successful or making more money would not give any motivation or reason to work for these goals. Here is shown the importance of the SMART goal defining, which was discussed in sub-chapter 3.2 Development strategies.

Corporate Finance Institute (2020) has given some example questions, shown in Table 1, that should be considered within all of the factors in SMART goal defining.

| Specific | **Who**: Who is involved in this goal? |
| --- | --- |
| | **What**: What do I want to accomplish? |
| | **When**: Where is this goal to be achieved? |
| | **Where**: When do I want to achieve this goal? |
| | **Why**: Why do I want to achieve this goal? |
| **Measurable** | How many/much? |
| | How do I know if I have reached my goal? |
| | What is my indicator of progress? |
| **Achievable** | Do I have the resources and capabilities to achieve the goal? If not, what am I missing? |
| | Have others done it successfully before? |
| **Realistic** | Is the goal realistic and within reach? |
| | Is the goal reachable, given the time and resources? |
| | Are you able to commit to achieving the goal? |
| **Timely** | Does my goal have a deadline? |
| | By when do you want to achieve your goal? |

Table 1. SMART goal (Corporate Finance Institute 2020)

When the goal is specific and measurable it is easier to follow through the plan, since it is certain what steps are needed in order to reach the goal. A clear goal should also be achievable and realistic because then it is known that it can be accomplished. Timing the goal correctly gives the motivation to reach the goal.

## 5.6 Taking action

After there is enough data for an individual to understand themselves, their environment and possibilities, and clear goals in mind the next step is to take action. This includes all the actions that are taken in order to reach the goal from according education, be it a degree, qualification or other self-imposed learning that supports the goal. Gathering experience from learning and working is important because more often than not employers want employees who already have some sort of experience for the occupation they are applying for.

Networking should also be considered a critical part of today's career development, especially in the planning phase. It is not uncommon for people to get jobs and other opportunities through connections. It is also one form of taking action, as most likely the connections are not going to present themselves without any input from an individual. Having interests and volunteering in different things are helpful in making these connections and usually also experience can be gathered. One point from Reed (2020, 31) regarding networking was not to wait to be invited. It has to start somewhere if one has not had opportunities to make connections beforehand. Though for some people it may be outside of their comfort zone, networking is necessary since very rarely can one person succeed in their career without any kind of connections.

## 5.7 Managing

**Self-development**

People have both strengths and weaknesses, things they are naturally good or skills they lack of, but that does not mean that a person could not develop themselves. Skills can be learned and while it is easy to focus on getting better at points of weakness, one should not forget to also develop further the strengths they already have. Of course, it depends on what an individual finds valuable for themselves to know, as one person usually cannot be master at everything.

**Goal development**

There is a difference between working on a job and working for the career one loves. Though sometimes there are situations in life that one has to compromise and for a while do something that does not awaken the motivation or does not feel especially meaningful. That is also okay as long as it is not a constant state. In a long run, that is not sustainable for either party, the employee or employer, and will only result in decreasing wellbeing.

That is why Reed (2020, 52) encourages being sustainably selfish – not selfish in a sense of never thinking of others' needs, but selfish in a way that makes meaningful work a priority. Because when one enjoys their work, it increases wellbeing and they want to keep improving – benefitting both, the individual and the organization.

# 6    CONCLUSION

## 6.1    Answers to research questions

The main objective of this research was to find out what is a successful career development and what are the key factors in order to implement it. In conclusion, the goal is to do that kind of work that one enjoys and what they are good at. The work should suit their skills and passions, values and sense of meaning. People working with their strengths will impact their working environment positively.

There were three supporting questions for the main research question, that will be answered before the main question.

- **What is successful career development and management?**

The career development process includes lifelong learning of self-assessment, opportunities and planning, and managing these towards clear goals. To make it successful an individual has to understand, adapt and find the right ways for themself to manage the development process. Every person is an individual, so one exact way will not work for everyone.

- **What factors support career development and management?**

The most important factors in career development and management are self-knowledge, self-and environmental exploration and definite goal setting and planning. Without a realistic and precise understanding of one's own career needs, interests, values and skills, it is difficult to know what would be the right direction for a successful and satisfying career. The understanding of one's own self as well as the career opportunities and how to integrate the needs, interests, values and skills to the options in careers, help to create clear and definite goals that are achievable and therefore manageable.

- **What makes work meaningful?**

The things that make work meaningful are the same things that make life meaningful for an individual. Different people value different things, but overall people working with something that corresponds to their strengths, keeps up the motivation and positivity, and creates a feeling of fulfillment, makes work feel meaningful. When people find out what they really enjoy doing, get to use their skills and challenge themselves appropriately, it will increase the feeling of meaningfulness.

- **How to implement successful career management?**

As stated before, everyone is an individual. That means that there is no one exactly right way to manage successful career development, but there are certain guiding lines that are valid for many. One has to learn to identify their own strengths, weaknesses, needs, interests, values, opportunities, and be realistic about them. The self-assessment might be the most crucial point in the whole career development process because without the personal knowledge about themself an individual won't know what they want, what they are capable of.

## 6.2   Suggestions for further research

This topic is very extensive and could have much more opinions, viewpoints, theoretical analyzing or data collecting. As this work was only a literature review based on some of the prior studies about the topic, there could be more practical data gathering to get more in-depth insight, maybe from surveys or interviews. Including other people's viewpoints, and not just other researchers but students, to map out how many of them are actually working towards a career and how many are just going with the flow.

## 7   SUMMARY

The aim of this research was to find out what means successful career development and management and how to implement it. To identify the key factors that affect successful career development and management, the first step was to go through what career development and management actually mean. In chapter three it got a more in-depth overview of factors that help to define personal career goals. Chapter four explained what it means for work to have a meaning, to have purpose, as nowadays the concept of meaning and purpose getting more recognition, instead of just working from paycheck to paycheck.

Chapter five has further discussion about the factors that affect personal career management. There are also practical examples of how to implement and utilize these factors as an individual. Even though the personal development and management process is different for everyone, the overall process is almost the same for all. With some directional instructions and supportive questions, these factors discussed should at least awaken some thoughts in an individual.

The final conclusion gives the key findings for the research questions and the supportive questions that were presented in the introduction. Key findings show some aspects which are most likely familiar to many, but to make it a systematic process of getting to know one's self, analyzing opportunities, defining clear plans and goals and taking action, will give a new point of view towards these aspects.

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