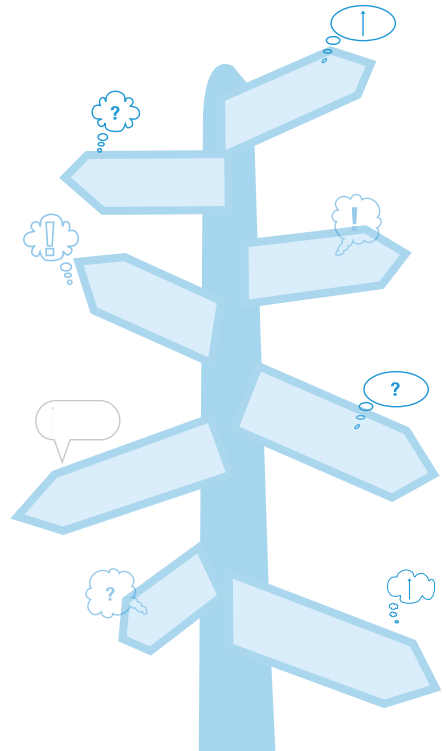


Abridged version of

Reflections on Career Planning

Exploring and clarifying various dimensions on “career”,
helping us plan in the manner appropriate to our self

Author: G.Ramu



Where am I? Where do I go from here? What's the right path for me? How do I develop myself? All these are self-directed questions every individual asks at different stages of one's career. Defining career as a continuous process of development and deployment of our capabilities 'Reflections on Career Planning' explores the fundamental questions relating to career. Taking a multi-dimensional look at multiple perspectives, empowers and invigorates us with the choices to enrich our careers, and thus lives, the essence of which is realisation of our immense potential.

About the Author

G Ramu graduated in engineering from IT BHU and later specialized in Human Resources at XLRI, India's premier management institute.

Ramu has experience in varied industries including heavy engineering (Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited), fast moving consumer goods (Asian Paints and Britannia) and software (HCL Technologies and iSOFT). While the corporate career gave exposure to wide cross section of HR function, he believes that the richness in experience was, more importantly, in working in organisations with varied cultures, leadership styles and levels of maturity.

Taking a plunge into entrepreneurship from corporate profession, he took over as Director of Yoganishta - a placement services company serving select IT organisations. In Jan 2010 he launched 3D Talent Services Pvt Ltd a company which creates online services in the space of discovery, development and deployment of talent. 3D has launched its first offering Training Orbit - www.trainingorbit.com - an online portal on training for trainers, training companies and training seekers across the globe.

3D Career Development Model

All of us have different notions on career and different thoughts come to our mind when we think of career – money, future, accomplishments, talent, position in organisations and so on. We need a common understanding of what career stands for, based on what is at the core of career. Similar to how money is to finance, health is to medical field, we need that one core dimension indicative of career.

In my opinion capabilities are at the core of career. Based on this assumption, I propose career development as continuous process of developing and deploying our capabilities.

We are born with certain talents and immense potential. The constant realisation of our potential and development of our capabilities is one aspect of career the other being - deploying our capabilities. By deploying our capabilities, we participate in the process of creation of products and services usefulness to others and in the process gain or

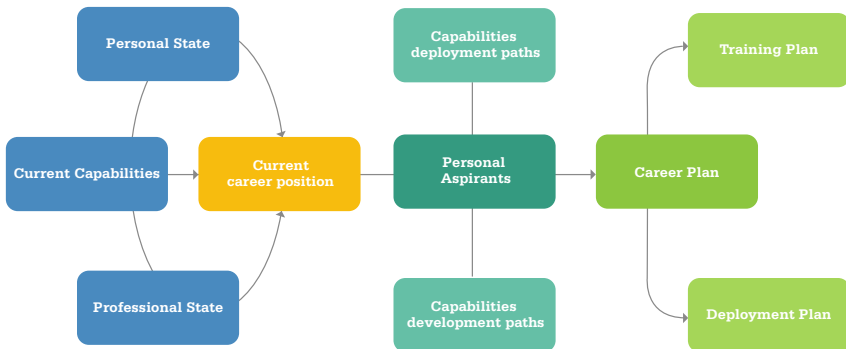


Figure 1 This is illustrated in the 3D Career Development Model

fulfil all those needs of ours – money, sense of achievement, recognition, power, self esteem and so on.

Therefore, career planning would involve a process of assessing where we are, where we want to go and how do we get there – where we are in terms of our personal position, in terms of our professional position and in terms of our current capabilities; knowing the various choices

and making the right choice suited to us on the different paths in which we can travel or develop and deploy our capabilities; and finally making a plan to execute the choices we make.

How do I understand my current career state?

Panch mantras (five elements) of personal and professional wellness

Career is integral part of our lives. Career affects our well being and vice versa, our well being affects our career. We seek to fulfil our needs through our career. We feel good about our lives when our career is satisfactorily fulfilling our needs. We propose that there are five elements which are key to our sense of wellness at a personal level. These five elements are – health, wealth, leisure, relationships and spirituality.

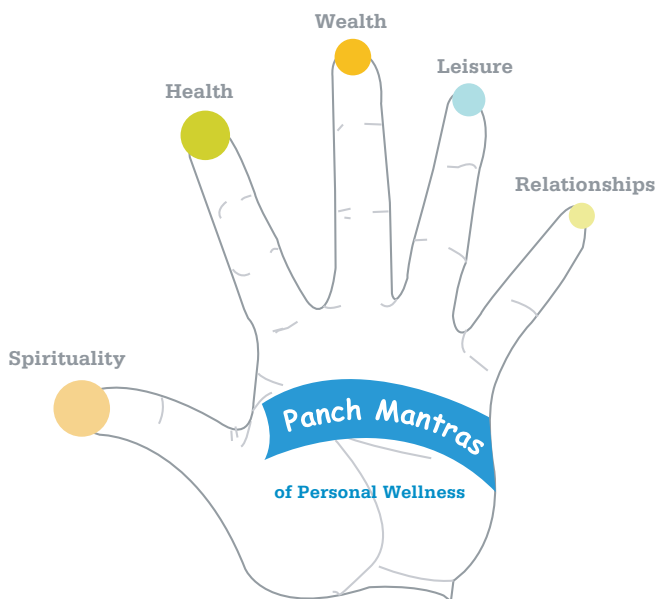


Figure 1

Similar to the panch mantras of the personal wellness we have the panch mantras of professional wellness i.e. the five elements which indicate our satisfaction at work or what we seek from our work. We long for satisfaction on these five elements and when they are not fulfilled we are either less attached to our work or even look for alternate job. When we seek to engage ourselves in a particular



Figure 2

job, we need to assess to what extent these elements will be met. Similarly for employers it would be important to identify the satisfaction of their employees on these five elements and take corrective action if required.

How do I assess my capabilities?

3D capabilities profile model

In order to plan our career for the future in terms of our capabilities development and deployment, we would need to take stock of our current capabilities. Don't we take stock of our financial positions – bank balance, savings, investments in different instruments etc. - from time to time. However, taking stock of capabilities is slightly difficult as it is not as easily quantifiable as that of finances. At least, this is what most of us have been thinking.

In order to help us take stock of our capabilities as-is today we have created a model for capabilities called the 3D capabilities profile model based on our research on profiles of thousands of people profiles. The model is a structured manner of assessing or mapping our capabilities.



Figure 3

It is not enough to look just these area i.e. what we know. For example it is not enough for a software professional to indicate that he or she knows C++ programming, datacom protocols. One would need to also indicate or assess how well one knows these skills. This is what we call proficiencies. By proficiency we mean the ability to handle a certain order of complexity. Our aim is to pick up more skills or know more about other areas in our function or specialisation and also to improve our proficiency levels in areas we are already skilled. Thus while mapping our proficiencies we will also assess our proficiency levels.

Based on this model in Training Orbit we have created a 3D capabilities profiler to help every individual map his or her capabilities.

What are the career paths available to me?

Panch marg (*five paths*) of capabilities development

When we analysed thousands of profiles to understand the human behaviour with respect to capabilities development we were led to conclude that people tend to develop their capabilities in five different directions. We call them the panch marg or five paths of capabilities development. The five paths are – larger, deeper, wider, newer and different.

Let's understand the different paths in little more detail. The detailed discussion on the same is available in the book.

Larger – This theme involved developing our capabilities to apply them to a large influence. Examples could be one who is managing 10 people aspiring to manage 100 people, one who is managing accounts of a \$1 Mn company aspiring to manage a \$5 Mn company, one is handling a sales of a territory wanting handle sales for a country. Scale is a principle driver here.

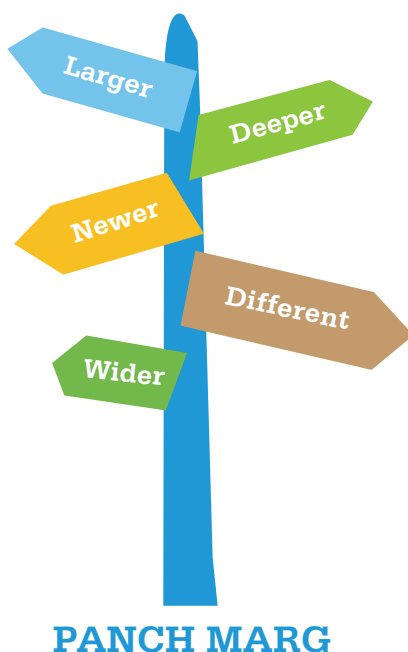


Figure 4

Deeper – Some of us are keen to specialise or go deep into particular subject or become expert in particular area or get into niches. For example, a HR professional may want to specialise in training on emotional intelligence, a writer may specialise in crime related fiction. A lawyer may specialise in Intellectual Property. Specialisation is the key here.

Wider – This theme involves applying our functional capabilities to different contexts. A salesman wanting to move from selling in FMCG sector to industrial products, a software developer may want to move from insurance domain to retail, a lecturer may want to teach in a foreign country, a director may want to make some documentaries. Context is the key here.

Newer – Cross functional expertise is not uncommon. In fact many large companies encourage and promote cross functional movement within their companies. Some of us want to a function from the one we already have experience in. An operations manager wants to move into sales.

Different – Some of us find our “moment of truth” one fine day and go on to pursue a line which we have not had experience in. For instance, business manager moving away from corporate profession to teach. This theme is more about aspiring for doing something different from what we have been doing so far and giving room to that hidden talent of ours.

We typically aspire to develop our capabilities in one of these directions and guide our learning process. Identifying which of these themes we are aligned towards gives us a sense of direction and focus to our development effort. And the choice that we make may also change with time.

What are different choices of occupations?

Different ways in which we can deploy our capabilities

Engaging our capabilities to participate in the process of creating products and services useful to others is the manner in which we, in turn, get those things which we need to fulfil our needs – panch mantras and more. By engagement of our capabilities we often mean a job. However, over the years the forms of engagements have emerged or have become prominent and job has undergone significant change from the way it was understood earlier.

Full time employment is one of the common forms of engagement of our capabilities i.e. being employed in a company as an employee of that company. The other forms of engagement of capabilities include part time employment, engagement as an independent provider of professional services, entrepreneurship and volunteering. The difference between these include the onus or responsibility for one's work, the terms of engagement or contract between us and the service seeker, responsibility for providing us what is expected for our services (money). At one extreme we have the full time employment where our responsibility is more towards a defined role or work and is part of that of a larger team which delivers products or services to the customer. In turn we are assured of security and predictability or stability of income (at least that is what we have always believed). At the other end of the spectrum we have entrepreneurship (it could be one man or large organisation) where one takes complete business responsibility, risks are high and freedom is high.

Each of these have its advantages and disadvantages. We are able to align to one of these modes based on our temperament. And further it need not be that we stick to one course throughout our life. This has also been possible because of the socio-economic trends and changes taking place rapidly. Internet has given many opportunities to engage their capabilities, in finding customers for their capabilities (at some other corner of the world), work has been shifting more easily even if the labour is not, dynamics of organisations are changing fast making

them look at alternate modes of engagement to manage their costs and handle the vagaries of business.

These changes throw up opportunities in which we can enagage in ways we never thought of before. That's the boon of the era of the talent and internet.

How do I learn and develop?

Different means of developing our capabilities

Having assessed our aspirations, temperament, capabilities, when we decide our course of direction for of our career both in terms of deployment of our capabilities i.e. engagement model and in terms of the direction in which we want to develop our capabilities i.e the panch marg we need to get focused on continuous learning and development of our capabilities. At the core of the era of talent is learning; continuous learning. With changes in technology, business environment as also socio-economic trends the need to constantly learn becomes even more paramount.

What to learn and how to learn form the two ingredients to the process of learning. The “what” comes from the aspects we discussed above. The how involves making a disciplined habit or regimen of learning based on our style of learning. Today we have many more avenues of learning than ever before. Web 2.0 has made collaborative learning very much possible. Elearning and distance learning over the web or enabled by satellite takes away the constraints of distance. We need to consciously opt for a combination of the various choices of learning media and blend it with our temperament and create a systematic plan. Like how we draw financial plans and health plans for ourselves and invest in them, we need to invest in our learning plan to – both in terms of effort and time.



Figure 5

Salient Features of Career Planning

Career development is a systematic activity

With dynamic changes in the socio-economic-business-technology around us we would need to take assessment on a periodic basis, to make tactical adjustments according to the changes and not necessarily to our long term goals or mission (such as running an enterprise).

Career development is the responsibility of the individual

Career development may sometimes, be facilitated, by organisations in which we work but, the ownership for development rests with us. Our career goals may have a much broader perspective than what the organisation may expect or lay out for us and thus we cannot pass on this responsibility to the organisation in which we work.

Career development is a holistic process

Career development is not about those skills that are required to perform today's job well. It is also about developing our other skills and talent. Developing our other talents means a better expression of our complete self, which is one of our subtle yet powerful aims of life that gives meaning, and joy to our life.

Career development is a harmonising activity

Career development in a way is continuous balancing activity; balancing between external and internal factors. Factors internal to us drive us in a particular direction, make us choose some priorities over others and let us apportion our time and effort. External factors on the other hand show opportunities, possibilities and impose constraints. Both, the external factors and internal factors, are dynamic in nature and change with time (and seem to be changing faster every time).

Career development is a spiritual activity

If we consider that the purpose of life is to become what we are capable of becoming then we will be led to believe that career development is a spiritual process involving the constant realisation of our immense potential; a life long realisation process!!

This is an abridged version of the book – “Reflections on Career Planning” written by G Ramu who holds the copyright of this book.

For the complete version of the book, please visit – Reflections on Career Planning.

Other useful links:

Assessing one's capabilities – 3D Capabilities Profile -

<http://www.trainingorbit.com/profiles/createLearnerProfile>

Assessing one's training needs – Training Needs Assessment -

<http://www.trainingorbit.com/profiles/createtrainingalert>

Website of Training Orbit – the global online portal on training for trainers, training companies and training seekers -

<http://www.trainingorbit.com>

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