

Personal career development plan

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



In this essay my medium to long term career objectives are identified as completing a PhD and working towards chartership in a large occupational psychology consultancy. The background to these aims is outlined. I consider my aptitude for such goals in relation to frameworks including the Myers Briggs Type Inventory, Schein's Career Anchors and Holland's Vocational Types. The usefulness of these kinds of measures is briefly examined. Finally, some potential pitfalls are identified and contingencies are discussed.

Career Objectives

My long term career objective is to become a chartered occupational psychologist working within a respected consultancy. Prior to this, I aim to complete a PhD in a related field. At present, I am particularly interested in employee motivation and envisage completion of extensive research in this area should be an advantage when applying to a consultancy for employment. Although a PhD is not an essential requirement to becoming a consultant it has been a long-held ambition of mine and one which I am hoping to achieve before entering the workforce. I believe that by gaining a broader knowledge and understanding of research my employability will increase as I will be able to offer a better command of methods that are often used in consultancy.

I would prefer to work within a large national or international company that demands high standards from its employees. I enjoy working under pressure, finding that this increases my motivation. The attraction to a bigger company is the stability it could offer. One of the main reasons for choosing

occupational psychology as a career path is the pre-determined and regular working hours. I have previously been employed in offices and value the structure given by a regular working day, both in terms of work and home-time. Although my career is a very significant aspect of my life I also rate highly the importance of family and leisure. In this respect Lifestyle and Security/Stability are the two of Schein's Career Anchors which best apply to me (Schein, 1990). Probably why I feel that job security is of such significance. The opportunity to earn a good salary would also be desirable as I will wish to make a significant contribution to the family income. This should be achievable within the average pay-scale of consultants.

I would be very open to relocating for employment early in my career, but once established will probably be less likely to do so. Hence, a company in the south of England would be my ideal employer because this appears to be where the majority of UK consultancies are located.

My employer would need to provide ample opportunity for promotion. I will be seeking a good manager who would recognize my expertise and dedication and actively encourage me to do well and continually improve.

The flexibility of self-employment is attractive; however, I do not feel this to be an option early in my career plan. I work best towards specific goals and to deadlines set by others. The experience gained from working alongside others will increase my knowledge and leadership skills. These benefits should later enable me to consider self-employment if it becomes more appropriate to my lifestyle.

It is my belief that I will have a lot to offer a consultancy. Through past employment I have discovered that I am a fast and accurate worker. It would be my major objective to find ways to increase the efficiency of any organisation that employs me. In the current economic climate increasing organizational efficacy on a national level is of great importance to the productivity of companies. This is an area to which I could contribute through working in this sector.

To summarise, my main career objectives are to complete a PhD with a view to working in a consultancy, possibly in the south of England, and achieving my chartership in occupational psychology.

Background

At my High School it was a requirement that in addition to three A Levels one must also study a fourth subject for a year, up to AS Level. Not having a particular career in mind at this point I opted to begin Psychology, a new area for me. Having started I found that I was captivated, choosing to continue studying to A Level and later at the University of Nottingham for my degree. A relatively scientific background from school led to my selection of a BSc in Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience. The latter part of this was, again, a new direction for me. Although I found it both challenging and interesting Cognitive Neuroscience remained complementary to my interest in psychology. Since beginning my degree I had intended to continue to Masters level. I am currently studying towards an MSc in Occupational Psychology to fulfil this desire.

As regards to non-academic experience, in the third year of my undergraduate degree I conducted a research project into eye-movement strategies used whilst driving motor vehicles. I was also involved in writing up a health psychology article for journal submission. Whilst not directly relevant to occupational psychology these do give me familiarity with research as will be needed in a PhD and later in consultancy work.

The majority of my work has been in teams, working with both professional clients and the general public. This gives me wide-ranging experience in dealing with different types of customers; including those similar to the clientele I envisage working with in a consultancy. I have a Key Skills level 3 qualification in communication, demonstrating the fact that I am able to present information clearly in both written and spoken formats. This will be an asset in consultancy work as writing reports and giving presentations to clients - who are not experts in the field - is a key aspect of the occupation.

Several psychologically based models are used by career planners to assess the suitability of clients to various career paths. The belief that each person has specialised talents that 'match' those required in a particular profession is widely held. Many career guidance services, particularly those in schools, provide computer based questionnaires to students to gauge which jobs they might prefer.

There are several theories linking personality traits to professions or work environments. I have used a selection of these to confirm that I am suited to work as an occupational psychologist.

Initially I took a free online test described by the website as a Mental Muscle Diagram Indicator (MMDI), based on the Myers Briggs Type Inventory which is itself based on Jung's personality theory. In his book *Psychological Types* (1921) Jung suggests that there are 16 personality types, derived from a combination of four traits: Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuiting, Thinking-Feeling and Judging-Perceiving. I was assessed as being ENFJ. As a personality type this suggests an inclusive person who is very interested in others feelings as well as being reliable, organised and loyal. These characteristics would be apt for an occupational psychology consultant, however, I would argue that I am more introverted than extroverted. This highlights the issue that many personality tests are unreliable, at least when not administered by a trained practitioner.

This said, Holland's Vocational Types theory - and Self Directed Search (SDS) test - was the subject of much analysis in the 1970s and was generally offered both qualitative and quantitative support (eg Edwards & Whitney, 1972 and Eggenberger & Herman, 1972). Recently, it has been suggested that vocational types are better predictors of perceived person-job fit than personality factors (Ehrhart & Makransky, 2007). Holland proposes a hexagonal structure of six vocational types - Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional - that map onto six corresponding types of work environment. If a mainly Social person such as myself is to work in a Social work environment it should result in a successful career. This personality type should be productive in consultancy work as problem solving and presenting information are associated traits (Jones, n. d.).

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences suggests that there are eight different intelligences encompassing all aspects of human potential (Smith 2002, 2008). Of these I believe I have the more traditional intelligences of Linguistic and Logical-Mathematical, along with a certain degree of spatial intelligence. These are certainly assets in a primarily academic discipline and indicate that I will be well suited to doing research where report-writing and statistical analyses are essential.

Largely, all of the career-matching techniques mentioned here have limitations but used together they can provide a reasonably reliable portrayal of the kind of career environment suited to an individual. Thus I have concluded that my personality and vocational type are suited to consultancy work.

Career Strategy

A majority of psychology careers do not have the job title 'psychologist'. It may be the case that advertised jobs in the sector I wish to work fall into this category. Thus, it will be important to read job descriptions to ensure I do not miss any potential opportunities. The reactive aspect of my job search will centre around the Appointments Memorandum of the British Psychological Society (BPS), along with other advertisements and internet job-searches.

Of course, networking is a large part of the application process to access hidden vacancies in a more pro-active job search. This is a particular area I intend to expand before completion of my PhD in order to increase my employment prospects.

To develop related experience it will be beneficial to write speculative letters to consultancies with a view to becoming involved with voluntary work. In addition to the list of companies provided on the portal I will locate smaller consultancies in my locality. Two years ago, whilst considering in which division of psychology to train I was fortunate to receive a useful email in response to a query I made to a local consultancy. Hopefully similar responses will result from my endeavours and certainly should help to build my network.

I have previously worked for an international company with a large Human Resources department in the UK. This may not be directly relevant to consultancy work but my contacts at this company can assist with developing my network. This should make it easier to determine my exact job search strategy.

In terms of training I am planning to take Level A and Level B Intermediate Certification in Occupational Testing in June 2009, specialising in the NEO five factor model. This should be an asset when applying for jobs.

Completing my Masters degree will be the first concrete step towards Chartership, fulfilling the Knowledge and Research dimensions of the BPS Qualification in Occupational Psychology (QOccPsych). I will then need to find a chartered psychologist willing to supervise me, through level 2, whilst I am an Occupational Psychologist in Training (OPiT). This may either be by way of the contacts I have made by this point through networking, or via the BPS website which provides a list of supervisors across the country. Alternatively

there are several websites which allow potential students and supervisors to advertise.

Once I have found a suitable supervisor I will be able to enroll for the QOccPsych and apply for exemption from the Knowledge and Research dimensions. After this, a plan of training must be drawn up and it is suggested by the BPS that one should apply for conditional registration within the Division of Occupational Psychology (DOP). I will need to practice under supervision for at least three years while completing a structured logbook in order to complete the assessment.

Risks

The main risk area of my plan is the development of a network of people to advise me and help me to find jobs in the unadvertised market. As I have only just begun networking this is where I need to concentrate my energies at present both in order to find suitable employment and a good supervisor for completing the QOccPsych.

If there is no immediate option to undertake a PhD it would mean that I need to accelerate my plan by around three years, a substantial amount considering I am on the threshold of career planning and networking.

There is the risk that I will not be able to find work in a consultancy at the beginning of my career but will need to find employment in a similar related field. Although a delay in achieving my long term career objectives will ensue this should not be too big a problem. Work experience during the next few years will increase the likelihood of getting an ideal job at an earlier date.

Overall, my plan is pretty flexible which allows room for change over the coming years as my life changes concurrently. It gives me a broad outline of what to aim for and draws to my attention the need for greater research, networking and experience on my part.