

Descriptions of Orientations

from
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Managing the New Careerist

V=Getting Ahead. This upwardly mobile career orientation is usually associated with advancing up a hierarchy of positions or a status system. More influence, prestige, and financial remuneration are usually bestowed with each upward move. Individuals pursuing such a strategy are most often found in large organizations or professional associations. Many executives and status-conscious professionals follow this career orientation.

W=Getting Secure. Some persons are driven by the need for job security, organizational identity, and the desire for a sense of order. In return for loyal, dedicated hard-working service, they seek long-term employment, benefits, recognition, and appreciation from the employer. In the best situations, mutual respect, reciprocity, and loyalty characterize the relationship. These people often seek steady promotions and advances as a symbol of their value and worth. Many who pursue careers in large and secure organizations are pursuing this internal career orientation.

X=Getting Free. Instead of moving upward in career direction, the careerist following this strategy seeks to move out towards the margin. The emphasis is on gaining personal autonomy, “space,” loose supervision, and responsibility for outcomes rather than being bound by another’s process, norms, and rules. Individuals are willing to work very hard, often as professionals or small businesspersons, for conditions assuring more independence and self-control. Interesting and exciting work is important and usually accompanies such an orientation, but individual freedom is the ultimate objective.

Y=Getting Balanced. Some people seek to balance their work, relationships, and self-development lives. For these individuals, work is just one important dimension of a total life-style orientation, even though such careerists may emphasize different dimensions at different seasons and given different pressures. Like the getting-free strategy, this career orientation requires considerable flexibility. Unlike getting-free, it seeks balance and these careerists try to separate themselves from their work. Many talented two-career couples, geographically bound persons, and personal growth-oriented individuals fall into this category.

Z=Getting High. Some careerists are driven by the need for excitement, challenge, and the engaging process of work. In such a career one seeks to move, often laterally, to the centers of action, adventure, and creativity. The organizational setting may be large or small but bureaucracy tends to be a constraint. These craft persons, technicians, entrepreneurs, and artists, like those opting for a getting-ahead and getting-free orientation, find it difficult to separate themselves from their work. While autonomy may be an important component of getting high, the bottom line is exciting work.