



Information on the Activation and Application of Career Resources

Student version

INTRODUCTION

The nature of careers has significantly changed over the past years. Nowadays, an increased degree of self-directed career management is needed. This emphasizes the importance of personal resources that support a self-determined and successful career. This trend towards an increasingly self-determined career affects students in all study fields. It is thus important to be aware of personal strengths as well as limitations that affect career success. We call these key predictors for career success *Career Resources*. A career is defined as all the work experiences of a person throughout a lifetime. Hence, every person has a career, independent of one's occupational position. Career success refers to attained salary, promotions, and occupational prestige but also to subjective evaluations in terms of satisfaction and meaningfulness of one's work.

Content of the questionnaire

The *Career Resources Questionnaire* is a scientifically developed self-assessment tool to evaluate critical resources that promote career success. The resources can be divided into four broad domains:

- (1) Knowledge and Skills;
- (2) Motivation;
- (3) Environment; and
- (4) Activities.

These four broad domains consist of 12 different components that are based on international research as important facilitators of subjective career success (e.g. job satisfaction, career satisfaction) and objective career success (e.g. salary, promotions). It is important to note that these resources are modifiable and can be actively developed (they are not personality traits).

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR BROAD CATEGORIES

Knowledge and Skills

The knowledge and skills career resources include three components: occupational expertise, job market knowledge, and soft skills. Overall, this domain describes aspects of knowledge and skills, which are essential for a successful career. These resources are essential to meet performance requirements for a specific job. Knowledge and competencies are strongly linked to objective career success, for example higher salary, more promotions and higher prestige in a job.

Motivation

The motivational career resources include three components: involvement, confidence, and clarity relating to one's own career. Overall, this domain describes aspects of the personal motivation that are essential for a successful career. In particular, motivational career resources are strongly related to subjective career success, for example career satisfaction, but they are also important for objective career success.

Environment

The environmental career resources include four components: career opportunities, institutional support from your current higher education institute (university or college), study challenge in your current studies, and social support for career development. Overall, the environmental career resources describe resources in the institutional, as well as private context, which are essential for a successful career. Thus, unlike the other resources, these resources are situated in your environment and not in you personally.

Activities

The activities category includes three components: networking, career information gathering, and continuous learning. Overall, the activities describe behaviors, which are essential for a successful career. They have a strong relation to both objective and subjective career success. These activities are crucial for supporting a self-determined and active shaping of your career and career success.

THE 13 ASPECTS IN DETAIL

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: OCCUPATIONAL EXPERTISE

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes your job specific knowledge and skills in relation to your future job. Occupational expertise is important to successfully meet the demands in your future job. Furthermore, occupational expertise is a key factor for employability and facilitates job transitions or seeking of a new position. Expert knowledge and professional competencies improve work performance and result in stronger feelings of competence at work/in your studies. Feeling competent is a central human need. Thus, expert knowledge and professional competencies strongly affect work motivation and career satisfaction. Hence, the possession of occupational expertise makes promotions more likely and increases job satisfaction in your future job.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Look for tasks and projects in your studies in which you can fully apply your occupational knowledge and skills.
- Provide support to other inexperienced people by teaching new knowledge and competencies to other students.
- Offer support to your fellow students in areas in which you have well-developed knowledge and competencies.
- Apply your knowledge that you have acquired in your studies in internships and side jobs relevant to your study field.

How you can increase this resource:

- Attend expert conferences to expand your professional knowledge.
- Regularly read specialized literature on new trends in your future professional area.
- Seek current articles and presentations in your professional area on the internet.
- Frequently exchange recent developments in your future professional area with colleagues.
- Find out what knowledge and competencies are required in your future professional field.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: JOB MARKET KNOWLEDGE

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes your general knowledge of the job market and employment trends. Such knowledge allows the identification of occupational opportunities. Additionally, occupational knowledge and competencies can be adapted and developed more successfully if current and future demands in the job market are known and taken into account. Job market knowledge is also important for personal employability and facilitates job search and job transitions. Therefore, the career can be actively shaped such that achieving career goals and success is more likely.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Think about in which professional areas and fields your professional knowledge may be well used in the future.
- Identify the most important job market trends and demands and think about how you could react.

How you can increase this resource:

- Discuss the current job market and its development with your fellow students and others in your desired professional area.
- Actively consult job forums on the internet and pay attention to the demands and tasks in the announced jobs in your future work field.
- Find out what the requirements for jobs in your future professional field are.
- Take out a job search subscription to be continuously informed about new jobs in your field of interest.
- Read specialized literature to learn more about current opportunities and perspectives on the job market.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: SOFT SKILLS

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes your skills and competencies that are relevant for a broad range of occupations (e.g. analytical capability, social competency, or organization skills). Such multi-professional skills are important in different occupations and generally play a crucial role for career success. Soft skills improve your personal employability and facilitate starting a career, job search and job transitions.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Seek challenges in which you can apply your soft skills in an optimum way (for example undertake a presentation, projects beyond your studies).
- Think about how you can utilize your general strengths in your current studies more often.
- Provide support to fellow students in tasks in which you can make a good use of your soft skills.
- Assume active and conscious responsibility of a group task in your studies or a research project in which you can fully apply your soft skills.

How you can increase this resource:

- Observe yourself: Which soft skills have you already developed well and which have potential for development (for example teamwork skills, dealing with stress in/during your studies, time management, presentation techniques, project management competencies, written language skills, problem-solving ability)?
- Get feedback from others (for example fellow students) regarding your soft skills.
- Actively seek “training fields” where you can practice the application of social competencies or presentation techniques.
- Read specialized literature or attend a course in which you learn how to increase your soft skills (for example course for time management, presentation techniques, conflict management, communication).

MOTIVATION: INVOLVEMENT

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes the degree to which you are emotionally attached to your studies and to what extent your studies are a central part of your identity. This attachment may be to your current higher education institute as well your current studies or your career in general. It may be an important motivational basis for a successful transition to working life. People who are more involved in the study role are normally more motivated in their studies and more active in the career development process. In addition, they show more academic performance, higher salaries in their future job, and are more satisfied in their studies and with their career in general.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Try to get your studies done with even more quality and efficiency.
- Arrange your studies according to your interests to make your studies even more exciting.
- Set yourself challenging goals in your studies and career.
- Actively shape your study environment and incorporate your own ideas (for example in seminars).

How you can increase this resource:

- Think about what you like in in your future job.
- Try to mention 5 reasons why your studies play an important role in your life.
- Consider in what ways your studies and future job may have a positive influence on society and others.
- Think about in what ways your future work after your studies is important for successful functioning in your future organization.

MOTIVATION: CONFIDENCE

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes to what extent you believe that you are capable of successfully developing your career. It also indicates your confidence to reach your career goals and to deal successfully with difficulties in your career. People who are more confident regarding their career development are normally more active in their career and show better strategies to cope with career-related challenges. As a result, they are usually more satisfied and more successful in their career.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Approach study challenges proactively and optimistically.
- Set ambitious and challenging targets.
- Be persistent in achieving personally important goals during your studies.
- Remain active, even when you fail.

How you can increase this resource:

- At the start, rather set smaller and more attainable goals – over time set gradually more ambitious goals.
- Pay attention to how other people shape their career and education and how they cope with challenges – and learn from them.
- Be happy even if you reach small successes – be proud of yourself.
- Surround yourself with people who encourage you and believe in your success.
- Motivate yourself - motivational sentences like “I can do it!” help a lot.

MOTIVATION: CLARITY

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes the clarity and independence of your career goals and the extent to which you have clear career goals that also reflect your personal interests and values. People who have clear career goals usually show more engagement in their career and are more successful and confident in their career development.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Keep records of your goals.
- Plan how you can reach your goals step-by-step (set also smaller milestones).
- Please check if your goals correspond to your interests, values and capabilities, and adapt them if necessary.
- Please check to what extent you make progress towards your career goals and adapt your goals and strategies if you have not made progress as you expected.

How you can increase this resource:

- Think about what occupational goals you want to achieve.
- Write a short text in which you define where you see your career development in 10 years.
- Make a list of 5-7 possible career goals and think about which of them you want to approach next.

ENVIRONMENT: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes to what extent your university/college/school provides support for your career development and to what extent you feel supported in your career development by your school. This support includes the opportunity to attend, for example, mentoring programs, conferences, or additional courses for further development of skills and competencies. People who perceive more institutional support generally show more career success and are more satisfied with their studies and career.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Actively use existing offers for additional programs (for example coaching or mentoring programs), courses or further development of skills.
- Clarify with the career services of your higher education institute when is the right time and what are the conditions to use these offers.
- Think about what internal offer you want to use next for achieving your career goals and discuss it with the students' advisory services.

How you can increase this resource:

- Think about where you can inform yourself about existing offers (for example for trainings and courses) in your higher education institute (bulletin board, intranet, brochures, career service of your higher education institute etc.).
- Contact the career services for advice and support in your search of internal and external training offers.
- If your higher education institute provides little support, search for support offers for your career goals beyond your higher education institute (for example external courses, career guidance).

ENVIRONMENT: STUDY CHALLENGE

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes to what extent your current studies allow you to utilize and develop personally valued skills and to what extent you can fully utilize your professional skills in your studies. Study challenge is an important factor to ensure that your professional knowledge and competencies are well developed. Thus, it can facilitate your personal employability and increase career success and career satisfaction. Additionally, successfully completed study challenges foster your confidence and your self-confidence for facing further challenges in your studies and future job challenges.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Think about where you can further apply your greatest strengths in your current studies.
- Develop your own ideas on how you can better use your greatest strengths in your current studies.
- Think about which abilities you can further develop in your current studies.
- Make a plan on how you could apply your greatest strengths in new projects and tasks in your studies.

How you can increase this resource:

- Actively seek new challenges in your studies (for example selection of courses).
- Voluntarily undertake new additional tasks in your studies (for example in seminars).
- Provide support to your fellow students in their study activities.

ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL SUPPORT

What is this resource and why is it important?

This resource describes to what extent you receive career-related support from other people and to what extent you feel supported in your career goals by friends, work colleagues, family, and other people. Social support enhances the ability to deal with difficulties and challenges in career development. Social support can be practical (someone does something for you, someone helps you with a certain task) as well as emotional (someone gives you the courage to do something). People who perceive more social support are generally more satisfied with their studies and career and are more successful in their career development.

How you can use this resource optimally:

- Do not hesitate to ask others for support if necessary.
- Think about what types of support you need from different people (for example friends for emotional support, fellow students for target-oriented support while studying).
- Say thank you to others who provided you support in the past.
- Think about from whom you could need support for achieving current study challenges and ask to meet this person.

How you can increase this resource:

- From time to time, offer to voluntarily support your fellow students and friends – this increases the likelihood that others will support you.
- Find a mentor in your desired professional area.
- Show interest in your studies and in the lives of your fellow students.
- Maintain contact to people in your private and occupational environment and show regularly that you appreciate their support (for example by thanking them, with small tokens, by offering support).
- Build new contacts in your private and future occupational environment and maintain these contacts.

ACTIVITIES: NETWORKING

What is this resource and why is it important?

This activity describes to what extent you build, maintain, and utilize social contacts to promote your career. It involves establishing new contacts and networking activities with potential employers, former supervisors from internships, and mentors. Building, maintaining, and utilizing networks provides access to information and support for your own career development. It also enhances your visibility with important people that can help you with further career steps. People who are more active in networking generally show more career success and career satisfaction. Networking is often seen as a key competency for career success.

How you can use this activity optimally:

- Activate your networks in case of challenges and barriers and inform your network about this (for example if you are looking for a job to start your career).
- Think about how to best use your existing networks for different purposes.
- Actively contact people who can support you in your career steps.
- Maintain your network while supporting others in their career development (for example by information, discussions, small favors).
- Become aware of what networks you already belong to (for example friends, relatives, fellow students, work colleagues from your side job).
- Make a list of all the people you know and identify those that could be helpful for your further occupational development.
- Build your network online (for example using Xing or LinkedIn) as well as with personal contacts.
- Stay in contact with former employers from internships.

ACTIVITIES: CAREER INFORMATION GATHERING

What is this resource and why is it important?

This activity describes to what extent you collect information about career options. It involves the active exploration of work environments and career opportunities (for example, related to job entry after graduation). Actively gathering information about occupations, job, organizations, and career paths is important to recognize and utilize opportunities for further occupational development. Occupational information gathering also allows for better adaptation to changes at work and in the labor market and can help to clarify your personal career goals. In addition, career information gathering is an important basis for decision-making in career choice and career planning.

How you can use this activity optimally:

- Subscribe to a newsletter for further education in your occupational area.
- Inform yourself about conferences, education and training possibilities, and internal courses.
- Talk with your fellow students about possible career developments.
- Think about consulting a certified career guidance counselor.
- Search for trends in the job market in your future occupational field.
- Use career-related events (such as job fairs) to facilitate job entry after graduation.
- Register for a mentoring program at your higher education institute and benefit from interacting with more experienced colleagues in your professional field.
- Clarify what documents are necessary for an application in your future occupational area and bring your up-to-date documents (for example curriculum vitae) with you to any job discussions or interviews.

ACTIVITIES: CONTINUOUS LEARNING

What is this resource and why is it important?

This activity describes to what extent you actively and regularly enlarge and update work relevant knowledge and skills. It also involves learning beyond the regular content of your studies. Continuous learning is an important basis to sustain one's employability and can enhance job satisfaction and success in your current studies. It can also facilitate securing a new job. Due to social changes in the job market, it is essential to adapt to future job demands and constantly expand your capabilities. Lifelong learning is an absolute prerequisite for long-term career success.

How you can use this activity optimally:

- Regularly read scientific journals in your future occupational field.
- Remain up-to-date – subscribe to newsletters in your future occupational field and read specialist articles in journals or books.
- Plan weekly time slots for “learning” – this learning goes beyond learning the regular content of your studies.
- Seek possibilities to increase your knowledge.
- Attend conferences, further education or workshops in your future occupational field.
- After a day in your studies, think about what you have learnt and share your knowledge with others.

NOTES

For further support with interpretation and application of the career resources, we recommend consulting a certified career guidance counselor.

Further information for interpretation of the results is provided on our website www.cresogo.com/CRQ.

The realization of the *Career Resources Questionnaire* was supported by the Foundation "Stiftung Suzanne and Hans Biäsch zur Förderung der Angewandten Psychologie".

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