

Chapter 10: Career Planning: Designing Your Own Life

As you graduate and move into adulthood you have many different lives ahead of you. In Chapters 10-12, you will learn to design your own career by reflecting on the cases of entrepreneurial business owners in Southeast Asia that you have studied in Chapters 3-9. Work on the tasks at the end of this chapter to clarify your own interests.

1. Let's think about your Life Stage

Before you graduate from university, you will make your first career choice. At this time, you should start to think about what you value in your life. As mentioned at the beginning of this book, an American researcher, proposed the theory of life stages in 1986, and divided life into five developmental stages (growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement). Super emphasized the importance of self-awareness and the importance of the relationship between self-awareness and career development, stating that an individual's career and growth have a mutually positive impact. Each stage of the life stage theory can be summarized as follows

Table 1: Life Stage Theory

Stages	Age	Professional Development Tasks
Growth Stage	0-15	Learn about who they are. Develop positive attitudes toward the professional world and a deeper sense of what it means to work
Exploration Stage	16-25	Formulate and begin to practice vocational aspirations. Through practice, consider whether the current occupation will be a lifelong one for them.
Establishment Stage	26-45	Determine one's orientation to a vocation and establish oneself in that vocation
Maintenance Stage	46-65	Retain the position attained and its advantages
Disengagement Stage	From 65	Disengagement in various activities, retire, and enjoy a second life

Source: Based on "Theories and Practices of Vocational Guidance," Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Labor and Training Institute, 2002.

Growth Stage (birth to 15 years)

During the first years of life, children learn coping skills, explore their own interests, attempt to socialize, and form a general understanding of working. This is the stage when biological physical growth progresses, and individuals start to formulate their idea of self-concept. This is formed primarily through school life, identification with and differentiation from others. During this stage, a child explores his or her own interests and abilities, identifying what he or she likes, what he or she is good at, and how he or she differs from others.

Exploratory Stage (16-25 years old)

This is the period of trial and error, when young people try to put their ideas into practice. In the exploratory stage, young people decide whether to pursue a career in the field through engaging in tentative professional activities or will change direction by changing jobs.

Establishment Stage (26-45 years old)

This is the period when young people choose a specific occupational activity after the trial and error of the exploratory phase, and enhance their own occupational status, ability, and expertise by building up their achievements in the occupation and fulfilling their responsibilities.

Maintenance Stage (46-65 years old)

This is a period of career development and innovation while making long-term adjustments. This is a time for long-term adjustment, career development, and innovation. People in this stage strive to maintain the occupation, position, etc. they have already attained, and to improve their own job skills. They may take on new challenges during this period, but usually they do not take on major challenges.

Disengagement Stage (after 65 years old)

This is the last period of life and the time to withdraw from the labor market. They plan for retirement and experience life after retirement. Energy in the workforce often decreases with age, and people narrow their sphere of activity and focus on their post-retirement life. They transition to a new life of volunteering, hobbies, and leisure activities after retirement.

Let's imagine ourselves working! In his book, *Career Dynamics* (1991, p. 143), Edgar Shein, an American organizational psychologist, defines the term career as "a lifelong occupational experience and a way of life." He identified the following components for developing an image of oneself through professional life:

- (1) Autonomy/Independence
- (2) Security/stability
- (3) Competence at the technical level
- (4) General management skills
- (5) Entrepreneurial creativity
- (6) Ability to solve problems
- (7) Challenge based on pure motivation, and
- (8) Way of life

He concluded that self-image is composed of the above components.

If you try to imagine what you would like to be like at any stage of your life, you will be able to think more concretely about your future.

From your teens to your mid-twenties is a period of life exploration. Through your study of the interview transcripts presented in Chapters 3 through 9 of this book, you may have noticed that your experiences in university play a significant role in your later career. When you are a student, this is the time to explore your own potential and draw your own career design after graduation.

Thinking about your future career plan while you are a student is very important for the rest of your life. This is the time to plan your future, to design your career, to anchor your career, and to find your direction in life. In addition, this is the time to actively learn how to work outside of Japan, how to communicate with others, and how to behave in an organization through internships, overseas experience, and short-term study abroad programs as preparation for entering the workforce.

2. What are the Characteristics and Traits of Successful Entrepreneurs?

In this section, let's summarize the characteristics and traits of entrepreneurs that

were derived from interviews with entrepreneurs working in Southeast Asia. There are seven categories that are important to recognize in order to think about your own career.

A). Differences Between Male and female Entrepreneurs - starting age and capital

Most of the male entrepreneurs started their businesses at a young age, in their 20s. In the case of male entrepreneurs in their twenties, they started their businesses by obtaining funds from their families or investors (Chapter 11, Section 6) in addition to their own savings. On the other hand, many women did not think about starting a business from the beginning of their professional lives and decided to start their own business overseas after they had gained age and experience. Since most women started their businesses later than men, they had already accumulated funds to start their businesses when they decided to start, and they established their companies within their own funds. In addition, when women decided to start a business, they made the decision by themselves without consulting their families.

B). Common Flexibility

What was common among both male and female entrepreneurs abroad was their ability to be flexible. Almost all the survey collaborators have made various adjustments in their professional lives. There was flexibility in their thinking, and flexibility was also utilized in their business. Let's take the entrepreneurs in Bangkok, Thailand in Chapter 4 and the Kingdom of Cambodia in Chapter 7 as examples. Mr. Keiji Ueno, who runs a Thai traditional spa and massage parlor in Bangkok, initially thought of opening an izakaya (Japanese style pub) in Tokyo but decided to open a restaurant serving Japanese lunch in Bangkok, where the economy continues to grow. After going through several changes, he is now focusing on running a Thai spa and massage store as the pillar of his business.

Mr. Abe, who runs a market research company in Bangkok, has expanded his activities into niche fields of business, but not all of his businesses have been smooth sailing. When the business didn't turn out the way he wanted, he changed his mind and redirected himself to other business fields.

Unable to manage her own life, Ms. Kurihara moved to Bangkok, Thailand after

turning 30 and changed her lifestyle to wake up at 3 a.m. every day and stay focused on her business.

Although not mentioned in this book, there was also a woman who decided to work abroad to change her living environment because she spent an hour and a half commuting each way to work in Japan and had a very poor work-life balance. These examples show that many of the people who are starting businesses overseas have flexible thinking skills. These people modify their business field and working style as needed. Flexibility is an essential element for Japanese people working abroad to succeed in their businesses and is a driving force for business expansion.

C). Overseas Experience in the Exploratory Stage of Life

The people in this book, both men and women, had overseas experiences or encounters during their exploratory period in life. Mr. Ueno, who appeared in Chapter 4, traveled around Southeast Asia as a backpacker when he was in university and felt an affinity with the region. In Chapter 9, Mr. Haga, who runs a car rental company in Myanmar, and Mr. Iwatani, who runs a Japanese restaurant, experienced long-term study abroad during their university years. Although these were transient experiences, they took place during a period of exploration in their lives and provided a strong motivation for them to decide to start their own business in Southeast Asia.

D). Motivation

People are motivated to work abroad for a variety of reasons. They can be divided into four groups:

i). The first group is those who do not want to be like the typical office worker in Japan and who have decided to build their career overseas. An example is Mr. Okuda in Chapter 8, who provides web design services based in Cambodia for clients in Japan, Thailand, and Cambodia. This group is responsible for creating local jobs and developing local human resources.

ii). The second group is the group working overseas to realize economic and social support for developing countries. As an example, the authors would like to introduce two people they met in Cambodia that appear in Chapter 8. Mr. Isobe, who has established a company that provides small loans to low-income

Cambodians in Cambodia and provides business support to them, shared with us his plan to increase the income of Cambodians. Ms. Nukui runs a souvenir shop in Cambodia with the aim of encouraging women to become economically independent, and organizes the Girls Dream Contest with the aim of helping Cambodian women to start their own businesses. In the future, she would like to build a school where Cambodian women can learn about small business, and she hopes to transfer this model to other developing countries. This group wants to contribute to the economic development of society by enriching the lives of low-income people through business.

ii). The third group is those who were not originally inclined to go abroad but chose to work outside their home country for some reason. An example of this group is Mr. Abe, who chose to work as a local staff member for a prominent Japanese company in Bangkok after failing to get a job at his first-choice company during his job search in Japan, as described in Chapter 4.

iv). The fourth group is those who decided to work abroad as an escape from Japan. Although not introduced in this book, there are those who worked for a company in Japan, however, they didn't last long in that environment, so they re-entered the workforce at a small to medium-sized Japanese company overseas.

E). Career Anchors and Mottos

Edgar H. Schein uses the term career anchor to explain the concept of professional self-image. The term career anchor is defined as "an anchor that guides and directs an individual's career, a self-concept that organizes and determines career decisions." The term is widely used in the U.S., but it is not widely used in Japan. Therefore, when we asked the respondents about their career anchors, we also used the term for the Japanese equivalent, "*zayu-no-mei* 座有の銘" which translates to motto.

Respondents stated the following mottos which may be easy to recognize in various languages:

- *"If you do it, you will get it; if you don't do it, you won't get it"*
- *"You only have one life. Live a life where you can experience the richness and joy of life"*

- *"A pinch is an opportunity"*
- *"People become who they think they are"*
- *"Be natural, harmonious, and sharing"*
- *"Priorities are the most important. If you make the right choices, you will succeed" "If you can make the people around you happy, you will be happy. You can do it. There is nothing that others can do that you cannot do. Once you start doing something, you have to make the people around you happy."*

Having a career anchor can be a strong ally in overcoming adversity in a foreign environment where it is often difficult to perform daily tasks and control oneself. According to Schein, a career anchor consists of three elements that are discovered after a person has worked for several years.

- Perceived talents and abilities (based on actual success in a variety of work environments)
- Perceived motivation and desire (based on real-world opportunities and feedback from others)
- Perceived attitudes and values (based on actual conflicts between the self and the norms and values of the organization and work environment).

The career anchors presented in this book can be categorized as shown in Table 2. What we can see from the table is that not a single person thinks that they have any special talent or ability. It shows that successful entrepreneurs place more importance on their self-philosophies such as their motivations, desires, values, and attitudes rather than on their talents and abilities.

Components of a Career Anchor	Career Anchor, Motto
1) Self-perceived talents and abilities	Not applicable
2) Self-perceived motivations and desires	<i>If you do it, you will get it. If you don't do it, you won't get it.</i>
	<i>Create your own opportunities and change yourself with machines.</i>
	<i>You only live once. Live a life where you can experience the richness and joy of life.</i>
	<i>Priorities are the most important thing, and if you make the right choices, you will succeed.</i>
	<i>Polish your axe, make your needle</i>
	<i>Difficulties are only given to those who can overcome them.</i>
3) Self-perceived attitudes and values	<i>The impermanence of all things</i>
	<i>Gaining trust and being honest</i>
	<i>The accumulation of small trust becomes a big business.</i>
	<i>Never forget a debt of gratitude</i>
	<i>Naturalness, harmony, and sharing</i>
	<i>A pinch is an opportunity. People become who they think they are</i>
	<i>Habits change lives.</i>
	<i>Be selfless with independence and self-respect</i>
	<i>Always smile</i>
	<i>Never lose your core.</i>
	<i>Enjoy working.</i>
	<i>When you are in trouble, your customers will help you.</i>
	<i>One meeting at a time</i>

Table 2: Components of Career Anchors and Mottos

F). The Importance of Mentors

In the early stages of one's career, it is difficult to know what choices and decisions to make. A mentor is a good guide and advisor during the period of career development. Mentors are senior people in life who can be trusted to help you with your career development and life problems.

Many of the people introduced in this book had a mentor. Some had only one mentor, while others had multiple mentors. When they made big decisions, they received advice from their mentors and ultimately made the decisions on their own. Having a mentor can be said to reduce business risks.

G). Support from Family

Family support is an important facilitator in working abroad. Family support is an important facilitator in working abroad. For example, Mr. Abe's father in Bangkok had worked as an engineer in China and encouraged his son to work as a local staff for a prominent Japanese company in Bangkok instead of working for a Japanese company. Ms. Kurihara, who sells Japanese healthful products in Bangkok, brought her family to Bangkok after the Great East Japan Earthquake. It is reassuring to have one's family by one's side to support one in promoting one's business.

Looking back at Chapters 3 to 9 of this book, the only differences between men and women were the age at which they started their businesses and the amount of capital they had to start. Therefore, the above characteristics can be considered as push factors for working abroad. We can see that people who start their own businesses overseas have many push factors and few pull factors. In other words, the more push factors a person has, the more successful he or she will be in starting a business overseas.

3. Career Planning

If you want to be active overseas in the future, or if you want to live autonomously without depending on an organization, it is important to make a career plan early, clarify the field you want to pursue as a profession during your university years, and be proactive in building your own career even after you find a job. In order to work with foreigners on an equal footing, you need to acquire not only language skills and knowledge of your field, but also cross-cultural communication skills. This requires effective preparation from the time you are a student for your future professional life. Here are some points to keep in mind.

The first is to clarify what field and type of work you want to do in your professional life. First, you need to read relevant books, meet and talk to people who work in the field you want to specialize in, and clarify your future field of specialization to

some extent.

Secondly, you need to measure your language skills. Many entrepreneurs have found it beneficial to have work experience in Japan. Many large companies require new employees to take the TOEIC test to measure their language skills. In addition, to enter a graduate school overseas, students are required to submit TOEFL (iBT) scores for the U.S. and IELTS scores for the U.K., depending on the country they are studying in. If your job requires you to work overseas, you will be required to write documents in English. It is recommended that you strengthen your reading comprehension skills by familiarizing yourself with English newspapers such as The New York Times and The International Herald Tribune, as well as English websites on the web.

The third is to spend time in an emerging Asian country. The experience of living in an emerging or developing country as a student will give you more options in your professional life.

The fourth is to participate in an internship abroad. Regardless of the size of the company, internship programs are widely available for undergraduate and graduate students. Having an internship at a company in the field of your choice will make it easier for you to design your future career.

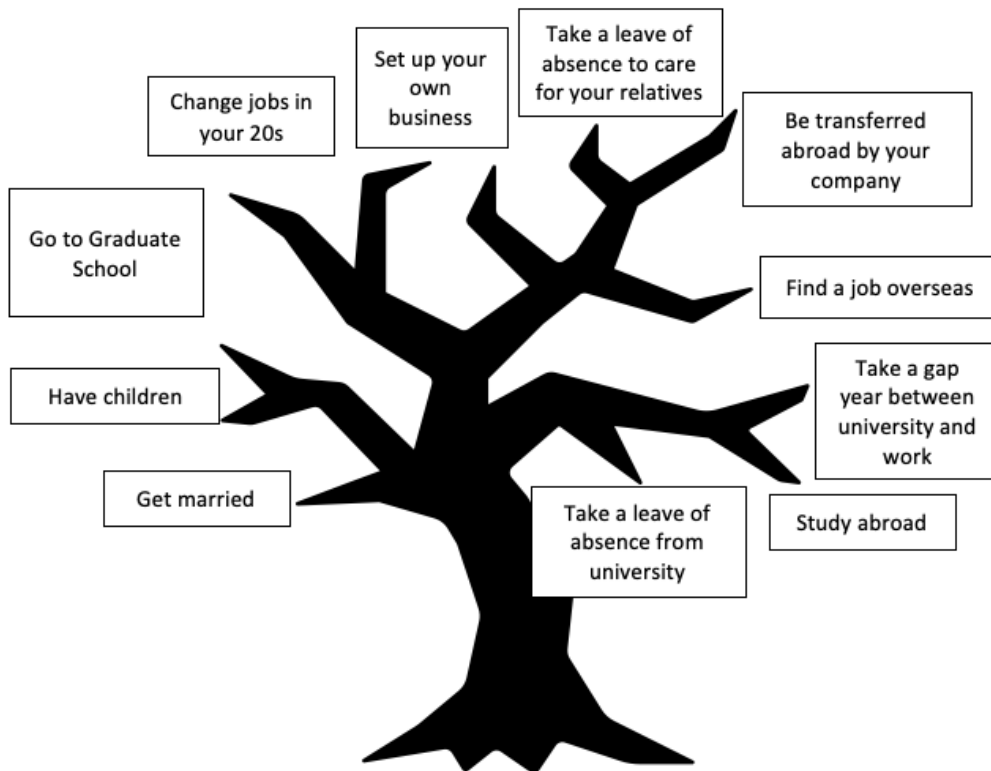
The fifth is to improve your computer skills. When you work overseas, you will be required to have a high level of computer skills in the workplace. Therefore, it is essential to learn how to use a computer from the time you are a student.

Tasks

1. Prepare a personal statement about yourself. Consider it as a type of sales pitch that will help you to promote your strengths and weaknesses. Ask your friends, family, or seminar teachers for their ideas.
2. What is your career anchor (your motto)? If you do not have a career anchor, please refer to Table 2 for some ideas.
3. Look at Figure 1. This decision tree shows you all the different situations you may face in your future. The decisions you make could have an impact on your career. Think about what you would do in each situation and discuss your ideas with your classmates. For example, *if you were transferred abroad by your company what would you need to do to*

prepare? Write an essay describing the path you would most like to take and why.

Figure 1. Decision Tree



English Supplementary Reading

Covey, S. R. (2004) *The 7 habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic*. New York: Free Press. Chicago.

Inkson, K. (2007). *Understanding Careers: the Metaphors of Working Lives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting & task performance*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall.

O'Regan, M (2010) 'Challenging Conventional Thinking about 'career' in the Higher Education Curriculum' *Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal*, 23: 20-24.

Sinek, S. (2011) *Start with Why*. Penguin Books.

Japanese Supplementary Reading

- 甘粕正（2007）『客家大富豪 18 の金言』講談社。
- クレイソン G.S. (2021) 『バビロン大富豪の教え』文響社。
- 林吉郎（1994）『異文化インターフェイス経営』 日本経済新聞社。
- 末永國紀（2011）『近江商人三方よし経営に学ぶ』ミネルヴァ書房