Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this module, students will be equipped with the tools they need to strategically shape their future careers. They will have gained an in-depth understanding of different career theories and models and be able to apply these to and reflect on their own personal situation. This will enable them to envision their aspired career and formulate a clear concept.

Students will have critically examined the concept of career planning, which will enable them to make well-informed decisions for their professional development. They will appreciate the importance of strategic career planning and understand how to incorporate it into their individual career plans.

Furthermore, students will understand the importance of self-assessment and be able to apply it to themselves, having identified their unique skills, interests, values, strengths, and competencies.

Students will appreciate the value of building and maintaining their own personal brand. They will understand global career principles and will be adept at operating in an international environment. They will have explored a variety of job-hunting and application processes in a national and international context.

# Unit 6 – Developing a Career Strategy and Managing Your Career

Study Goals

On completing this unit, you will be able to ...

… understand the importance of career capital – from both the employee’s and the employer’s perspective.

… name the various career goal levels and distinguish these from private-life goals.

… distinguish between objective and subjective career success and understand the importance of considering each of them separately.

… use the Ikigai model to evaluate your own competencies and interests.

… understand the advantages and the risks of personal branding for your own career.

# 6. Developing a Career Strategy and Managing Your Career

### Introduction/Case Study

After graduating with a degree in computer science, Kim began her career at a small tech start-up, where she acquired solid expertise and refined her programming skills. Her exceptional performance and enthusiasm for new technologies did not go unrecognized, and she soon found herself involved in a series of challenging projects. This allowed her to broaden her knowledge and deepen her web development and database design skills.

Throughout her career, Kim has actively invested in her education, attending training courses, workshops, and conferences to keep abreast of the latest trends and technologies in software development. She also taught herself new programming languages and frameworks with a view to broadening her expertise and enhancing her versatility as a developer.

Over time, Kim set herself a series of clearly defined career goals. She aspires to a position as technical director in an established, medium-sized software company. To achieve this goal, she has developed a personal development concept which entails acquiring leadership skills as well as project management and team leadership experience. She actively develops her communication and presentation skills to help her persuade others of her ideas and solutions.

Kim regularly reflects on her career success and personal branding. She takes the time to analyze and learn from her past successes and challenges. She also asks managers and colleagues for feedback to help identify her strengths and improve her weaknesses. She cultivates a professional network by participating in industry events, where she can forge contacts and exchange ideas. She also uses online platforms to showcase herself as an expert and share her expertise with others.

Kim understands that personal branding is an essential part of her professional development. She is careful to ensure that her online profiles and communications reflect her expertise, enthusiasm, and professionalism. She positions herself as a committed developer who continuously evolves and adds value for her employers and projects. Kim knows that her personal branding helps her tap into new career opportunities and advance her career.

Overall, Kim has created a solid foundation for her career development by building her career capital, setting clear career goals, and continually reflecting on her career success and personal branding. Her expertise, her willingness to learn, and her professional approach make her a sought-after software developer and will help her achieve her long-term career goals.

## 6.1 Career Capital

For some time, employees with sought-after skills have been given access to opportunities in other companies and other countries. In the labor market, this value is known as career capital – the combination of individual characteristics, skills, competencies, and personal networks developed by an individual over the course of their career (Böhmer & Schinnenburg, 2018). This career capital (also known as **human capital** in its broadest sense) is specific to each individual and can be applied in a work context. Its value for the employer equates to the employee’s market value (Litz, 2012, p. 65).

**Human capital**

A person’s knowledge, skills, and education (encompassing formal education, as well as informal learning and developmental experiences).

Employees’ career capital is becoming increasingly important, especially when there is a shortage of skilled workers. The more you define your own goals and values, obtain work experience, expertise, and networks, and engage in personal development, the more career capital you accumulate. This accumulation gives you the freedom to choose where to work (Litz, 2012). People with extensive career capital tend to achieve better positions, higher salaries, and greater career success than those with less career capital.

Litz (2012, pp. 65–71) describes four types of career capital:

* **Economic capital:** Throughout a career, people invest their own or external economic capital in acquiring qualifications and experience. Examples include investments in qualifications, training, and continuing professional development (CPD), such as an expensive MBA degree or qualification as a supervisory board member.
* **Social capital:** A person’s relationships, networks, and contacts (including both professional and personal) are their social capital. Social capital may help people to access help and resolve professional issues more quickly. Since networks also cost time and money, these resources must be deployed in a targeted manner. For example, resilient networks may be found in family-owned companies or in the tech and sustainability sectors.
* **Cultural capital:** This refers to people’s different values, norms, and cultural abilities. It includes knowledge of cultural differences and the ability to work successfully in different cultural contexts. This may extend to different national cultures as well as your own origins and membership of a social scene or grouping. Examples include people who have lived in different cultures, such as a music producer with many years of experience and extensive knowledge of different music genres from working in different countries.
* **Symbolic capital:** This includes a person’s knowledge, skills, and education (encompassing formal education, as well as informal learning and developmental experiences). Beyond college and vocational qualifications and certificates, this also includes skills derived from previous experience, such as certificates or training courses at renowned start-ups or respected management consultancies.

Figure 22: Career Capital

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Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Litz, 2012, p. 67.

The different types of capital may be grouped into two key dimensions. Transformability indicates how simple or difficult it is to transform one type of career capital into a different type. One example when moving jobs might mean weighing up how much capital you have already invested in your current job and how much of it could be transferred if you move. In other words, this dimension concerns the ability of capital to be transformed in the event of change. Transformable capital means that your accumulated qualifications and experience are sufficiently flexible to be transferable to a different sector or career opportunity. It demonstrates the ability of capital to adapt to new requirements and be used in different contexts. For example, a person with strong analytical and problem-solving skills might modify and apply these skills to the areas of finance, marketing, or human resource management when addressing complex challenges.

The vertical axis in the diagram represents the sustainability dimension. It indicates how readily capital may be used as a long-term asset and resource. In relation to career capital, sustainability might mean your accumulated qualifications and experience remaining relevant and sought-after in the future and offering long-term career opportunities. For example, expertise in the renewable energies or artificial intelligence sector is relevant, because these industries will continue to grow in the long term and such knowledge will therefore be in demand. A person with solid expertise in one of these areas has a good chance of benefiting in the long term from advancements in the industry.

These dimensions of sustainability and transformability are pivotal to strategic career planning and an important consideration when investing capital in developing your own skills and competencies. They help you achieve your long-term career goals and take advantage of opportunities for modifying and transforming your career.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ *Career capital covers a variety of resources such as education, skills, experiences, and relationships that help a person achieve professional success and meet their career goals*.

¨ Career capital is a static concept and does not change over time. Once accumulated, capital remains unchanged and has no impact on professional success.

¨ *In the long term, investing time, money, and energy in developing your career capital may lead to higher income opportunities, professional flexibility, and job satisfaction.*

## 6.2 Career Goals

Goals play a key role in our day-to-day working and private lives. “They are what drive us in a particular direction and determine which information in our environment is important and meaningful to us, how long and how persistently we work toward certain things, the intensity we employ, and the decisions we make” (Maier, Heckhausen, & Steinmann, 2019, S. 194). Goals give guidance, structure, and meaning to our lives. They help to concretize our desires, dreams, and ambitions and translate them into measurable results. As such, goals help you control your own development and advance on a personal and professional level. Desirable goals are often viewed as something positive, a “source of well-being,” because they provide purpose and time scales (Maier, Heckhausen, & Steinmann, 2019, S. 195).

We set and pursue goals at various levels, both in our private lives and in our careers. We distinguish between the following goals (Maier, Heckhausen, & Steinmann, 2019, S. 196):

* **General life goals:** These affect the way we lead our lives and our well-being. Private life goals often focus on areas such as health, relationships, personal development, finances, and leisure activities. For example, a general life goal could be to achieve a healthy work-life balance and to have time for your family as well as for your hobbies.
* Overarching life goals may also be relevant to your career. For example, a career goal at this level might be to become self-employed, reach a specific position, or receive a particular award.
* **Personal goals:** In our private lives, personal goals are more specific and tend to focus on individual wishes and needs. They may include both short-term and long-term goals. Examples of personal goals might be to take regular exercise, to learn a new skill, to travel, or to read a certain number of books per year.
* Personal goals can also play a vital role in our careers. Individual career goals might be to develop a particular skill, to advance to a leadership position, or to achieve specific performance indicators.
* **Resolutions:** Resolutions are commitments or intentions for the future, and often entail changes or improvements. In our private life, an example of a resolution might be to spend less time on social media or to communicate more regularly with the family.
* In a career context, resolutions may represent an important step toward a personal goal. A career-related resolution might be to communicate more effectively or to invest more time in professional development.

As the following diagram illustrates, it is possible to keep career goals separate from private life goals. Our success at achieving this is generally referred to as a work-life balance – i.e., striking a good balance between private life and career, between personal and professional life.

Figure 23: Career Goals and Private Goals

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Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Maier et al., 2019, p. 196.

Brunstein and Maier (Das Streben nach persönlichen Zielen: Emotionales Wohlbefinden und proaktive Entwicklung über die Lebensspanne, 2002) describe the journey to developing your own goals as a creative process: The first step is to formulate meaningful intentions and combine them with action plans for achieving these goals. However, remember that **goal commitment** and goal achievability are interrelated and crucial to our subjective well-being (Dargel, 2005, S. 56). In other words, the more goals you pursue and achieve, the greater your sense of well-being.

**Goal commitment**

The determination to pursue your own goals.

In other words, a determined individual is highly committed to achieving their goals. They have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, and are willing to invest time and effort, even during difficult periods, or to seek alternative strategies for achieving their goals. A goal’s achievability may be influenced by favorable or unfavorable external living conditions. When an individual perceives the conditions as very favorable, they will often have an opportunity to move closer to their goal. They can control the goal achievement process themselves.

However, while a high degree of determination is essential, it is not in itself sufficient for achieving your goals. There must be a good fit between determination and achievability, and the interplay between these two factors will impact your progress toward achieving your goals. At the same time, the model explains that a high degree of goal achievement influences our subjective well-being.

Alongside goal commitment and the achievability of personal goals, Brunstein and Maier (Das Streben nach persönlichen Zielen: Emotionales Wohlbefinden und proaktive Entwicklung über die Lebensspanne, 2002) also define a third condition for achieving a high level of well-being: Successful goal achievement will not evoke positive feelings and satisfaction with your own life unless the goals reflect your inner needs (implicit motivation disposition). It is therefore important to understand your own motivations, values, and personality and to continually readjust accordingly.

The following chart illustrates the correlations described by this model: The more you pursue your own goals (high goal commitment) and achieve them (goal progress), the greater your subjective well-being. There are two key factors at play here: Achievability influences progress toward your goals. However zealous you are and however much effort you put in, you cannot train as a pilot if you have an uncontrollable fear of heights, for example. At the same time, you will not have a high level of subjective well-being if achieving your goals (goal progress) does not reflect your own needs. If Alice, a graphic designer, wants to improve her animation skills and sets herself realistic goals, her subjective well-being may not improve if this makes her feel stressed and lacks the time for activities she enjoys. She has set herself this goal only because she believes it will help her career – but she has no intrinsic interest or passion for animation, which makes her unhappy.

Figure 24: Goal Commitment Achievability Model

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Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Created on behalf of the IU, 2023, based on Maier et al., 2019, p. 196.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please describe the importance of career goals:

*Career goals are the personal, job-related goals and ambitions a person wants to achieve over the course of their career. They provide a template for career planning, professional development, and career success.*

2. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ Career goals are all about financial success and neglect other important aspects such as work-life balance and personal satisfaction.

¨ *Career goals help provide a clear direction for career development and motivate people to pursue certain milestones and successes.*

## 6.3 Career Success

Career success is defined as an individual’s goals, progress, and satisfaction with their career. Arthur et al. (Career success in a boundaryless world, 2005, S. 179) define career success as follows: “Career success may be defined as the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person’s work experiences over time.” Academics distinguish between the objective and subjective components of career success (Reichel, et al., 2006). Objective career success is interpreted as “actual” career success, while subjective success is “perceived” success (Volmer & Köppe, 2019, S. 367). We will discuss both variants below.

### Objective and Subjective Career Success

Objective career success refers to a person’s measurable, visible success in their career. This may be measured by objective criteria such as salary, promotions, career grades, manager-to-staff ratios, performance reviews, or professional awards (Böhmer & Schinnenburg, 2018). Objective career success focuses on external indicators and external recognition and is often determined by the organization or industry. It may provide objective confirmation of a person’s professional performance and progress (Biemann & Weckmüller, Subjektiver und objektiver Karriereerfolg, 2016).

However, there is growing emphasis on the importance of subjective perceptions of career success (Böhmer & Schinnenburg, 2018). Subjective career success is a person’s individual perception and assessment of and satisfaction with their own career, as well as their personal satisfaction with their achievements to date. Subjective career success is based on personal goals, values, expectations, and ideas of success. In other words, you should ask yourself: How would I rate my individual satisfaction? What about professional fulfilment? How satisfied am I with my current work-life balance? How do I define professional development and the achievement of my personal goals?

**Self-determination**

An individual’s right or ability to make decisions and actions autonomously and independently, without undue influence from other persons or external circumstances.

In a subjective career success context, high levels of work and career satisfaction are often linked to maximum **self-determination**. Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory is based on the fundamental idea that people are motivated to control and regulate their own behavior. The assumption is that every human being has a basic need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These basic needs must be met for an individual to feel motivated and satisfied. The self-determination theory is therefore closely aligned with the intrinsic motivation described by Barbuto and Scholl, whose model comprises the following components:

1. **Autonomy** means control of your own behavior. An autonomous individual can decide for themselves what they want to do and how they want to act without being influenced by external factors.
2. **Competence** is knowing that you can complete a task successfully. A competent individual feels they have a good command of a skill or task.
3. **Relatedness** is a person’s connection with other people. People with a sense of belonging feel accepted and supported by their social environment.

Deci and Ryan (2000) stress the importance of meeting these basic needs so that an individual can develop intrinsic motivation from within and without reliance on external factors. If a manager feels that they are not as effective as they would like to be, this may be due to a lack of competence, autonomy, or relatedness. It is therefore important for managers to be familiar with their own needs if they are to develop an understanding of their goals (Jonas, Mühlberger, Böhm, & Esser, 2019, S. 819).

The self-determination theory also stresses the importance of extrinsic motivation, but only if it is supportive and not controlling. Supportive extrinsic motivation is when a person feels motivated to perform an activity in order to receive a reward they will appreciate or progress toward a goal that is important to them. By contrast, controlling extrinsic motivation is when a person feels motivated to perform an activity because it is expected by others or to avoid punishment.

The self-determination theory explains what motivates people to control and regulate their behavior, and the role played by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It stresses the importance of intrinsic motivation and the supporting role of extrinsic motivation and defines subjective career success as satisfaction with your own career.

### Interplay Between Objective and Subjective Career Success

Objective and subjective career success are not always congruent, as indicated in a meta-study by Ng et al. (Predictors of objective and subjective career success: A meta-analysis, 2005), which found minimal **correlation** between subjective and objective career success. This means that a person might be objectively successful according to defined external success criteria yet subjectively dissatisfied or unfulfilled. Conversely, a person might be subjectively successful if they achieve their personal goals and values and experience work satisfaction, despite not having objectively achieved the highest career strata. Let’s illustrate this with an example.

**Correlation**

In statistics, correlation measures the statistical relationship or connection between two variables and describes the strength and direction of this relationship.

Anna and David work for the same company. In recent years, Anna has been promoted several times, earns a high salary, and has plenty of responsibility. She has achieved her goals in terms of objective career success and is recognized by the organization for her achievements. From an objective perspective, Anna is considered successful. By contrast, David has received fewer promotions over the same period and his salary has remained relatively stable. However, he has always found his work to be fulfilling and challenging. He has been involved in some interesting projects which have enabled him to hone his skills and to develop both personally and professionally. He feels a high level of job satisfaction and professional fulfillment. Although Anna has objectively achieved higher status and external recognition, subjectively she may feel dissatisfied or stressed. On the other hand, David enjoys subjective career success because of his personal fulfilment and satisfaction, but he has not received the same objective, external recognition as Anna.

Countless studies have considered the importance of career success and how it differs depending on age, gender, and motivation (refer to the studies by Spurk, 2019; Böhmer & Schinnenburg, 2018; Biemann & Weckmüller, 2016; Ng et al., 2005; Arthur et al., 2005). Essentially, they all drew similar conclusions: Career success cannot be measured solely by external factors, but must also consider the individual’s perspective, values, and goals. While some people focus on financial success and external recognition, others may put a greater emphasis on fulfillment, personal development, or work-life balance as indicators of success. What is more, younger people may define career success differently than those at a later stage of their career. Every individual has different definitions and priorities regarding their own career success, and it is important to recognize and respect this diversity.

Knowledge of career success and the multiple factors affecting it will help you develop a more comprehensive understanding of your own success. Rather than measuring success purely in terms of external measures such as money or recognition, you will understand the role of individual perspectives, values, and goals in individual career success. It will become clear that individuals have different priorities, be it financial success, professional fulfilment, personal development, or work-life balance. This knowledge helps us recognize and respect the many different definitions of career success. It also allows you to set your own goals and priorities in a more conscious way and to appreciate diversity in other people.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please describe how objective career success differs from subjective career success:

**Ikigai**

The Japanese philosophy of Ikigai explores the overarching meaning of life.

*Objective career success refers to measurable external indicators such as salary, promotions, and professional awards, while subjective career success refers to a person’s individual perceptions, satisfaction, and fulfillment in relation to their career.*

2. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ Subjective career success depends solely on external factors such as how prestigious the company or role is. (F)

¨ Objective career success is determined solely by personal opinions and attitudes and cannot be measured objectively. (F)

## 6.4 Self-Reflection

Self-reflection plays a crucial role in career development and design, especially when building career capital, setting career goals, and defining career success (both objective and subjective). Self-reflection means consciously examining your own strengths, weaknesses, interests, and values. By regularly taking time for self-reflection, you can consciously shape your own career and advance your professional development in line with your individual needs and ideas.

### The Ikigai Model of Self-Reflection

The **Ikigai** model offers a model for self-reflection on your own career development (García & Miralles, 2016). The Ikigai model is a concept derived from Japanese culture to help people find their life’s purpose and fulfilment. It combines the elements of vocation, profession, passion, and mission, with a holistic view of human beings at its center. The overlapping intersection between passion, mission, profession, and vocation offers the greatest likelihood of both career success and personal satisfaction.

The four elements of this model converge at the intersection:

* **Vocation:** What a person enjoys doing and is fulfilled by.
* **Profession:** The profession that a person is pursuing or wishes to pursue.
* **Passion:** The things a person is passionate about and which bring them joy.
* **Our mission:** A person’s beliefs and values that are important to them.

The Ikigai model aspires to strike the right balance between these four elements in order to lead a fulfilled and satisfied life. When all four areas are interconnected, a person utilizes their skills and strengths to do something they feel is important and which also gives them pleasure. This can contribute toward self-realization and an enhanced quality of life.

The Ikigai model is a useful tool for self-reflection and self-discovery. It may help people to consciously explore their own interests, strengths, and abilities, and therefore find a way to achieve greater satisfaction and fulfilment in life.

Figure 25: Ikigai Model



Source: Created on behalf of the IU, 2023, based on García & Miralles, 2016, p. 16.

This is illustrated by the following example: For years, Kai has been fascinated by the potential of artificial intelligence, especially within a sustainability context, and has a doctorate in this subject. Having conducted countless conversations with experts in the field, and having read extensive studies, reports, and trend analyses, he is well-qualified to predict the industry’s development over the next few years. He has come up with an idea about building an AI platform to help companies monitor their sustainability requirements, obtain recommendations, and achieve their sustainability goals. His Ikigai model looks like this, leading him to conclude that a career as an entrepreneur in the **Tech4Good** segment could be the perfect fit for him.

**Tech4Good**

The use of technology (such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, blockchain) and innovations to solve social problems and create positive social impact for the benefit of society.

Figure 26: Example of a Completed Ikigai Model



Source: Created on behalf of the IU, 2023.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ The Japanese philosophy of Ikigai explores the fastest way to carve out a career.

¨ The Ikigai model implies that there is only one ideal career path that perfectly unites all the model’s elements, and that any other career choice will be less successful or less fulfilling.

¨ *The Ikigai model stresses the importance of aligning your work with your personal passions and strengths to achieve a fulfilling career.*

## 6.5 Personal Branding

Personal branding is an increasingly important concept in today’s world of work. It describes an individual’s conscious positioning and communication as a brand in order to communicate their individual personality, skills, experiences, and values (Schulz, 2020, S. 24).

A brand is defined as a combined identity that carries a name or a prominent trademark and evokes a particular idea or perception among target groups. In people’s minds, these ideas are distinct from other competing objects and affect the target groups’ behavior, especially their opinions and preferences about the brand (Radtke, 2014, S. 1).

Figure 27: Definition of Brand as an Impact-Driven System

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Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Radtke, 2014, p. 2.

A personal brand is seen as “the exaggerated image of an individual in the minds of others” (Spall & Schmidt, 2019, S. 21). The function of a strong personal brand is to identify and differentiate. Schulz argues that you should explore various categories when developing your own positioning (Das große Personal-Branding-Handbuch, 2020, S. 30) :

1. **Origin:** When establishing yourself as a brand, it is important to consider your past experiences and skills. This information is critical for developing an appropriate strategy and shaping your own personal brand.
2. **Identity:** Your identity is made up of your personality, character, skills, competencies, and other characteristics that give you charisma and market appeal.
3. **Big picture/legacy:** The “big picture” or vision is your long-term goal, in other words, the contribution you will leave behind as a legacy. It is important to define this long-term goal and align your overall operational focus with it.
4. **Target group/topic:** Having identified an appropriate, clearly defined target group which is interested in your personal brand messages, you must tailor your wording and content to that specific target group. Target groups may be investors, new employers, conference and workshop organizers, or professional networks.

**Consumer branding**

Consumer branding focuses on shaping a product brand’s image and identity in the eyes of consumers, while personal branding is about building and showcasing an individual person’s image and identity as a brand.

1. **Flash points:** Flash points are critical concerns and problems in the eyes of your customers. The key here is to understand how to meet customers’ needs and offer successful solutions. You draw on this content as the basis for developing your own topics.
2. **Need satisfaction:** Your next focus should be on solving the target group’s identified problems (as in conventional **consumer branding**, we refer to them as ‘customers’). Consider how best to meet customers’ needs, perhaps by listing products, topics, or services that could help alleviate the pressure on them.
3. **Legitimation:** Clarify what entitles a certain individual to represent a particular product or business model with their personal brand or to be perceived as an expert. Opinions are “legitimized” with knowledge and skills. Expertise and experience in a particular field add credibility and authenticity (for example, qualifications, education, higher education, book author, lecturer, projects, references, life experience, professional background).
4. **Market competitors and differentiation from the competition:** This means setting your personal brand apart from your competitors. It entails examining how others position themselves (competition analysis) and setting your brand apart from them by elucidating what distinguishes your performance from others and which industry-standard measures must be taken. This, combined with your existing positioning content, helps to differentiate you from your competitors and communicate the desired external impact.

Personal branding can play a critical role in career development, as it helps to differentiate your profile, maximize career opportunities, and build a strong professional identity. It is not so much the level of awareness of an individual with personal branding that is important here, but their value contribution for specific target groups (Zayats, 2020). Value contribution may include skills, experiences, strengths, network, knowledge, personality, etc. (Zayats, 2020, S. 11). Personal branding is therefore not about staging and self-presentation for its own sake.

To build a successful personal brand, you need to understand your target audience. There are often suitable professional networks in which to build your brand, or you may wish to reach out to particular groups of customers, employees, or the general public (Spall & Schmidt, 2019, S. 22). The key is to develop a clear message and position, to communicate consistently and authentically, and to invest continuously in your own development. It takes time, commitment, and a strategic approach to build and maintain your desired image and reputation. You may need to readjust your direction to reflect a changing environment. Authenticity is vital, because these days, staging and pretense are soon unmasked (Schulz, 2020, pp. 24–27).

The concept of “leadership branding” is also gaining traction among managers (Zeitler, 2020). The aim is to build your own personal brand and reputation in a way that also benefits the organization behind you, enabling it to attract more talents.

When positioning a personal brand, be mindful that all forms of visibility have consequences. When a person positions themselves as a brand, their opinions may polarize others, making them vulnerable (Schulz, 2020, S. 29). When building a strong personal brand, the values, opinions, or views that you represent may not be shared by everyone. This can provoke debate and controversy, as some people may reject or criticize the brand, particularly if it adopts a strong stance and uncompromising opinions. Especially in today’s digital world, where social media plays a vital role, personal brands attract public attention and may be more exposed to negative reactions. Consider the potential consequences in advance and approach cautiously before positioning yourself in this way.

Below are two examples illustrating the smart use of personal branding:

An entrepreneur wishing to establish a sustainable fashion label recognizes the importance of personal branding to the success of her company. She uses her personal brand to communicate her values, passion for sustainable fashion, and expertise in this sector. She speaks at sustainability conferences, publishes articles and blogs on relevant topics, and uses social media to showcase her vision and her company. Through consistent personal branding, she successfully establishes herself as a recognized expert in the sustainable fashion industry. This gives her company added credibility and visibility, which in turn attracts more customers and collaboration opportunities and enables her to build a strong brand presence.

An employee in the logistics industry recognizes that a strong personal branding strategy will help him position himself as an expert in his field and advance his career. He begins by sharing his knowledge and experience in specialist articles, speaking at conferences, and actively engaging in relevant professional organizations and networks. He also uses digital platforms such as LinkedIn to build his reputation as a subject matter expert by sharing informative articles, industry trends, and his own insights. His personal branding helps to boost his visibility in the logistics industry, where he earns a reputation as a trusted contact and is offered more professional opportunities, such as exciting projects, promotions, or the opportunity to work as a consultant for other companies.

Overall, personal branding can play a significant role in your career development by enabling you to define your professional identity, raise your visibility, and maximize career opportunities. It offers an opportunity to highlight your strengths, build a network, and demonstrate your expertise, which can lead to long-term professional success. However, it also comes with potential risks which must be considered from the outset.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please describe the importance of personal branding to career success:

*Personal branding can be crucial to career success, as it helps to distinguish your individual profile from others, improve your career opportunities, and build a strong professional identity.*

2. Please describe the risks of personal branding that should be considered in advance:

*Personal branding may pose an increased risk of polarization, as a brand’s strong positioning may stir up controversy. In addition, personal branding may make people more vulnerable, as a well-established brand attracts more public attention and potentially negative reactions.* *It is important to be aware of these risks and to develop suitable counteractive strategies. This includes thinking carefully about your own positioning, considering different viewpoints, and devising a thoughtfully considered personal branding strategy to address criticism and controversy.*

Summary

Employees with sought-after skills have access to job opportunities in different companies and countries. This is known as career capital. Career capital is entirely individual and equates to the employee’s market value for the employer. There is an important distinction between economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital.

Goals are an important part of day-to-day working and private life. They provide guidance and give structure and meaning to our lives. We distinguish between different levels of goals (general life goals, personal goals, and resolutions).

Career success refers to an individual’s achieved goals, progress, and satisfaction with their career and includes both an objective and a subjective component. It is important to recognize and respect individual differences and priorities in relation to career success.

Self-reflection plays a crucial role in career development. By consciously exploring our own strengths, weaknesses, interests, and values, self-reflection helps us to consciously shape our own career development according to our individual needs and ideas.

Personal branding is gaining traction as a way for individuals to deliberately position themselves as brands and communicate their personality, skills, and values. However, it also carries the risk of polarization and increased vulnerability.

# Unit 7 - Global Careers

Study Goals

On completion of this unit, you will be able to ...

… understand the different global career types and distinguish between the different types of international mobility. We will also explore the various career systems in different countries and regions.

… use Geert Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions to deduce which individual characteristics global leaders need to succeed in an international career context.

… elucidate the importance of interculturality in a global career context.

… describe the importance of diversity and inclusion for employees and explain why employers must address diversity and inclusion if they are to be successful in the long term.

# 7. Global Careers

### Introduction/Case Study

Stephanie, a marketing manager, has worked for an international company for the past ten years and has completed several international transfers and projects in different countries. She started her career in her home country, Germany, where she built a solid foundation in marketing. After a few years, she was offered the opportunity to move to the company’s Singapore office to develop marketing strategies for the Asian market. This first international experience opened her eyes to the challenges and opportunities of interculturalism. In Singapore, for example, she had to adapt to the hierarchical working culture and respectful tone. A few years later, she was transferred to Brazil, where she learned to handle the flexibility and spontaneity of Brazilian business culture. These challenges meant she had to adapt quickly to new cultural contexts, develop intercultural sensitivity, and understand different ways of thinking.

Throughout her global career, Stephanie realized that certain personal qualities and skills are critical for success. Being exceptionally open to new experiences enabled her to adapt to and learn from new cultures. Flexibility and adaptability are also important, as she is often confronted with unexpected situations and needs to act swiftly to find a solution. Intercultural communication skills, such as the ability to listen, observe, and adjust to other people’s perspectives, proved extremely useful in working successfully with colleagues and customers from different cultural backgrounds.

## 7.1 Global Career Types

In the wake of increasing economic globalization, global careers are becoming ever more important. Many experts are keen to seize the opportunity to develop their careers in other countries and acquire international experience.

We generally distinguish between the following global career types:

* **Global teamwork:** This refers to collaboration between professionals from different countries and cultures on joint projects. Collaborating in global teams helps professionals to develop their intercultural skills, gain new perspectives, and benefit from the diversity of team members.
* **Virtual collaboration:** Technological advances allow professionals to collaborate virtually on projects with colleagues from different countries and continents without being physically present. Technologies such as video conferencing and shared online platforms facilitate global collaboration and allow professionals to benefit from flexible working models.
* **International placements:** This refers to the assignment of skilled workers to company branches or subsidiaries abroad. International transfers may be either long-term, such as a management role in an international branch, or short-term for specific projects or training.

### International Mobility (International Placements)

As international work experience is recognized as an important route to acquiring intercultural skills (Ng, van Dyne, & Ang, 2009), a growing number of companies now require (multiple) international placements as a prerequisite for promotion to management positions (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2019). In doing so, they are pursuing multiple objectives:

* Building valuable networks within the company to forge contacts and relationships between colleagues in different departments and offices.
* Sharing experiences and ideas on a company-wide basis to encourage employees to learn from one another and develop innovative solutions.
* Working in an international environment helps develop intercultural skills and strengthen the company’s global perspective.
* Participating in decision-making processes at headquarters and individual branch offices encourages employees to play an active part in strategic decision-making and business development.
* Preparing employees for the challenges of leadership roles where a willingness to work internationally is vital for understanding and effectively managing the complexity and diversity of global markets.

Essentially, there are four categories of international activities, each of which has a different business and development value and is therefore reflected in different contracts and salary packages.

Figure 29: Typology of Long-Term Internationally Mobile Employees

Ein Bild, das Text, Screenshot, Schrift, Quittung enthält.

Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Andresen & Bergdolt, 2019, p. 613.

The vertical “initiator” axis dimension indicates who initiates the international activity, since this is not necessarily organized by the employer. The horizontal “organizational mobility” axis dimension indicates whether the international activity takes place within the employing organization (intra-organizational) or between organizations (inter-organizational).

For example, an international posting in a global group might be organized by the expert themselves. It could also be a secondment because that individual’s expertise will benefit a particular location. Specialists who work for an organization abroad for up to five years are also known as “**expatriates**” (Latzke, Schneidhofer, Mayrhofer, & Pernkopf, 2019).

International positions between organizations may also be organized by the employee themselves seeking out an interesting new role with another organization abroad; or they may be hired by another organization abroad (change of company).

**Expatriate**

An “expatriate” (or “expat”) is a person who temporarily lives and works in a country other than their home country.

We also distinguish between different international career paths. Authors Andresen and Bergdolt (2019) have identified four different international career paths:

* **Early international career:** The employee takes their first international mobility step early on in their career – for example, an internship abroad or a semester at a university abroad.
* **International organizational career:** The employee’s career path includes two or three international roles over the course of their career development, possibly working for the same company in different countries for limited periods.
* **International boundaryless career:** Multiple international career moves, possibly with different employers in different countries, which means that the employee acquires a very broad international experience.
* **Transnational career:** A career path characterized by a very high number of international moves. An individual with a transnational career may stay in several different countries for extended periods and work on global projects or in senior roles with global responsibility.

These four categories represent different levels and characteristics of international career paths. They illustrate the varying scope and intensity of international mobility and global experience, depending on the individual’s particular goals and preferences.

### International Career Systems

The different cultural contexts in different countries and regions (many British career patterns are mirrored in the Netherlands, for example) are reflected in specific career development and organizational structures. The following diagram illustrates management career model approaches in selected countries and country groups (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2019). Triangles represent the **career system** of a particular country or group of countries, while dashes within the pyramid represent the various career paths within that career system. Horizontal dashes represent development opportunities between different corporate functions, while vertical dashes illustrate possible hierarchical developments. The arrows pointing into the pyramid from outside represent the various ways of entering the career system of that model or country.

**Career system**

The structure, rules, and mechanisms that determine the career paths and development in a particular country or organization.

Figure 30: Management Career Models in Selected Countries and Country Groups

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Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Andresen & Bergdolt, 2019, p. 625.

Authors Andresen and Bergdolt (2019, pp. 624–627) describe the fundamental differences between selected career systems (although these should be seen as tendencies only) and attempt to elucidate the “career rules of play” prevailing in various national systems (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2019, S. 613) :

* **Germanic career system:** This system typifies a conventional management career in Germany based on functional career paths. Here, careers are typically centered around specialist roles and require potential candidates to ascend through various grades and hierarchical levels. University graduates cannot usually enter directly at senior management level and usually enter at a low level within the hierarchy.
* **Japanese career system:** Here too, graduates often join a company at the lowest hierarchical levels and undertake a series of different tasks and roles. After around five to eight years, they compete internally for promotion. Only the best and most talented professionals are promoted after four years, while the rest are promoted later or seek employment elsewhere.
* **Roman or Latin career system:** Here, potential managers may join directly at the middle or senior hierarchical level, provided they have attended an elite university, since their academic education is in itself a form of pre-selection. Their subsequent rate of promotion depends on their performance in comparison with their colleagues. Functional knowledge is less important than in the Germanic model, and the focus is more on a broader, generic skills profile.
* **Anglo-Dutch career system:** In this model, university graduates are often hired for technical or functional roles and subsequently promoted within these hierarchies. At an average age of around 30, candidates with general management potential are selected for promotion, and may be developed to senior management level where applicable.

While there are many different formats and undoubtedly many exceptions, it is worth considering these basic models when relocating abroad. If you wish to work in France, for example, you may find it particularly difficult to enter middle and senior management if you did not attend one of the so-called **Grandes Écoles** and belong to the relevant alumni networks.

**Grandes Écoles**

These higher education institutions in France offer highly selective and specialized educational programs (such as engineering, economics, political science, and administration).

International assignments lasting several years are highly regarded due to the knowledge and experience thereby acquired, so this should play an important part in your career planning. In the face of advancing globalization, international experience is often highly prized by companies for developing an in-depth understanding of international business (Biemann, Die Bedeutung internationaler Erfahrungen für den Karriereerfolg von Führungskräften, 2009). Many companies are therefore keen to hire top managers who have already demonstrated their skills in an international context.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ *Global career types allow individuals to develop their careers in other countries and acquire international experience.*

¨ Employers are not interested in supporting their employees in global careers, as this could lead to a loss of skilled workers in Germany.

¨ *The Japanese career model tends to focus on long-term employment with a single company and advancement within a fixed hierarchy.*

¨ The German career model is flexible and allows for rapid ascent based on performance – the most talented graduates can enter at senior management level straight from university.

## 7.2 Individual Characteristics of Global Leaders

In the search for globally applicable and practicable solutions, it is important to understand the differences between different cultures in the way they think, feel, and act. In the past, cooperation in sectors such as economics, technology, medicine, or politics was considered solely from a functional perspective. One reason why many solutions fail is that they do not allow for the differences between the way people and colleagues think (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, Lokales Denken, globales Handeln. Interkulturelle Zusammenarbeit und globales Management, 2017).

Geert Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions is a scientific concept that aims to elucidate the differences between national **cultures** in multiple dimensions. The theory was first developed in the 1970s by Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede and is based on empirical studies conducted in numerous countries.

**Culture**

Culture incorporates a set of social norms and reactions that influence and shape a nation’s behavior (Sure, 2017, S. 41-42).

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (The cultural relativity of organizational practices and theories, 1983) (Towers & Peppler, 2017; Sure, 2017, pp. 54–57) focus on four key dimensions for comparing national cultures. These are:

* **Individualism vs. collectivism:** The degree to which a society prioritizes individual freedom, independence, and personal success over community, cooperation, and group membership.
* Examples: In an individualistic culture like the USA, the focus is on individual freedom and personal success, often based on a performance system that rewards individuals for their individual performance. Conversely, in collectivist cultures like Japan, the focus is on group membership and collaboration. Companies stress the importance of teamwork and shared goals.
* **High vs. low power distance:** How hierarchical structures are perceived and accepted and the distribution of power in society. A high power distance indicates a strong hierarchy; the power and authority of those in higher positions must be respected and accepted. A low power distance is less concerned with hierarchical thinking and focuses instead on high levels of participation, communication on equal terms, and transparency in decision-making processes.
* Examples: In cultures with a high power distance like Saudi Arabia, there is a strong emphasis on hierarchy, and power and authority are respected. Superiors’ decisions are commonly accepted without objection. By contrast, cultures with a low power distance like Sweden have more equality and an appetite for involvement in decision-making processes. Companies often have flat hierarchies and participative leadership.
* **Strong vs. weak uncertainty avoidance:** The extent to which a society finds insecurity and ambiguity threatening and therefore seeks to avoid it. Cultures with a strong avoidance of uncertainty tend to prefer clear rules and structures, while cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance tend to be more tolerant of uncertainty and change.
* Examples: A culture with pronounced uncertainty avoidance, like Germany, prefers clear rules and structures in order to minimize uncertainty. Work and behavioral rules are often strictly adhered to. Cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance, such as the Netherlands, are more tolerant of uncertainty and change and companies are often open to new ideas and experiments.
* **Masculinity vs. femininity:** An emphasis on traditionally masculine or feminine values in society. Masculine cultures value competition, performance, and material success, while feminine cultures tend to be more centered around welfare, solidarity, and quality of life.
* Examples: A masculine culture like Mexico emphasizes values such as competition, performance, and material success. Corporate cultures are more likely to center around individual performance and career progress. By contrast, a feminine culture like Sweden places greater emphasis on welfare, solidarity, and quality of life. This explains why Sweden is renowned for its family-friendly working environment and flexible working hours.

More recently, Hofstede’s model has been supplemented by an additional dimension:

* **Long-term vs. short-term orientation:** This dimension concerns a society’s orientation toward long-term goals and maintaining traditions (long-term orientation), versus those which emphasize short-term satisfaction, spontaneity, and adaptability (short-term orientation).
* Examples: A long-term oriented culture like China values the preservation of traditions and forward planning. Within companies, decisions are often made with a very long-term view. In a more short-term oriented culture like the US, by contrast, the focus is on short-term needs and adaptability. This is also reflected in the rapid launch of new products to meet current trends.

Figure 31: Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Ein Bild, das Text, Screenshot, Diagramm, Schrift enthält.

Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Sure, 2017, p. 54.

Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions provides a framework for understanding the cultural differences between countries and analyzing their impact on a range of behavioral aspects and organizational dynamics.

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions can also help us to understand the individual characteristics of global managers in terms of their adaptability and effectiveness in different cultural environments. When considering the requirements for internationally successful managers, the cultural dimensions may be applied as follows:

* **Individualism vs. collectivism:** Globally active individuals should be adept at operating successfully in both individualistic and collectivist cultures. They should be skilled at identifying and balancing the needs and expectations of individuals and teams.
* **Power distance:** Managers should understand the varying manifestations of power distance in different countries and be aware of how power and authority are perceived. They should understand hierarchies and encourage participatory decision-making processes in cultures with low power distances.
* **Masculinity vs. femininity:** Global leaders should be able to adapt their leadership communication and styles to the values and expectations of masculine or feminine cultures. They should demonstrate flexibility and understand the importance of welfare, solidarity, and performance in different contexts.
* **Avoidance of uncertainty:** Managers must be adept at coping with uncertainty and ambiguity, especially in cultures with high levels of avoidance. They should be skilled at communicating clearly, assessing risks, and building trust to promote acceptance of change.
* **Long-term vs. short-term orientation:** Managers should understand the values and priorities of long-term and short-term oriented cultures. They should be able to formulate long-term strategic goals while facilitating short-term adjustments and flexibility in dynamic environments.

To operate effectively in global teams and intercultural situations, managers should reflect their own cultural heritage while also being open to learning about other cultures. However, generalized modeling of nations into cultural clusters and homogenized country groups based on similar cultural-dimensional manifestations should be avoided; each case should be approached individually and with a critical eye.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please describe the cultural dimensions according to Hofstede.

*Hofstede’s model of cultural dimensions measures different aspects of national cultures in five dimensions: Power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, avoidance of uncertainty, and long-term vs. short-term orientation.*

1. Please describe the implications of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions for the individual characteristics of global managers.

*These cultural dimensions have multiple implications for the individual characteristics of global managers. For example, managers from countries with a high power distance may have a more authoritative leadership style, while those from individualistic cultures may place greater emphasis on individual performance and autonomy. In addition, cultural differences relating to uncertainty avoidance may affect managers' appetite for risk and decision-making. It is important for global managers to be aware of the cultural dimensions and adapt their leadership style accordingly to work effectively with teams from different cultural backgrounds.*

## 7.3 The Role of Interculturalism

International experience is crucial in globalized organizations and when working with international business partners. Your insights into behavior in different environments will enable you to operate effectively in different languages and cultures (Sommerlatte, 2022). Intercultural skills, sensitivity to cultural differences, and the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts are critical for developing global managers. The ability to communicate interculturally, resolve conflicts, and build trust in multicultural environments are also key requirements. Experience acquired during vacations abroad is not enough. Having worked and lived in another country and culture makes all the difference.

Interculturalism is defined as the mutual communication process between individuals from different cultures who perceive themselves as having different identities (Barmeyer & Busch, 2023) and often do not share the same values and knowledge base. In a globalized context, interculturalism could be viewed as “de facto cultural differences” (Barmeyer & Busch, 2023, S. V). In an interculturalism context, this often translates into behavioral differences which may cause friction, so understanding is vital. At the same time, there are countless commonalities and behavioral similarities. Intercultural understanding includes the realization “that successful behavior that may be taken for granted in your home country will not necessarily produce the same effect in a partner country” (Troxler & Ternès, 2017, S. 5). The greater your intercultural understanding, the fewer irritations and differences you will experience in an intercultural context.

It is important for organizations to address interculturalism. Intercultural management means designing, managing, and improving organizational structures and processes to meet certain goals in environments where clashes between two or more cultures may arise (Troxler & Ternès, 2017, S. 5). In this type of situation, a high level of mutual intercultural understanding is necessary to develop in-depth familiarity with different cultural working practices in day-to-day cooperation with international teams.

Building intercultural competence is the key to achieving a high level of intercultural understanding. This is defined as follows: “Intercultural competence are the skills and abilities needed to see potential conflicts and understand their backgrounds in an intercultural context and adopt an ethically appropriate approach” (Ilkilic, 2023, S. 70). Intercultural competence is vital if people in different cultural contexts are to collaborate purposefully and without misunderstandings (Barmeyer & Busch, 2023, S. V).

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ Interculturalism inevitably leads to conflict and misunderstandings between people from different cultural backgrounds and precludes harmonious cooperation.

¨ *Interculturalism promotes an understanding and appreciation of different cultures, leading to respectful interaction and better collaboration in a globalized world.*

¨ *Interculturalism allows individuals to develop their intercultural skills and reinforce their adaptability in multicultural environments, which is highly valued in the global work environment.*

## 7.4 Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are crucial in today’s globalized work environment. In an increasingly interconnected world, where careers transcend national borders, promoting diversity and creating inclusive working environments is a key success factor for global careers.

### Diversity

Diversity describes "the dissimilarity, inequality, otherness, and individuality that arises from the myriad of differences between elements of a whole, such as the workforce of a company” (Becker, 2015, S. 18). Diversity incorporates multiple aspects, such as age and gender diversity, cultural or social diversity, diversity of characters, diversity of talents, diversity of lifestyles, diversity of mindsets and approaches (Becker, 2015, S. 18).

The terms ‘Managing Diversity’ and ‘Diversity Management’ describe an integrative approach. While often used synonymously, there are differences between the semantic meanings, objectives, and content of these two concepts:

* Managing Diversity means acknowledging differences and balancing the disadvantages for individuals or groups with specific characteristics. The objective of Managing Diversity is to mitigate or eliminate the disadvantages faced by individuals or groups without targeted intervention. The distribution of power and a sensitivity to diversity helps to determine whether and to what extent dominant groups and less dominant groups can work together and jointly shape the internal structures of organizations and institutions. Examples of passive protection measures include employment quotas for people with disabilities and promoting women at work through quota schemes. The aim is to minimize frictional losses, conflicts, and disadvantages to create a high-performing and equitable working environment.
* Diversity Management builds on the foundations of Managing Diversity and aims to proactively use diversity as a way of boosting competitiveness and financial success. It involves the targeted planning, design, and evaluation of diversity and integrates various aspects and dimensions of diversity into one holistic concept. Diversity Management encompasses the homogeneity and heterogeneity of people in an organization, aligned with the goals of the organization and the interests of employees (Becker, 2015, S. 19).

The following diagram illustrates the differences between Managing Diversity and Diversity Management – always with an emphasis on maximizing the benefits of diversity and minimizing disadvantages (Becker, 2015, S. 19) while achieving the so-called “dual optimum” between the benefits and costs of diversity.

Figure 32: Managing Diversity and Diversity Management

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Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Source: Becker, 2015, p. 23.

The concepts of Managing Diversity and Diversity Management complement one another and create one powerful, overall strategic concept. Diversity is not an end in itself; it is an enterprise resource for achieving business goals. Diversity must be actively managed through purposeful planning, design, and evaluation. The various aspects and dimensions of diversity must be coordinated and integrated into a holistic structure. By successfully creating unity from diversity, diversity management can significantly boost and safeguard a company’s competitiveness and economic success.

### Inclusion

In sociology, the term “inclusion” refers to involvement and equal participation. Inclusion and exclusion are inextricably linked. To understand inclusion, we must also explore its opposite, exclusion. Inclusion refers to the social integration of individuals, while exclusion denotes social marginalization. These are the two extremes of social participation (Behrendt, 2017, S. 51). Successful inclusion means that the individual participates more extensively in social life. As a process, inclusion aspires to increase social participation, which is achieved as a state after its successful implementation. Once a person is socially included, they subsequently remain in that state. Inclusion and exclusion could therefore be considered complementary on the continuum of social participation (Behrendt, 2017, S. 51).

In a corporate context, inclusion means that all employees are involved and participate in all areas of the organization (Sauberer, 2021, S. 19). Inclusion plays a significant role in a global career context by recognizing that all individuals, regardless of their origin, nationality, ethnicity, or cultural background, should have the same opportunities and chances to succeed in different professional environments and at a global level.

In a global career context, inclusion therefore means ensuring that working cultures and practices are diverse, open, and inclusive. Companies and organizations must remove barriers that might limit access to global career opportunities, such as language barriers, cultural prejudices, or discrimination based on origin or ethnicity.

Inclusion also means actively promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce incorporating different perspectives, experiences, and skills. Companies can achieve this through targeted recruitment and talent development programs, intercultural skills training, and by creating a supportive and respectful work environment.

From a global career perspective, inclusion is highly relevant to both companies and employees. As well as creating a more diverse and inclusive working environment, it can also boost innovation potential, bolster a company’s success in international markets, and improve employee retention and satisfaction levels. Inclusive work environments promote a climate of openness, respect, and equal opportunities. Individuals feel accepted, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential, which in turn has a positive impact on employee retention, motivation, and performance. Inclusion also facilitates access to education, development, and career advancement opportunities for people of all backgrounds. This helps to attract and retain talents who might otherwise be disadvantaged. Through targeted support programs, flexible working models, and specialist training, it is possible to create an inclusive corporate culture that attracts and retains a broad selection of skilled workers in the long term, especially in the context of a shortage of skilled workers.

### Diversity and Inclusion in a Global Career Context

Within an organization, the pursuit of global careers can contribute to greater diversity and inclusion in various ways:

* **Cultural diversity:** Working with people from different cultural backgrounds facilitates an exchange of perspectives, ideas, and innovations that inspires creative solutions and boosts global competitiveness.
* **Functional diversity:** A diversity of expertise and experience in a global work environment creates high-performing teams with a broad range of skills and knowledge. This promotes collaboration, knowledge transfer, and the development of innovative approaches.
* **Innovativeness:** Diversity and inclusion foster a broader range of perspectives, experiences, and mindsets, thereby making organizations more innovative and giving them a competitive edge.
* **Cultural sensitivity:** Organizations that promote diversity and inclusion develop greater cultural sensitivity and adapt their products, services, and business strategies more effectively to meet the needs of a global market.
* **Employee satisfaction and retention:** Inclusive work cultures boost employee satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty, resulting in increased retention and reduced turnover.

Against a backdrop of globalization and digital transformation, it is strategically important for the economy to not only meet legal requirements, but to proactively encourage diversity and inclusion (Sihn-Weber, 2021, S. 2). We cannot overemphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion in a global career context. Promoting diversity and creating inclusive working environments offers immense benefits for individual professionals and organizations alike. By recognizing every facet of diversity and developing an appreciation of different perspectives and experiences, we can create a dynamic and sustainable global employment environment.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please define diversity and describe its relevance for companies.

*The term diversity describes the variety, differences, and individuality arising from the myriad of characteristics and traits, such as age, gender, culture, social background, character, talents, lifestyles, attitudes, and approaches, within an entity such as a workforce. For companies, diversity in the workforce is important because it helps to create a broader perspective and promote creativity, innovation, better decision-making, and an inclusive working environment, which in turn boosts the company’s performance and success.*

1. Please define inclusion and describe its relevance for companies.

*Inclusion means the equal participation of all individuals, regardless of their characteristics or backgrounds, in all areas of society.*

*For companies, inclusion is important because it creates a diverse and inclusive working environment with access to a wide range of perspectives, talents, and experiences. Inclusion drives innovation, improves collaboration, and enhances employee satisfaction, ultimately leading to increased productivity, competitiveness, and long-term success for the company.*

Summary

As the economy becomes ever more globalized, increasing importance is attached to global career types, as many professionals see the opportunity to shape their careers in other countries and acquire international experience. Different cultural contexts in different countries and regions are also reflected in career development and organizational structures.

Geert Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions provides a framework for understanding the cultural differences between countries and analyzing their impact on prevailing behavior patterns and organizational dynamics. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions also help us understand the personal traits of global leaders in terms of their adaptability and effectiveness in different cultural environments.

Intercultural skills, sensitivity to cultural differences, and the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts are crucial to the development of global managers. In this context, the term intercultural competence refers to the skills and knowledge that sensitize us to conflicts in an intercultural context and help us understand the underlying causes.

Diversity and inclusion play a vital role in today’s globalized employment world and are essential success factors for a global career. Fostering diversity and creating inclusive working environments offers immense benefits for individual professionals and organizations alike.

# Unit 8 – Job Hunting in Germany and Abroad

Study Goals

On completion of this unit, you will ...

… know which databases are most relevant for job hunting in Germany.

… understand the importance of networking to your career, be able to distinguish between different professional networks, and rate the importance of social networks in a career context.

… understand the key aspects of writing a CV and cover letter in German-speaking countries.

… be familiar with the main differences between written job applications in different countries and understand how a video application should be structured.

… be able to distinguish between different selection procedure formats, such as personal selection interviews, panel interviews, and assessment centers.

# 8. Job Hunting in Germany and Abroad

### Case Study

Thomas works as a software developer for a well-known IT company. He realizes that the ability to network internally and externally can decisively impact his career success. To improve his skills in this area, he takes targeted steps to build and cultivate his network.

At an internal level, Thomas proactively seeks contact with colleagues from different departments and at different levels of the company. He attends in-house events such as team meetings, departmental presentations, and training courses. He approaches other colleagues, introduces himself, and shows an interest in their work. Thomas offers his help and shares his expertise when he feels he can support other colleagues in their projects. His openness and helpfulness allow him to gain the trust and recognition of his colleagues. He also asks for support and advice when he is facing challenges. Thomas recognizes that networking is a mutual exchange requiring a good balance between give and take.

Externally, Thomas uses various options to expand his network. He attends industry-related conferences, seminars, and networking events to connect with other professionals and potential employers. Thomas is interested in other companies’ projects and challenges and offers his expertise if he believes he can add value. He actively listens and asks questions to learn from the experiences and insights of others. Thomas is aware that a successful external network requires mutual support and sharing of information and resources.

Thomas’s internal and external networking are helping to boost his career success. Internally, he has gained a reputation as a competent and helpful colleague who goes beyond the boundaries of his department. He is being selected for more projects beyond his area of expertise, giving him the opportunity to develop and expand his knowledge. Externally, Thomas is perceived as an expert and trustworthy point of contact. He regularly receives offers for exciting freelance projects from other companies and his advice and support are sought-after. His diverse network contacts help him tap into new opportunities in the labor market and make potential career moves.

He understands that networking can be a win-win situation from which he and his contacts benefit mutually. His proactive approach to networking has helped Thomas to broaden his career opportunities and be more successful in achieving his career goals.

## 8.1 Job Search Databases

There are various types of job searches, ranging from traditional print media to online platforms. As virtually every company now publishes its job advertisements online (Pflaum, 2020, pp. 105–106), we will focus on different online channels and their optimal use:

* **Company databases:** Many companies publish current vacancies on their own websites as an important channel for communicating their **employer brand** (Knabenreich, 2019). By regularly checking a company’s career page, job seekers can directly access current job opportunities that may not have been published on other job portals or in print media.

**Employer brand**

A company’s reputation and image as an employer, including its values, culture, and attractiveness to potential employees.

* **Employment Agency website:** The Employment Agency’s website may not look appear particularly sophisticated, but it contains a wealth of relevant, carefully prepared information about employment and the labor market.
* **University job exchanges:** Look closely at the job exchanges at your own university and its Career Service. Companies with a special interest in graduates from a particular university and those with a local presence often advertise here. Some of the companies listed will also be represented at events organized by your Career Service.
* At IU, students can access the Career Service via MyCampus, where they will find practical tips on personal career goals, writing a CV, preparing for an interview, job-hunting, job exchanges, and talent pools. Various advanced training courses and coaching services are also available.
* **Other job search engines:** These databases provide valuable resources to help you find current job opportunities and learn about potential employers. We recommend using several of these platforms to increase your chances of a successful job search.
  + - Indeed: As one of the world’s largest job exchanges, Indeed offers a comprehensive selection of job opportunities in a range of industries and regions. Users can search for jobs, upload their CVs, and send applications directly via the platform.
    - StepStone: This is a leading online job exchange, and one of the best-known in Europe. Designed for both professionals and graduates, StepStone offers extensive job search support features, including the option to set up job notifications and create a personal profile.
    - Monster: As one of the oldest, best-known job exchanges, Monster publishes a wide range of job opportunities worldwide. Users can search for positions, upload their CVs and submit applications on the platform.
    - Glassdoor: As well as publishing job vacancies, Glassdoor is also a useful source of information about companies, salaries and ratings by current and former employees, giving job seekers an insight into the company culture and working conditions.

Even before you graduate, it is well worth scanning for career fairs and similar events, as these can offer valuable opportunities to meet potential employers and build personal relationships (Pflaum, 2020, S. 108). Events and trade fairs at your own university are a particularly attractive option, as participating companies will have a special interest in the students and graduates of this university. Career fairs allow you to make direct contact with companies, find out about possible job and career opportunities, and broaden your professional network. They may also provide an opportunity to familiarize yourself with the application process and the company’s particular requirements, which can be useful when writing future applications.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ *Job search databases may contain thousands of job offers from different employers in a range of industries and locations. This enables job seekers to explore a variety of opportunities and search for suitable vacancies.*

¨ *Although many companies use databases for recruitment, it is not the only method they use. It is therefore important not to rely solely on databases, but also to use other sources, such as social networks, personal recommendations, and in-house job advertisements.*

¨ Databases never contain outdated or unavailable job advertisements. Published job offers are always current and vacancies have not yet been filled, otherwise they would not appear in the database.

## 8.2 Networks and Platforms

### The Importance of Networking for Your Career

Networking means building, cultivating, and leveraging informal relationships with the potential to maximize shared professional benefits (Wingender & Wolff, 2019, S. 218).

Since the 1990s, theories about boundaryless and protean careers have become increasingly widespread (Arthur, 1994; Hall, 1996; Gubler, 2019). These theories postulate that traditionally, career paths were characterized by clear guidelines and career moves between organizations were rare; these days, however, the landscape has evolved and people move jobs extensively both within and between organizations (Wingender & Wolff, 2019). The consensus view is that responsibility for career development increasingly rests with the individual. Professionals and managers must therefore manage their own careers independently to achieve their professional goals and maintain or increase their employability. Networking can play an important role here.

Additionally, in recent decades, economic and organizational developments have led to a surge in the importance of networking: Globalization and the introduction of new technologies require organizations to be more flexible, which has led to a range of measures such as outsourcing, flatter hierarchies, and network-like organizational structures (Wingender & Wolff, 2019, S. 218). In these contexts, individuals must demonstrate greater flexibility and ownership of their work and career planning. Networking is one way of achieving this.

At an individual behavioral level, networking plays a key role in career development and achieving your career goals. By networking, we mean a range of activities designed to build, cultivate, and leverage informal relationships to maximize professional benefits. Personality traits such as extroversion, openness to new experiences, proactiveness, and self-efficacy may prove helpful here (Weihrauch et al., 2021). Effective networking can benefit you on multiple levels: By building relationships with colleagues, managers, customers, or other individuals within and outside their organization, you gain access to valuable information, resources, and career opportunities. Networking helps you to forge professional contacts, broaden your industry knowledge, receive support and mentoring, and explore potential career opportunities. Extensive research has shown a positive correlation between networking and common indicators of career success such as salary and promotions (Wolff & Moser, 2009).

Below, we consider selected aspects of networking in greater detail:

1. **Access to information:** Networks provide access to important information about career opportunities, job vacancies, industry trends, and career developments. By sharing information with other professionals and industry contacts, you may discover new opportunities and resources to support your professional growth.
2. **Broadening knowledge:** Interacting with other professionals in networks gives you access to new ideas, perspectives, and expertise. Networks provide an opportunity to learn from the experiences and expertise of others, thereby enhancing your personal knowledge and development.
3. **Access to contacts and support:** Networks provide access to resources such as mentors, expert knowledge, financial support, professional advice, and recommendations. Building a supportive network can help you to overcome obstacles, address challenges, and achieve your career goals.
4. **Visibility and reputation:** Building a professional network helps raise your visibility and reputation. Networks are a place to showcase your expertise and professionalism, which in turn builds trust and recognition among other professionals and potential employers.
5. **Career opportunities and recommendations:** Networks provide access to hidden career opportunities that are not publicly advertised (**hidden job market**). Positions are filled internally or through personal recommendations. By building relationships with decision-makers and actively networking, you are more likely to learn about these opportunities and be recommended by others.

**Hidden job market**

The “hidden job market” includes all unpublished vacancies that are filled without being publicly advertised **Invalid source specified.**.

1. **Business cooperation and career development:** Networks are an opportunity to collaborate with other professionals and companies, whether in the form of projects, collaborations, or joint ventures. These types of business partnerships can promote professional development, create new business opportunities, and support your career advancement.

Authors Barthauer et al. (2019) identify several distinct network types in a career context: Support networks, guidance networks, buy-in networks, as well as internal and external network contacts:

* **Support networks:** These are highly relevant to professional development and refer to support from colleagues and superiors. These networks bolster your career by promoting the visibility of your work and showcasing prestigious tasks and projects. They also provide psychosocial support in the form of career-related advice and assistance. Studies have shown that this type of support is linked to popular career success yardsticks such as career satisfaction, promotions, and salary increases.
* **Leadership networks:** Alongside mentor-mentee relationships, leadership networks are also important for managers in their career development. These networks include peer-to-peer, organizational, division-specific, and collective management networks. Peer-to-peer networks connect managers through shared experiences, tasks, and interests. Organizational networks are informal relationships within the organization that drive innovation, effectiveness, and productivity. Division-specific strategy networks connect managers with shared strategic goals, while collective networks are self-organized systems that connect managers with common interests.
* **Buy-in networks:** These play a role in the efficient design of work processes, change management, and promoting innovations. They often include influential individuals whose consent and approval are needed for project proposals, strategy directions, or innovative change processes. Exchanging information, services, products, and resources between network players helps to promote engagement and resource procurement. The size of the buy-in network increases members’ ability to assert their own initiatives and views.
* **Internal and external networks:** The distinction between internal and external networks is relevant. Internal networks refer to contacts within your own department or organization, while external networks include contacts outside your employment context. Internal networks (especially when supported by higher hierarchical levels, see Seefeld, 2022) provide access to resources, support, and collaboration, while external networks facilitate the exchange of information and broader career opportunities.

Gender-specific networks are also worth mentioning – in the past, selected networks tended to be male-dominated, prompting more and more women to build their own networks. Other networks are committed to being open to all gender identities and sexual orientations. Studies indicate several gender-specific differences in terms of networking and network expectations (Seefeld, 2022, S. 13). There are therefore justifications for both cross-gender and gender-specific networks.

### Social Networks in a Career Context

In recent years, social networks have played an increasingly important role in job hunting (Pflaum, 2020, S. 107). Companies with the reputation of being innovative are increasingly advertising on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and the like to attract employees. Professional platforms such as Xing and LinkedIn are also widely used. It may be worth setting up your own profile on these platforms. A growing number of HR managers not only advertise vacancies on these platforms, but also actively use them to reach out to potential candidates.

LinkedIn and Xing are the top two professional networks in Germany. Both play an important role as social networks for professionals. Below, we will explore their relevance in more detail:

1. **Professional network**: Platforms like LinkedIn and Xing enable users to build and maintain professional networks. Connecting with colleagues, superiors, business partners, and other experts helps you establish and cultivate valuable contacts. Your network can help you explore career opportunities, share information, share resources, and build long-term professional relationships.
2. **Visibility and self-marketing:** LinkedIn and Xing provide platforms for showcasing your professional profile online. By giving detailed information about your professional experience, skills, training and achievements, you can highlight your expertise and professionalism. This will raise your visibility for potential employers, headhunters, and professional contacts looking for qualified professionals or business partners.
3. **Job opportunities and job hunting:** LinkedIn and Xing are key job-hunting resources. Many companies publish current vacancies here, giving job seekers access to a variety of career opportunities. These platforms also include a host of useful features such as job notifications, recommendations, and the option of applying directly for vacancies.
4. **Business-related exchange and learning:** LinkedIn and Xing provide forums and groups where professionals can exchange ideas and share knowledge on specific topics. They give you access to industry-specific content, discussions, technical articles, and expert opinions to promote continuous learning and professional development.
5. **Personal branding:** LinkedIn and Xing offer personal branding opportunities. By actively participating in relevant discussions, sharing expertise, publishing contributions, and demonstrating your professional success, you can position yourself as an expert in your field and gain the trust of potential employers and business partners.

Social networks therefore offer opportunities to advance your own career, discover career opportunities, and make valuable contacts. We recommend that you periodically review your search results by entering your own name in a search engine (Sommerlatte, 2022, S. 161). If you feel the results are sub-optimal, you can influence them by posting more recent content to improve your ranking and appear at the top of the list of search results. You may need to take similar measures if there is another person with the same or a similar name to yours. In such cases, try to ensure optimal positioning of your online information to set yourself apart from them.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please describe the role networking may play in a career.

*Networking is critical to your career because it is a way of forging valuable contacts, building and cultivating professional relationships, and tapping into potential opportunities for professional growth and success. A well-maintained professional network can improve access to information, resources, and support, which in turn may significantly boost your career development and prospects for interesting job opportunities.*

2. Please explain the importance of social networking in a career context.

*Social networks play an important role in a career context, as they enable you to build valuable professional relationships, stay abreast of industry trends, and share information about potential career opportunities. They are an efficient platform for networking, raising your professional visibility, and discovering career development opportunities.*

## 8.3 Writing a CV and a Cover Letter

### CVs in German-Speaking Countries

A CV gives a first impression of the applicant’s personality and should also fit the advertised role. If in doubt, opt for a conventional layout which expresses your personality while providing a quick and easy overview (Pflaum, 2020, S. 113). Regardless of professional experience and training, a CV should never cover more than three pages including the cover sheet, or two pages without the cover sheet. The use of a cover sheet is a matter of personal taste. The current trend is to omit the cover sheet.

These days, photographs are also optional, although for many years they were mandatory in Germany (Pflaum, 2020, pp. 113–114). If you opt to include a photograph, make sure it is a professional headshot. The dress code for candidate photos has become more relaxed in recent years. In most cases, it is no longer mandatory for men to wear a tie in these headshots, or for women to have their hair tied back. It is important to consider the industry and the company you are applying to. It might be useful to check how employees are typically dressed in the types of roles you are applying for, either from the job advertisement itself or by looking at the company’s website.

A CV should be structured according to two key principles (Pflaum, 2020, pp. 105–119): Firstly, separate the important information from the less important information (if in doubt, unimportant information should be omitted anyway). Secondly, it should be organized chronologically, starting with the most current and working backwards. CVs usually begin with the highest school leaving qualification from the last secondary school you attended. One possible structure might be employment history, advanced vocational training, academic background, vocational training (where applicable), school education (citing only your most advanced qualification), IT and foreign language skills, and, where applicable, voluntary work. The structure should reflect the requirements of the role you are applying for.

International experience is seen as increasingly important and should be clearly indicated on your CV. You might want to create a separate category for international experience, or else integrate it into your employment history (e.g., internships abroad) or academic background (e.g., semester abroad). Extended holidays abroad and short student exchanges are not relevant here and should not be mentioned on your CV. Only include stays of several months or more.

The same applies to internships. Short internships of one to two weeks are of little relevance for your CV. Only those lasting several months or more should be listed.

Including information about your hobbies is a matter of personal taste. Some HR managers draw conclusions about the applicant’s personality from their hobbies and incorporate this into their overall assessment. If in doubt, it is perfectly acceptable to make no mention of hobbies. Too many hobbies or particularly risky ones may give a negative impression.

### Cover Letters in German-Speaking Countries

More and more companies are dispensing with the traditional cover letter and replacing it with a short letter of motivation (Pflaum, 2020, S. 108). In all cases, it is advisable to write a few words about the role you are applying for, the company, and your own motivation for applying. You should also touch on the skills you can bring to the role, how the company can benefit from you personally, and your career plans in relation to the job. This groundwork will pay off at the interview stage.

Many applicants are adept at listing their own skills and experiences. It is perfectly legitimate to repeat the same descriptions. In most cases, two to three texts tailored to the specific job advertisement will suffice to add a personal touch to your cover letter and to appeal to those reading it.

A cover letter might follow the structure outlined below or something similar (Pflaum, 2020, pp. 109–112):

* **Salutation:** Ideally, a specific person in the company should be addressed by name. If, in exceptional cases, you are unable to identify the relevant contact in the company, you may use “Dear Sir or Madam.”
* **Introduction:** Describe how you heard about the position.
* **Motivation:** Outline what motivated you to apply for this role at this company.
* **Business-related skills:** Summarize your professional knowledge and relevant experience and how they align with the company’s requirements, remembering to relate this to the job advertisement rather than merely repeating the content of your CV.
* **Personal/social skills:** Describe some personal traits that complement your professional knowledge and experience.
* **Start date and salary expectations:** Follow this with an indication of your earliest possible start date (in four or more weeks’ time), giving a specific date at the beginning of a month. The issue of salary is a sensitive matter. We advise only indicating your salary expectation if this has been explicitly requested.
* **Closing words:** Finally, indicate that you would welcome an invitation to a personal interview.

In the top right-hand corner of the covering later, write today’s date and your location in the following format: City, DD.MM.YYYYY. Even if you are sending your letter as an e-mail attachment, it should nevertheless contain a letterhead with your address details, followed by the full address of the company as indicated in the job advertisement. The cover letter should be concisely written and should not exceed one page.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ *When writing a CV and cover letter, it is important to use a clear and succinct format that looks professional and is easy to read.*

¨ Your CV should only highlight the positive aspects of your career and conceal any gaps or mistakes.

¨ *The cover letter should be tailored to the job advertisement and should highlight the applicant’s skills, experience, and achievements relevant to the role.*

¨ In the cover letter, applicants should indicate their salary expectations and ask about the possibility of a raise.

## 8.4 Written and Video Applications

### International Comparison of Written Applications

Written applications may vary by region and culture. In English-speaking countries and in Asia, consider some of the typical differences relating to CVs and cover letters.

**Résumé**

The term "résumé" comes from the French word meaning "summary" or "overview".

The US and some English-speaking countries may use “résumés” that focus on the applicant’s skills and achievements. This is a fundamentally different approach: Rather than describing the tasks you performed in a previous company, you should focus on the successes you achieved there (Bosewitz & Bosewitz, 2021). An American résumé may be longer and cover multiple pages, outlining your professional experience, skills, and education in detail. Photographs are not usually included to avoid potential discrimination and make the application process more objective. The cover letter may have a more flexible structure, focusing on your relevant skills and experience. You may also use a more informal style of writing style to engage the reader’s attention.

In selected Asian countries, such as Japan or South Korea, résumés often follow a standardized format with specific sub-headings and information. Like its American counterpart, an Asian résumé may be a little longer and cover multiple pages. In Asia, photographs in CVs are common and expected. More formal and detailed language may be used here, giving in-depth descriptions of your tasks and achievements. The cover letter may contain comprehensive background information about the applicant and their motivations.

However, please note that these differences are intended as rough guidelines only and may vary depending on individual preferences and industries. When applying in an English-speaking or Asian country, it is crucial to learn about the specific requirements and expectations of that country and the company you are applying to and to adapt your CV and cover letter accordingly. Authors Bosewitz and Bosewitz (Professionell bewerben auf Englisch, 2021) look at job applications in different countries and the relevant country-specific characteristics and requirements to consider. We recommend that you study the relevant international requirements in detail and familiarize yourself with local customs if you are interested in working in another country or continent.

### Video Application

Society today is shaped by digital communications in real time. This creates new requirements for recruiters and company HR departments (Schiebeck, 2019, S. 319). Although vacancies are often published on digital portals, the application process itself is often cumbersome, requiring database registration and the completion of various forms, which is at odds with the principle of a more modern approach to communicating with applicants (Schiebeck, 2019, S. 320). Companies are only just beginning to simplify their application process in line with the **candidate centricity** concept and adapt it to applicants’ needs (Knabenreich, 2019, S. 97).

**Candidate centricity**

Studies have shown that on average, 70% of applicants are lost due to poorly integrated or cumbersome application forms (Knabenreich, 2019, p. 166).

With smartphones and tablets being widely used, mobile recruiting, i.e., applications being processed solely on mobile devices, plays an increasingly important role (Schiebeck, 2019, S. 322). Here, the entire application process is designed to be mobile, from finding a vacancy to submitting the application documents.

As the younger generation generally prefers videos to text (Sommerlatte, 2022, S. 162), ever more companies are experimenting with video applications. The type of content published provides important clues about the individual’s interests. Of course, these videos are no substitute for a face-to-face interaction or meeting, but they can still be a valuable initial source of information about the candidate. It is therefore vital to ensure that online content is of high quality and an appropriate representation of who you are. It is not just candidates who benefit from video applications; making the application process easier means that potential employees are more likely to apply. This is also less expensive than inviting promising candidates and later discovering that they do not fit the corporate culture and personality (Schiebeck, 2019, S. 323).

A video résumé demonstrates your proficiency with social media, which is increasingly seen as a necessary skill for many jobs today (Sommerlatte, 2022, S. 162). It is also a unique opportunity to present yourself in the best possible light, as you can incorporate your own ideas and convey significantly more individuality than a conventional CV. These types of videos should last no more than five minutes. Sommerlatte (Sommerlatte, 2022, pp. 163–164) proposes the following structure:

* **Introduction (approx. 30 seconds):** A brief personal introduction showcasing your motivation, interests, and personal goals.
* **Main body (two to four minutes):** A compact summary of your career history. You might want to mention some of your less pleasant experiences or even one of your failures. The aim of the video CV is to give a personal insight into your personality.
* **Summary (approx. 30 seconds):** This should focus on outlining your vision for professional development and your planned next steps. You might also want to mention selected personal aspects that may be relevant to your situation, such as geographical preferences and mobility.

Video applications are likely to become more significant in future application processes.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please mark the statements that are correct.

¨ In all countries, it is a good idea to include a professional headshot with your CV to make a personal impression.

¨ *In the USA, cover letters may be written in a relaxed, direct, and informal style*.

2. Please explain the significance of a video application and how it should be structured.

*A video application demonstrates your proficiency with social media as an essential prerequisite for many jobs and is a unique opportunity to showcase your individual talents. The recommended structure includes a brief personal introduction outlining your goals, a main body describing your career history with a personalized touch, and a summary of your vision and planned next steps. In total, videos should not last longer than five minutes.*

## 8.5 Selection Procedures

Selecting suitable candidates via an application process is essential for successfully filling vacancies in organizations. Companies use a variety of selection procedures to ensure that they pick the best possible candidates for the role. As well as assessing the applicants’ functional competencies, they also evaluate their social skills, team skills, and character traits that are pivotal to the company’s success. Below, we consider various key selection techniques in greater depth: Personal selection interviews, panel interviews, and assessment centers. Each of these procedures has its own specific characteristics and objectives for gaining a more comprehensive insight into a candidate’s suitability and potential.

### Personal Selection Interviews

Although no two interviews are the same, a typical process will often include the following phases (Pflaum, 2020, pp. 126–127):

1. **Welcome:** To prepare for this phase, practice basic aspects such as the correct greeting, an appropriate handshake and upbeat small talk. Suggested small talk topics include your journey here or today’s weather.
2. **Present your personal situation:** This is your opportunity to talk about your school, academic background and career development. Try to give a structured, positive, and authentic potted career history lasting no more than five minutes. This will leave enough time for the rest of the interview and saves the interviewer having to remind you of the time. This is also an appropriate moment to express your interest and motivation in the employer and the role.
3. **Information about the company:** The interviewer will provide information about the company and the advertised role. It is important to show that you are actively listening, take notes if necessary, and ask questions about specific points.
4. **Key contractual information:** Alongside questions about salary, use this phase to discuss general terms such as your earliest start date and organizational aspects (e.g., relocation). We recommend researching standard salaries in your chosen industry in advance.
5. **Closing:** The final impression you leave behind is almost as important as the rest. You should see this as an important opportunity to give a well-rounded overall impression. For example, you might ask what happens next. Say goodbye confidently, maintaining eye contact and with a firm handshake, even if you feel the interview did not go as well as expected.

During the interview, is important to stay calm and give considered answers to so-called stress questions. If a question takes you by surprise or you need time to reflect, it is best to be open about it. In recent years, job interviews have evolved into more of an authentic dialog, designed to help the interviewer and the applicant to get to know one another and ascertain whether they are a good fit with the company (Pflaum, 2020, S. 127). As an applicant, remember that the company is also applying to you as a potential employer.

### Panel Interviews

In the past, an interview with your potential superior was quite common, whereas nowadays structured panel interviews with multiple interview partners are becoming increasingly popular (Klein & Zarzar, 2020, pp. 229–231). A panel interview involves multiple interviewers.

The interview panel is designed to analyze suitability with a good ratio of benefits (validity approx. 0.6) to effort (time required: 60 to 90 minutes) for the company. By validity, we mean the extent to which it measures the required aspects, i.e., the conclusion is an accurate reflection of the candidate’s subsequent performance. Put simply, a validity score of 0.6 means that 40% of assessments are potentially inaccurate (Klein & Zarzar, 2020, S. 230). Assessment centers with role playing and group exercises have a slightly higher validity score but are more time-consuming.

The panel interview is an environment which gives people who share a common goal (to find the most suitable person for a particular task) the opportunity to observe and judge candidates. They will consider the skills required, not just to perform this role but to successfully develop it and contribute to the company’s long-term success. Ultimately, it is about finding a good fit between the role and the candidate.

### Assessment Centers

Some companies organize so-called assessment centers in addition or as an alternative to traditional job interviews. These assessment centers are designed to gauge “the extent to which the applicants’ interests, skills, and behavior are a good fit with the role and the company” (Hofer & Spurk, 2019, pp. 478–479). The aim is to identify suitable candidates and establish a good fit between the individual, the role, and the company (Hofer & Spurk, 2019, pp. 478–479). Assessment centers are an opportunity for candidates to showcase themselves by performing various exercises, Q&A sessions, individual and group assignments, and case studies with other applicants (Pflaum, 2020, pp. 128–129). The company hopes this will provide an authentic impression of the applicants’ skills and approaches to solving team and individual work problems. The focus is less on finding the perfect solution, and more on the candidates’ commitment and approach. If you attend an assessment center, remember that is not just the applicant applying to the company, but also the company aiming to attract the applicant.

In summary, selection procedures are a vital process for selecting suitable, qualified candidates for a role. Combining various selection procedures allows companies to make a comprehensive assessment of candidates’ suitability and make an informed decision.

A well-designed and well-executed selection process will produce an accurate candidate selection, which in turn contributes to the organization’s long-term success and performance. As such, it is crucial for companies to continually optimize their selection processes and adapt them in line with the specific needs of the role and industry, giving the best talents an opportunity to make optimum use of their skills.

### Self-Check Questions

1. Please compare personal selection interviews with panel interviews and assessment centers.

*While personal selection interviews provide direct interaction between applicants and decision-makers to gain personal impressions, panel interviews are an opportunity for multiple interviewers with different perspectives to assess the candidate. By contrast, assessment centers are an opportunity to observe candidates in realistic scenarios and to test their skills and behavior under practical conditions.*

Summary

Databases play a major role in job hunting today. However, it would be inadvisable to rely solely on databases. You should also make good use of corporate websites, job exchanges, and job search engines to explore available vacancies.

Networks play a pivotal role in your career. They are critical to career progress and achieving your career goals. Active networking involves establishing and cultivating informal relationships to maximize your career benefits. There are different types of networks. Support networks provide career-related and psychosocial support to colleagues and supervisors and have been linked to typical career success yardsticks such as satisfaction, promotions, and salary increases. Manager networks play an important role in advancing the career of managers, including peer-to-peer, organizational, industry-specific, and collective networks. Buy-in networks promote efficient work processes and foster entrepreneurial change through the exchange of approval and resources between influential players. There is also a relevant distinction between internal and external networks.

The professional networks LinkedIn and Xing allow users to establish and cultivate valuable professional contacts, improve their visibility and self-marketing, search for job opportunities, promote professional exchange and learning, and strengthen their personal branding. These platforms offer a wealth of opportunities to advance your career and discover suitable opportunities.

For written job applications, your curriculum vitae should provide a clear overview of your personal details, career history, education, training, and relevant knowledge. Use a clearly structured format which distinguishes the most important and less important information, in chronological order starting with the most recent. The traditional cover letter may be replaced by a short motivation letter, which should be aligned with the job advertisement and should highlight your motivation, professional skills, and personal characteristics that are relevant to the role.

It is important to note that applications often differ internationally between different regions and cultures. It is therefore vital to consider the precise cultural requirements before drafting your application. In the digital communications era, video applications are becoming increasingly relevant.

Application processes to select suitable candidates are crucial for successfully filling vacancies in companies. Companies use various selection procedures to ensure that they find the best candidates. As well as assessing professional competencies, they also evaluate candidates’ social skills, team skills, and character traits that are relevant to the company’s success. Three commonly used selection procedures are personal selection interviews, panel interviews, and assessment centers.