

Turning ideas into actions! How research on identity, psychological resources, and leadership support can inform career coaching (Mari ja Vucic & Lucy E. Bolton)

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AIM OF STUDY

In the past 10 years words like ‘boundaryless’ and ‘protean’ have come to describe modern careers. As a result the traditional career model of linear progression has given way to new perspectives involving multiple career transitions. Any good coach would know though, that career change does not happen in a day! From visualizing, to action taking, career transitions are not isolated events but often influenced by an array of internal and external factors. The aim of this study is to investigate the underlying motivations, and circumstances that lead to successful career transitions for a large multinational group of mid-career changers. Authors take a further step to suggest interventions coaches can use to facilitate their clients’ career change journey.

BACKGROUND

What factors have the potential to shape career transitions?

Future work-self	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Future work-selves are defined by Strauss et al., 2012 as dynamic identities of what individuals believe they were, what they are, and who they wish to become• By adopting future work-selves, coachees have the freedom to explore and reinvent themselves in a playful manner that enables them to test different career possibilities
Proactive career behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaging in the 4 types of behaviours listed below has been shown to enhance career progression, and attainment of new employment (Grant, 2000):<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Career planning – exploring options, planning and goal setting2. Skill development – acquiring new skills related to future careers3. Consultation – pursuing advice, help, or information4. Networking – building social capital
Psychological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence shows that how individuals navigate career transitions depends largely on the following 5 psychological state-like resources:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Readiness – motivation to proceed with transition2. Confidence – belief in the ability to take action3. Perceived control – over a career transition4. Social support – perception of how supportive other people are of the transition5. Decision independence - self-appraisal of the extent that decisions are made autonomously
Supervisory support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervisory support in the form of acknowledgment of contributions, regular feedback on performance and guidance/mentoring on work opportunities, has been shown to increase career transition success

RESEARCH DESIGN -METHODOLOGY

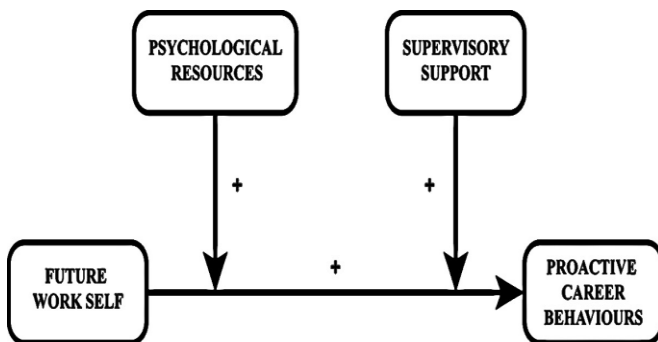
A quantitative design was chosen by the authors to test whether having a clear vision of one’s future work self can positively influence career changers’ engagement in proactive career behaviours. The survey also examined whether career changers were more likely to be proactive in their career transitions when they were motivated, confident, felt in control and independent, and had support from supervisors and significant others.

An impressive **400 participants** from more than **95 nationalities** completed the survey. All participants were employed, and with an average age between 31 – 40 years old, most of them were potentially experiencing a mid career change.

KEY FINDINGS

How do we make successful career transition?

Authors developed the model¹ below to demonstrate the relationship between future work selves and proactive career behaviours and found the following:



- Participants who could visualize their future work self and bridge the gap between their current and future self were more motivated to explore new career paths
- Participants who were confident, motivated had social support and felt in control were better able to deal with career transition demands
- Participants who received regular feedback, mentoring and career guidance from their supervisors were more likely to be proactive in transitioning into new roles

CONCLUSION

So far, lack of evidence-based research has somewhat hindered the development of interventions in coaching practice. It shouldn't come as a surprise that clients who can envision their future work self, are focused, motivated, and have strong support networks are more likely to be promoted, or transition successfully in new roles. The size and demographic of the study's sample, coupled with the fact that all participants were employed validates what most career coaches observe in their practice. By having a working model career coaches are able to individualize coaching interventions, and focus on the key areas that promote career transitions for their clients.

Interestingly the current study also highlights the role of supervisory support in career development. This has been shown to be important for talent management in organisations. Employees are not always looking to transition out of an organization, and the study's findings emphasize once more how managers can influence career growth and progression.

Finally authors showcase the value of certain career tools like the Career Transition Inventory developed by Heppner. This particular inventory can be used by career coaches looking to examine the availability or lack of psychological resources for clients, at the start of their career change journey.

¹ Marija Vucic & Lucy E. Bolton (2019) Turning ideas into actions! How research on identity, psychological resources, and leadership support can inform career coaching, *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, DOI: [10.1080/17521882.2019.1594327](https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2019.1594327), p.13