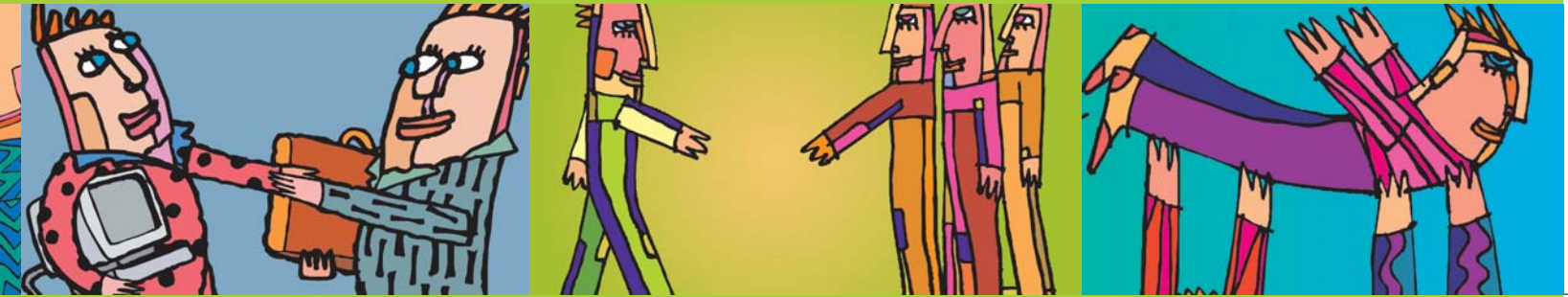


# Career control

Research report 2005



  
**Chiumento**  
The individual approach to HR

## Foreword



We undertook this research to understand the approaches UK workers take to planning their careers and whether they would be prepared if their jobs took a turn for the worse. We wanted to determine to what extent employees expect their employer to help them forge a career path and how much responsibility they are prepared to take for themselves.

Career Control reveals that most workers are serial drifters, with no clear strategy for getting the most from their current jobs and future roles. They make job moves as a leap of faith, often as a knee-jerk reaction, and are generally disappointed with the results.

Such lack of forethought results in workers who are, at best, stagnating in their current roles and at worst, easy targets for redundancy. If made redundant, 42% say they would feel terrified or anxious – a group that, if not managed well, could affect the performance of the remaining workforce with their concerns. This career lethargy means people are missing out on promotions and higher salaries too. They are probably also underachieving and not realising their potential.

For employees this is a wake-up call; a fulfilling career is largely their responsibility. If they take no interest in the development of their careers, why should their employers?

And what does this mean for employers? An employer can ensure ambitious high flyers don't get itchy feet and move on by providing clear routes for employees to advance in their careers. This means taking more responsibility for giving staff structured career paths, with clearly defined goals, challenging and varied tasks and regular training and development. Opportunities to work across departments, for example, will help build transferable skills, knowledge and experience that will be valuable for employee and employer alike. Employers can also maximise the value they receive from 'career drifters' by helping them determine their career direction through high performance coaching.

Boredom at work breeds underperformance. By keeping staff supported and challenged at every point in their career organisations will retain more engaged workers, leading to greater fulfilment and higher levels of productivity.

*Sarah Chimento*

Sarah Chimento, CEO

## Executive summary

- Few people have a clear idea of where their careers are going and nearly half of those who don't plan their job moves end up feeling dissatisfied
- With little direction, career drifters often change jobs only to find themselves in less satisfying roles than before
- Worryingly, people believe they've been made redundant and missed out on promotions as a result of career apathy. Others believe they've missed out on pay rises because they haven't put enough time and effort into career planning
- The majority know they should actively plan their careers yet nearly half put more effort into their social lives
- Many people only think about a change of job when bored or frustrated and others do so only when forced to through redundancy or because they need more money
- If redundancy were to strike, few would feel prepared to be on the job market again or know what to do next.

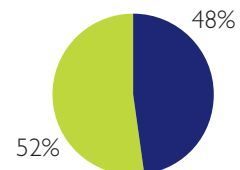
## Statistical breakdowns

### Serial drifting is unfulfilling

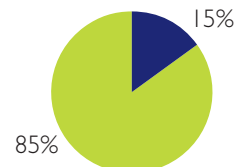
- Just 22% of career people have a clear view of where their careers are heading and 14% don't have a CV
- Almost half (48%) of those who move from job to job without proper forethought feel dissatisfied. Unsurprisingly, nearly a third (32%) are no more satisfied in their new role than before. Nearly 70% would do things differently if they could start again
- 19% are dissatisfied with their careers to date, rising to 48% among those who have no clear direction. Among those who do have a clear idea of where their careers are going, 88% are satisfied
- Over half (57%) only think about changing jobs when bored or frustrated, while over a third (39%) do so only when forced to through the threat of redundancy or because they need a bigger salary
- Over two thirds (69%) want to change careers in the future but say their finances are holding them back. Over half (53%) don't know how to make this happen even if they took the plunge
- More than one third (35%) doesn't have a five year plan and nearly half (47%) don't know what they'll be doing in 10 years' time.

### APPROACH TO CAREER PLANNING VERSUS SATISFACTION WITH CAREER TO DATE

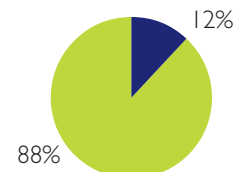
I tend to move from job to job without any clear idea of where I'm going with my career



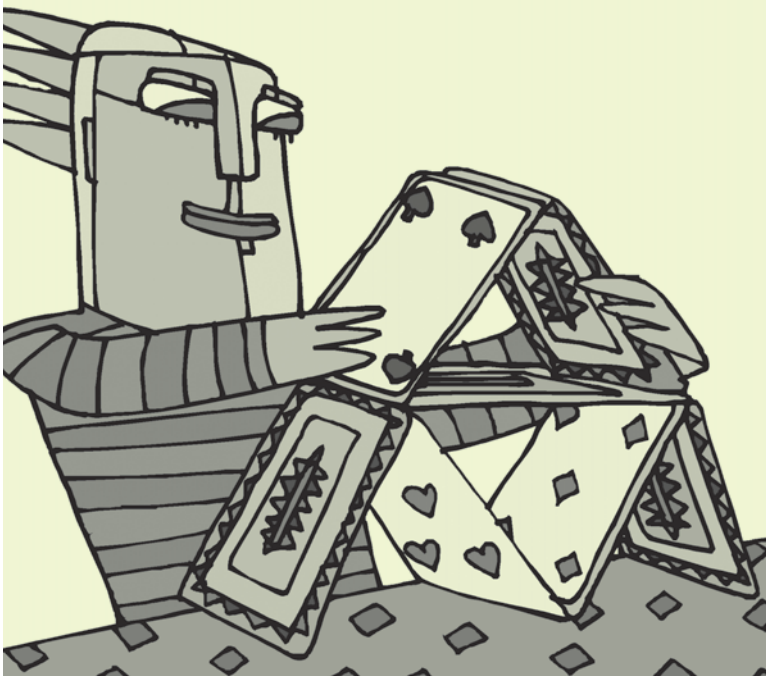
I know the rough direction I'm taking and am generally moving in the right direction



I have a clear idea of where my career is going and am constantly thinking about how I'm going to achieve this



**KEY**  
■ Dissatisfied ■ Satisfied





### Whose role is it anyway?

- Almost all workers (98%) know it's up to them to plan their careers but nearly half (48%) put more effort into planning their social lives
- 83% of people who put more effort into planning their career than their social life are satisfied with their careers to date. However, this drops to 78% among those who put their social lives before their career planning
- 35% think more training would most help them to advance their careers, and 34% believe working in other departments would also be beneficial. 32% want more responsibilities and 29% want more feedback on their performance
- Almost one in three (31%) thinks it's their boss's role to provide a clear career path
- 29% also feel it would help if their boss took time to listen to their career wishes and priorities
- Half of our respondents are not sure what transferable skills are. When asked to rate their skills, 42% rate flexibility as one of their top strengths, followed by use of IT (41%) and listening (41%). Key business skills, such as decision-making, people management and negotiation are rated less highly (29%, 20% and 16% respectively).

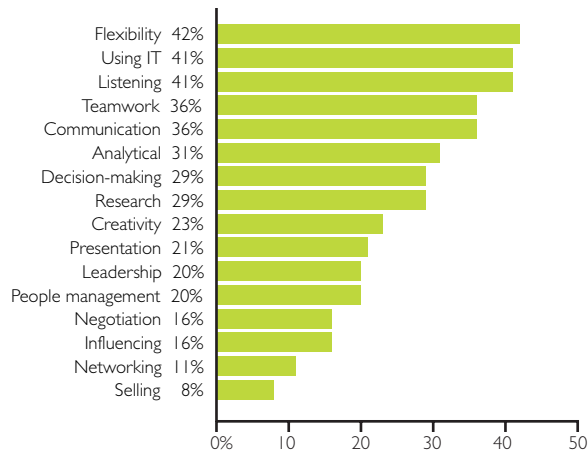
RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED WHAT THEY WOULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY TO MAKE THEIR CAREERS MORE SUCCESSFUL. THE QUOTES THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT ACKNOWLEDGE THAT A LACK OF PREPARATION AND FAILURE TO TAKE INITIATIVE, COMBINED WITH A LACKADAISICAL ATTITUDE HINDERED THEIR PROGRESS. INADEQUATE TRAINING IS ALSO HIGHLIGHTED AS A REGRET.

"Prepare for interviews / new roles. Had I done so, I might have been successful and my career may have taken a different path."

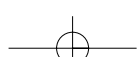
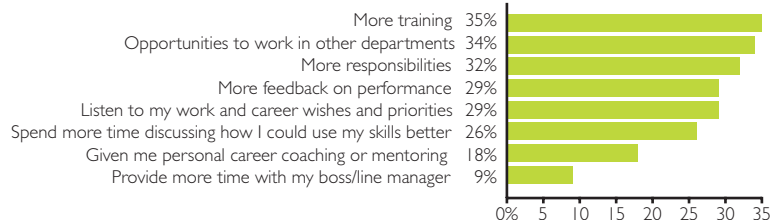
"Research my alternatives more to avoid making wrong job moves."

"Been more aggressive about training needs. Because I would have more skills and that would make me more marketable."

**THE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS THAT PEOPLE FEEL THEY'RE VERY STRONG AT**



**WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD BE MOST BENEFICIAL TO YOUR CAREER?**



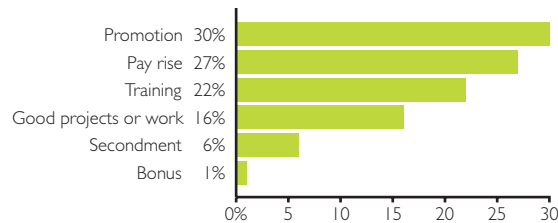
### What's the worst that can happen?

- Nearly one in five who has been made redundant (17%) thinks their redundancy was a direct result of not giving enough thought to where their career was going
- 30% believe they've been overlooked for promotion, rising to 34% among male workers. Interestingly, just 24% of women feel this way. 27% of respondents think they've missed out on a pay rise
- If made redundant, 34% would not know what to do next and 38% would feel unprepared to be back on the job market. First jobbers feel this less keenly, with just 7% saying they would not be prepared for redundancy. This rises to 12% of junior and middle managers and 19% of senior managers
- This is concerning given that 81% feel the workplace is more competitive than five years ago. As a result, 85% believe it's important to keep their skills up to date
- Experience of redundancy makes workers feel better equipped and more courageous should it happen again. Just 28% would not know what to do next and 20% would actually be quite excited by the opportunity
- The prospect of redundancy terrifies 14% of people and makes a further 28% feel anxious. Just 17% would view it as an opportunity.

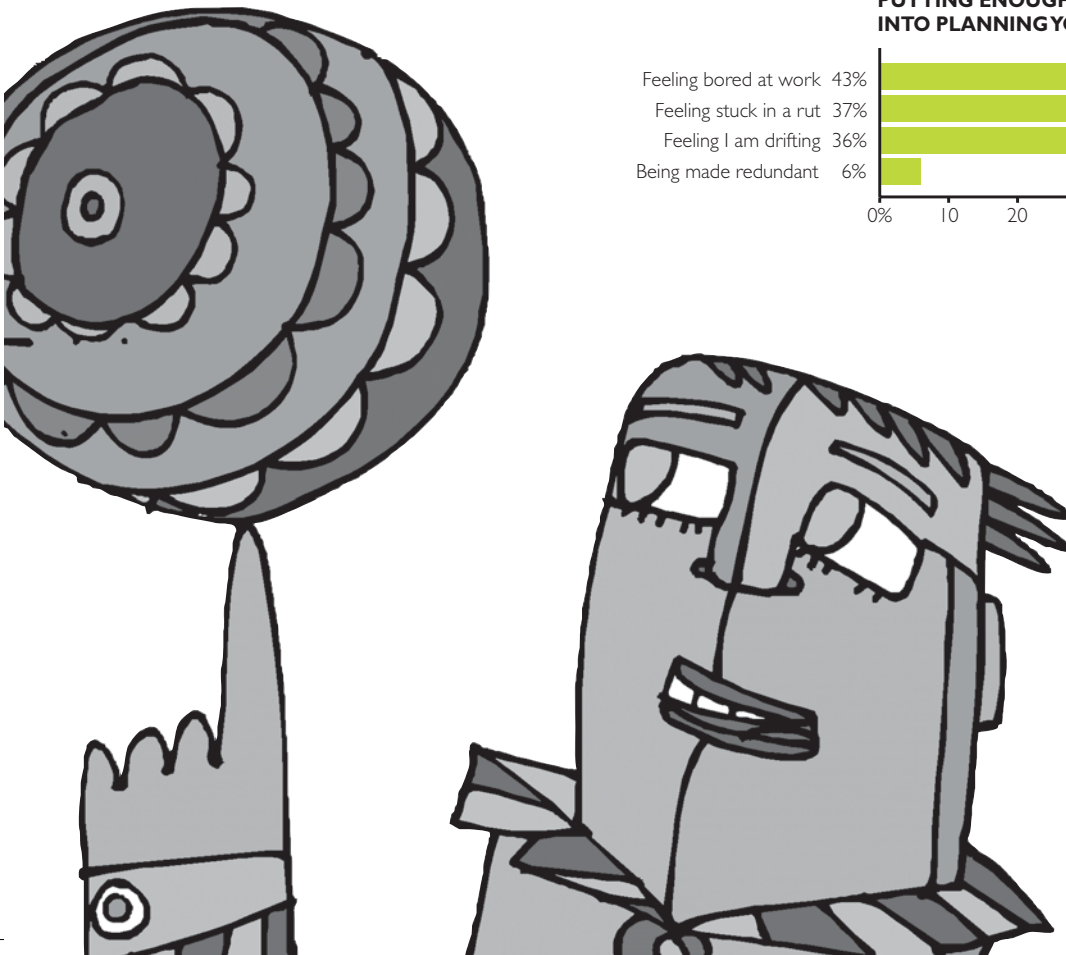
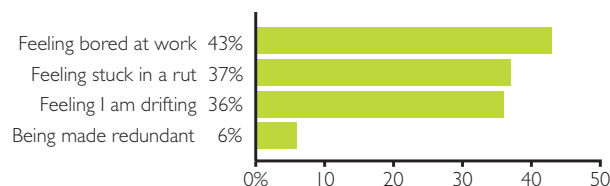
“Chase promotion more actively – I would have achieved a higher level sooner.”

“Taken more risks earlier rather than following the pack – it would have made a difference by moving me on more quickly.”

**WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE YOU MISSED OUT ON AS A RESULT OF NOT PUTTING ENOUGH TIME AND EFFORT INTO PLANNING YOUR CAREER?**



**WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE HAPPENED AS A RESULT OF NOT PUTTING ENOUGH TIME AND EFFORT INTO PLANNING YOUR CAREER?**



## Defining career success

- Our respondents say happiness is their most frequent measure of career success, ahead of salary and lifestyle. Interestingly, women are more likely to judge success by level of responsibility and job title while men are concerned about how they are perceived by peers, colleagues and friends, as well as public signals of success such as property, possessions and car
- Salary and interesting work are the most important things people look for in a new job, while career path and promotion opportunities rank lower down the list. Perhaps as a result, just 60% are currently happy with their career and future opportunities while 70% say they're happy with their salary, rising to 83% who say their work is interesting.

## Future managers are least prepared

Despite an enthusiastic start in their early 20s, people appear to lose momentum as they move beyond their first jobs, perhaps believing that once they're on their chosen career path their success will simply follow.

- Over half (51%) of 25-34 year olds have found themselves stuck in a rut and 35% believe they've missed out on a pay rise
- 59% of those in this age group admit to being bored and 47% feel their careers are drifting as a result of inadequate preparation
- 29% feel they've missed out on promotion as a result, compared to just 18% of those earlier on in their careers
- 41% of 25-34 year olds believe more training would help them get on
- 28% of workers in junior and middle management think time with their bosses to talk about their futures would help keep their careers on track.

## Capital careers

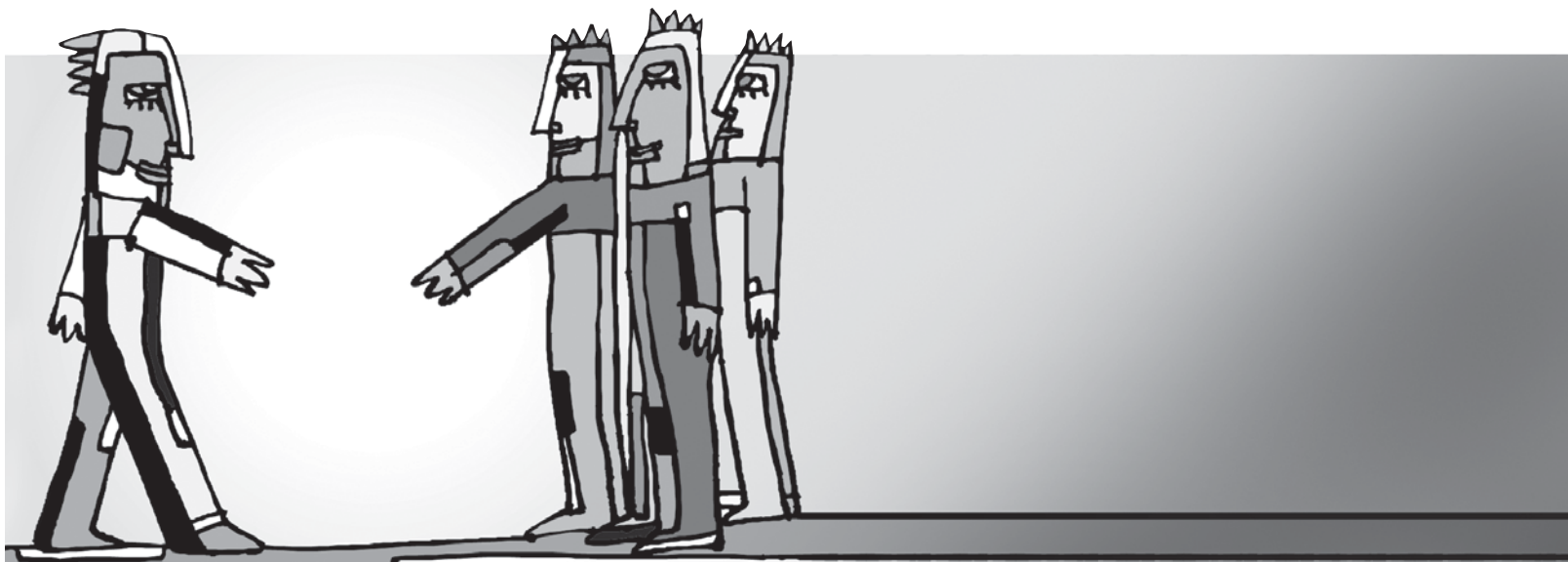
London workers may be more career-savvy than their regional counterparts but are still learning:

- Just 8% of London respondents don't have a CV, compared to 16% of employees in the Midlands and the North East
- 58% of London workers believe it's entirely their own responsibility to plan their careers, compared to just 39% of those in Scotland and 35% in the South East
- London workers appear to get more responsibility at work. Just 29% wish for greater responsibility to help their careers compared to 40% of those in the South West
- 40% of Londoners would definitely do something different if they could start again while workers outside the Capital appear to be more content; just 20% of workers in East Anglia, 23% in Scotland and 27% in the South East would choose different careers.

"Moved companies earlier to avoid being stuck in a rut and taken for granted."

"Taken things more seriously."

"Made more use of my networking skills and pushed myself with regard to my personal profile."



## Getting the balance right

Sarah Chimento, CEO, Chimento, offers the following advice for employers who want to get the best from their staff:

- Boredom at work quickly leads to underperformance, so keep roles interesting and varied
- Regular training will mean your people are more effective in their roles and they'll feel they're growing their own bank of skills
- Consider offering secondments in other departments or related organisations so individuals learn more transferable skills and have a broader view of the business and industry
- Offer coaching for staff who need a helping hand in certain areas. This will help build confidence and effectiveness. Learning to be more assertive, for example, will make the individual's life both in and out of work more satisfying
- Schedule regular performance appraisals so any issues can be highlighted and training requirements noted. Taking time out to focus on your staff as individuals and listening to their questions will make them feel looked after and valued
- Keep employees informed of changes at work so they feel in the loop – asking their opinion will help them feel involved and valued
- Giving praise and celebrating when individuals and teams do well increases motivation and instils a sense of well-being and pride in their work
- If redundancies are on the horizon make sure those affected are supported every step of the way – help them come to terms with the news by offering practical solutions, such as time with a career consultant so they can see what their options are
- Informal mentoring will help your people feel like they're being listened to and will resolve any small issues before they potentially escalate. It's always good to have a confidante.

“Spent more time focussing on what I really wanted rather than drifting from one dead end job to another.”

“Actively planned my career instead of just going with the flow.”

## Top tips for taking career control: getting the best from your career

Sarah Chimento, CEO, Chimento, offers the following advice for employees who want to keep their careers on track:

- Dust off your CV and decide if it needs to be rewritten or if tweaks and updates are all that's required. Getting an independent opinion from a friend or discreet colleague will give you an objective view of how it reads
- Keep your skills bank up to date by doing as much training as possible. Make recommendations for courses you feel may benefit employees and the company as a whole
- Do a five year plan and try to articulate where you want to be by then, both personally and professionally. This will help concentrate your mind and keep your career choices focused so you're more likely to achieve your goals
- Keep abreast of job opportunities in your industry and related sectors. Knowing how the market's doing will give you a head start if you find yourself job hunting
- Widen your network - join a new club or group to broaden your contacts. You never know when someone may lead you in a new direction
- Consult a career coach for impartial advice and guidance – they may be able to shed light on an issue you're facing or point you in a direction you may not have considered
- If you're lacking the necessary skills or qualifications to follow your dream career, consider retraining by taking a vocational or academic course
- Look for opportunities within your organisation to network and broaden your skills. Aim to get a full understanding of how your organisation works
- Ask for regular feedback from your line manager so you know how you're progressing and you're aware of areas you may need to work on.



Chiumento regularly undertakes research on Human Resource issues. To access other Chiumento research documents, go to [www.chiumento.co.uk/infospace](http://www.chiumento.co.uk/infospace)

  
**Chiumento**  
The individual approach to HR

**Contact details:**

London : 24 Park Square East, Regent's Park, London NW1 4LH. t: 020 7224 3307  
Oxford : 8 Elm Place, Eynsham, Oxford OX29 4BD. t: 01865 882100  
e: [info@chiumento.co.uk](mailto:info@chiumento.co.uk)