

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Worcester</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 19 - Business and Management Studies</p>
<p>Title of case study: Enhancing Policy and Practice in Career Management and Development</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Commissioned research into career management and development led to changes in Human Resource (HR) practice and policy within a public sector organisation (West Mercia Constabulary) which have had clear benefits for the organisation. Subsequently, one of the products of this research, a psychometric tool called the Career Competencies Indicator, was successfully developed for commercial purposes in conjunction with a private sector consulting company. A version of the Career Competencies Indicator aimed specifically at 18-24 year olds was launched in April 2013 bringing immediate commercial benefits to the company involved but also potential benefits for an age group that is currently suffering particularly high levels of unemployment.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Centre for People at Work, led by its Director, Dr Jan Francis-Smythe (in post at the University of Worcester 1990-present), has engaged in a body of research focused on Human Resources and, in particular, on career management and development. This case study focuses on a strand of her research commissioned through SPHERE (Shared Police and Higher Education Research and Enterprise), a longstanding partnership between the University of Worcester and West Mercia Constabulary.</p> <p>SPHERE funded two linked projects (Grants a & b), over the periods 2003-06 and 2004-07, examining, in turn, career competencies and career anchors, both of which led to successful doctoral completions. The research on career competencies (Reference 1) identified that, whilst the notion of ‘career competencies’ had been established as a potentially useful way of developing careers, no psychometrically valid tool to measure these competencies had as yet been developed. Following an extensive review of the career development and management literature, interviews with career development experts, focus groups with police officers and a rigorous process of psychometric test development and validation, a theory-driven and empirically-sound measure of career competencies (the Career Competencies Indicator) was developed. This was based on three areas of ‘knowing’: ‘knowing how’ (how we do a job), ‘knowing why’ (why we do a job) and ‘knowing whom’ (with whom we do work). The tool was then piloted and evaluated as a potential career development intervention with a sample of police officers. The usefulness of the Career Competencies Indicator was demonstrated in a predictive validation study where competencies were shown to predict both objective and subjective career success.</p> <p>Research on the Career Competencies Indicator extended beyond the life of the project, funded through a University of Worcester innovation grant (Grant c). This involved a validation study with a different sample, dissemination of the research findings in academic and practitioner publications and conferences and preparation of technical documents (see Section 4 below).</p> <p>The research on career anchors (Reference 2) took Schein’s established model with its focus on the individual and an individual’s career management and developed it for use in an organizational setting as part of a wider career management process. The research used a multi-method approach, involving focus groups, interviews and questionnaires with police staff (not officers). It extended the theory of individual career anchors to job role career anchors and developed a way of measuring career anchor congruence between individuals and jobs. The extent of fit between a person’s job role career anchor and their individual career anchor was shown to predict both job satisfaction and organisational commitment.</p>

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3. References to the research

1. Francis-Smythe, J.A., Haase, S. Steele, C. & Thomas, E. (2013) 'Applying career competencies in career management' *Journal of Career Assessment*, 21.2, pp. 227 - 248. DOI:10.1177/1069072712466724. Returned to UoA19 in REF2014.
2. Steele, C. & Francis-Smythe, J.A. (2010) 'Investigating the role of career anchor congruence' in Mrowinski, V., Kyrios, M. & Voudoris, N. (eds.) *Abstracts of the 27th International Congress of Applied Psychology 11-16 July 2010 Melbourne, Australia*, 156.
https://eprints.worc.ac.uk/1039/2/ICAP_Conference_Paper_Career_Anchor_Symposium_CSteele_%282%29.pdf

Grants:

- a.) Dr Jan Francis-Smythe, 'Applying Career Competencies in Career Management', SPHERE, 1/11/2003-31/10/2006, £36,000.
- b.) Dr Jan Francis-Smythe, 'Measuring career anchors and investigating the role of career anchor congruence', SPHERE, 1/4/2004-30/3/2007, £36,000.
- c.) Dr Jan Francis-Smythe, 'Commercialisation of the Career Competencies Indicator', University of Worcester KT Grant, 1/11/2009-31/10/2010, £20,000.

4. Details of the impact

The research was specifically commissioned with the intention of developing and enhancing Human Resources practice in West Mercia Constabulary (WMC), which at the time was one of the largest forces geographically, covering 3 counties and employing approximately 4500 people. A clear reporting strategy was therefore in place from the outset to disseminate on-going findings from both projects within WMC. This culminated in the production of a final joint report for the funders (**Source A**) and the delivery of a training workshop in June 2007 to the Corporate Development Strategy Group consisting of WMC's Director of Strategy and Organisation and the Head of Training and Development as well as senior police officers and staff. Feedback at the time from the Head of Training and Development noted: '*as a result [of this training] we have been able to introduce innovations which have led directly to performance gains and national recognition*'. (**Source B**)

There were a range of impacts on Human Resource practice in West Mercia Constabulary (articulated by the Head of Training and Development) (**Source C**):

- WMC's Performance and Development Review process was modified in light of the research with an increased focus on the career development aspect of the process. This was highlighted by a poster 'campaign' within WMC with the tagline: "Putting the 'D' back into PDR". The new process was quality assured through dip sampling undertaken between 2009 and 2010 which showed that staff felt they had benefitted from the change.
- The research informed the policy decision taken by WMC to offer the National Core Leadership Development Programme not only to a wider range of police officers but also, innovatively, to other police staff. This began in late 2006 but continued through into 2010.
- The research informed strategy relating to talent management and succession planning. For example, the concept of 'knowing whom' fed into the development of a Mentoring programme which was rolled out in 2009.
- The research had a palpable impact on organisational learning within WMC. For example, the concept of 'knowing how' informed the development of 'Learning the Lessons', an agenda that became part of strategic meetings within HR and which resulted in 2011 in the

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introduction of simple, short electronic learning bites (i-cards) (designed to highlight key points around a subject) cascaded down from senior officers to relevant people via email.

- More generally, the research raised awareness of a broader concept of careers amongst police officers and staff and has led to a cultural change within WMC which has enhanced opportunities for individuals. For example, the work on career anchors enabled individuals and the organisation to view lateral progression as career development.

The impact of the research, specifically the Career Competencies Indicator, has extended beyond West Mercia Constabulary clearly demonstrating both reach and significance. The Career Competencies Indicator was exhibited at the Festival of Innovation at Birmingham NEC in November 2007. At this event, the owner of [Consulting Tools](#) - a company specialising in online psychometric tools (**Source D**) targeted at consultants (in the areas of coaching, training, talent management) and Human Resource staff - approached the Centre for People at Work to collaborate in bringing the tool to market. The Career Competencies Indicator was consequently developed through a University of Worcester Innovation Grant (see section 2 above). Market research with careers experts clearly showed that the tool could be applied in the other sectors. A revised version of the Career Competencies Indicator, aimed at 18-24 year olds, was exhibited and promoted at the British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology Conference in January 2012. It was launched in its [final version](#) by Consulting Tools in April 2013. Plans are in place to develop another version of the Career Competencies Indicator aimed at 16-18 year olds.

The successful commercialisation of the Career Competencies Indicator has had immediate commercial benefits for Consulting Tools itself. It is a product that extends their portfolio into a new area and expands their client base. The product has already found a market within the Higher Education sector (for example, it is to be trialled at the University of Leicester) and there is interest from the Further Education sector and sixth form colleges. Moving forward, this tool has clear potential to enhance the career development of individuals within an age group (16-24) where unemployment as of July 2013 was over 20%.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. End of Projects Report for West Mercia Constabulary
- B. Email from Kim White, Head of Training & Development, West Mercia Constabulary
- C. Statement from Sally Yates, Head of Training, West Mercia Constabulary
- D. Ruth Hannant, Product Manager, Consulting Tools