

# Unlocking the Mystery of Career Services: Reinventing and Defining Careers

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**ABSTRACT:** Global challenges impeding the advancement of the career development field revolve around insufficient awareness regarding career services and their underutilization even after awareness is raised (Alake-Apata, 2022; National Career Development Association, 2021; OECD, 2021). To reinvent the reputation of career development and promote career services, I propose a novel approach to understanding the field from the lens of career professionals rather than those utilizing career services.

My research focuses on understanding the value of career literacy among career professionals. While a precise academic definition of career literacy is currently lacking (Tatham & McIlveen, 2009), I would assess the career literacy of an individual based on their choice of language when discussing their career. The value of language in career management is best described by Savickas: “Language enables the subjectivity needed to reflect on our actions and think about who we want to become and what work we want to do” (2012, p. 148). With this information, the language we use to describe our roles and responsibilities takes center stage.

During interviews with over 100 career professionals worldwide—including career academics, coaches, educators, practitioners, and professionals—the question that most interviewees found challenging was the following: “What is the one term that reflects your work, and how would you define it?” Many mentioned that

reflecting on this question led them to revisit their roles, better understand what they do, and truly assume ownership of their chosen career path. Some immediately identified their career-defining terms and illustrated how these terms influenced their role choices, commitment, and success in the field. Notably, identifying the term defining one’s work is the first step toward achieving a refined comprehension of their current role.

Drawing upon the insights of various career theories such as the 5Ps Model (Hoda’s Career Info, 2023, September 26; Magnusson, 2020), Career Construction Theory (Hoda’s Career Info, 2023, August, 29; Savickas, 2012), and Chaos Theory of Careers (Hoda’s Career Info, 2022; Pryor & Bright, 2011), I invite fellow career professionals to join me in reinventing the reputation of career services by choosing and reflecting on appropriate work terms through a thoughtful process. I encourage individuals to identify their work-defining terms, articulate their definitions, and

explore how these terms resonate with their work.

Integrating the insights acquired from the above three career theories (Magnusson, 2020; Pryor & Bright, 2011; Savickas, 2012) with data collected from over 100 interviews (Hoda's Career Info, n.d.), I present my findings at conferences and presentations. At these events, I invite attendees to reflect on their work-defining terms. I support this reflection process by providing attendees with exercises to identify their work-defining terms and envision potential roles and responsibilities associated with these terms. During this process, attendees may reflect on their personal narratives (Hoda's Career Info, 2023, August 29; Savickas 2012), seeking moments of pride (Hoda's Career Info, 2023, September 26; Magnusson, 2020), sorting through their daily activities, digging for epiphanies, or recalling instances where they lost track of time. Through this introspection, they start to unravel their career-defining terms. By attempting to articulate and personally define this term, they truly comprehend it. When attempting to identify the way in which this term manifests in their work, they feel encouraged to align their roles and responsibilities with the term or perhaps to reconsider and restart the reflection process if needed. Ultimately, choosing and defining a work term foster a commitment, and understanding how this term relates to individual roles and responsibilities becomes vital.

I also adopt this approach when dealing with clients outside the career field. The process of work-term identification helps them narrow down their career choices. They begin to envision a possible future by exploring various roles aligned with their career-defining term. This enhances their ability to identify possible career pathways.

Typically, many interviewees and attendees who seriously commit to identifying an initial work term return a year later with more refined terms, along with a positive attitude, enhanced motivation, and a renewed commitment to their work. As I continue to collect data, I welcome collaborations. I invite fellow professionals to connect with me. Together, let us amplify our motivation and commitment to foster excitement, empowerment, and involvement in the career field!

## References

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