


Dealing with Career Uncertainties: A Playful Strategy on How to Hit Your Career Jackpot

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Dear readers of Simulation and Gaming,

Related to the current global crises—or not—our personal lives are filled with uncertainties about how to deal with challenges. This is perhaps especially true for planning your professional career. Even if one is wise enough to engage in career planning early on, the future is uncertain. One cannot meticulously draft a path, as uncertainties are inevitable and unexpected situations will inevitably arise. For example, you may land your dream job at a particular company, not expecting that this company will collapse due to a future economic crisis. Or you may have to deal with some changes challenging your circumstances (a baby, a partner, a disease), influencing your professional career in a way that may inhibit you from working as envisioned. Some of our readers may currently struggle to obtain a PhD, despite diligent studying and having made an initial perfect plan.

The world around us changes, and not always for the better. Therefore, we should be prepared to handle challenges and seize new opportunities that come with change.

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Despite – or even due to the challenges coming with changing environments, some of us will succeed in their aspired careers. Others do not always understand this, and it may even be the case that people not succeeding in the same effort attribute another's career success to mere "luck". This is often not the case. Betsworth and Hansen (1996) found that two thirds of their participants ($n = 237$) reported having experienced serendipitous events throughout their careers that they recognized and that had led to advancements in their careers. In addition, they pointed out that people who are not succeeding often overlook these types of opportunities, and miss out on capitalizing on new chances associated.

Krumboltz et al. referred to this kind of seizure of lucky opportunities as "Planned Happenstance" (Mitchell et al., 1999). It is an interesting theory that elaborates on the art of transferring unplanned events into opportunities. To accommodate such transfer, the theory emphasizes the necessity of developing five skills:

1. Curiosity: exploring new learning opportunities
2. Persistence: exerting effort despite setbacks
3. Flexibility: changing attitudes and circumstances
4. Optimism: viewing new opportunities as possible and attainable
5. Risk Taking: taking action in the face of uncertain outcomes.

The next question, then, is how to master the art of developing and enhancing these skills. A between-the-lines reader of this editorial may have already suspected our suggestion: that playing strategic games is a smart strategy, as such games often contain all the elements to build these skills. Indeed, strategy gamers must be curious, persistent, flexible, optimistic, and, of course, take risks at every phase of playing games to win.

Games are known to contribute to the development of personal ability in many ways. Such as planning, whether the game is in an analog or digital format. Succeeding in a game requires efficient planning skills and resilience to deal with changing circumstances. The latter is even vital, as gameplay by default contains uncertainties, e.g., rolling the dice, drawing an accident card, and so on. Additionally, the behaviors of other players are often unpredictable.

To win in games, as well as in professional careers and life, we need to build our skills to capitalize on the serendipitous opportunities that surround us. And what more fun and innovative way to prepare by using gameplay as a tool to develop our 'Happenstance' skills, to better cope with the challenges of the real world.

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