

Implementation of Planned Happenstance In Career Planning and Decision Making

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Abstract

This article explores the implementation of Planned Happenstance in career planning and decision making. Planned Happenstance is an approach that recognizes the role of serendipity in career journeys and teaches individuals to leverage unexpected opportunities. The discussion in this article covers the concept of Planned Happenstance, its core components, and practical strategies for career planning. In career planning, Planned Happenstance emphasizes the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and preparedness for planned risk-taking. The core components of Planned Happenstance include sustained curiosity, preparedness to seize opportunities, networking skills, adaptability, and learning from experience. Case studies and practical examples presented in this article illustrate how Planned Happenstance can be applied in career planning. These stories provide real-life insights into how individuals use the concept of Planned Happenstance to explore desired industries, engage in planned risk-taking, build effective social networks, learn from experiences, and achieve significant career growth. In implementing Planned Happenstance, individuals need to maintain openness to new opportunities, develop adaptability skills, build strong social networks, and learn from every experience. Through this approach, individuals can leverage uncertainty to attain sustainable career success. This article underscores the significance of Planned Happenstance in navigating the dynamic and complex world of work. By adopting a proactive, flexible, and strategically planned approach to risk-taking, individuals can create unexpected opportunities and achieve remarkable success in their career journeys.

Keywords : Planned Happenstance, Career Planning, Decision Making



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1. Introduction

Career planning has evolved into a critical and complex component of modern life, where individuals are confronted with an increasingly dynamic and diverse array of choices and opportunities. Traditionally, career planning was a linear and structured process. It involved defining clear long-term goals, identifying the requisite skills, and meticulously following a predetermined path. However, in our current era of rapid technological advancement, shifting economic trends, and evolving job markets, this conventional, rigid approach often proves inadequate for navigating the complexities of the contemporary professional landscape.

In response to these challenges, researchers and career development professionals have begun to emphasize the importance of incorporating unpredictability and serendipity into career decision-making. This recognition has given rise to an alternative and increasingly relevant framework known as "Planned Happenstance." This paradigm shifts the perspective from one of rigid control to one of proactive adaptation. It posits that while not all career opportunities can be precisely planned for, individuals can actively cultivate the mindset and behaviors necessary to create, recognize, and capitalize on unexpected events throughout their professional journey.

Planned Happenstance reframes uncertainty and change not as threats, but as valuable sources of potential. By adopting this approach, individuals do not merely prepare to face the unknown; they learn to engage with it. This involves the courage to take calculated risks, a commitment to open-ended exploration, and the strategic leveraging of social networks. Within the Planned Happenstance framework, individuals accept that chance events will inevitably occur. The key to success lies in developing the capacity to transform these random occurrences into beneficial and formative career opportunities.

The Planned Happenstance mindset is built upon a foundation of core components that transform an individual from a passive planner into an active opportunity-creator. Central to this approach are adaptive mental attitudes,

which serve as the internal compass for navigating uncertainty. This suite of attitudes includes an insatiable curiosity that drives the exploration of new fields and ideas, a resilient persistence that allows one to persevere through rejections and setbacks, a practiced flexibility to pivot when unexpected events render old plans obsolete, and a foundational optimism that fosters the belief that one's actions can shape positive outcomes. Complementing this mental framework is the courage for calculated risk-taking. Planned Happenstance actively encourages individuals to step beyond the safety of their comfort zones, whether by initiating a conversation with a stranger, proposing an unconventional idea at work, or applying for a role that seems just beyond their current reach. It is in these moments of deliberate vulnerability that the seeds of serendipity are often sown, opening doors that would remain closed to a more cautious approach.

Beyond internal dispositions, Planned Happenstance emphasizes the critical importance of external engagement through strategic networking and experiential learning. In our hyper-connected world, a robust and diverse social network is far more than a professional accessory; it is a vital infrastructure for chance opportunities. This involves building genuine, reciprocal relationships with individuals across various industries and backgrounds. Such a network acts as a dynamic sensor array, providing access to unadvertised job openings, diverse perspectives that challenge one's thinking, and mentorship from those who have navigated similar uncertainties. Simultaneously, this approach redefines every professional experience be it a triumphant success or an instructive failure as a crucial data point in a continuous learning cycle. Through active reflection, individuals can extract valuable insights, refine their skills, and, most importantly, sharpen their ability to recognize subtle patterns and potential opportunities that others might overlook.

Translating the theory of Planned Happenstance into tangible action requires a set of practical, actionable strategies. One must proactively cultivate curiosity by attending interdisciplinary conferences, enrolling in courses outside one's core expertise, and seeking projects that deliberately challenge existing

competencies. Risk-taking must evolve from being a reactive gamble to a proactive strategy of taking calculated risks, which involves thoughtfully weighing the potential downsides against the learning and opportunity-based upsides of new ventures. Networking, too, must be dynamic and value-driven, focused not on transactional contact-collecting but on fostering genuine, reciprocal relationships where knowledge and support are freely exchanged. Finally, individuals must institutionalize a process of learning from action by consistently engaging in a cycle of doing, reflecting, adapting, and applying. This continuous loop ensures that every step taken, regardless of the immediate outcome, contributes to a growing reservoir of wisdom and preparedness, ultimately enabling one to navigate the unpredictable currents of a modern career with agency and confidence.

2. Method

The practical methodology for implementing Planned Happenstance is a dynamic, cyclical process designed to transform passive individuals into active architects of their career serendipity. This method begins with the intentional cultivation of curiosity, which involves proactively seeking diverse experiences, engaging with fields outside one's immediate expertise, and pursuing knowledge without a predefined objective to widen one's horizon and enhance the ability to spot potential opportunities. This is followed by the disciplined practice of taking calculated risks, which entails making quick, informed assessments of unexpected chances and having the courage to act upon them, such as initiating a conversation with a senior leader, applying for a challenging "stretch" assignment, or exploring a nascent industry. Running concurrently is the strategic and authentic building of networks, focusing on fostering genuine, reciprocal relationships with a diverse range of people rather than merely accumulating contacts; this network acts as a vital conduit for information, support, and unadvertised opportunities. The final, crucial component of this methodology is systematic reflective learning, where every outcome whether a success or a

failure is rigorously analyzed to extract key lessons, refine one's approach, and develop a more intuitive understanding of the professional landscape. Together, these four interconnected practices exploration, action, connection, and reflection form a powerful system that enables individuals to consistently create, recognize, and capitalize on chance events, thereby designing their own luck in an uncertain world.

3. Result and Discussion

The concept of Planned Happenstance in Career Planning, formally introduced by researchers Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Levin in 1999, represents a paradigm shift in how we approach professional development. This theory posits that successful career trajectories are not solely the product of meticulous, linear planning but are significantly influenced by unpredictable chance events. In contrast to traditional models that emphasize a fixed destination, Planned Happenstance acknowledges the inherent uncertainty of the modern economy and leverages it as a fundamental component of career growth. It proposes that while individuals cannot predict the future, they can cultivate a specific set of skills and attitudes to better generate, recognize, and capitalize on serendipitous opportunities when they arise, thereby "planning" for the unplannable and transforming luck into a manageable variable.

Krumboltz and his colleagues delineated four key elements that form the cornerstone of this approach. The first is learning adaptive skills, which focuses on developing a resilient and flexible mindset characterized by courage in the face of ambiguity, persistence through setbacks, and the flexibility to pivot when circumstances change. The second element, creating opportunities, is driven by intense curiosity and a commitment to open-ended exploration; it encourages individuals to pursue new interests, develop novel skills, and engage in activities without a guaranteed outcome, thereby increasing the surface area for chance encounters. The third element involves building robust social networks, recognizing that a diverse web of connections is a primary conduit for unexpected

information, advice, and offers that would remain inaccessible in a state of professional isolation. Finally, the concept culminates in utilizing change and chance events as opportunities, which is the practiced ability to reframe unforeseen disruptions whether a missed promotion, a market shift, or a random conversation not as threats, but as potential doorways to new and beneficial career paths.

Planned Happenstance reframes the very nature of career planning from a rigid blueprint to a dynamic process of navigation. It invites individuals to adopt a proactive stance, where they are not passive recipients of fate but active agents in creating their own luck. This means consistently stepping beyond one's comfort zone to network authentically, pursuing learning for its own sake, and taking calculated risks. By doing so, individuals build a career not just on a foundation of skills and goals, but on a robust capacity for adaptation. Ultimately, this approach provides a powerful framework for thriving in a volatile world, empowering people to write their own career story by intelligently and courageously engaging with the unexpected twists and turns of professional life.

A cornerstone of the Planned Happenstance theory is the profound role of experiential learning and resilience. This approach asserts that every professional experience, whether a clear success or an apparent failure, serves as a critical data point for future navigation. Individuals are encouraged to engage in deep reflection on their past actions, systematically analyzing outcomes to identify key lessons, recognize recurring patterns, and gain clarity on their unique strengths and vulnerabilities. This process of continuous self-evaluation transforms random events into meaningful guidance, enabling individuals to refine their strategies, pivot their career paths with purpose, and direct their efforts more effectively toward future opportunities. Furthermore, this reflective practice is intrinsically linked to building resilience. By learning to view setbacks not as definitive defeats but as learning opportunities, individuals develop the psychological fortitude necessary to face an uncertain professional landscape.

with confidence and a positive attitude, seeing volatility not as a threat but as a terrain rich with potential.

Beyond learning from the past, Planned Happenstance demands a proactive and forward-looking orientation, primarily characterized by adaptive mental attitudes and purposeful exploration. This involves cultivating a mindset that embraces curiosity, flexibility, and courage. Instead of adhering to a rigid, linear career map, individuals adopt the perspective of an explorer, driven by a desire to investigate new fields, develop novel skills, and ask "what if?" This intellectual curiosity is the engine for generating chance opportunities. It is complemented by the willingness to take calculated, planned risks such as proposing an innovative project, accepting a challenging "stretch" assignment, or initiating a conversation with someone outside one's normal circle. These deliberate actions, taken while stepping outside one's comfort zone, are not reckless gambles but strategic moves designed to disrupt routine and dramatically increase the likelihood of beneficial serendipitous encounters.

Interconnected layer of this approach is the strategic construction of a dynamic social network as a conduit for opportunity. Planned Happenstance recognizes that many of the most transformative chances are not found in job postings but are transmitted through human connections. Therefore, building and nurturing a wide and diverse web of relationships is not a passive activity but a core strategic function. This network, composed of individuals from various industries, backgrounds, and levels of experience, acts as a vital sensor array, providing access to unadvertised positions, unique insights, and invaluable mentorship. By actively engaging with this community both giving and receiving individuals position themselves at the crossroads of information and opportunity. In essence, Planned Happenstance frees individuals from the constraints of rigid planning, empowering them to build a career that masterfully blends intention with agility, and structured goals with the creative capacity to capitalize on the unexpected.

The Planned Happenstance theory is built upon five interconnected core components that function as a dynamic system for navigating a volatile professional world. At its foundation lies an Adaptive Mindset, which encompasses the courage to face the unknown, the flexibility to pivot when circumstances change, and the persistence to continue seeking opportunities despite setbacks. This mental framework is fueled by Curiosity and Exploration, an active and open-ended pursuit of new knowledge, skills, and fields of interest. This curiosity drives individuals to step beyond their routines, directly leading to the third component: Building a Broad Social Network. A diverse and robust network is not merely a contact list but a vital ecosystem for serendipity, providing access to unique information, unadvertised opportunities, and diverse perspectives that one would not encounter in isolation. To leverage this system effectively requires the fourth component, Courage in the Face of Uncertainty the willingness to take calculated risks, embrace challenging assignments, and leave the comfort zone. Finally, the entire process is refined through Learning from Experience, where both successes and failures are systematically reflected upon to extract lessons, refine strategies, and build the wisdom needed for future decisions. These components are not sequential steps but a synergistic cycle, where curiosity leads to new connections, which require courage to pursue, and from which invaluable experience is gained, further adapting one's mindset.

To operationalize these core components, individuals must develop concrete strategies for Overcoming Uncertainty. This begins with cultivating Flexibility and Adaptability, which involves treating career plans as living documents open to revision rather than rigid scripts. Strengthening Problem-Solving Skills is equally critical, enabling one to analyze ambiguous situations, generate creative solutions, and make informed decisions when the path forward is unclear. Alongside these cognitive skills, building Mental Resilience is essential for managing the stress and anxiety that uncertainty can provoke, allowing one to remain focused and optimistic. This is greatly supported by a Strong Support Network of peers, mentors, and experienced professionals who can offer

guidance, share their own experiences with uncertainty, and provide both practical advice and emotional encouragement.

Overcoming uncertainty in one's career is an active and continuous process of self-development and strategic engagement. It requires a commitment to Staying Informed about industry trends and emerging technologies to anticipate shifts, coupled with a deliberate effort to Maintain Openness and Curiosity towards unexpected paths. This is powered by a proactive approach to Building Adaptive Skills and Maintaining Personal Competence through continuous learning, ensuring one's skillset remains relevant and competitive. By adopting a Resilient Attitude, individuals learn to view challenges and setbacks not as failures, but as integral parts of the professional journey. In synthesizing the core attitudes of Planned Happenstance with these practical strategies, individuals transform uncertainty from a paralyzing threat into a landscape of potential, empowering them to confidently navigate their career and actively create their own serendipity.

Taking Planned Risks in Career Planning

Taking planned risks represents a strategic approach to career advancement that involves carefully calculated decisions rather than impulsive leaps. This process begins with identifying potentially beneficial risks through systematic evaluation of potential rewards against possible drawbacks. Effective risk assessment requires honest self-reflection about one's capabilities and thorough research into the specific context, enabling individuals to distinguish between reckless gambles and strategic opportunities. The foundation of successful risk-taking lies in developing contingency plans that outline alternative paths should the initial risk not yield the desired outcomes. This safety net not only minimizes potential negative consequences but also provides the psychological security needed to move forward with confidence. By combining thorough preparation with courageous action, individuals can transform uncertainty from a threat into an opportunity for growth.

The implementation of planned risks demands strong decision-making skills and emotional intelligence. Individuals must learn to manage the natural anxiety that accompanies stepping outside comfort zones while maintaining a balanced self-confidence that acknowledges both strengths and areas for development. This emotional equilibrium becomes particularly crucial when facing the inevitable setbacks that accompany risk-taking. Rather than viewing failures as defeats, successful risk-treaters extract valuable lessons from these experiences, using them to refine future strategies and build resilience. This process is significantly enhanced by seeking mentorship and building support networks that provide diverse perspectives, practical advice, and emotional encouragement during challenging career transitions.

Planned risk-taking proves most effective when aligned with clear long-term career objectives. This strategic alignment ensures that risks serve a purpose in the broader career narrative rather than representing random deviations. The courage to pursue unfamiliar paths, explore different industries, or accept challenging responsibilities often reveals unexpected opportunities that would remain inaccessible through cautious, conventional approaches. By mastering the art of responsible risk management through careful evaluation, contingency planning, emotional regulation, and continuous learning individuals transform risk from a deterrent into a powerful tool for unlocking hidden potential and achieving meaningful career growth in an unpredictable professional landscape.

Building Effective Social Networks

Creating and maintaining effective social networks requires a strategic and genuine approach focused on building meaningful professional relationships. The process begins with clear identification of networking objectives aligned with specific career needs, whether seeking industry insights, mentorship, or new opportunities. Professional events, conferences, and industry associations provide valuable venues for organic connections, while digital platforms like LinkedIn offer powerful tools for initiating and maintaining professional relationships. The most successful networkers adopt a proactive mindset,

consistently initiating conversations and demonstrating genuine interest in others' experiences and expertise. This foundation of authentic engagement establishes the groundwork for mutually beneficial relationships that extend beyond transactional connections.

The sustainability of professional networks depends heavily on consistent nurturing and value creation. Rather than focusing on quantity, effective networkers prioritize relationship quality through regular, meaningful interactions that demonstrate ongoing interest and support. This involves sharing relevant knowledge, making thoughtful introductions, and offering assistance without immediate expectation of return. The development of trust forms the cornerstone of these relationships, built through reliability, integrity, and respectful communication. By adopting a long-term perspective and viewing networking as an ongoing process rather than a periodic activity, professionals create durable connections that withstand the test of time and changing circumstances.

Advanced networking strategies emphasize diversity and strategic positioning within professional communities. Building connections across different industries, career stages, and areas of expertise creates a rich ecosystem of perspectives and opportunities. Active participation in professional communities through knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and mentorship positions individuals as valuable contributors rather than passive beneficiaries. Maintaining a positive digital footprint and professional reputation reinforces these connections, while seeking teaching opportunities establishes expertise and expands influence. Through this comprehensive approach combining strategic initiation, consistent nurturing, and value-driven engagement professionals develop robust networks that serve as dynamic resources for career development, opportunity identification, and long-term professional success.

Learning from Experience in Career Planning

The process of learning from experience represents a fundamental pillar of effective career development, transforming every professional encounter into

a valuable source of growth. This cyclical process begins with structured reflection, where individuals deliberately examine both successful and challenging experiences to extract meaningful insights. Through careful analysis, professionals can identify specific lessons about their capabilities, preferences, and areas needing improvement, recognizing patterns in their decision-making and outcomes. However, the true value emerges only when these reflections translate into deliberate action - adjusting career strategies, setting revised goals, or expanding professional networks based on newly gained understanding. This implementation phase turns abstract lessons into tangible career progress, creating a dynamic feedback loop where each experience informs the next step in one's professional journey.

The social dimension of experiential learning significantly enhances its impact through knowledge sharing and documentation. Discussing experiences with mentors, colleagues, and professional connections provides diverse perspectives that deepen understanding and reveal blind spots. This collaborative reflection is complemented by maintaining a systematic record of key experiences, lessons learned, and subsequent actions, which serves both as a tracking mechanism for personal growth and as concrete evidence of professional development. This documented journey becomes particularly valuable during career transitions, performance reviews, or when seeking new opportunities, providing a compelling narrative of continuous improvement and adaptive learning throughout one's career.

The most successful professionals embrace experiential learning as a lifelong practice grounded in curiosity and openness to new challenges. This mindset encourages actively seeking diverse experiences, whether through challenging projects, cross-functional collaborations, or exploring unexpected opportunities. Each new experience becomes a potential source of learning and growth, fostering the development of career agility - the ability to adapt and thrive in changing professional environments. By consistently applying this approach, individuals transform their career path into an ongoing learning

expedition, where every success and setback contributes to their professional evolution, ensuring they remain relevant and competitive in an ever-changing job market.

Case Studies and Practical Examples

Case Study 1: Sarah's Planned Happenstance Journey in Fashion Marketing

Sarah's career journey exemplifies how deliberate networking and strategic risk-taking can create unexpected pathways to dream careers. After graduating with a marketing degree and facing intense competition in the fashion industry, Sarah implemented Planned Happenstance principles by proactively expanding her professional network through industry events and exhibitions. Her willingness to accept an internship at a local design company - though not her ideal position - demonstrated crucial adaptability and recognition of potential opportunities. During her internship, Sarah maximized every learning opportunity while building meaningful relationships with experienced professionals who provided valuable industry insights and skill development guidance.

Sarah's strategic approach continued as she transitioned to a marketing assistant role in the same company, consistently enhancing her skills and maintaining active engagement with her growing professional network. Her breakthrough came months later when network connections alerted her to an opening at her dream fashion company. The combination of developed skills, relevant experience, and strong professional recommendations - all cultivated through her Planned Happenstance approach - enabled Sarah to secure her ideal position. This case illustrates how consistent application of curiosity, networking, and strategic risk-taking can transform initial opportunities into dream career outcomes.

Case Study 2: Mark's Exploration Through Planned Happenstance in Technology

Mark's career transformation demonstrates how professionals can leverage unexpected encounters into significant career evolution. Despite established success in his technology role, Mark's attendance at an international technology conference - driven by curiosity and exploration - led to a

conversation with a young entrepreneur starting an AI venture. Though initially hesitant about the startup environment, Mark recognized the learning potential and accepted the role, embracing the uncertainty as a growth opportunity. His startup experience provided accelerated learning in business development, adaptive leadership, and collaborative teamwork within an innovative, fast-paced environment.

After several years of skill development and confidence building, Mark leveraged his enhanced capabilities and expanded network to explore new career options. His Planned Happenstance approach culminated in securing a senior position at a leading technology company, where he now contributes to innovative product development and business strategy. Mark's journey highlights how professionals can transform career uncertainty into strategic advantage through openness to unexpected opportunities, courageous risk-taking, and continuous skill development, ultimately achieving significant professional growth and new career directions.

These case studies collectively demonstrate that career success in modern professional environments often emerges not from rigid planning alone, but from the skillful combination of preparation, adaptability, and the strategic seizing of unexpected opportunities.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of Planned Happenstance in career planning and decision-making presents a powerful and effective framework for navigating the complexities of the modern professional world. This approach empowers individuals to proactively explore opportunities, successfully manage uncertainty, and leverage their experiences for continuous career growth. As detailed throughout this article, Planned Happenstance moves beyond rigid, linear planning by emphasizing the critical importance of flexibility, adaptability, and a readiness to take calculated risks. By learning to generate and capitalize on planned chance, individuals can explore unforeseen paths, build robust social

networks, learn iteratively from all experiences, and take decisive actions that propel their careers forward.

The efficacy of this approach rests on its core components: sustained curiosity, a tolerance for risk, strategic networking skills, adaptability, and a commitment to experiential learning. By consciously developing these attributes, individuals significantly enhance their capacity to face ambiguity with confidence, make informed decisions, and seize emergent opportunities. The practical case studies included demonstrate the tangible application of this theory, illustrating how individuals have used Planned Happenstance to break into competitive industries, navigate significant career transitions, build effective professional relationships, and achieve substantial growth by turning uncertainty into a strategic advantage.

In a professional landscape characterized by constant change and complexity, Planned Happenstance remains a profoundly relevant and valuable paradigm. Its successful implementation requires a consistent openness to new possibilities, the continuous development of adaptive skills, the cultivation of a strong and diverse network, and a reflective mindset that learns from every outcome. The resources and competencies developed through this approach do not merely serve immediate career goals; they establish a resilient foundation for long-term adaptation and future growth. Ultimately, by adopting the proactive, flexible, and courageous principles of Planned Happenstance, individuals can expand their horizons, forge valuable connections, and create a sustainable path to extraordinary success in their career journeys.

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