



The Fast Tracker

How Diverse Career Motivations Affect Career Decisions

Deep down, we all approach our work in different ways, depending on our history, personality type and the many decisions that we have made during our lives. Our behaviors at work might look very much like those of others, but only we know the real reasons why we perform the tasks and responsibilities of our jobs. And these reasons affect our work satisfaction most deeply, causing us to draw energy from our work or—if our motivations are not being met—to find disappointment at work.

The FutureWork Institute has researched and developed a series of categories to help explain these deep-seated motivations. We call them "career archetypes," because research shows they are constant among many individuals.

There are five career archetypes and, it seems, one is almost always dominant in individuals, possibly from an early age:

- **The Fast Tracker** — a person who values individual contributions above all else
- **The Experimenter** — a person whose deepest motivation is to build a portfolio of skills to enable that person to discover the job or company that "fits."
- **The Fast Tracker** — a person who sees tangible career success as a gauge of personal success in life
- **The Company-dedicated Careerist** — a person comfortable in his or her job and company because it enables that person to "dig in" and understand how "this place really works"
- **The Balanced Careerist** — a person who values life outside work as much as time spent on the job.

Each archetype is "normal," a valid way of approaching work and career, but each is very different. Read more now to discover what motivates the Fast Tracker.



What Fast Trackers Are All About

Fast Trackers are the darlings of corporate America, highly energetic, very enthusiastic about the business' success, always willing to take on a leadership role and get things done. However, these amazing qualities all stem from an underlying career motivation: the Fast Tracker uses external rewards to gauge personal success.

Fast Trackers are highly success-oriented and, since success is conferred as a reward in most companies—by promotions, salary increases and other tangibles, Fast Trackers gauge their worth in the company by these rewards.

As long as there is a steady stream of rewards and promotions, the Fast Tracker will perform at a high level. If promotions become fewer, a Fast Tracker will be tempted to search out another company where hard work, dedication and risk-taking are rewarded.

Fast Trackers tend to make little distinction between work and personal life. They take short vacations, checking in at the office constantly. They seem to be on a mission to excel and reap the rewards of excellence.

To truly understand the Fast Tracker mentality, we have to look at their sense of time. Fast Trackers have a compressed sense of time; they like things done yesterday. They seem to live in the future, constantly striving to make it a reality in the present.. Their enormous energy seems almost to make the impossible happen.

Managing the Fast Tracker

Fast Trackers see their managers as equals. After all, they might not be managing a whole unit today, but they are managing their own careers and doing so very well. They will gladly learn from their managers but will also seek to turn their managers into what they need now in their career, whether a sponsor, a giver of opportunities to take on larger projects, or someone to discuss business with.

As long as their managers realize that Fast Trackers are about external rewards and provides them opportunities to succeed, Fast Trackers and managers get along fine. For the manager, a Fast Tracker can be a real find. That impossible job, the project crying out for leadership, the business that needs to be turned around—all these are what the business and the Fast Tracker needs.

Working on Teams with Fast Trackers

To other career archetypes Fast Trackers might seem to be totally out for themselves but this is not really true. Real Fast Trackers often exhibit great leadership ability, and an uncanny skill to motivate others. Working on a team with a Fast Tracker leader can be an exhilarating experience for others.

On teams, Fast Trackers have a way of getting to the heart of the issues, setting schedules for deliverables and bringing their enormous energies to bear on the problems at hand. Where others find issues intractable, Fast Trackers find solutions and always seem to know the steps to get there.

It is little wonder that, although Fast Trackers make up only 11% of the worker population, 29% of senior executives identify themselves as Fast Trackers. And these executives set the standard for others in their companies.

Questions and Answers on Fast Trackers

Q. *Are Fast Trackers team players?*

A. As long as the team is about accomplishing something for the business, Fast Trackers are excellent team players. They often gravitate to leadership roles on teams because of their energy and focus.

Q. *Will Fast Trackers stay with the company?*

A. Fast Trackers will stay with the company as long as the challenges and rewards keep coming.

Q. *Do Fast Trackers want to be promoted?*

A. Yes, as quickly as possible.

Q. *Is it unfair to give rapid promotions and increased responsibilities to Fast Trackers?*

A. Fast Trackers see themselves as earning all they receive. Their enormous energy, dedication to results and ability to find solutions make them extremely valuable to businesses.

Q. *Why are Fast Trackers so often held up as models to others?*

A. There are two reasons why so many competency profiles in American companies seem like portraits of the Fast Tracker:

- Senior managers see their own success as a just reward for their untiring efforts on behalf of the company and expect others who want to advance to exhibit similar behaviors.
- Fast Trackers are very valuable employees.