



Building Career Capital: Developing Business Leaders' Career Mobility

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Abstract

Purpose – Career theorists have been increasingly occupied with role transitions across organisations, neglecting role transitions undertaken within single organisations. By exploring in depth the aspects of career capital that role holders need to facilitate their own organisational role transition, this article builds upon career capital theory.

Design/methodology/approach – Adopting an interpretivist approach, this study explores the experiences of 36 business leaders who have undertaken a recent role transition within a United Kingdom (UK) construction business.

Findings – The article empirically characterises 24 career capital aspects, clustered into Knowing Self, Knowing How and Knowing Whom. It argues that these aspects are important to internal role transitions and compares them to mainstream career capital theory. In addition, the concepts of connecting, crossing and investing career capital are introduced to explain how career capital supports such transitions.

Research limitations/implications – This study proposes a new career capital framework and refocuses debate on organisational careers. It is based on a single organisation, and it would be beneficial for future researchers to explore its applicability within other organisations.

Practical implications – The article explores the implications of the new career capital framework for business leaders and organisational managers who wish to build individual and organisational career mobility.

Originality/value – This study proposes a new, empirically-grounded, career capital theoretical framework particularly attending to organisational role transitions.

Keywords: career capital, business leaders, organisational role transitions, career mobility

Paper type: research paper

Introduction

Career is the process by which individuals' interface with organisations, the labour market and the wider world over time. Career has been characterised as the simultaneous operation of multiple complex systems (including self, organisations and the labour market) and is consequently the process of managing uncertainty (Pryor and Bright, 2011). While not all career management is about making shifts between roles, the process of changing jobs remains a critical moment within individuals' career development. In this article we describe an individual's ability to undertake role transitions as 'career mobility' (Forrier, Sels and Stynen, 2009) and the resources that they use to make these transitions as 'career capital'.

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Career capital brings together a range of non-financial, resources that individuals bring to work (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994) and draws on Bourdieu's capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986). Through the course of their career, individuals can build and use their career capital (Dickmann, Suutari, Brewster, Makela, Tanskanen and Tornikoski, 2016) to create positional improvements within organisations and labour markets (Lamb and Sutherland, 2010). Arthur, Inkson and Pringle (1999) provide a career capital framework which consists of three knowings: 'Knowing-Why', 'Knowing-How', and 'Knowing-Whom'. Arthur et al.'s career capital framework (1999) has since been used extensively to understand individual and organisational change, but has not been used to examine career transitions within organisations.

This study examines whether, how and what aspects of career capital facilitate organisational role transitions. It comprised narrative interviews with 36 business leaders in a UK construction business. 'Business leaders' are defined as members of the three leadership groups of the case organisation, the: Executive; Leadership Group; and Business Deployment Group.

The study explores how career capital supports organisational career transitions through the following questions:

1. What aspects of career capital facilitate organisational role transitions?
2. How is career capital used to support organisational role transitions?
3. What are the implications for business leaders, organisational managers and researchers of these organisational role transitions?

Theoretical background

Career mobility context

Career mobility 'implies the transition from one position to another' (Forrier, et al., 2009: 741). Such role transitions and career moves are complex and often prove personally challenging for business leaders.

A tapestry of different forms of career co-exist (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Some commentators argue that organisationally-bounded careers are no longer the norm (Baruch, 2006). Instead, increasing attention is being given to notions of 'the boundaryless career'

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5 (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Others have contested this, noting that the organisational
6 career, staying in one organisation for extended periods including changes of role, is not dead
7 (Baruch, 2006; Chudzikowski, 2012). In a longitudinal study involving 465 employees across
8 four organisations, Wittekind, Raeder and Grote (2010) found that 66% of survey participants
9 aspired to have a secure career with a single employer.
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14 Role transitions are central to the notion of career mobility, yet take many forms
15 (Schlossberg, 1984). Within an organisation, role transitions can include transitioning within
16 or between functions (Nicholson and West, 1988) or moving upwards, side-wards or
17 downwards within the organisational structure (Ng, Sorensen, Eby and Feldman, 2007).
18 Given this, role transitions can be challenging and stressful for individuals to experience and
19 manage, requiring both physical and mental adjustments to routines, networks, training
20 needs, identity and attitudes (Baruch, 2006; Clarke, 2009; Chudzikowski, 2012). Business
21 leaders making role transitions within their own organisations may experience additional
22 stress and challenge, since they are often highly visible to others (Mitchell, 2007; Ibarra and
23 Barbulescu, 2010).
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33 *Career capital*

34 Career capital is a resource that supports career mobility. Arthur, et al. (1999) and
35 Mayrhofer, Iellatchitch, Meyer, Steyrer, Schiffinger and Strunk (2004) developed two rival
36 career capital theoretical frameworks. Mayrhofer et al.'s (2004) framework takes a multi-
37 level perspective, recognising social (economic and legal systems), sectoral (the symbolic
38 capital valued in different fields) and individual (the career capital that is uniquely personal)
39 levels, and holds much strength. However, the practical application of Mayrhofer's
40 framework has been hampered by difficulties in definition and measurement (Jokinen,
41 Brewster and Suutari, 2008). Consequently Arthur's framework has often been favoured by
42 researchers and has been applied in a breadth of empirical studies (Dickmann and Harris,
43 2005).
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52 DeFillippi and Arthur's (1994) career competency framework, later termed **as a career**
53 **capital framework** (Arthur et al., 1999), comprises three knowings – from which 'intelligent
54 careers are made' (Arthur, Claman and DeFillippi, 1995: 19). Their career capital framework
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5 is designed to be applicable to career management across different contexts. ‘Knowing-Why’
6 relates to motivation and personal meaning which provides the owner with energy, purpose
7 and identification with work (Arthur et al., 1995). ‘Knowing-How’ or human capital and
8 cultural capital provides an individual with the work-related skills, knowledge and
9 understanding needed to perform well (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994). ‘Knowing-Whom’ or
10 social capital refers to the value of relationships both inside and outside of our professional
11 lives along with associated reputations (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994). DeFillippi and Arthur’s
12 (1994) framework originated from exploring competencies within firms, but it ultimately
13 sought to understand how individuals manage their careers between boundaries.
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21 Arthur et al.’s (1999) career capital theoretical framework can be easily applied
22 within empirical studies and emphasises the ease of career capital development.
23 Consequently, Arthur et al.’s framework has been applied extensively to look at both
24 organisational and individual change. With respect to organisational change, the framework
25 has been used to look at institutional development (Arthur et al., 1999), talent management
26 (Zikic, 2015) and industry communities (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994). While in relation to
27 individual change it has been used to explore: personal understanding (Arthur et al., 1999),
28 personal development (Felker and Gianecchini, 2015) and career management (Tempest and
29 Coupland, 2016). Despite such broad applications, there have been limited efforts to apply
30 the framework to role transitions with notable exceptions being Terjesen’s (2005) work on
31 female entrepreneurs and Suutari and Makela’s (2007) work on global career transitions.
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40 Although Arthur does not explicitly reference Bourdieu, his conception of career
41 capital, like that of Mayrhofer, uses concepts that are strongly aligned to Bourdieusian theory.
42 It draws on the notions of convertibility and capital circularity (Bourdieu, 1986). In other
43 words, career capital can be cycled and traded to access other forms of capital, thereby
44 generating additional capital. For example, a positive relationship with a line manager (social
45 capital), can be used to gain access to funding (financial capital) to undertake a Masters’
46 qualification, (human capital). It would be possible to fuse the theories further, for example
47 drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of field to recognise the importance of the locality within
48 which the career capital is used, and his notion of symbolic capital which clarifies the way in
49 which different forms of capital are accorded value within different contexts such as
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5 organisations (Bourdieu, 1986). Having explored the key literature sources, it is now timely
6 to introduce the methodological approach adopted in this study.
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10 **Methodology**

11 This article draws on a research project which explores the career capital that business
12 leaders need to facilitate role transitions within a UK organisation. As the operation of career
13 capital within an organisation is under-researched, a single organisation case study involving
14 an in-depth, exploration is a useful way to build additional understanding of this phenomenon
15 (Yin, 2012). The study takes an interpretivist approach to explore business leaders' subjective
16 experiences of their role transitions (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).
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24 *Data Collection*

25 A purposive sampling approach was used and 36 business leaders who had recently
26 (within 3 years) made internal, voluntary, sideward or upward role transitions in a UK-based
27 construction company were invited (with all agreeing) to participate. Face-to-face, event-
28 based narrative interviews were used to give participants the opportunity to tell the story of
29 their role transitions. The case population was 36 people and was 78% male, 78% married,
30 64% with dependents and 100% 'White British' and 'Other White Background' (following
31 the Office for National Statistics ethnic categories). An interview protocol was developed to
32 facilitate the exploration of their role transition narrative, and comprised of a series of open
33 questions (Roulston, 2013), including: What helped your transition? How did this help? What
34 hindered your transition? What did you do? What additional support might have helped you?
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45 *Data Analysis*

46 An iterative analytical approach was undertaken. This is recognised as a useful
47 approach when exploring something that has not been explored before (Boyatzis, 1982;
48 Braun and Clarke, 2006). Here, iterative is defined as the continual movement between
49 analytical processing of the data, sense-making of the data through journaling and
50 development of field notes and further reviewing of the literature. After being recorded and
51 transcribed, interview transcriptions were thematically analysed for enablers and barriers for
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5 such role transitions, along with required additional support. Roulston (2013) argues that this
6 approach provides a rich, detailed and complex description and interpretation of an entire
7 data set. A visual map was created for each business leader to illustrate the interconnectivity
8 between what helped and hindered their role transition experiences. Following manual
9 thematic coding, NVivo was used to support further data interrogation. Here, 24 career
10 capital aspects were identified as both aiding role transitions and supporting the overcoming
11 of barriers. Influenced by, but in contrast to, Arthur et al.'s (1999) career capital theoretical
12 framework, these 24 career capital aspects were grouped into three clusters: *Knowing Self,*
13 *Knowing How, Knowing Whom.*

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21 In addition, running, meditation, journaling and the creation of field notes helped to
22 facilitate sense-making of the data and the observation of patterns and to allow 'insights come
23 up on their own timetable' (Kabat-Zinn, 2002: 69). Here, seven additional themes emerged
24 relating to how career capital was used to support such role transitions, namely: connecting
25 and crossing career capital, investing in career capital, impact of agency and attachment,
26 career capital development and erosion and, finally, career capital as a barrier. All 36
27 interview transcriptions were re-coded against these seven emergent themes.

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33 Finally, Golden-Biddle and Locke's (1993) three criteria of authenticity, plausibility
34 and criticality were selected as research quality indicators. More specifically, authenticity is
35 illustrated through the researcher's deep understanding of what was taking place in the
36 organisation. Having consulted with the case organisation over the preceding six years, the
37 researcher was conversant with the challenges, the opportunities, cultural norms and
38 organisational ambitions. In managing the dual roles of practitioner-researcher, clear ethical
39 procedures were developed and followed, including defining identities, values and habits.
40 Plausibility is shown by exploring issues that interest researchers, whilst criticality is
41 demonstrated through encouraging readers to question assumptions thereby offering
42 something novel.

51 Findings

52 *Career capital theoretical framework for organisational role transitions*

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The notion of career capital, and its comprising aspects, fitted well to the transition experiences described by participants. All 36 business leaders described career capital aspects that supported their role transitions. 24 career capital aspects were described as enabling the transition (518 citations) and easing the overcoming of barriers (208 citations). Such career capital aspects are illustrated in Figure 1.

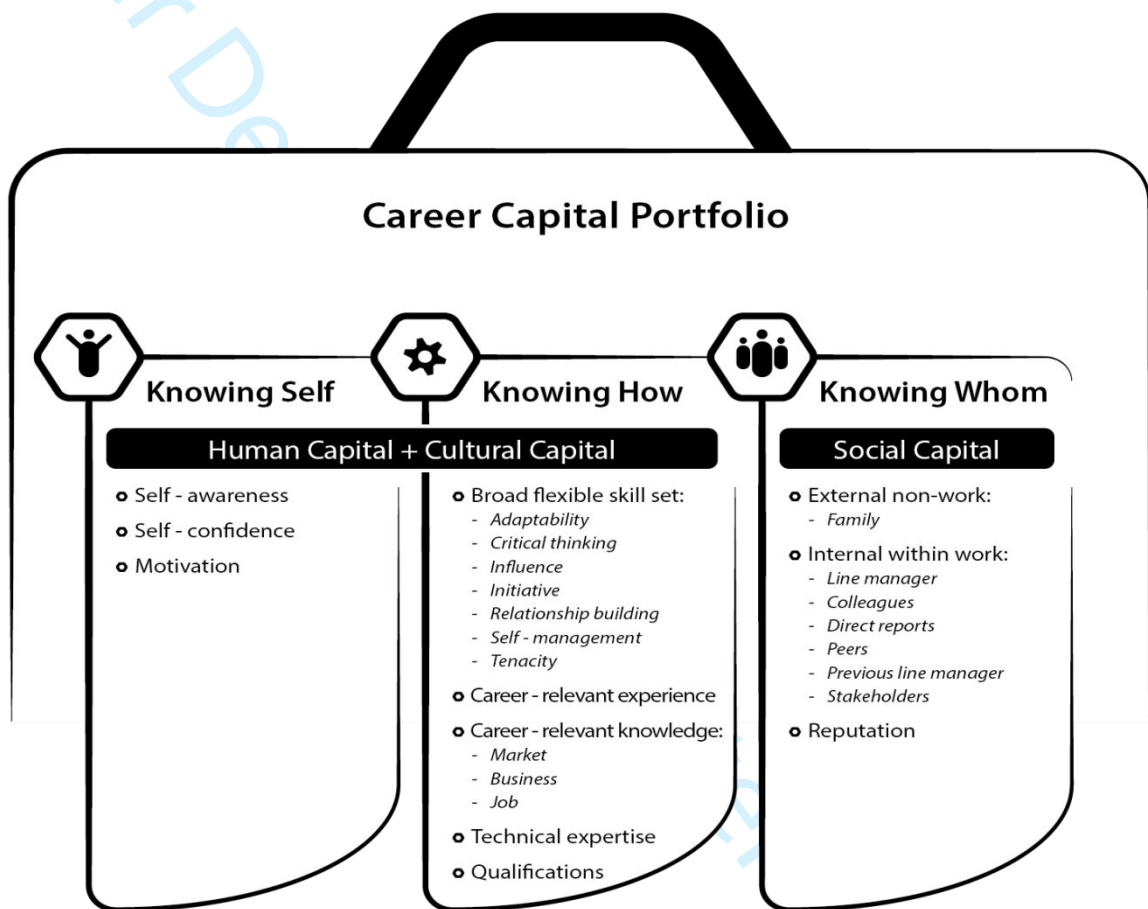


Figure 1: New career capital theoretical framework

When exploring what had helped their recent transition and what had helped to overcome a specified barrier, each business leader described a portfolio of career capital varying in size between 5-14 aspects.

The 24 career capital aspects are clustered into *Knowing Self*, *Knowing How* and *Knowing Whom*. *Knowing Self* is described as having an understanding of self and belief in

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own ability with a personal drive to want to make things happen. *Knowing How* relates to having career-relevant experience, knowledge, expertise, qualifications and a flexible skill set. *Knowing Whom* involves having an internal work network and external family network, and a personal reputation within these networks.

These categories differed from earlier constructs of career capital. Business leaders spoke less of their reasoning behind undertaking role transitions ('Knowing-Why'), and instead spoke more about knowing themselves. The emergence of self-knowing through the interviews prompts us to revisit the career capital framework of DeFillippi and Arthur and suggest a modification – the replacement of knowing 'why' with knowing 'self'.

Knowing Self

The first cluster of career capital aspects relates to *Knowing Self* and illustrates various ways in which the business leaders revealed how their self-knowledge supported their career development. This cluster is made up of three aspects: *Self-awareness*; *Self-confidence*; and *Motivation*.

Self-awareness described how the business leaders could understand and recognise their emotions, characteristics, preferences, strengths and limitations. For example, Geoff described how his desire for change every few years led him to look for a role change, thereby instigating this role transition:

I like change. I have always had a reasonable amount of change in my life [...] I have gone into careers and jobs [after] 2-3 years I start to think, I have itchy feet, I start to think what is next?

Self-confidence is defined as having self-belief and an ability to assert themselves, including with senior people. For illustration, Helen showed how her ability to challenge senior people helped to influence the approach taken within one of the first projects that she had to work on within her transition:

Some of these things you have to say no to. So it is having strength of character to say to the most senior manager of the team in the business: 'Actually we are not going to do that!'

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This demonstrates how having *Self-confidence* helped her to speak out to others, including organisational stakeholders.

Motivation constitutes having a drive and determination to act, pushing to achieve a better outcome or defined goal. To illustrate this, Darren worked through the night to prepare for his interview and win the job over his competitors:

'We want it by 9am the [sic] tomorrow morning.' [...] So I spent a good 7-8 hours on it, had a late night and put a lot of effort into it and produced a 6-7 page document of all of my answers [...] and I know that was what got me the job over the others.

Knowing How

The second cluster of career capital aspects relates to *Knowing How* and describes how the business leaders drew upon their experience, expertise, knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate their role transition and overcome obstacles. This cluster is made up of a range of aspects grouped under 'broad flexible skills', career relevant experience, career relevant knowledge, technical expertise and qualifications.

Participants described a range of aspects that we have grouped under 'broad flexible skills'. These broad flexible skills consisted of *Adaptability*, which describes the way that the business leaders altered their work approach in order to achieve a perceivably better situational outcome. Within his role transition, Tim described how he adapted his approach with his new direct reports to provide the support that they required:

You try and get inside their head; you try to understand [...] Do they want to do it? Are they interested in it? [...] But you change the style depending on the support that you think that they need.

Influence describes the business leaders' intention and ability to gain others' buy-in through direct persuasion, indirect influence or through systematic campaigns. Garry's orchestrated campaign to win over the members of the leadership team and land the new role illustrates this well:

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I put [my] application in and started my aggressive campaign! So I made appointments with pretty much every member of the leadership team [...] I took in 1% of what they said but it was all about appearances for me [...] I needed to give myself competitive advantage [...] that worked!

Relationship building is defined as the business leaders' intention and ability to make connections with others, as shown by Darren through being curious and engaging with others early on into his new role:

[I am] likeable, positive, get on with people [...] so I ask questions and listen [...] it showed that I was interested in them.

Critical thinking describes the thinking ability to understand situations analytically and conceptual. For example, Garry illustrated how his analytical and conceptual skills helped him to **understand** changes in strategic direction, which he used to build his profile whilst applying for the new role:

So during my exposure to [colleague] and [strategy name], I recognised that there was a paradigm shift in [organisation] away from a supply and ops-led business to a marketing-led business and if you looked at the kind that was coming out of [city] at the time it was very clear that there was a seismic shift and not just a fad and I recognised that early on [...] it was also a really handy thing for me to use to raise my profile within [department].

Initiative describes the ability to spot and act on opportunities or resolve problems to achieve a desired outcome. For illustration, Eve spotted an opportunity to build a stronger connection with her plant manager and understand the main stakeholder's expectations of the next role:

I requested from my plant manager to have a regular one-to-one [...] so the idea of that was that I wanted to understand his expectation and of course he had direct view on the next role [...] I took him into encompass the main stakeholder [...] he is quite powerful.

Self-management is defined as the ability to manage feelings, thoughts and actions. For example, Eve showed how she managed her thoughts to take control over her over-active mind when moving into her next role:

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5 *And I think that I over think this, which I would never recommend to anyone to overthink the*
6 *role. So when I decided to go into my next role I just said 'I am going into it, I am not over*
7 *thinking it'.*
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11 The final of the 'broad flexible skills' was *Tenacity* which describes the ability to
12 keep going even when facing adversity. For example, **Garry showed how he learnt that in**
13 **order to get things done, as well as taking personal responsibility, he needed to keep going**
14 **and work around the presenting obstacles:**
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18 *I have been more and more coming to the realisation over the previous years, not just of those*
19 *months that in order to make things happen I would need to own it [...] I am just going to do*
20 *this and I am going to work around the rest of you.*
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24 Also within the *Knowing How* category were a number of other aspects of career
25 capital. *Career-relevant experience* describes the business leaders' work-relevant experience
26 drawn from previous markets, sectors, businesses, functions, roles and activities. George
27 illustrated how a range of experiences enabled him to make sense of the presenting issues
28 when he transitioned into his new role:
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33 *So I have got mining experience and milling experience and I have got plant experience, I have*
34 *got plaster experience [...] I am able to understand and empathise with the issues that they*
35 *may have.*
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39 Strongly linked to career relevant experience was participants' career relevant
40 knowledge which included knowledge about the business, market and job. *Business*
41 *knowledge* describes the business leaders' understanding of the structure, parent company
42 position, functions, departments, stakeholders, processes and other relevant aspects of the
43 business. Within Julie's transition story, she described how it was critical to stay up-to-date
44 with the business workings so as to enable her to manage stakeholders across the matrix
45 structure:
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51 *I have made it my business to keep up-to-date with how a matrix organisation works [...] you*
52 *have got to have the relationships because it is such a matrix organisation, stakeholder*
53 *management is massive.*
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Market knowledge describes the business leaders' understanding of customers, competitors, the supply chain, and market trends. Darren illustrated how his market knowledge helped him to transition smoothly into his new role:

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So definitely my understanding of the market and how we sell [product name], what the supply chain is and how the different functions work and the support and the extra pricing discount and how we look to create competitive advantage, what is our USPs? [...] What do our competitors do? How do they look for volumes and business? And what do we do differently to compete against them? Yes that would have helped.

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Job knowledge is defined as the business leaders' relevant job understanding including: line manager's expectations, required skills, knowledge and experience. Felix illustrated how his *Job knowledge* helped him to take up new role's responsibilities and empathise with his team:

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The one thing that has helped me is that I have done every single role that I am responsible for [...] nobody can pull wool over my eyes [...] I understand the frustrations that the guys and girls have and I understand what they are up against and what they can do and what they can't do.

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Technical expertise describes the business leaders' specialised expertise within systems, process, methodologies and tools. Mike described how his ten years of technical expertise was critical in the transition, without which he would have struggled:

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The ten years in [organisation] I suppose that helped me technically understand the toolset, the methodologies that help and how to do it. Without that I (a)[sic] I wouldn't have been able to do it.

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Related to technical expertise and other forms of knowledge, *Qualifications* provided a formal recognition of, and drive to develop, business, functional or technical specialisms. Colin illustrated how his diploma equipped him with a 'full tool box' to support his transition into the new role:

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I had just finished the diploma, the [technical specialism] diploma, and I was armed with all of this information which I could now go and apply [...] it was like turning up to lay a carpet with a full tool box rather than an empty tool box.

Knowing Whom

The third cluster of career capital aspects is *Knowing Whom* which addresses how the business leaders used internal and external networks and reputation, as resources to ease their role transition and overcome challenges.

Participants drew on a range of non-work networks to provide them with career capital. With these non-work networks, *Family* networks describe immediate family such as a partner and children as well as wider family. Vera described in her role transition story how her husband played a central role in helping her to face into new line management challenges:

At home my husband, he has loads of line management experience, and I would come home and we would spend an hour every day just talking about the challenges I had and he gave me advice.

Participants also described how they built up and drew on a range of internal within-work networks. These included *Stakeholder networks* which are defined as the business leaders' relationship with, and resources gained through, influential people within and outside of the organisation. For example, in Bella's transition narrative, she described how building relationships with key stakeholders enabled her to understand areas of the business where her knowledge was lacking:

It had given me the opportunities to see the key stakeholders [...] I could see the value of creating those relationships to enable us to drive some more stuff forward [...] it was about understanding areas of the business that I hadn't had massive exposure to.

Colleague networks comprise the business leaders' relationships with, and resources gained through, colleagues at all levels (excluding our own organisational level) including coaches sourced within the organisation. For example, Simon illustrated how his mentoring support provided by *Colleagues* helped him to settle quickly into his new role:

Without a shadow of a doubt the biggest aid was [name] who did do the role [...] I got to ask what questions [...] I had a good insight into the role [...] he was almost like a mentor [...] [name] in that sense was brilliant.

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Direct report networks comprise relationships with, and resources gained through, team members who are directly reporting to the business leaders. To illustrate, when moving into a new role with limited job knowledge Neil described how his *Direct reports* supported him by sharing knowledge:

My team have helped just in terms of just share and trying [...] to share their knowledge of what goes on.

Line manager networks are defined as the business leaders' relationship with, and resources gained through, their line manager whom they directly report to. For example, Sue drew upon her relationship with her *Line manager* to map out the required transition support:

I sat down with [line manager] after the job, and looked at what support I needed both in terms of [...] how she could help me, how I draw on support from colleagues in that sense but also in terms of formal training and development.

Peers networks constitute the business leaders' relationship with and resources gained through their peers, representing colleagues at a similar organisational level. Darren illustrates how his *Peer* relationship helped to build his job knowledge and establish how to tackle the job on a daily basis:

It really helped that I had a good friend who was already [doing] the role for another account. So that the fact that I had someone loyal and trustworthy and supportive, doing the job role and finding out exactly what it was about, what you would do on a daily basis.

Finally in relation to networks, respondents described how their *Previous line manager networks* enabled them to continue to make use of their relationship with the line-manager that they had had before they had made the transition. Garry illustrates how his *Previous line manager* acted as a sounding board and helped him to think through the transition:

[name] is easily one of the best, on a par with one of the best line managers that I have had career-wise – full stop. [...] [name] was very supportive of me, I was very open with him about my thought process.

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In addition to external and internal networks, participants also raised the issue of *Reputation* as a form of career capital. *Reputation* can be defined as the widespread beliefs that exist about the business leaders both inside and outside of the business. George described in his transition story how his existing reputation enabled him to gain credibility and acceptance early within his transition:

I have got credibility and so instantly plants accept me because I have credibility as they know about me, and have heard about me and therefore I have a reputation [...] they know that I have done the roles and so therefore they accept me, they don't see me as an outsider, so acceptance is important.

Making use of career capital

So far the career capital aspects that business leaders employed in managing their career transitions have been explored. However, it was not just 'what' career capital that was used, but also 'how' it was used that mattered. Participants used three main strategies, described as 'crossing', 'connecting' and 'investing in' career capital.

Connecting Career Capital

Connecting career capital describes how business leaders wove several career capital aspects together to help them to make a successful transition. Twenty-three of the business leaders gave 60 examples of how they connected different career capital aspects to ease their transition.

For example, Simon's narrative illustrates how he wove together his *Colleague relationship* and his *Self-awareness* to ease this role transition. His colleague helped him to both understand the relevant people and the forthcoming challenges within the new role as well as supporting him to get involved in doing work immediately. This involvement was critical as Simon recognised his personality preference to working with tangibles:

He did the role for 5 years [...]. And so he knew all the people and he knew the challenges that I would face so yes he was really good. And he got me involved in a couple of things very very early [...] so I felt that I was giving something something[sic] back very very early which for me and my personality, I struggle if I am doing a task [...] when I can't see anything tangible [...] so yes, [colleague] in that sense was brilliant.

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The way in which participants blended different aspects of career capital to support their transitions was particularly noteworthy, as this has not been reported before within the careers literature.

Crossing Career Capital

Crossing career capital describes how the business leaders addressed gaps in their career capital portfolio and overcame organisational barriers. This comprises using career capital aspects in creative ways and stretching their utility to solve problems. Twenty-five of the business leaders gave 119 examples of how they drew upon aspects of career capital to compensate for gaps. So, when business leaders met challenges within their transition which comprised of either a missing career capital aspect or other organisational obstacles, they drew upon their career capital to overcome and cross over such challenges.

James' narrative illustrates how he chose to use his *Tenacity* to overcome his now bruised *Previous line manager* relationship through persevering within his new role:

[Previous line manager] was quite sore [...] having lost me to the dark side! So I got kicked around the room a few times for no real reason other than he didn't like it [...] He was a bit of an arse during that time.

[I] just persevered just water off a ducks back, that is all you can do [...] I just persevered with it as I know that I had to crack on with my current role otherwise it would derail me.

James knew that his ailing relationship with his *Previous line manager* could have derailed him in the transition to his new role to the new 'dark side' department. On recognising that this relationship was now damaged, and that he was missing an important aspect of career capital, he drew on his *Tenacity* to side-step this gap.

Investing in Career Capital

Finally, participants described how they built career capital by 'investing in it'. They did this by using their existing career capital to help them to develop new aspects of career capital that they perceived that they lacked. For example, when reflecting upon the transition stories, 32 of the 36 business leaders described how they developed their career capital portfolio by leveraging an existing relationship (*Knowing Whom*). Whilst different

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relationships were invested in to create additional career capital, the importance of the *Line manager* relationship in particular emerged. The business leaders drew additional value from this *Line manager* relationship in predominantly two ways.

Firstly, through positive relationships with the new line manager, business leaders appeared able to enhance their own career capital portfolio. To illustrate this, the business leaders' social capital relationship with the *Line manager* was converted into other career capital aspects across each of *Knowing Self*, *Knowing How* and *Knowing Whom*. For example, in Colin's case, he started cultivating a relationship with his *Line manager* so as to instigate the creation of the new role within a different department:

I suppose that that was another big thing that happened in that stage of my career, getting to know [line manager] and building a relationship with her. [...] it was at that point that we kind of said that something needs to happen with [different department]. That was it, the seed was planted by [...] me [...] I started to build a rapport with her [...] I had manufactured the role with [line manager] and myself.

On securing this newly created role, his *Line manager* was able to ease his transition by building Colin's *Reputation* within the business. Colin's line manager spoke highly of him within key meetings to help to enhance his credibility:

She [...] acted as an advocate when we went to the [meeting] [...] so some of the things was building credibility, and I suppose that may be where building quick wins came from. 'So how can you build credibility?' 'Well let's have some quick wins' [...] it helped me build credibility in the role.

Secondly, as well as helping to build the business leaders' career capital, the *Line manager* instigated access to other additional capital: physical capital (for example, office space) and economic capital (for example, targeted pay increases). Therefore, the social capital of the *Line manager* relationship was converted into physical and economic as well as career capital. Colin was able to leverage staged pay increases (economic capital) through instigating a role development conversation with his new line manager:

Yes there was also another thing, something that I do quite proactively anyway is that I go into a new role and I start to think about the next one. I think about what do I need to do get to the next stage and then I was explicit with [my line manager] about that. 'What do we do? How does the role develop and how do I develop?' And we had, we had some very early conversations that incorporated both role and remuneration [...] The offer with the role was that based on a number of [...] performance related things [...] There would be a salary lift after 6 months and then again after a year, based on performance.

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These findings reflect Bourdieu's principle of convertibility, where particular aspects of capitals can be converted into other capitals (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). Here the investment in the line manager relationship (social capital) generates additional career, economic and physical capitals.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that business leaders drew upon 24 career capital aspects to facilitate such role transitions and enable the overcoming of barriers. Whilst, in the main, our findings were congruent with DeFillippi and Arthur's (1994) framework, this revised career capital framework has several advantages over its predecessor. First and foremost, it emphasises how relationships can be gateways to additional career capitals and capital, demonstrating how Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital convertibility can be applied to career capital. It fuses DeFillippi and Arthur's framework with Bourdieu's capital theory and is empirically-based rather than having a diffuse conceptual basis.

Secondly, this new career capital framework offers better fit to a specific role transition context. By focusing on organisational role transitions, it provides insight into a previously unexplored area **warranting further research (Arthur, 2014)**. With *Knowing Whom* and *Knowing How* emerging strongly in our interview data, 11 career capital aspects from these clusters have not been cited before within career capital literature: *Knowing How* (*Critical thinking, Initiative, Self-management, Tenacity, Career-relevant market knowledge and Career-relevant job knowledge*) and *Knowing Whom* (*Colleagues, Direct reports, Line manager, Peers and Previous line manager*). In previous boundaryless career studies, more generic career capital aspects were cited, for example in *Knowing How*: adaptability and influence (Lamb and Sutherland, 2010) and *Knowing Whom*: stakeholders (Jokinen et al., 2008). This focus on the organisational transition setting has led to greater specificity of: flexible skills set (*Knowing How*), as well as an internal organisational network with associated resources (*Knowing Whom*), with less importance given to networks outside of the organisation. Moreover, the notion of 'Knowing-Why' was less important when exploring barriers and enablers to role transitions. This observation concurs with Arthur et al.'s (1999) explanation that much of 'Knowing-Why' essentially describes the catalyst for role

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5 transitions; the rationale for role transition was outside the scope of this research study. Our
6 new career capital framework emphasised the importance of *Knowing Self* within such
7 setting, emphasising an understanding of self and belief in own ability with personal drive to
8 want to make things happen within the organisation.
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12 We uncovered several insights regarding how career capital is used to support role
13 transitions within organisations. Firstly, we noticed that business leaders combined career
14 capital aspects to ease their transition, termed as *Connecting Career Capital*. Being novel in
15 form, such occurrences offer a unique knowledge contribution. Whilst Terjesen (2005)
16 highlighted how her participants *inter-related* their career capital when transitioning into their
17 own business, this had a different meaning. Here, she illustrated how her female business
18 owners selected which business partners to collaborate with based on the strength of their
19 competency profile (*Knowing How*). So in other words, the business owners only drew upon
20 one aspect of career capital to make decisions relating to their network, rather than
21 connecting several career capital aspects to inform decision-making. Secondly, business
22 leaders frequently drew upon aspects from their career capital portfolio purposefully to
23 overcome both gaps in career capital and other organisational barriers, characterised here as
24 *Crossing Career Capital*; this echoes similar findings from Terjesen's (2005) work where she
25 notes that female entrepreneurs overcome missing *Knowing How* career capital through
26 drawing upon their *Knowing Whom* existing contacts. Finally, business leaders consciously
27 invested in their career capital to cultivate additional career capital, as illustrated through the
28 nurturing of their *Line manager* relationship (Social capital), leading to the accessing of
29 additional capitals (Bourdieu, 1986) and career capital (Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch, 2005),
30 and the growing of their career capital portfolio likened to a dynamic balance sheet
31 (Schollossberg, 1984). This career capital development illustrates capital circularity outlined
32 in Bourdieu's capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986).
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48 Our findings have implications for business leaders, organisational managers and
49 researchers, business leaders' current levels of career capital are likely to impact their ability
50 to undertake organisational role transitions. Consequently, having reflexive awareness of
51 one's own career capital and being mentally agile to manage such resources (Gonin,
52 Napiersky and Thorsell, 2011) is likely to facilitate the accessing, connecting, crossing and
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investing of career capital through such transitions. This new career capital theoretical framework improves both the business leader's ability to reflect upon what career capital they have and currently lack, and eases career capital development planning. Such planning is likely to aid an otherwise stressful occasion, enabling a more successful role transition, through understanding required changes (Mitchell, 2007).

When exploring the implications for organisational managers, given that transitions can be experienced as stressful and are relevant to everyone, (Baruch, 2006), including business leaders where the stakes are arguably higher (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), this topic is pertinent for organisations to address (Gonin et al., 2011). Mitchell (2007: 46) argues that such attention is paramount given that leadership research has highlighted how organisations provide little or very poor support during such 'crucial, make-or-break points'. Organisational managers can provide transition support through helping colleagues to understand current levels and develop career capital. Whilst a full career capital range may not be essential, managers can support colleagues to cultivate a targeted portfolio across *Knowing Self*, *Knowing How* and *Knowing Whom* in light of forthcoming role transitions, including the important *Line manager* relationship. Such development can be aided through providing coaching (Gonin, et al., 2011), mentoring (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994) and career counselling (Forrier et al., 2009).

Turning to consider the implications for researchers, although the strengths associated with a single organisation case study design have been argued through its provision of a deep understanding of a specific context, there are inherent research limitations. It does represent a narrowly-defined environment on two accounts, relating both to the case organisation (UK, construction business) and case population (business leaders, 100% white ethnic origins and 78% male).

Consequently, when considering future research avenues, it would be interesting to replicate this study with different case organisations and populations to explore whether the career capital framework outlined here remains relevant. Different contexts may expose variations in how aspects such as organisational culture and organisational career management influence career capital aspects, and how constraints within the context may hinder mobility (Forrier, et al., 2009). Secondly, it may be useful to broaden the enquiry

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5 scope to explore how different motivations towards role transitions impact career capital
6 needs. By understanding the role holder's rationale for undertaking such transitions, differing
7 career capital aspects may be uncovered (Arthur et al., 1999). Thirdly, it may be pertinent to
8 alter the transition dimensions being explored. Different transition dimensions, for example:
9 involuntary or international transitions, are likely to create particular challenges (Schlossberg,
10 1984) for role holders. Such challenges are likely to require distinct career capital aspects to
11 ease such differing transitions.
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18 **Returning to research quality, the plausibility and criticality of these research findings**
19 **have been shown through the interest witnessed by career theorists, career practitioners and**
20 **organisational managers. Firstly, invitations to speak at European (for example, NICE 2018)**
21 **and international (for example, IAEVG 2018) careers research conferences have been**
22 **forthcoming, along with acceptances to contribute to practitioner (for example, Career**
23 **Matters 2018) and career theorist publications (for example, NICEC journal 2018). Secondly,**
24 **such empirical findings are informing practitioner debates (for example, through invitations**
25 **to blog within the London School of Economics Business Review) and organisational**
26 **practices (for example, through informing multi-national organisational career mobility**
27 **diagnostics and career mobility policy).**
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37 **Conclusion**

38 **Considering** the changing work context where transitions are becoming the norm, and
39 role transition forms are becoming more varied (Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch, 2005) and
40 complex (Chudzikowski, 2012), insights created through this research study **do** add value to
41 an under-researched area of organisational career transitions (Arthur, 2014). With career
42 capital providing a lens to understand transition resources, our career capital theoretical
43 framework provides a useful framework to manage such organisational career mobility.
44 Furthermore, the consideration of the ways in which career capital is used by those who
45 undertake intra-organisational role changes is illuminating. Such understanding will support
46 individuals to build organisational career mobility, as well as career researchers in
47 conceptualising career capital within the organisational transition setting.
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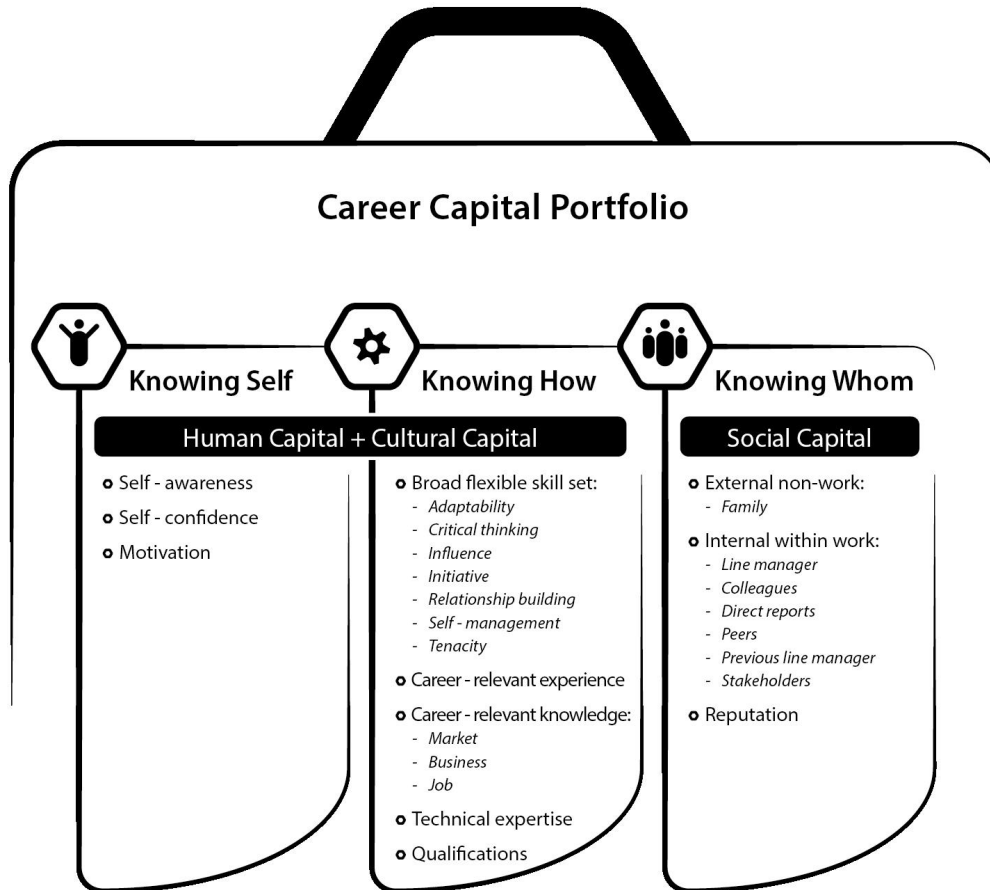


Figure 1

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