

# Is ‘personal agency’ the key to helping individuals manage their career?

Ci Virtual Roundtable - Tuesday, 16 July 2019

Personal agency refers to an individual’s ability to originate and direct actions to achieve a given purpose. With employees increasingly expected to manage their own careers, this Roundtable focused on the relative importance of personal [agency](#) in modern day career management.

## PART 1: INSIGHT

Participants shared the challenges and opportunities of equipping people with the confidence, skills and support needed to exercise personal agency and develop the right ‘mindset’ for careers today:

- What is the best balance between the support and direction the organisation provides and expectations that individuals should be in the driving seat?
- Gaining acceptance that careers and career progression should be measured by experience and skill building as much as job moves and promotions.
- Using technology to ensure stretch experiences are visible, and successfully matching individuals with opportunities across the organisation
- Equipping individuals to recognise the likely disruptive impact of future change on careers and the need for repeated cycles of learning and re-skilling.
- Supporting busy people to find time to reflect and learn from their experiences.
- Fostering personal agency supports social mobility.

## PART 2: INNOVATION

Dr Nathan Iverson, Program Director, Industrial & Organisational Psychology, California Baptist University, introduced his Phd research into the link between the seven dimensions of career health in the Career Innovation Company’s

[CareerPulse™](#) diagnostic tool and job and career satisfaction. Across cultures, he found that the ‘Build your Network’ dimension essentially ‘**Connecting with Others**’ had a significant correlation. The evidence for building a deep and varied network of relationships as a key enabler of career satisfaction and personal agency is compelling, and was seen as a useful evidence base to promote internal relationship building activities.

Nathan also shared how he applies well grounded theory to raise agentic behaviour in his students by: providing **stretch experiences**, showcasing **role models** that reflect their backgrounds, and continuously reminding them of **their potential**.

## PART 3: IMPACT

Referring to our [Careers of Tomorrow](#) research and related Career Strategy and Support model, David North reflected on the balance between organisations having a clear career development framework that helps direct and inform careers, along with nurturing employee [self-efficacy](#).

Other ways discussed to impact personal agency included:

- ‘Burning platform’ stories to build urgency, ‘hero narratives’ and telling the career stories of others to foster an agentic culture
- Understanding what helps and hinders employees in exercising ‘personal agency’
- Equipping managers with coaching skills
- Focusing on helping people to build their networks
- On-line courses such as our evidence-based ‘Be Bold In Your Career’ which helps individuals to develop, and plan how to use the seven key career building skills to increase their confidence and agency.

