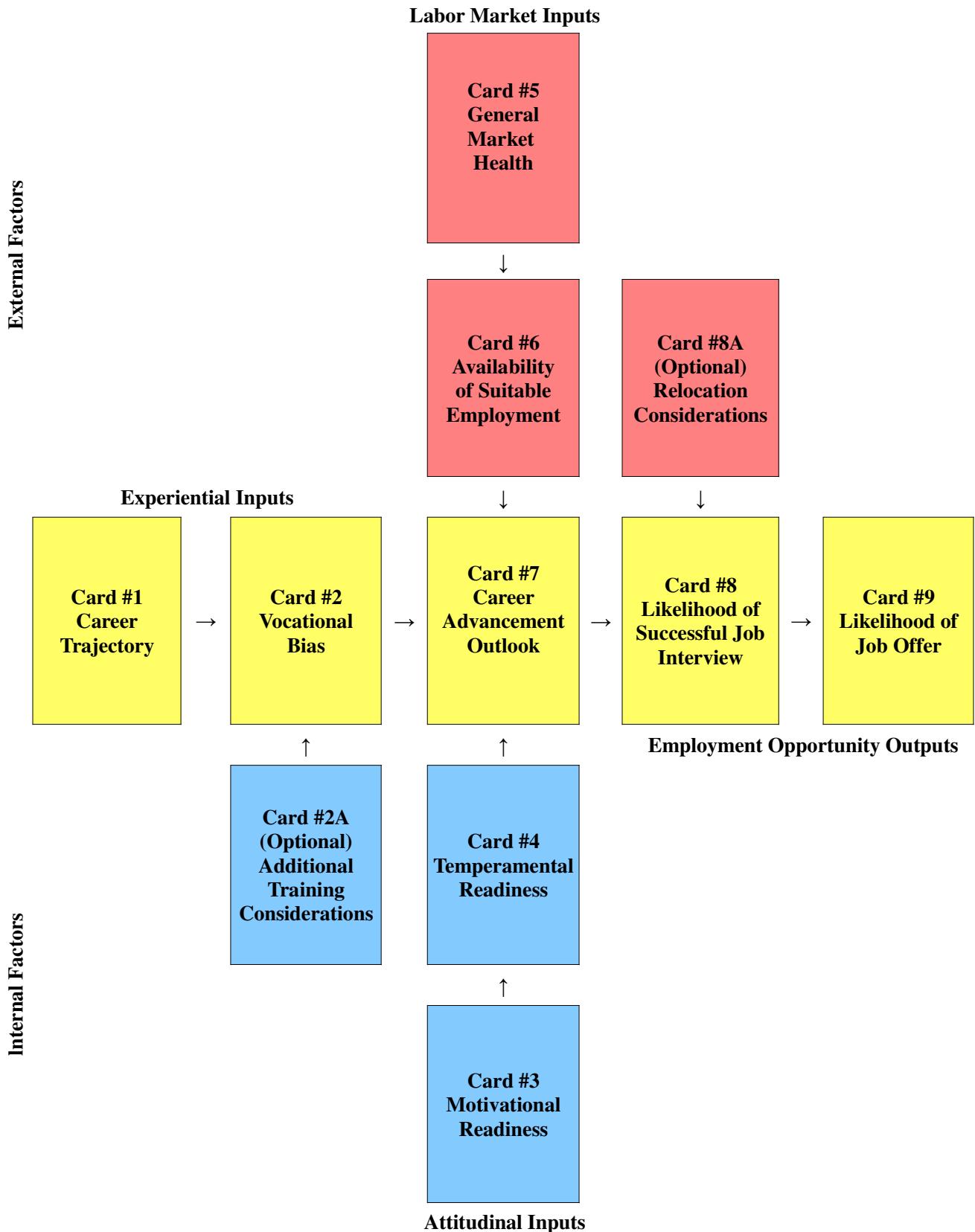


The “Career Crossroads” Spread



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This spread is designed to aid those contemplating a career change in assessing the climate for a successful transition. It includes both external factors (primarily job market considerations) and internal factors, including both historical aspects and personal readiness features. It will be most useful during the early stages of the process rather than as a way to validate conclusions already reached. It will also be more suitable for those who are mid-stream in their careers and looking for something new than for those who are just entering the fray, since the young usually lack the depth of experience needed to populate one essential area of the spread. The four arms of the cross are relatively self-explanatory, but a few observations are in order.

First and foremost, the values derived from this spread are *qualitative*, not *quantitative*. They won't reveal much about the details of available work opportunities. They *may* shed light on whether there is alignment or synergy between a particular employment scenario and the querent's current career trajectory, professional skills, vocational objectives and personal state of readiness, thus making it at least potentially a good fit.

The Experiential Inputs branch of the spread includes both the querent's prior focus on occupational matters (“career trajectory” rather than historical “job experience” since a work record is factual data impervious to much in the way of creative reinterpretation) and the task/role/habitat preferences that have been accumulated from previous workplace exposure. An optional “additional training” element is also provided in case “going back to school” in one form or another is an available avenue for career advancement.

The Attitudinal Inputs branch is intended to show how ready the querent is to make the change. It includes both motivational readiness factors (how inspired is the individual to move on?) and temperamental readiness factors (how emotionally prepared is the individual to deal with the stress of making an important life change?).

The Labor Market Inputs branch attempts to illuminate current labor market conditions in both general and specific terms, mainly in the querent's local or regional area but relocation is presented as an optional consideration. It includes both the overall job availability outlook and the more relevant availability of jobs that would be a suitable match for the querent's vocational aptitudes and his or her present attitudes toward work.

The Employment Opportunity Outputs branch originates in the center card of the spread, “Career Advancement Outlook,” since generally unfavorable prospects for career improvement would most likely forestall the likelihood of experiencing either a successful pre-job interview or an actual offer of employment. The last two cards show whether the combination of factors issuing from the three input areas will result in a viable opportunity for the querent to make good on the desired change.

Positive, negative or neutral cards in any of the spread positions will emphasize the relative ease or difficulty with which the querent confronts that area of the occupational landscape, and the functional importance of each area to the overall picture. In most cases, the standard “textbook” meanings for each card will serve to illustrate the nature of its operation. However, other factors such as the astrological, numerological and elemental attributes assigned to the cards over the years may reinforce or moderate those meanings to the extent that the reader is conversant with them. Purely intuitive exploration of the card imagery, independent of the usual documented lore, is another way to expand the reach of the interpretation in a more subjective way. For this approach, one of the many “oracle” decks that are less deeply rooted in the tradition might be a better choice of tools than the average “tarot” deck.

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Cards 1 and 2 show what the querent brings to the table in terms of his or her occupational past. “Career Trajectory” summarizes “who the querent is” from a work perspective. It includes factors like the impact of prior career decisions, evolving work ethic and developmental aims, among many others; the cumulative work history is not considered a significant input since the goal of a career change is often to pursue a new chapter in one’s lifework saga. Card 1 synthesizes everything the concept of work means to the querent in both practical and philosophical terms. Card 2, “Vocational Bias,” portrays the occupational niche (tasks, roles, workplace environment, etc.) the querent is – or ideally could be - most comfortable and productive in occupying; in short, what he or she is “cut out for” (which may in fact not be the talents employed in previous jobs).

Cards 3 and 4 reflect the querent’s mental and emotional readiness to take on the burden of a major career change, and his or her overall attitude toward the idea. “Motivational Readiness” speaks to the measure of ambition, initiative and persistence accrued by the querent and the inherent fluidity of its expression. “Temperamental Readiness” shows the reserves of emotional stamina and resiliency on hand, and whether those resources will engage easily or be compromised in some way.

Cards 5 and 6 represent the “outer reality” of the current employment situation in the market area contemplated by the querent. “General Market Health” is big-picture and focuses broadly on the vigor of the local or regional labor market, which in turn produces either more or fewer jobs. “Availability of Suitable Employment” addresses whether any of the available jobs are likely to be a good fit for the querent from a career advancement standpoint.

Card 7 is the crux of the matter. It shows whether all of the inputs, when stacked up, combine to create an encouraging or discouraging re-employment forecast. It should be read as the terminus of a three-card vignette derived from each of the three input branches in turn: Experiential, Attitudinal and Job Market. It should then be read as the originator of the three-card “output” sequence showing whether moving forward with a career-change initiative is likely to result in commensurate action on the part of prospective employers (acceptance of application, pre-job interview, job offer, etc.)

Cards 8 and 9 step off into the future and may not need to be read in detail if Card 7 emphatically advises against starting down that path. “Likelihood of Successful Job Interview” shows how willing a prospective employer will be to open a dialogue. “Likelihood of Job Offer” reflects whether follow-up hiring action is likely to occur.

Card 2A is an optional input showing the relative merit of undertaking further training to enhance one’s employability. It would apply when a querent is considering an educational interlude to sharpen and update current skills or to develop new ones.

Card 8A is an optional input showing whether relocating to accept a job in a distant place would be advantageous. It would apply when the employer has nothing available close by but can offer a suitable position in another region.

In summary, a negative outlook for the querent’s career aspirations at Card 7 would not necessarily preclude initiating a career change, but it should be viewed as a cautionary note emphasizing the challenges likely to be encountered on that path. At worst it would be a vote of “no confidence” in the querent’s near-term career advancement intentions; at best it would provide useful insights as to how he or she might gird for an uphill battle: as the saying goes, “forewarned is forearmed.”