

## "FRIENDS WITH PASSION" AS A MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCES

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**Purpose:** The main aim of the article is to analyze the conditions for pursuing professional passion in the context of professional success. An additional goal is to demonstrate that there are people among your loved ones who can be role models for pursuing your professional passion.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The research presented in this article uses an analysis of literature in the area of professional competences. The research covered all first-year students of Management at the University of Szczecin. A research problem was posed: what is the importance of professional passion in professional success. 132 students described someone they knew who had achieved professional success.

**Findings:** The research allowed us to draw some general conclusions. They show that professional success is facilitated by clearly defining interests and discovering passions. Passion can be realized mainly through two elements of competence: having knowledge and deepening it, as well as a broadly understood and developed personality in terms of: perseverance, patience, building good relationships, etc.

**Research limitations/implications:** the research was conducted on a non-representative sample. It would be advisable to conduct quantitative research on a representative sample and in-depth qualitative research on the determinants of modeling career development on close relatives.

**Practical implications:** students have people close to them who have achieved professional success by developing their passions and professional dreams. They have knowledge of how to achieve goals and implement ideas thanks to their work, persistence, consistency and relationships with others. They are also aware of the costs of pursuing their passion, which is very important in their professional and non-professional life.

**Originality/value:** showing that an important factor in professional development is having a professional passion. Such passion is also possessed by close people, friends, family and they can therefore be role models in pursuing their own passion, but also be career advisors.

**Keywords:** competence, passion, professional success.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

An important issue for individuals, and therefore for enterprises and the country, is having competences useful in the labor market (Polańska, 2002). It is easier to develop good competences needed on the labor market when you identify your own interests, passions, talents and opportunities. Then, professional development and work performed will not be perceived mainly through the prism of burden and effort, but also through pleasure, despite the natural difficulties and obstacles occurring at and outside work, and at the same time, high variability of working conditions and the environment.

Developing professional competences is not easy. The basis is knowledge and awareness of what your professional goal is. Research shows that professional success, but also satisfaction with work or the position held, may be significantly influenced by the moment of specifying one's professional interests (Jarecki, 2011). However, it is worth remembering and taking into account that despite the set goal and identification of professional interests or passions, there is a cost of developing and achieving this goal. People you know who have gone this route can make you realize how important it is to discover your passion and pursue your goal, as well as what costs may be associated with achieving it. Therefore, the aim of the article is to analyze the conditions for the realization of a friend's professional passion. This approach is rather unusual in the literature, although it has both cognitive and didactic value. On the one hand, it allows you to learn about the functioning of a person who has discovered a professional passion, on the other hand, it shows students that they have people around them who have achieved professional success thanks to their own passion and work. They can therefore be a model for imitation, learning or consultation. The challenge of identifying interests and discovering passions is particularly important for young people: pupils or students (Łuźniak-Piecha, Golińska, 2023). This will enable and facilitate their pursuit of a specific goal and professional development (Wiśniewska, 2015).

The author wants to encourage students to reflect on their own interests, predispositions, strengths and weaknesses, and thus to actively learn, study and develop their interests, acquire knowledge, but also to take up employment in their free time from studying, because all this affects development of competences developed during learning.

It is worth adding that one of the learning methods is following good examples. In economics and management magazines and textbooks you can find case descriptions of people or companies who have achieved success in business. These cases most often concern people from "big business", who usually have additional financial support or are very lucky. Therefore, an additional but important goal of this article is to show that you can also model yourself on people from your immediate environment, from your family.

To achieve the aim of the article, first the issue of competence and then passion in the context of professional success is described.

## 2. The concept and essence of competence

The concept of competence in Polish literature and practice is relatively new. It generally refers to the compliance of knowledge, education, experience and personality traits with the needs of work (Mięzkowska, 2003). For H. Król, these are "predispositions in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes that ensure the implementation of professional tasks at an effective and (or) distinctive level, in accordance with the standards set by the organization for a given position" (Król, 2006). A. Springer (Springer, 2018) conducted a broad analysis of the concept of competences, pointing out, among others, to the variety of definitions of this concept, many types and levels of competences. In turn, C. Bach and R. Sulikova (Bach, Sulikova, 2019) as well as U. Jeruszka (Jeruszka, 2016) analyzed the diversity of interpretations of the concept of competence and pointed out its multidimensionality. However, the key competences in various areas of professional activity, the ability to manage time, cooperation and communication, were indicated by V. Wickramasinghe and N. de Zoyza (Wickramasinghe, de Zoyza, 2009). In the context of R.R. management Wood and T. Payne identified communication and results orientation as the most common competencies (Wood, Payne, 2006). In turn, due to the variability of the political, economic and legal environment, which we have encountered especially in recent years (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2017), another element of competence is indicated, which is the ability to function in difficult and surprising situations (Heyse, Erpenbeck, Ortmann, 2015).

An important element of competence development, and at the same time a factor supporting this development, is identifying interests, discovering passions and predispositions. This allows for a better definition of the professional goal, means and directions of development of competences serving this goal. This applies in particular to young people who will build their competences and strive to achieve their life goals.

Career development and achieving professional success require students and employees to have the ability to self-direct, set goals, communicate, continuously acquire knowledge (Smolbik-Jęczmień 2017), entrepreneurship (Chlebiej, 2022), and knowledge of modern communication methods (Czekaj, Tyrańska, Ziębicki, 2022) as well as building social capital in the form of relationships with colleagues, co-workers, superiors, subordinates, and clients. To some simplification, it can be assumed that the development of competences, also in school education and during studies, is a continuous updating of a person's professional activities (Erpenbeck, Sauer, 2001).

However, developing competences is not easy. Similarly to identifying your own interests. Hence, the article presents the idea that a factor conducive to the development of competences and the identification of interests or passions is role models from people from one's environment. With the above in mind, research was carried out among students, consisting in the description of the conditions and costs of a selected, familiar person, which is described below. First, however, the essence of the concept of passion is presented.

### 3. Passion in professional life

The concept of "passion" is discussed in the literature on the subject in areas such as pedagogy, psychology, sociology, but also economics and management. According to the Dictionary of the Polish Language, passion is a great passion for something, deep commitment and interest in something that we really like to do and want to devote our time to (SJP, 1979). Passion, perhaps a little less often in a professional context, but also related to telecommunications. We talk about talent when it is easier to achieve better results in one field than in others (and better than other people undertaking this activity), when we have clear predispositions to successfully pursue this activity (Piotrowska, 2017). This context of passion will be adopted in this article. Therefore, talent is important for passion, and passion should result from talent, not from imposition, even involuntary (e.g. from the passion of a parent, uncle, aunt or friend). However, it should be remembered that in relation to professional work, good performance also depends on other factors, e.g. work ethos, honesty, etc., but passion is the "driving force" of professional development.

Every person is born with certain predispositions and talents. In the first few or a dozen or so years of life, they can be recognized in their preferred games and ease of acquiring knowledge in selected subjects. Just like with the talents in the biblical parable - some have stronger talents, others have weaker ones. Discovering them is often not easy, it happens that they are discovered and implemented at retirement age, and there are various disruptions in discovering passions and talents, especially today in the form of time and emotions devoted to games and information contained in smartphones, social media and the Internet.

Raising your own children and young people, especially, is a job that requires inquisitive mind, a big heart, courage and trust (Polańska, 2002). In the media, we often hear about talented people, media stars, managers, and business owners who ended up lonely and addicted. This is a big social problem. It often results from the fact that success was achieved by unworthy means, at the expense of others, that it was an end in itself and not for others, and that morally and ethically inappropriate means were used to achieve it.

Psychology has tools to recognize personality predispositions to subjects, professions, and real interests. It is worth using these tools. However, it is worth observing the child - what he likes to play with - and supporting him in these interests by playing together and buying things related to this interest. It should be emphasized that a child is especially eager to reach for things he likes when he becomes bored, so it is worth allowing boredom to pass. Of course, the modern challenge is the smartphone, computer and social media. They often cause disruptions and make it difficult to recognize talents. However, regardless of age, you can reflect on who you are, what you like to do, what gives you pleasure...

It is also worth remembering that one should learn to do every job reliably, even those that do not give satisfaction or arouse no interest, because work is a value in itself and causes the development of a person and his/her competences, but also increases the chances of finding a suitable, expected job. (Zwoliński, 2016; Grabowski, 2015). Life situations sometimes make it much more difficult to recognize predispositions and talents. You may also encounter various difficulties in undertaking education or performing work consistent with these predispositions, resulting from your family situation, health situation, and place of residence. Then, values such as reliability, honesty, responsibility, which will allow you to do your job well or acquire knowledge, become particularly important.

There are people who have talents since childhood and know who they want to be in the future and what profession to pursue. A clearly defined goal allows you to direct the development of your knowledge, personality traits and experiences. The result is faster development of these competence elements. It happens that a child has strongly defined predispositions when he is only a few years old: he likes building, reading, counting... He starts his education and in the following years he does very well, achieving definitely above-average results at school and in extracurricular competitions. This is a source of great joy for parents, but also a huge challenge due to the need for the overall development of the child, then the adolescent and his upbringing. However, this article is limited to matters related to work and competence development, so this topic will be developed.

#### **4. Method and research results**

As part of the subject "Managing your own development", conducted in the first year of bachelor's studies in Management at the University of Szczecin, in October 2022, students were asked to write a paper on the topic: "Describe a person you know who has achieved professional success". An important goal of the task was to make students aware of the strong motivation of passion and discovering one's own interests and pursuing them, and also that among the closest people there are people who have achieved professional success thanks to their features and competences, not to their acquaintances. Students were to take into account: age, education, profession, type of relationship with this person and describe his or her professional success, indicating the reasons, but also the non-financial costs of this success. 132 works were obtained, most often 1.5-2 pages in length, most of which were written with great substantive and emotional "engagement". Despite the recommendations, the exact characteristics of the person were not always indicated (age, education, profession, type of relationship with the described person, hence the different total numbers in tables 1-4). Most of these works could be made into a collective work, showing many examples of the fact that each person has among their loved ones a person who has achieved professional success, of course measured and assessed

in various and subjective ways, who can be a role model, but also a teacher, a master. Due to the limited scope of the article, only summary results are presented, encouraging you to conduct your own research.

The received works were first sorted in terms of the characteristics of the people described (age, type of relationship, education, profession) and then a collective description of friends who achieved professional success in the opinion of the students describing them was presented.

The first step of the analysis was the age of the described people (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

*Age of the people described*

Age	Number
- 19 years	5
20-29 years	15
30-39 years	8
40-49 years	30
50-59 years	11
60-69 years	5
70 years and more	5
Total	79

Source: Own study.

The data in Table 1 shows that most people were aged 40-49, i.e. at the age of professional maturity. The second group were young people, aged 20-29, who were not much older than students. However, it is worth noting that people from each age group were described, both under 19 and over 70. Therefore, in each group you can find role models and at different ages you can discover passion (which was also due to the content of the works).

The next table (Table 2) shows the type of relationship with the described person.

**Table 2.**

*Type of relationship*

Type of relationship	Number
Dad	20
Mom	8
Brother and sister	9
Spouse/permanent partner	3
Grandfather/Grandmother	4
COusin	4
Uncle/aunt	24
Acquaintance	21
Total	93

Source: Own study.

Of the indicated people, the vast majority (72 out of 93 people, i.e. almost 80%) were family members and the rest were friends. The most frequently described family members included an uncle (24 times) and a father (20 times). This information shows that students have good role models for career success among those closest to them.

The next table (Table 3) shows the level of education of the respondents.

**Table 3.**  
*Level of education*

Level of education	Number
Higher	49
Secondary	26
Vocational	5
Other	6
Total	86

Source: Own study.

More than half of the indicated people had higher education and 1/3 had secondary education. A preliminary conclusion could be drawn that increasing the level of education promotes professional success, which seems logical, but with any level of education it is possible to achieve professional success.

The next table (Table 4) indicates the professions/job positions held by the described persons.

**Table 4.**  
*Occupations performed*

Occupation	Number	Examples (number of indications above 1 in brackets)
Company owner	38	Construction (4), transport (3), service and trade (3), hairdresser (2), carpentry, electromechanic, boutique, real estate, telecommunications, agritourism, drilling companies, car repair shop, stud farm, financial consulting, construction (bridges and tunnels), services (waste and rubble removal), clinic (laser therapy, cosmetology, body modeling), guide, shoe production, limited edition shoes trade, restaurant, bakery, tattoo studio, trainer in the field of savoir vivre in business, refrigeration and heating, nursery horse riding, car repair, sewing room, bar.
Directors	12	For technology, sales, production, shop, development, administration, developer, hotel, bank, trade, technical industry, IT specialist.
Managers	12	General (4), food industry (2), interpersonal communication, production, automation, IT, legal services for companies, traffic maintenance.
Teacher	4	Subjects (2), therapist, primary education.
Miscellaneous (work performed for someone else)	38	IT specialist (7), footballer (2), doctor (2), nurse (2), midwife, filmmaker, lawyer, veterinarian, software engineer, mayor, loan advisor, tattoo artist, finance specialist, sociologist-journalist, surveyor, public administration , policeman, fitter, accountant, electrician, certified auditor, construction worker, PKP Energetyka technician, soldier, accountant, veterinary professor, investment analyst, ship officer, PKP Energetyka technician.
Total	104	-

Source: Own study.

Most students (104) indicated the profession of a friend. About 1/3 were business owners, including sole proprietorships. Equally numerous were friends who were not owners or held high positions, such as managers, managers or directors, but were mostly specialists. It can be seen (Table 4) that professional success can be achieved in various professions and positions.

However, what is crucial is the statements that determine professional success. Table 5 presents partially grouped student statements, dividing them into the main elements of competence (knowledge, experience, personality).

**Table 5.**

*The most frequently indicated features in terms of knowledge, experience and personality*

Knowledge	Experience	Personality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional education</li> <li>• Continuous acquisition of knowledge.</li> <li>• Learning what's new in the industry/ profession.</li> <li>• Meeting and observing people from the industry.</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting from the lowest positions.</li> <li>• Work already in childhood.</li> <li>• Hard work.</li> <li>• Recognizing the importance of employee management skills.</li> <li>• Starting a career "with someone else" and then running your own business.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is passion.</li> <li>• He does what he loves, he is happy with what he does.</li> <li>• Engagement.</li> <li>• Stubbornness, perseverance, consistency.</li> <li>• Enthusiasm.</li> <li>• Curiosity.</li> <li>• Openness.</li> <li>• Self-discipline.</li> <li>• Communication skills.</li> <li>• Responsibility.</li> <li>• Courage to take risks.</li> <li>• Ambitions.</li> <li>• Savings.</li> <li>• Warmth.</li> <li>• Cooperation.</li> <li>• Respect for employees and good relations with them.</li> <li>• Well-coordinated team, good relations with employees.</li> <li>• Ability to think critically and connect facts.</li> <li>• Willingness and satisfaction from helping others.</li> </ul>

Source: Own study.

Most indications concerned personality. Most often, which is not clearly visible in Table 5, it was indicated that work is a passion, a pleasure, and that the described person is very committed to doing it, but indicating pleasure rather than effort. Students pointed out many very valuable features of a successful person. In addition to the above, the following deserve special attention: responsibility, communication skills, cooperation, respect for others, good relations with employees, willingness to help others. These features mentioned by the students show that a person pursuing his passion is a person who is good to the entire environment, has a positive attitude towards others and towards his own development.

Apart from personality, the need for continuous learning was pointed out, regardless of the level of education completed, and that success was related to hard, systematic work, often undertaken already in childhood.

It is also worth adding that out of these 132 descriptions, only one student stated that the person described chose his profession because he wanted to earn a lot. It is interesting that at the beginning of classes in this subject, a significant number of students declared that the main motive for taking up studies was the desire to obtain higher salaries. Therefore, it was interesting to confront the factors influencing the success of a friend.

Students also pointed out the costs of the described successes. Belong to them:

- Time devoted to work and study.
- Sleepless nights resulting from a lot of time spent studying, working and thinking.
- Hard work, several hours a day.



- Sacrifices in the form of lack of time for entertainment, free time, relationships with others.
- Limitations on contacts with friends.
- Deterioration of family relationships, little time for the family.
- Stress.
- Poor nutrition.
- "Others' envy of uncle's successes."

Finally, it is worth adding their other observations, which were pointed out in connection with their success:

- Learning from failure.
- Difficult beginnings.
- Most often, success was achieved without knowledge.
- We can discover passion a bit accidentally.
- Important family support in overcoming difficulties (parents, spouse).
- Positive influence of parents on acquiring knowledge and personality development.
- Good quality of work.
- Striving for a goal takes many years, and it requires patience and consistency.
- Success has a different dimension for a person from the countryside than for a person from the city. It sometimes happens that for a person from the countryside, achieving the level of competence of a person from the city (knowledge of foreign languages, acquired experience) is a success.
- Success is facilitated by early identification of interests and passions.
- He achieved success because he followed his dream.

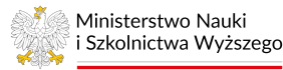
## Summary

School education or studies are not an end in themselves, but contribute to personal development, acquiring knowledge, improving the situation on the labor market, and improving professional competences. The latter effect is good if it is a consequence of commitment to use science and studies for professional development in line with interests and passion.

The analysis carried out, requiring in-depth research on a representative sample, shows that the surveyed students have role models for their own development and the pursuit of professional passions in the form of close people, often family, from whom they can learn how to develop their interests, what passion brings, but also what the costs are. related to its implementation. The problem is whether interest and professional passion are diagnosed, whether the student knows what he wants to achieve and what interests him. This seems to be a growing problem.

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