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New Career Patterns and New Adaptive Skills: The Other Half of a Successful Independent Geologist's Brain

All successful geoscientists will have to adopt an attitude of self-employment as the restructuring of oil and gas, environmental, and related academic and governmental organizations continues. In addition to strong Technical Skills, successful geologists will acquire a set of essential Adaptive Skills that give them the ability to be independent and connected, and to anticipate the future. Case histories of individual careers show that technical expertise alone is insufficient for success in an ever-changing and uncertain business climate. People who have made the transition from corporate employment to self-employed free agency, are those that had strong support networks, a sense of anticipation, and the drive to be proactive. Some people with very strong technical skills became unemployed or markedly underemployed when they were outplaced, because they lacked adequate Adaptive Skills.

All geologists will be in one or more of four Career Patterns in their working life. They will be an Independent Employee, a Dependent Employee, a Free Agent, and/or an Outlander. The ability to sustain a position in a pattern or to make the transition from one pattern to another depends on the level of Adaptive Skills that an individual acquires and practices. Dependent Employees are always at risk. Many Dependent Employees became Outlanders in the midst of corporate downsizing. Independent Employees and most self-employed Free Agents can "surf the wave of change" because they have both Technical and Adaptive Skills. Finally, the Career Patterns that we observe today are also the scenarios for careers of an individual's future.