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## FROM ELITE SPORT TO THE JOB MARKET: TOOLBOX FOR CAREER PRACTITIONERS TO WORK WITH ACTIVE AND FORMER ATHLETES



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Published online: January 30, 2019

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This toolbox was produced as part of the ‘Be a Winner In elite Sport and Employment before and after athletic Retirement’ project (B-WISER). The entire B-WISER consortium contributed directly to the development of the toolbox:

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## Introduction

This toolbox was designed to assist career practitioners in their work with active and former elite athletes. The ten tools in this toolbox aim at optimizing athletes' transition from elite sport to the job market by increasing athletes' awareness about their competencies and enhancing the matching process with employers. The tools in this toolbox are based on the challenges and needs of active athletes, former athletes and 'elite sport and employment stakeholders' (incl. employers, representative bodies of athletes, sporting bodies, educational bodies, and career support providers). Their needs and challenges were expressed during the B-WISER project by more than 1000 athletes and 500 'elite sport and employment' stakeholders during questionnaires, focus groups, workshops and symposia. In the tools, you will find reference to athletes' and stakeholders' needs and challenges in the 'Why?' section.

With this toolbox and under the slogan "It's never too early (or late!) to prepare for life after sport" we aim to increase awareness about the importance of assisting athletes in their vocational development, and hope to inspire and assist career practitioners and related stakeholders in optimizing their existing support and/or developing new support services.

Have fun!

The B-WISER team

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## Toolbox overview

The table on the next page provides an overview of the 10-evidence based tools. The tools are structured in chronological phases of athletes' exploration process, namely:

1. Where am I?
2. Who am I?
3. Where do I want to go?
4. How do I get there?
5. Take action!

## Overview of the 10 evidence-based tools

| Phase                              | Tool                              | Aim   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Where am I?</b><br>↓            | 1. Holistic Athletic Career model | Assist athletes in identifying their current position in life and anticipating potential challenges related to their current and/or future employment using a holistic perspective.   |
| <b>Who am I?</b><br>↓              | 2. Competency profiling           | To assist athletes in evaluating their competencies required to optimize their employability and employment, using the Athletes' Competency Questionnaire for Employability (ACQE).   |
| <b>Where do I want to go?</b><br>↓ | 3. Life wheel                     | Assist athletes in evaluating the importance of different life domains and values, in order that they develop actions points and make decisions to attain a good balance in life.   |
|                                    | 4. Career Compass                 | To assist athletes in exploring career paths by mapping their dream job. The instrument enables reflection on different aspects of their life and job (i.e., skills, fields of interest, values and goals, people and colleagues, working conditions, geography, salary expectations) that contribute to success and well-being.    |
|                                    | 5. Holistic Goal Setting          | To assist athletes in developing short-, mid- and long-term goals in different spheres of life that are outcome, performance and process oriented.  |
|                                    | 6. Motivational interviewing      | Enhance intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.  |
| <b>How do I get there?</b><br>↓    | 7. Competitive Advantage          | To assist athletes in discovering the transferability of their competencies and aid them to showcase their strengths on the labour market.  |
|                                    | 8. GROW coaching methodology      | Assist athletes in discovering their own solutions for specific problems, in order that they can be confident in taking their own decisions.<br><br>Structure your coaching/counselling sessions with athletes.   |
|                                    | 9. Five-Step Career Planning      | Assist athletes in effectively planning for the future based on analysis of their present situation and past experiences.<br><br>Bring together athletes' goals, values, resources and barriers obtained with previous instruments in a Personal Development Plan to stimulate the implementation of lessons learned into practice. |
| <b>Take action</b>                 | 10. Speed Networking              | To create a positive understanding between athletes and employers   |

**The Toolbox:**  
**10 evidence-based tools to optimize  
athletes' transition from elite sport  
to the job market.**

## Holistic Athletic Career Model

**Type of method:** Intervention

**Goal(s):** Assist athletes in identifying their current position in life and anticipating potential challenges related to their current and/or future employment using a holistic perspective.

**Why?**

- Research shows that when athletes make the transition to a dual ‘elite sport and employment’ or post-athletic career, they need to cope with concurrent and possibly conflicting demands at different levels of their development (i.e., athletic, academic/vocational, psychological, psychosocial, and financial; Wylleman & Rosier, 2016).
- WP1: Stakeholders recognize that athletes face relevant challenges on different levels of their development.
- WP2: Athletes consider multi-level factors such as time constraints, lack of financial resources, lack of social support, self-confidence and motivation issues, and injuries as key barriers for a successful transition.
- WP2: Especially retired athletes who are preparing for a first-time employment report lower possession of the “*belief in their own ability to overcome challenges in different life domains*”.
- WP2: Athletes who are already employed report lower possession of their “*ability to prioritize in order to balance multiple life domains*”.
- WP3: Employers emphasize the importance of knowing what you want and having long-term perspectives.
- WP3: Employers mentioned the use of theoretical frameworks to support practical implementations as necessary.

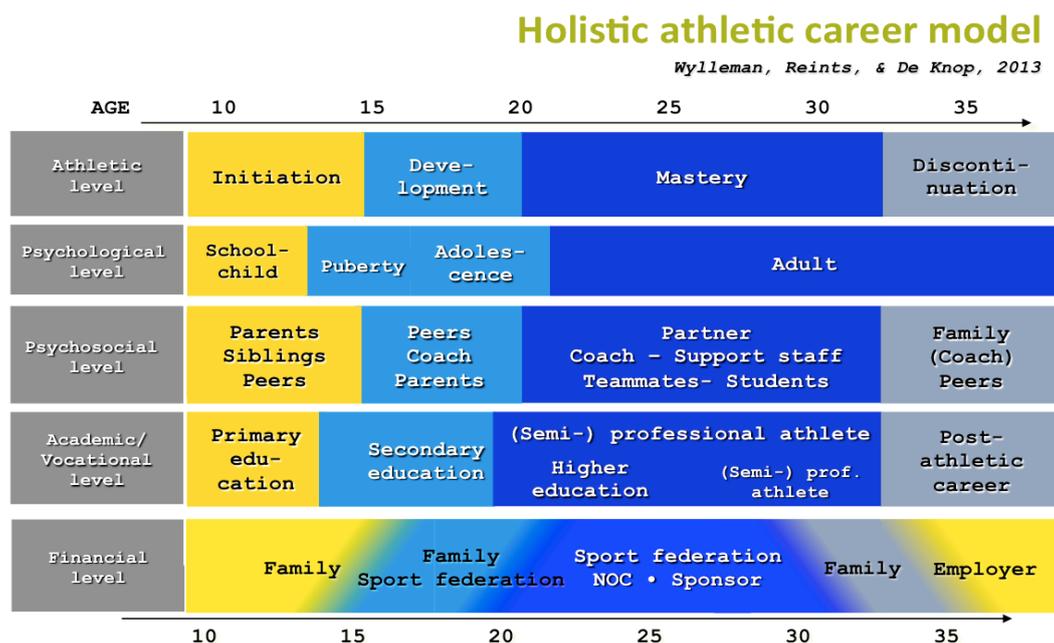
**Target population:**

- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed

**Targeted Competencies:**

- Ability to prioritize in order to balance multiple life domains
- Belief in your own ability to overcome challenges in different life domains
- Self-discipline to manage the demands of different life domains

## Graphical representation:



## Background:

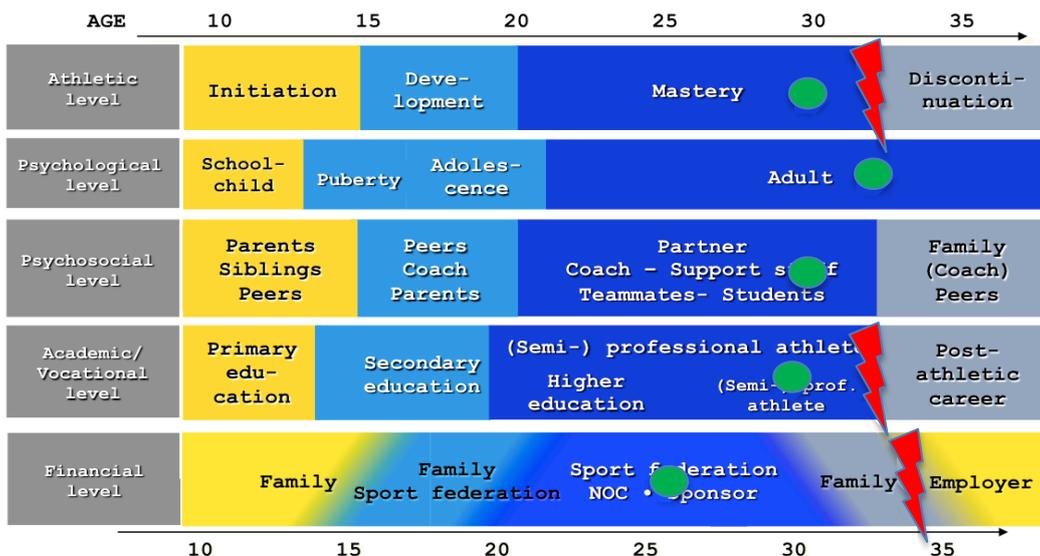
From a developmental perspective, athletes' pathways are not uniform and consistent in nature, but consist of different stages and transitions. Moreover, from a holistic perspective, athletes encounter transitions at different levels of development (i.e. the athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational, financial level). The Holistic Athletic Career (HAC) model brings together this developmental and holistic perspective in a graphical representation. It can therefore be used as a visual model in working with athletes to identify and anticipate specific multi-level challenges and opportunities related to their professional development.

Below, specific reflection questions are presented that can be used to coach athletes in the preparation of specific transitions related to their vocational career. Note that the age mentioned in the model is just an indication, and can differ per sport/athlete.

## Instructions:

### 1. Identify current level of development & transitions in the near future

- Pinpoint yourself on each of the developmental levels to identify your current level of development from a holistic viewpoint (e.g. use dots).
- What are the main transitions coming up in the following years? (e.g. use lightning bolts)
- Do any of these main transitions coincide with other important events/transitions?



## 2.1. IF: Preparation for a dual ‘elite sport and employment’ career

- What would be the *reasons/advantages* of combining elite sport with employment?  
= *Why would you undertake a dual ‘elite sport and employment’ career?*
  - At the athletic level:
  - At the psychological level:
  - At the psychosocial level:
  - At the vocational level:
  - At the financial level:
- If I engage in a dual elite sport and employment career, my main challenges will be...
  - At the athletic level:
  - At the psychological level:
  - At the psychosocial level:
  - At the vocational level:
  - At the financial level:
- Can these challenges be managed?  
How can you anticipate for these challenges (right now / in the near future)?
- Taking into account the advantages and challenges:  
Would you engage in a dual elite sport and employment career?  
If yes: Why? / If no: What is holding you back?

## 2.2. IF: Preparation for the transition to the post-athletic career

- a) What aspects of your post-athletic career are you looking forward to?
- At the athletic level:
  - At the psychological level:
  - At the psychosocial level:
  - At the vocational level:
  - At the financial level:
- b) Are there any aspects you are not looking forward to?
- At the athletic level:
  - At the psychological level:
  - At the psychosocial level:
  - At the vocational level:
  - At the financial level:
- c) What do you think will be the main challenges that you will encounter during the transition to your new career?
- At the athletic level:
  - At the psychological level:
  - At the psychosocial level:
  - At the vocational level:
  - At the financial level:
- d) How can you anticipate for these challenges (now/in the near future)?

### Sources:

#### Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Wylleman, P., & Lavallee, D. (2004). A Developmental Perspective on Transitions Faced by Athletes. In M. Weis (Ed.), *Developmental sport psychology*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness International Technology.

Wylleman, P., & Rosier, N. (2016). Holistic Perspective on the Development of Elite Athletes. In M. Raab, P. Wylleman, R. Seiler, A.-M. Elbe, & A. Hatzigeorgiadis (Eds.), *Sport and Exercise Psychology Research: From Theory to Practice* (pp. 269–288). London: Elsevier.  
<http://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>

## From Elite Sport to the Job Market: Discover your Competencies

- Type of method:**
- Data collection/intake method
  - Intervention method
  - Monitoring/evaluation method

**Goal(s):** To assist athletes in evaluating their competencies required to optimise their employability and employment, using the Athletes' Competency Questionnaire for Employability (ACQE).

This tool aims to make the athlete aware of the importance and current level of a series of competencies required to optimise their employment. It can serve to assist athletes in gaining insight in their competencies, provide a starting point for competency development, and be used as a monitoring and evaluation tool of their performances and/or goals.

- Why?**
- WP1: 43% of stakeholders provide individual coaching sessions and 7% group coaching sessions incl. competency coaching. This tool can assist them in those sessions.
  - WP1: Stakeholders perceive active dual career athletes' challenge to "*explore their own personal interests and competencies with regard to professional domains*" as the most relevant challenge in function of their employability (M=4.38; on a scale of 5).
  - WP1: Stakeholders perceive retired athletes' challenge to "*further develop competencies needed for the current or future employment*" as the most relevant challenge in function of sustainable employment (M=4.03, on a scale of 5)
  - WP1: "Lack of self-knowledge about competencies" was a recurrent barrier mentioned by stakeholders.
  - WP2: Athletes report a general need to develop their competencies.
  - WP2: "*Developing competencies needed for the job you are interested in*" and "*Developing competencies needed for your current and/or future employment*" are perceived the most challenging tasks by retired athletes.
  - WP2: "*Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses*" is among the top competencies in which athletes' think they can develop a competitive advantage (i.e. in comparison with employees without an elite sport background).
  - WP3: Employers believe that athletes possess a set of competencies which are transferable to the job market.

- WP3: Employers emphasize the importance of raising the awareness of the competencies (former) elite athletes possess.

**Target population:**

- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed

**Targeted competencies:**

- Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
- Confidence that you have the competencies needed for the job

**Instructions:**

**STEP 1: Answer the ACQE**

Athletes answer each of the competencies of the *Athletes' Competency Questionnaire for Employability* (ACQE) for their perceived importance and perceived possession in the attached excel file (an online template is under development).

They answer the following two questions for each of the competencies dependent on their career stage:

- Active athletes:
  - How important are each of these competencies for you in preparing for future employment?
  - To what extent do you possess each of these competencies?
- Retired athletes preparing for employment:
  - How important are each of these competencies for you in preparing for a first-time employment?
  - To what extent do you possess each of these competencies?
- Retired athletes who are already employed:
  - How important are each of these competencies for you in securing sustainable employment?
  - To what extent do you possess each of these competencies?

After answering all the items, the excel will draw a graphical representation of their results in four competency groups:



## STEP 2: Interpret the profile

Assist the athlete in interpreting the profile obtained with the ACQE. Important when interpreting the profile is to address the perceived importance and possession of the competencies, as well as the gap/difference between importance and possession. This gap between importance and possession can be interpreted as athletes' need to develop this specific competency (see purple arrow). When the importance is higher than the possession, one can expect that there is a developmental need for this competency. The bigger the difference is, the greater the need to develop this competency.

## STEP 3: Reflect on the results

If you are sure that the athlete understands the profile, you can start reflecting on the results. Discuss their personal visual profile on competency group level (see the figure above) in combination with their scores on item level. The profile can serve as a starting point for a discussion and assist in further elaboration on his/her competencies required to optimise employability. Reflective questions can include:

- Strengths
  - What are your main strengths (i.e. strong possession)?
  - Can you provide me with some examples / specific situations in which you use these strengths?
  - How are these strengths expressed in your daily life (i.e., sport, work, social life...)?
    - *Write down two situations in which you feel very competent.*
  - How did you develop these strengths?
- Weaknesses / Need to develop
  - What competencies do you want/need to develop (high discrepancy between importance and possession)?
  - Can you provide us with specific examples/situations in which you feel less competent/comfortable?

- *Write down two situations in which you (sometimes) feel less competent.*
- What can be the reasons that you possess these competencies to a lesser extent?
- Can some of your strengths compensate for those competencies that are less well developed?

#### **STEP 4: Action points**

Based on the reflections, you discuss with the athlete how he/she could work on his/her employability competencies. Reflective questions can include:

- Based on our discussion, what competencies would you like to develop further (maximize strengths / develop weaknesses)? Why?
- How can you develop these competencies?
  - Which concrete actions can you take?
  - Which of your strengths can help you with this?
  - Who can help you with this?
  - By when would you like to realize this?

After the discussion, the athlete can add elements to his/her Personal Development Plan, such as resources, but also some first goals and action points (see tool 8 and 9).

#### **Next steps: The bigger picture**

The following cycle can be set-up using the ACQE:

- First self-assessment (see above);
- Select the competencies that you want to develop, e.g. based on the highest discrepancy scores.
- Create goals (e.g. by the end of the month I want to bring my score to a 4,6 on a specific competency or competency factor) and make these specific (e.g. by using the Personal Development Plan tool).
- Second self-assessment to re-evaluate. Did I reach my goals? Which is the next competency I want to optimise?
- Create goals using the PDP for the new competency.
- Third cycle and so on.

#### **Alternatives:**

- The monitoring can also be done without answering the full ACQE, but just by following up on the goals and PDP for specific competencies.
- The monitoring can be done by giving scores on the competency factors/groups instead of answering all the items

NOTE: The online version of this assessment tool is freely available at [www.dualcareertools.com!](http://www.dualcareertools.com!)

Our conference workshop with this tool is freely available here: <http://www.bwiser.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/3.-PARALLEL-WORKSHOPS.zip>

**Source:**

**B-WISER, Vrije Universiteit Brussel**



## Attachments

| <b>Athletes' Competency Questionnaire for Employability (ACQE)</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Factors</b>   | <b>Items</b>   |
| <b>Career &amp; Lifestyle management</b>                           | Ability to use your time efficiently   |
|  | Self-discipline to manage the demands of different life domains                |
|  | Ability to prioritize in order to balance multiple life domains                |
|  | Ability to make your own responsible choices                                   |
|  | Ability to be goal-oriented  |
|  | Dedication to succeed in different life domains                                |
| <b>Career Awareness &amp; Communication</b>                        | Ability to create a professional network                                       |
|  | Ability to maintain relations with important others                            |
|  | Understanding of your own career interests and options                         |
|  | Confidence that you have the competencies needed for the job                   |
|  | Ability to communicate your ideas clearly                                      |
|  | Asking advice to the right people at the right time                            |
|  | Ability to lead a group of people  |
|  | Ability to balance your organisation's goals with your individual needs        |
| <b>Career Efficacy &amp; Resilience</b>                            | Ability to remain self-confident after mistakes                                |
|  | Ability to use setbacks as a positive stimulus                                 |
|  | Ability to regulate your emotions in different situations                      |
|  | Ability to cope with stress effectively  |
|  | Ability to understand your own emotions  |
|  | Belief in your own ability to overcome challenges in different life domains    |
|  | Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses                                 |
|  | Patience and optimism about the progression of your career                     |
|  | Confidence to take work-related decisions                                      |
| <b>Career Engagement &amp; Adaptability</b>                        | Ability to engage in in-depth discussions in your job domain                   |
|  | Ability to identify yourself with the culture of your organisation             |
|  | Willingness to do more for your organisation than your direct responsibilities |
|  | Ability to be flexible and change career plans if necessary                    |
|  | Curiosity to explore career opportunities                                      |

## Life Wheel

**Type of instrument:** Intervention

**Goal(s):** Assist athletes in evaluating the importance of different life domains and values, in order that they develop action points and make decisions to attain a good balance in life.

**Why?**

- WP1: Stakeholders consider athletes' life management competencies (i.e. commitment, time management, prioritizing) key resources to optimize their pathway to employability, especially for those who engage in a dual "elite sport and employment" career.
- WP1: Stakeholders consider athletes' time constraints and difficulties with their new identity as key barriers for optimizing their employability. Time constraints are especially relevant for those in a dual career, while identity problems were significantly higher in retired athletes preparing for 1<sup>st</sup> time employment.
- WP2: Athletes' dedication to succeed in different life domains and their belief to overcome challenges in different life domains is very strong (both in the top-5 for perceived possession) and they also feel that those competencies can provide them with a competitive advantage.
- WP3: Employers emphasize the importance of knowing what you want and having long-term perspectives.
- WP3: Employers think the need of independence within an employment can be difficult for (former) elite athletes as they are/have been constantly served during their sporting career.

**Target population:**

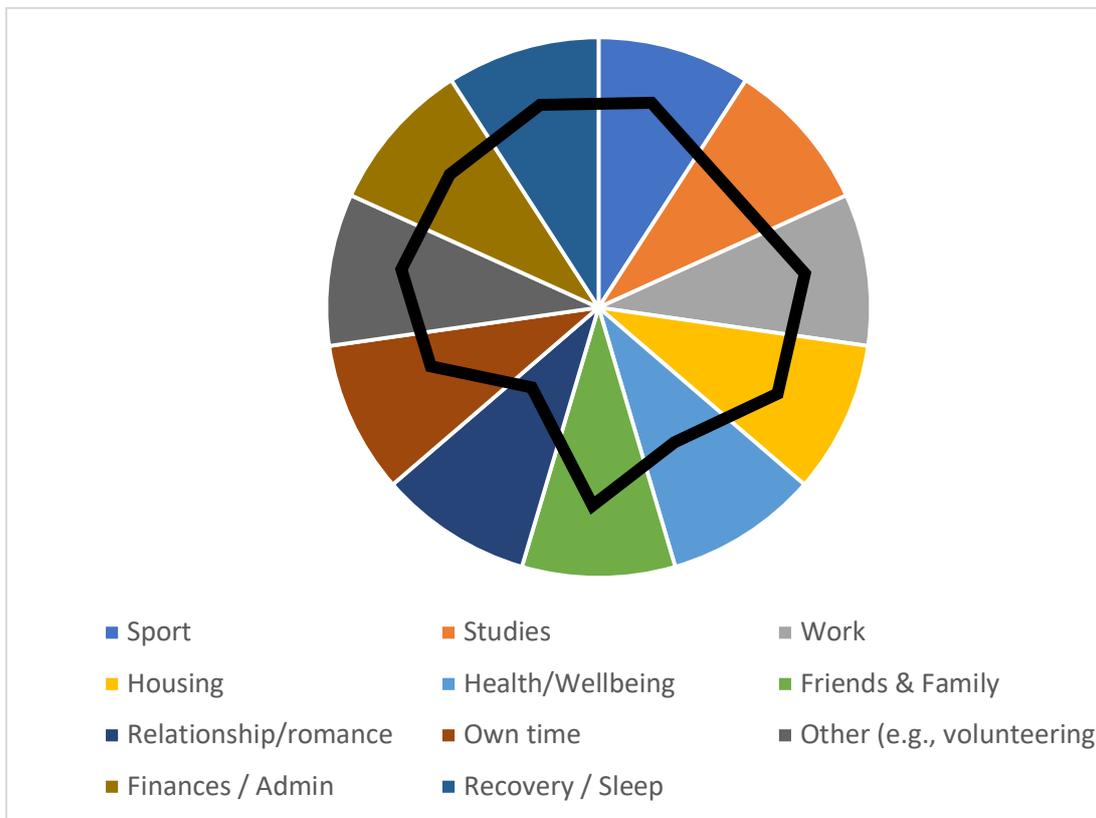
- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed

**Targeted competences:**

- Ability to prioritize in order to balance multiple life domains
- Ability to make your own responsible choices
- Dedication to succeed in different life domains

- Belief in your own ability to overcome challenges in different life domains

### Graphical representation:



### Instructions:

- **STEP 1: Draw the wheel**

Indicate how satisfied you are with each aspect of your life. Provide a value from zero to ten, where ten indicates the greatest satisfaction. Each DC athlete indicates his/her satisfaction in each “cake piece” where zero is closest to the centre of the pie and ten is at the outer edge of the circle. In the end, connect the dots.

Since there are no absolute numbers in this exercise, different people can for example experience their health as the same, but still indicate it differently within the pie.

- **STEP 2: Describe the wheel**

The career counsellor asks you to describe your wheel. For example:

- ✓ How does your wheel look like?
- ✓ Does the wheel roll well? Or is there an imbalance somewhere?
- ✓ Can you tell me more about this specific “cake piece”? What is the reason for this low/high score?
- ✓ ...

- **STEP 3: Draw the desired wheel**

How would you like your wheel to look like?

Indicate the new score within your wheel, for example with a different colour, and connect the dots for the desired wheel.

- **STEP 4: Reflect on the differences between the current and desired wheel**

The career counsellor can ask the following questions to aid reflection:

- ✓ What “cake pieces” do you need to work with to provide the biggest impact on your life overall?
- ✓ Which one do you want to start with?
- ✓ How could you improve this “cake piece”?
- ✓ ...

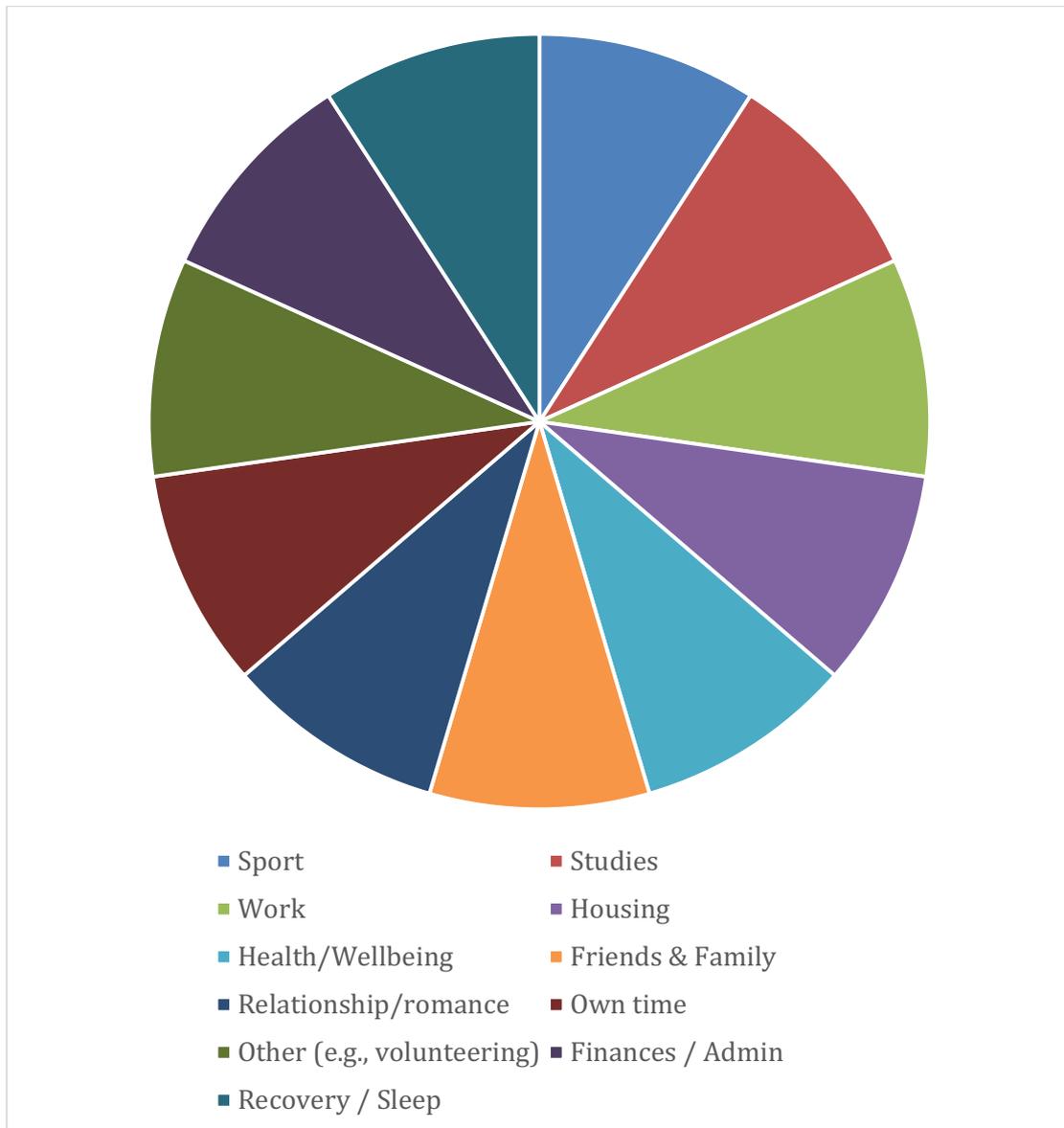
This can be used in one-on-one coaching or athletes can make the exercise together and question/explain to each other.

NOTE: Our conference workshop with this tool is freely available here: <http://www.bwiser.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/3.-PARALLEL-WORKSHOPS.zip>

Reference / Source: **Eriksson & Wallgren (2015). Umeå University, Sweden.**

## Attachments

## LIFE WHEEL



## Career Compass

**Type of method:** Intervention

**Goal(s):** To assist athletes in exploring career paths by mapping their dream job. The instrument enables reflection on different aspects of their life and job (i.e., skills, fields of interest, values and goals, people and colleagues, working conditions, geography, salary expectations) that contribute to success and well-being.

**Why?**

- WP1: Stakeholders perceive active and retired athletes' challenges to "*explore the vocational possibilities in the domains of interest*" and "*explore own personal interests and competences with regard to professional domains*" as the most relevant ones (top 2) in function of their employability.
- WP1: Athletes' *lack of long time perspective* is perceived by stakeholders as the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest barrier in their pathway to employment.
- WP2: Athletes' perceive their "*lack of long-term-perspective*" as the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest barrier in preparing for future employment or securing sustainable employment
- WP2: "*Understanding of your own career interests and options*", "*Ability to identify yourself with the culture of your organisation*", and "*Curiosity to explore career opportunities*" are among the competencies for which athletes report weaker possession.
- WP3: Employers believe that athletes possess a set of competencies which are transferable to another career path.
- WP3: Employers value the stimulation of autonomy within athletes as a very relevant resource.
- WP3: Employers emphasize the importance of knowing what you want and having long-term perspectives.
- WP3: Employers consider lack of knowledge with regard to post-athletic options (i.e. vocational options and perspectives) as a barrier for athletes on their pathway to employment.

**Target population:**

- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed

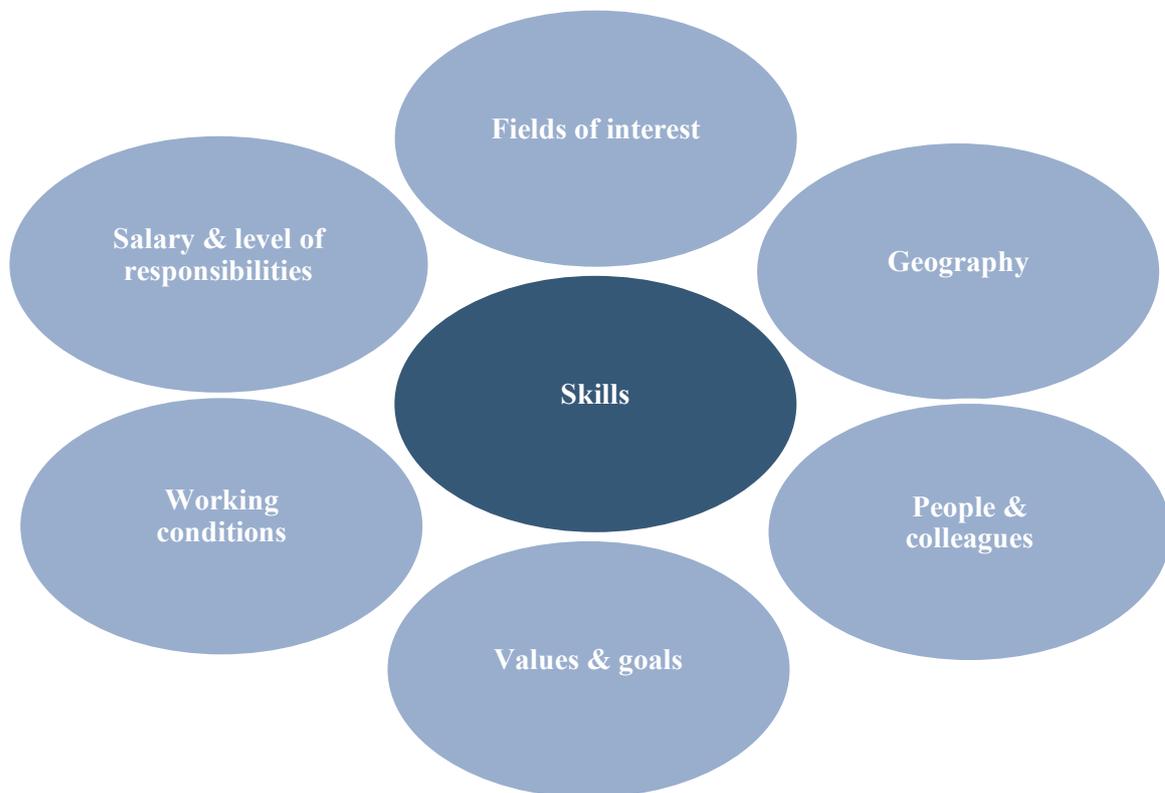
**Targeted competences:**

- Understanding of your own career interests and options
- Curiosity to explore career opportunities
- Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses



- Ability to identify yourself with the culture of your organisation
- Ability to balance your organisation's goals with your individual needs

### Graphical representation:



### Instructions:

1. **Skills.** Ask the athlete to identify the skills they possess best. This instrument can be used after the Competency Profiling instrument (#2) where athletes reflect on their strengths. The competency list of instrument 2 can be complemented with additional (hard) skills in which they excel (e.g., writing, analysing, research, languages, reading, software use/development, use specific programmes/apparatus). In case the athlete already had a job in the past: an additional question to reflect on their own skills can be: “What did you enjoy the most about your previous job/s?”
2. **Fields of interest.** Ask the athlete to list his/her main fields of interest. “If you win a million in the lottery, what would you spend your time doing?”
3. **Values and goals.** Ask the athlete to reflect on their values and goals. What drivers are behind their interests? What are they passionate about? (e.g., family, freedom, efficiency, control, strength, fitness, balance).
4. **People and colleagues.** Ask the athlete to reflect on the people that he would like to be surrounded with (e.g., people who challenge me / ...are open-minded / ...are committed).

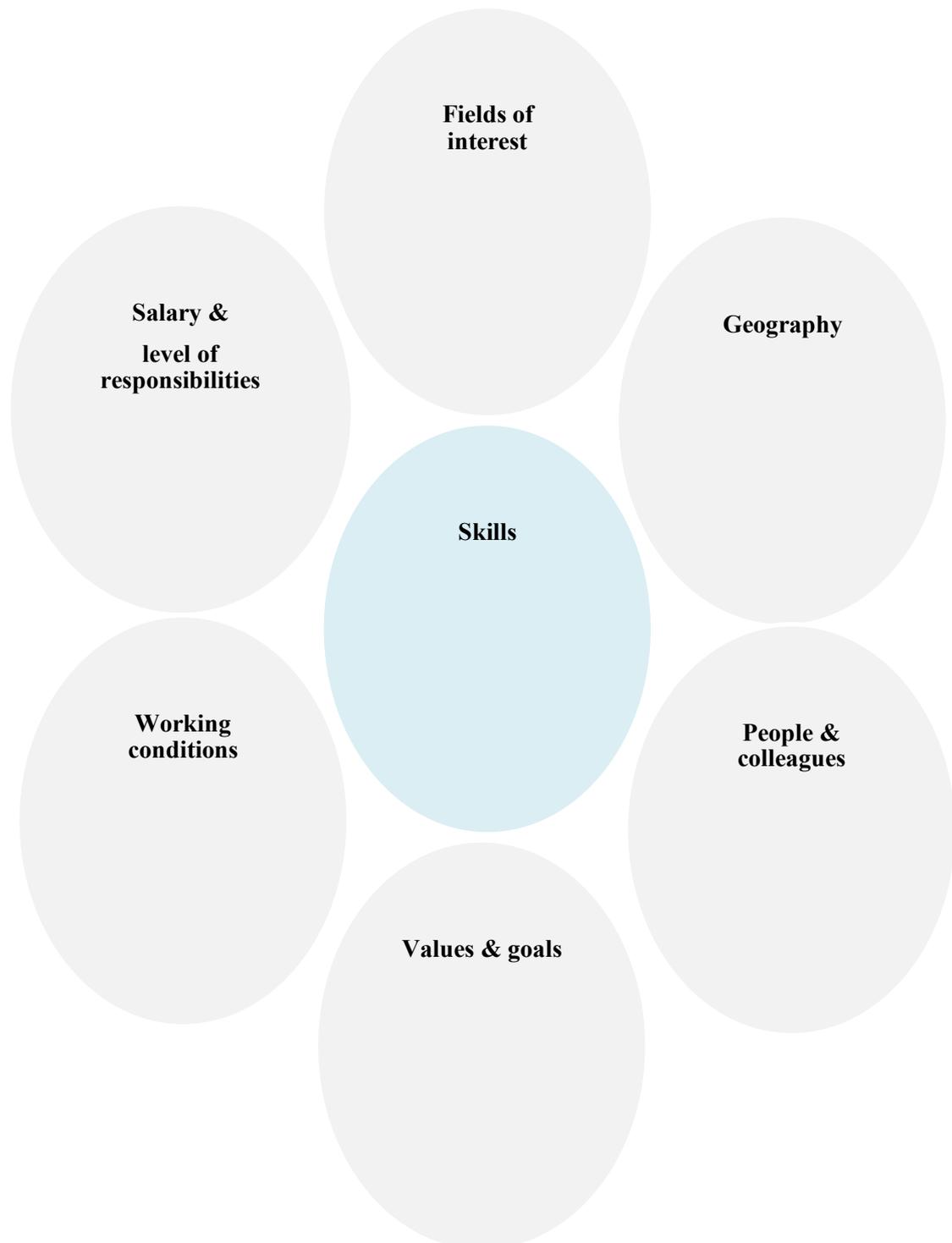
5. **Working conditions.** Ask the athlete to reflect on the circumstances in which they (would) do their most effective work (e.g. bike to work, having a mentor, fixed/flexible working hours, merit system).
6. **Geography.** Ask the athlete in what environment they were the happiest so far/would be the happiest? (e.g., close to a major city, multi-cultural environment, energetic/calm environment, Europe/N.-America/Africa...).
7. **Salary expectations and level of responsibilities.** Ask the athlete to reflect on their salary expectations and the level of their responsibilities within the organisation. How much would they need to cover all their basic costs? What is the level of their responsibilities? (e.g. able to chose my team, speak before large groups, serve on various important boards, develop own projects, lead a team/follow in a team).

After completing the 7 components, the following reflective questions can be asked:

- Which components were easy/difficult for you to answer?
- Are there components for you that are more/less important than others?
- Are there any surprising or conflicting things that you discovered about yourself/your dream job?
- Do you have an idea of which organisations/companies match your career compass?
  - Home task: Identify a list of 5 individuals/organisations that match their career compass
  - Find the shortest link to these organisations (contact information)
  - Identify a timeline for when you want to contact them for informational interviewing (e.g. by phone)

Source:

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Doctoral School -  
Key2Advance

**Attachments****CAREER COMPASS:  
The recipe for success**

## Holistic Goal Setting

**Type of instrument:** Intervention

**Goal(s):** To assist athletes in developing short-, mid- and long-term outcome, performance and process goals in different spheres of life.

**Why?**

- WP2: Athletes consider their “*ability to be goal oriented*” and the “*dedication to succeed in different life domains*” as the number one and two competencies that can provide them with a competitive advantage.
- WP2: Athletes’ *dedication to succeed in different life domains* and their *belief to overcome challenges in different life domains* is very strong (both in the top-5 for perceived possession).
- WP3: Employers emphasize the importance of knowing what you want and having long-term perspectives.
- WP3: Employers believe that personal development (e.g., goal setting) is under-developed among (former) elite athletes.

**Target population:**

- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed

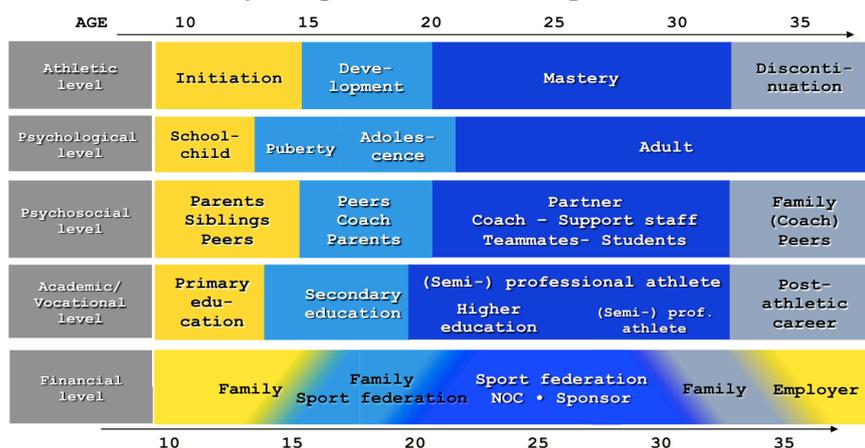
**Targeted competencies:**

- Ability to be goal-oriented
- Dedication to succeed in different life domains
- Understanding of your own career interests and options
- Ability to prioritize in order to balance multiple life domains
- Patience and optimism about the progression of your career
- Curiosity to explore career opportunities

### Instructions:

To make most of this instrument, it can best be used after “*Competency profiling*”, “*Life Wheel*” and “*Career Compass*” in order that their goals flow from their competencies, interests and values.

## STEP 1. Describe your goals in different spheres of life



- Explain or ask the athlete to interpret the model (this instrument can be used after or together with the tool “*Holistic Athletic Career Model*”)
- Ask the athlete to write down two personal goals for each of the five developmental levels (see form attached)
  - The formulation of these goals can be basic (no need for SMART goals at this time of the exercise)
  - Question: Was this easy/difficult? In which domains was it easier/more difficult?

## STEP 2. Short-, mid- and long-term goals

- Touch on the difference between and importance of short-, mid- and long-term goals
  - Ask if the athlete knows what the difference is
  - Present cases to the athlete to make the different terms clear
- Ask the athlete to situate his/her goals of Step 1 in time (see form attached)
  - Question: Are your goals mainly short-, mid- or long-term?

## STEP 3. Outcome, performance and process goals

- Explain the difference between and importance of outcome, performance and process goals
  - Ask if the athlete knows what the difference is
  - Present cases to the athlete to make clear the different types of goals
- Let the athlete select two goals from Step 2 and stimulate reflection on those goals:
  - Is your goal outcome, performance or process oriented?
  - Ask the athlete to formulate a mid-term performance goal and a short-term process goal for a long-term outcome goal (see form attached).
  - Question: What was difficult/easy about this?

## STEP 4. Formulate your goals in a SMART way

- Formulate all the goals from STEP 3 according to the SMART principle.

NOTE: Our conference workshop with this tool is freely available here: <http://www.bwiser.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/3.-PARALLEL-WORKSHOPS.zip>

Reference / Source:

Vrije Universiteit Brussel



www.bwiser.eu

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## My goals in different spheres of life



Sport:



Psychological / Mental:



Academic:

Vocational:



Social:



Financial:

## Short-, mid- and long-term goals

|                      | Short-term | Mid-term | Long-term |
|----------------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Athletic</b>      |            |          |           |
| <b>Psychological</b> |            |          |           |
| <b>Academic</b>      |            |          |           |
| <b>Vocational</b>    |            |          |           |
| <b>Social</b>        |            |          |           |
| <b>Financial</b>     |            |          |           |

## Outcome, Performance and Process goals

|                   | <b>Process</b> | <b>Performance</b> | <b>Outcome</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>Short-term</b> |                |                    |                |
| <b>Mid-term</b>   |                |                    |                |
| <b>Long-term</b>  |                |                    |                |

## Competitive Advantage

**Type of method:** Intervention

**Goal(s):** To assist athletes in discovering the transferability of their competencies and aid them to showcase their strengths on the labour market.

### Why?

- WP1: Stakeholders perceive active and retired athletes' challenge to "*develop transferable competencies*" as a relevant challenge in function of their employability (M=4.16, on a scale of 5).
- WP1: "*Using your abilities in different sectors*", "*Developing self-awareness outside the sport context*" and "*Knowing how to sell your values and how it can contribute to the company*" were recurrent competencies mentioned by different stakeholders.
- WP1: "*Lack of self-knowledge about competencies*", "*Lack of understanding of the working place culture*" and "*lack of awareness of the world outside of sport*" were important barriers mentioned by stakeholders.
- WP1: Working on transferable competencies is often considered a good practice by stakeholders.
- WP2: The competencies for which athletes reported the strongest possession, where also the top competencies that they felt gave/would give them a competitive advantage in the labour market (i.e., their ability to be goal-oriented, the self-discipline to manage the demands of different life domains, and the ability to cope with stress effectively).
- WP2: "*Ability to identify yourself with the culture of your organisation*" was among the competencies for which athletes reported weaker possession.
- WP3: Some employers doubt the ability of (former) elite athletes to transfer the competencies developed in the sporting career into a working environment, so athletes should be able to convince employers with concrete (possible) examples.
- WP3: Employers mentioned the danger of stigmatization within the population of (former) elite athletes (e.g. elite athletes are dumb).
- WP3: Employers emphasize the importance of raising the awareness of competencies (former) elite athletes possess with regard to employment and employability.

**Target population:**

- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed

**Targeted competences:**

- Awareness of your competencies that are transferable from elite sport to the job market
- Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
- Ability to identify yourself with the culture of your organisation

**Instructions:****STEP 1: Select your 5 strongest competencies**

Athletes select 5 of their strongest competencies. The competency list of the *Athletes' Competency Questionnaire for Employability (ACQE)* can be used for inspiration (see at the end of this tool), but it is not required for this exercise.

This instrument is best used after “*Competence profiling*” and/or “*Career Compass*”, after reflecting on their strengths and job(s) of interest.

**STEP 2: Use of the competencies in sport**

Athletes reflect on how they use(d) those 5 competencies in sport:

- How do/did you use each of those competencies in sport?
- In which particular situations did you show strong possession of these competencies?

**STEP 3: Use of the competencies in employment**

Athletes reflect on how they can use those 5 competencies in employment:

**3.1. Relate to working situations/tasks**

- *Active athletes / retired athletes preparing for a 1<sup>st</sup> time job / retired athletes looking for a new job:*  
Think of the job of your preference: In which specific working situations or job tasks can you display those 5 competencies? = How would you use those competencies in your job of interest?
- *Retired athletes who want to stay in their current job:*  
Think of your current job: In which specific working situations or job tasks did you display those 5 competencies? = How did you use those competencies in your job? How could you use those competencies even more?

**3.2. Write down 2 job tasks/situations per competency**

- *Active athletes / retired athletes preparing for a 1<sup>st</sup> time job / retired athletes looking for a new job:*

For each of those 5 competencies: write down 2 job tasks or situations in which you feel a strong possession of those competencies is required, and how you would display those competencies to successfully manage this task/situation.

- *Retired athletes who want to stay in their current job:*

For each of those 5 competencies: write down 2 job tasks or situations in which you feel a strong possession of those competencies was required, and how you displayed those competencies to successfully manage this task/situation. In what other situation(s) could you use these competencies?

### 3.3. Which ones give you a competitive advantage?

- *Active athletes / retired athletes preparing for a 1<sup>st</sup> time job / retired athletes looking for a new job:*

From the list of 10 job tasks/situations, select the 3 situations that you feel an employer would value the most. Which ones will give you a competitive advantage in this job? (i.e., in comparison with employees without an elite sport background)?

Write them down in a sentence, starting with the competence and followed by the job-related task/situation. For example:

- I am able to use setbacks as a positive stimulus, for example, when a client decides to stop our cooperation, I will take out the positive points and move on quickly.
- I am able to cope with stress effectively, for example, when I have to speak for big crowds, I can calm myself down and bring the message clearly.

Keep those competencies and situations in mind for your CV and/or a job interview.

- *Retired athletes who want to stay in their current job:*

From the list of 10 job tasks/situations, select the 3 situations that you feel your employer values the most. Which ones give you a competitive advantage in this job? (i.e., in comparison with employees without an elite sport background)?

Write down actions how you can further increase your competitive advantage for these 3 important situations/tasks.

Source

B-WISER, Vrije Universiteit Brussel



Attachments

2

**SPORT**

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

1

**COMPETENCIES**

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

3

**EMPLOYMENT**

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...



## My transferable competencies

1.

2.

3.

| <b>Athletes' Competency Questionnaire for Employability (ACQE)</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Factors</b>   | <b>Items</b>   |
| <b>Career &amp; Lifestyle management</b>                           | Ability to use your time efficiently   |
|  | Self-discipline to manage the demands of different life domains                |
|  | Ability to prioritize in order to balance multiple life domains                |
|  | Ability to make your own responsible choices                                   |
|  | Ability to be goal-oriented  |
|  | Dedication to succeed in different life domains                                |
| <b>Career Awareness &amp; Communication</b>                        | Ability to create a professional network                                       |
|  | Ability to maintain relations with important others                            |
|  | Understanding of your own career interests and options                         |
|  | Confidence that you have the competences needed for the job                    |
|  | Ability to communicate your ideas clearly                                      |
|  | Asking advice to the right people at the right time                            |
|  | Ability to lead a group of people  |
|  | Ability to balance your organisation's goals with your individual needs        |
| <b>Career Efficacy &amp; Resilience</b>                            | Ability to remain self-confident after mistakes                                |
|  | Ability to use setbacks as a positive stimulus                                 |
|  | Ability to regulate your emotions in different situations                      |
|  | Ability to cope with stress effectively  |
|  | Ability to understand your own emotions  |
|  | Belief in your own ability to overcome challenges in different life domains    |
|  | Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses                                 |
|  | Patience and optimism about the progression of your career                     |
| Confidence to take work-related decisions                          |  |
| <b>Career Engagement &amp; Adaptability</b>                        | Ability to engage in in-depth discussions in your job domain                   |
|  | Ability to identify yourself with the culture of your organisation             |
|  | Willingness to do more for your organisation than your direct responsibilities |
|  | Ability to be flexible and change career plans if necessary                    |
|  | Curiosity to explore career opportunities                                      |

## GROW Coaching Methodology

Type of instrument: Intervention

- Goal(s):
- Assist athletes in discovering their own solutions for specific problems, in order that they can be confident in taking their own decisions. By generating their own ideas and solutions we want them to gain experience and get empowered rather than just supported.
  - Structure your coaching/counselling sessions with athletes.

- Why?
- WP1: Stakeholders report difficulties on how they can empower athletes.
  - WP1: Stakeholders consider athletes' *self-regulation and self-confidence* as very relevant competencies in preparing for and/or securing employment.
  - WP2: Athletes consider *self-confidence and motivation issues* as relevant barriers to optimize their employability.
  - WP2: Athletes' *belief to overcome challenges in different life domains* is very strong overall, but significantly lower in retired athletes preparing for 1<sup>st</sup>-time employment.
  - WP2: Athletes consider their *belief to overcome challenges in different life domains* as a strong asset with which they can get a competitive advantage.
  - WP2: Athletes' report lower possession for "*confidence to take work-related decisions*".
  - WP3: Employers consider the stimulation of autonomy within athletes as a very relevant resource.
  - WP3: Employers consider lack of knowledge with regard to post-athletic options (i.e. vocational options and perspectives) as a barrier for athletes on their pathway to employment.
  - WP3: Career counselling is perceived by employers as a way to maximize the added value of employing a (former) elite athlete.
  - WP3: Employers mentioned the use of theoretical frameworks to support practical implementations as necessary.
  - WP3: Employers doubt the transferability of competencies from the sport environment into the job market.

- WP3: Employers consider the lack of experience as a reason not to hire (former) elite athletes.
- WP3: Employers consider the competencies elite athletes linked with a low perception of possession as those which are basically linked to employment and employability.
- WP3: Employers mentioned autonomous entrepreneurship as an important resource to maximize the added value of employing (former) elite athletes.

**Target population:**

- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed

**Targeted competencies:**

- Ability to be goal-oriented
- Ability to make your own responsible choices
- Belief in your own ability to overcome challenges in different life domains
- Confidence to take work-related decisions

**Instructions:**

The GROW model is a 4-step model and is an acronym for Goal, Reality, Options and Will. It can be used by career counsellors to structure an individual session with an athlete:

- The athlete has a question/problem that he/she wants to manage.
- The career counsellor assists the athletes in structuring their thoughts so that they can come up with their own solutions & future actions.

**1. GOAL**

Ask the athlete what his/her specific goal is for the session. You could ask one or more of the following questions:

- What question do you have? What problem would you like to solve?
- Which theme would you like to discuss? Why?
- What should be the concrete outcome of this session?

Assist the athlete to formulate a SMART goal:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Acceptable
- Realistic
- Time-bound

Assist the athlete in formulating the goal in a positive way.

## 2. REALITY

Ask the athlete what his/her current situation is linked to the problem. You could ask one or more of following questions:

- What's happening now? Why is this a problem?
- What went wrong so far?
- What went good so far?
- Is there always a problem or are there moments that it's going fine?
- What did you already try to do to solve the problem?

As a career counsellor you assist the athlete in evaluating his/her current situation. In this phase, it is very important to ask concrete examples and to get a good overview of the current situation.

## 3. OPTIONS

Try to promote the creative problem-solving process by providing structure and asking the right questions, for example:

- What could you do?
- What helped you in similar situations?
- How do other people solve this situation?
- What holds you back to solve it? What would you do if this obstruction wasn't there anymore?

As a support provider you could use specific techniques to enhance the option searching, for example brainstorming or mind-mapping.

## 4. WILL

A) After having discussed several options, it is time to choose one (or more) options(s). To help the athlete make the decision, you could ask following questions:

- What option(s) are the best solution(s)?
- What are the advantages of this solution(s)? And the downside(s)?

B) Once the athlete made a decision, it is important to assist them in making it very concrete:

- What will you do specifically?
- When will you do this?
- What will you do first? (RAG)
- What problems could arise? How will you face these?
- How will you keep yourself motivated?

- Is there someone who could help you with this?

**Things to take into account:**

- “Goal” and “Reality” can be switched depending on the preference of the career counsellor and/or the athlete. While some prefer to start from specific goals, others prefer to start from the context, and link the current situation to the advocated problem.
- Try to avoid that you provide all the answers, but let the athlete come up with his/her own solutions.
- This instrument can also be used in a more subtle, less rigid way when the career counsellor is more experienced.
- The form attached can be used to take notes as a career counsellor and/or by the athlete to structure his/her thoughts.

**Reference / Source:**            **Gold in Education and Elite Sport, Handbook for DC Support Providers**

**GROW****STEP 1:**

What is your **GOAL** (for this session)?



GOAL:

Check: Is your goal formulated in a SMART and positive way?

**STEP 2:**

Take a look at your current situation, what is the **REALITY**?



REALITY:



STEP 3:

Which **OPTIONS** can help you to solve this problem?

OPTION:

OPTION:

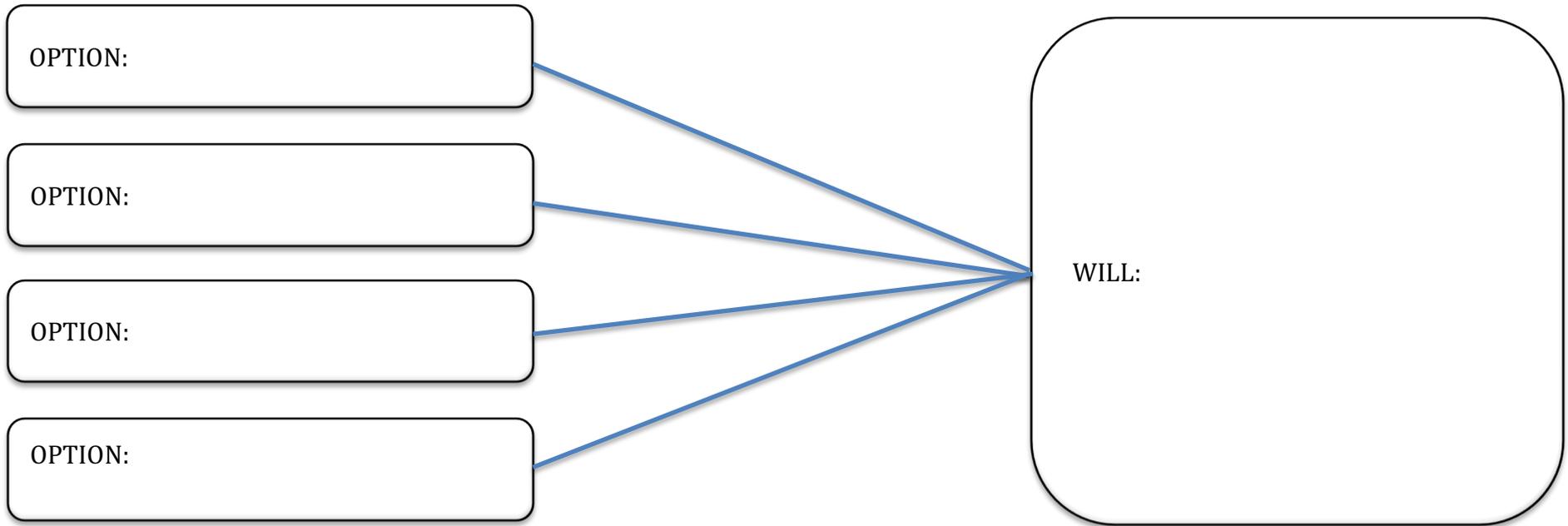
OPTION:

OPTION:



STEP 4:

A) Which options **WILL** you go through with?





B) How **WILL** you do this?

| <i>CONCRETE ACTIONS</i> | <i>WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?</i> | <i>TIMING</i> | <i>SUPPORT?</i> | <i>PRIORITY?</i><br><b>RAG</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
|                         |                           |               |                 |                                |
|                         |                           |               |                 |                                |
|                         |                           |               |                 |                                |
| <i>FOLLOW UP</i>        | <i>WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?</i> | <i>TIMING</i> | <i>SUPPORT?</i> | <i>PRIORITY?</i><br><b>RAG</b> |
|                         |                           |               |                 |                                |

## Motivational interviewing – Do I need a change?

**Type of method:** Intake method  
Brief intervention method

**Goal(s):** Enhance intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.

**Why?**

- WP1: The main type of support that career support providers provide is individual coaching (on average 43% of their job time). The current tool can help to structure these individual coaching sessions.
- WP2: Athletes consider *self-confidence and motivation issues* as relevant barriers to optimize their employability.
- WP2: Athletes consider lack of long-term perspective as the number three barrier.
- WP3: Career counselling is perceived by employers as a way to maximize the added value of employing a (former) elite athlete.
- WP3: The inner motivation (former) elite athletes possess can, according to employers, be beneficial in enhancing their employment and employability.
- WP3: a lot of employers believe that the occupational delay and lack of job-specific experience might be a problem for athletes. As such, at least considering to engage in a DC is important for athletes.
- Elite athletes might choose not to engage themselves in a dual career being satisfied with their current routines, social and financial situation. Therefore, a decision to make a change (e.g., to start education) might provoke their sense of uncertainty leading to avoidance behaviour. Meanwhile, an ambivalence is a normal attribute of the behaviour change process because most people have conflicting feelings in relation to changing familiar routines or habits.

**Target population:** Active elite athletes contemplating about pursuing a dual career.

**Targeted competences:**

- Understanding of your own career interests and options
- Curiosity to explore career opportunities

- Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
- Ability to identify yourself with the culture of your organisation
- Ability to balance your organisation's goals with your individual needs

### Instructions:

Motivational interviewing is a client-centred approach requiring empathy and reflective listening skills and drawn from the client-centred therapy of Carl Rogers (Welch, Rose, & Ernst, 2006).

Ambivalence is seen as an important part of change, as it might create motivation. A tool for exploring ambivalence is termed “the decisional matrix”. The four-pillar matrix clearly illustrates the client’s picture of the pros and cons of the choices being considered that is to proceed as it is here and now, or to change.

There are four central principles of motivational interviewing (Moyers & Rollnick, 2002):

1. Express empathy by using reflective listening to convey understanding of the client’s message.
2. Develop discrepancy between the client’s most deeply held values and current behaviors.
3. Roll with resistance by meeting it with reflection rather than confrontation.
4. Support self-efficacy by building confidence that change is possible.

*Working with “the decisional matrix”:*

- Explain Figure 1.
- Begin to discuss squire A. Ask open questions about advantages of the athlete’s current situation, for example: “Please, tell me what you like with your current situation as an elite athlete”. From that continue with open end questions to understand the benefits of current behavior from the athlete’s perspective.
- Move to squire B and ask questions about disadvantage with staying in the current situation and not doing any changes. In this exercise: to start an education and pursue a dual career. Work in similar way asking open questions and listening to the athlete’s view.
- Continue with squire C and ask questions about disadvantages to change and reach the target situation (e.g., a dual career). For example: “What can be not good things about the target situation?” It is important to explore and clarify the downside of the target behavior.
- Finish with squire D discussing advantages of a change and reaching the target situation.
- Summarize the discussion, acknowledge all aspects of the ambivalence but with an emphasis on the downside of staying the same and the benefits of behavior change. Relate the discussion to the athletes’ goals and values to increase the desire to change from the point of intrinsic motivation.



## References

- Janis, I. L., Mann, L. (1977) *Decision-making: A psychological analysis of conflict, choice, and commitment*. New York: Free press.
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doi:10.2337/diaspect.19.1.5



## Five-Step Career Planning

**Type of instrument:** Intervention

- Goal(s):**
- Assist athletes in effectively planning for the future based on analysis of their present situation and past experiences.
  - Bring together the athletes' goals, values, resources and barriers obtained with previous instruments in a Personal Development Plan to stimulate the implementation of lessons learned into practice.

**Why?**

- WP1: Stakeholders identified competency development as key challenges for athletes in preparing for and securing employment.
- WP1: Stakeholders consider athletes' *self-regulation* as a very relevant resource in preparing for and/or securing employment.
- WP1: Stakeholders consider lack of long-term perspective as the second biggest barrier for athletes on their pathway to employment.
- WP2: Athletes consider lack of long-term perspective as the number three barrier.
- WP2: Athletes consider the *ability to be goal-oriented* as their strongest asset, with which they feel they can get a competitive advantage, but at the same time they report a lower possession for "*understanding their own career options and interests*".
- WP3: Employers believe that the stimulation of autonomy within athletes is a very relevant resource.
- WP3: Employers consider lack of knowledge with regard to post-athletic options (i.e. vocational options and perspectives) as a barrier for athletes on their pathway to employment.
- WP3: Career counselling is perceived by employers as a way to maximize the added value of employing a (former) elite athlete.
- WP3: Employers mentioned the use of theoretical frameworks to support practical implementations as necessary.

**Target population:**

- Active elite athletes
- Former elite athletes preparing for employment
- Former elite athletes who are already employed



**Targeted competencies:**

- Ability to be goal-oriented
- Awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
- Understanding of your own career interests and options
- Ability to communicate your ideas clearly
- Confidence that you have the competences needed for the job

**Instructions:****STEP 1. Formulate your Goals**

- What do you want to achieve (e.g. in your vocational career) ?
- Formulate your goals (e.g., for the next 6 or 12 months) in a SMART and positive way (see tool “Holistic Goal Setting” for an extensive overview of possibilities in goal setting).

**STEP 2. Analyze your resources and barriers (internal and external)**

- **Resources**
  - Internal resources: What personal strengths or competencies do you have that can help you achieve your goals?
  - External resources: Who or what around you might help you to achieve your goals?
- **Barriers**
  - Internal barriers: What are your personal weaknesses or internal factors and competencies you need to develop more to achieve your goals? Think about how you can overcome them.
  - External barriers: What external factors (e.g., people or factors around you) might act as a barrier for you to achieve your goals? Think about how you can overcome them.

**STEP 3. Actions plan (= your strategies to proceed)**

If based on the resource/barrier analysis the goals look realistic, they are approved, and the action plan (i.e., what to do to reach the goals) can be designed.

- What will you specifically do to achieve these goals?
- When will you do this/When should this be done?
- Think about how you best can use your resources and at the same time compensate for your barriers and use lessons learned from previous experiences (see step 4 below).

**STEP 4. Reflections on previous experiences**

- Which previous experiences do you have that can be helpful in realizing your PDP?

**STEP 5. Follow-up**

- Determine the date when you will update your PDP

NOTE: Our conference workshop with this tool is freely available here:  
<http://www.bwiser.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/3.-PARALLEL-WORKSHOPS.zip>

**Reference / Source:**

From the Five-Step Career Planning Strategy, Step 5B.

**Stambulova, N.** (2010). Counseling athletes in career transitions: The five-step career planning strategy. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action, 1*, 95–105. doi: 10.1080/21520704.2010.528829

### Attachments

| 1. Your goals | 2A. Your resources<br>(internal/external) | 2B. Your barriers<br>(internal/external) | 3. Your Action plan –<br>What you should do | 3. Your<br>timeframe | 4. Your<br>previous<br>experiences |
|---------------|---|--|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|
|               |   |  |   |                      |                                    |

5. Date for when to update your PDP \_\_\_\_\_



## “Speed” Networking

- Type of method:**
- Facilitated Method
  - Intervention method
  - Monitoring/evaluation method

**Goal(s):** To create a positive understanding between athletes and employers with respect to 1) the perspectives and understanding that companies have regarding the employability of athletes; and 2) enhance the confidence an athlete has with respect to the transition from the life of an athlete to the labour market; while reducing negative preconceived entry barriers to the labour market that can exist for athletes as their background are typically different than non-athletes.

Increase understanding and opportunities to motivate increased employment opportunities for athletes, and to support employers to hire a more valuable and diverse workforce that may originate with people with backgrounds that are non-traditional

Ensure elite athletes, Olympic and Paralympic, can develop their networking skills based upon their abilities rather than perceptions of those that have not had the opportunity to first hand engage with an athlete regarding employment.

- Why?**
- Most of jobs are obtained including some form of networking.
  - Elite athlete backgrounds are typically different than that of non-elite athletes, as such in typical resume search activities, employers could miss a potential strong candidate without further insights / information.
  - Developing success in networking is benefitted with coaching and practice
  - Networking opportunities, will provide employers an informal environment to meet athletes, without the pressure of a “career fair”. This situation can be a key first step for employers to be more inclusive in hiring athletes with increased knowledge.
  - [VUB Team] can you come up with some WP1,2,3, about how real live integration of athletes and employers can help them with their self-confidence, learning and other activities to make the why more scientific?
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- Target population:**
- Active elite athletes
  - Former elite athletes preparing for employment
  - Former elite athletes who are already employed



- Employers (Public / Private sector)

**Targeted competencies:**

Prior to engaged in a Speed Networking activity; both athletes and companies should undergo certain awareness and educational workshops to promote a successful engagement that can include:

- Companies should be provided with a 30 – 60 minutes presentation on the process and their role.
- Athletes should have completed a workshop(s) that provides them the foundation to recognize more completely who they are as a person, not just an athlete.
- The athlete should understand their strengths, weakness and career aspirations
- Athletes should be educated in effective and valuable networking practices.

**Instructions:**

**STEP 1a: Invite and educate employers on the purpose of the event**

In advance: Employers should be identified and invited to participate; with the persons to attend the event should have experience in HR, Hiring, leadership positions, training or similar type positions. The persons invited should be made aware that they will primarily be asked to meet athletes in a networking environment to be able to learn as well as provide educational feedback to the athletes around networking. Employment should be initially downplayed.

Employers should be requested to arrive approximately 60 minutes in advance of the networking session where they will be provided an overview of the event as well as provided direction on how to make the event successful. The facilitated discussion with the employers should include:

- An overview on the purpose of the session / activity
- Summary Background on the athlete population
- Establish expectations
  - Treat this as a typical networking engagement (do not go easy as they are athletes)
  - Do not lead the discussion, allow it to be a natural part of the activity
  - Be prepared to provide feedback on their experience following the two sessions (structured and informal)
  - Share with them that this is a “real-life / practice” activity and their constructive feedback will be appreciated
  - Let them know they will be asked about their experience at the end of the session.

### **STEP 1b: Athletes should complete workshops on self-awareness, career interest, and effective networking.**

For this to be an effective value-based activity, it is key that athletes are prepared to engage with a balanced perspective of who they are and have an idea of where they may want to go professionally. In addition, they should have undergone training on how to network effectively so that during the networking activity they are prepared to share and gain value from the activity. There are many ways to prepare athletes for a successful networking activity, however the understanding all or a part of the following will all play a role in how effective the session will be:

- 1) Their understanding their skills, traits, and interested in general
- 2) Their understanding of their professional goals (general (industry or sector e.g. finance, marketing, sales,) or specific (e.g. company, treasury, etc.)
- 3) They should be able to translate their experiences in sport into the language of business
- 4) It would be good to have a CV (draft or final) not to share, but to frame the athletes a structure. It would also be good to have some type of interviewing practice or experience to support their communication skills. This section would be a secondary priority in the preparation phase
- 5) It is key that the athletes undergo “Networking” practice and learning prior to the session with the employers. There can be two outcomes of networking: a) a social activity with minimal long-term value; or value-based networking which can provide a significant advantage to athletes and those they network with.

### **STEP 2: Facilitate a structured “speed” networking event**

After the pre-work session with the employers and athletes, the first phase of the networking activity will be done with structure to guide each participant.

- 1) First the participants should be divided into 2 groups (athletes and employers) if there is not an equal amount you can include facilitators and on-site administrators in the employer group, if it is still not balanced, you can rotate breaks to the athletes so that they may only participate in a portion of the networking opportunities. Those on break can observe for one session.
- 2) When there are two equal groups, they can either stand or sit in a line across from each other so there is one person from each group facing a person from the other group (sitting is typically preferred).
- 3) At this point you are ready to start the networking activity, which will last for 3 -4 minutes. At the end of the time, those that did not participate in round #1 will trade places with a person that did and again everyone will move one spot to the right or left and engage with another person. This should last for 6 people with 1 minute in-between each session to change partners. As such this overall activity should take 30 minutes.
- 4) With respect to the discussions, it is always helpful to provide some structure and expectations of the discussion, such as each person should learn a personal, professional, and maybe on small piece of the other persons “5-year personal vision” with these as a foundation, it should create a foundation for a good discussion.



### **STEP 3: De-brief the structured networking event**

At the end of the session, the facilitator will engage with employers and athletes to gain insights on what went well, what could have gone better, what did they learn etc. Facilitator should remember this is a constructive learning activity for both groups.

### **STEP 3: Launch an informal networking session**

The informal session is similar in nature to the formal structure, except this will be done cocktail party style. Everyone will have the chance to informally meet their own person to speak with (Similar to a cocktail party or informal event engagement). In selecting who to speak with, it could be someone they spoke with during the structured section, or a new person. The timing is the same. 3-4 minutes, followed by 1 minute to find another person and the timing is the same 6 people in 30 minutes.

### **STEP 3: De-brief the informal networking activity**

Engage in a similar practice as the prior de-brief activity.

### **Next steps: The bigger picture**

At the end of the session, there are some desired outcomes:

- Athletes and Employers should have enlarged their network by 8 – 12 people.
- Companies attitude / behaviours should be positively impacted to understand the challenges that athletes face in entering the labour market, as well as the value that athletes can bring to the labour market
- Athletes should understand more the hiring focus of companies and what they are looking for.
- Athletes should improve their networking skills.
- With the activity, as stated, networking plays a key role in both recruiting and the job search process and all parties should have an increased opportunity for employment.

NOTE: Our conference workshop with this tool is freely available here: <http://www.bwiser.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/3.-PARALLEL-WORKSHOPS.zip>

**Source: Experience and research**