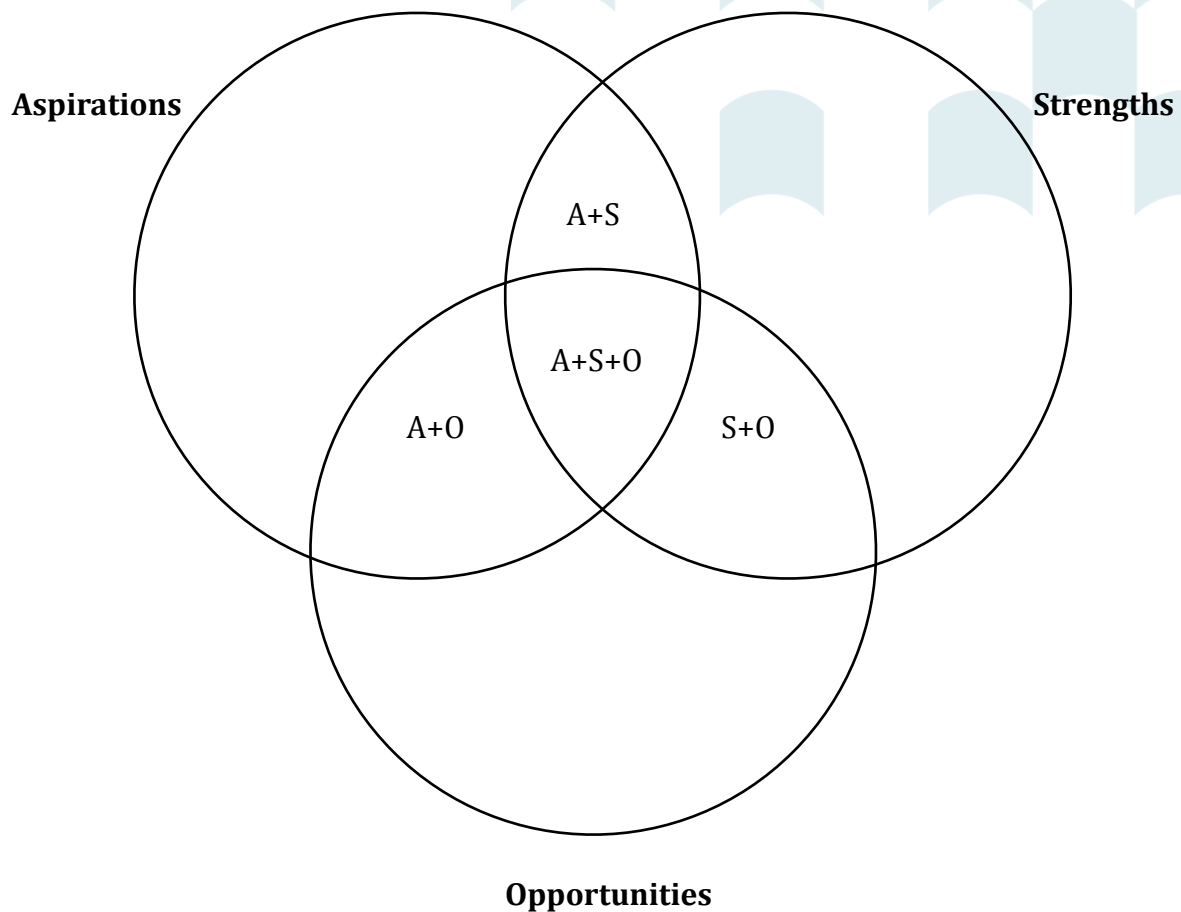


Career Considerations



The best options are likely to be at the intersection of these three areas (A+S +O): career choices which build on our strengths, allow us to pursue our aspirations, and are real options: ie the opportunity to follow them either exists or can be created.

Exploring the Circles

Our Aspirations may be quite clear to us; or they may have been... It can be well worth checking our current view of these, rather than assuming that really we still want to be a railway driver or ballerina.

One useful way to approach this is exploring our values at work: what it is that gives meaning and satisfaction to us in our work. Reviewing our achievements (about which more below) can be a useful way into this: consider for each major achievement why it was so important to you, and see what themes emerge.

Another approach is to take a look backwards from a point in the future: that can give us an interesting and sometimes surprising perspective. Ways to do this include writing the speech you would love someone to make at your retirement, or (macabre though it may sound) writing the obituary you would love to have written about you when you die.

Our strengths may also be clear to us; or we may have some blind spots there, too.

If we are concerned about the accuracy of our own perception of our strengths, seeking feedback, either informally or through a 360 appraisal process, is extremely valuable.

Another good approach is to compile a review of achievements of which we feel truly proud (say 8 - 12) and then analyse them to see what strengths we used for each, and what pattern of strengths emerges (this is also valuable when it comes to talking about our strengths, as each one we claim will have several examples to back it up).

Don't forget things like the ability to learn, and tenacity!

The Opportunities available to us are best explored, and developed, through research and networking. Research may include speaking to specialist recruiters in your area of interest, as well as reading relevant journals, following relevant leaders on social media etc. But it is useful to go beyond the obvious. Arranging exploratory information meetings (which are explicitly not about seeking a job offer) with people who can help you in your research is a powerful, effective and targeted way of going about this. The idea is to solicit their help in clarifying where the kind of opportunity you are seeking might be found, and to whom you should talk in order to pursue it.

Exploring the Overlaps

The best options are likely to be at the intersection of these three areas (A+S+O): career choices which build on our strengths, allow us to pursue our aspirations, and are real options: ie the opportunity to follow them either exists or can be created.

Whilst the central section is the strongest target area, ideas which fall in other overlaps may be worth considering - or rejecting!

Options in the A+O overlap are particularly tempting: we really want to do these, and the possibility arises: but if we do not have the required strengths or abilities, we may set ourselves up for a major - and very disappointing - failure. However, if we have reason to believe that we can develop the strengths quickly, and do not over-sell ourselves into such roles, they may be worth considering (for example if we are the best option from the point of view of a particular employer, who is therefore prepared to invest time in training us and tolerating our learning curve).

Options in the S+O overlap are tempting for another reason: they are real possibilities and we could really do well. But if they do not match our career aspirations, do we really want to? Possibly: if they are a stepping stone on the path to where we want to get to, or if we can see ways of fulfilling our aspirations in other ways (eg outside of work). But seizing these opportunities because they seem to be the only ones on offer is often a mistake!

Options in the A+S overlap are well worth exploring: if we are prepared to do the necessary work required to create or develop opportunities to pursue them. But it is easy to waste a lot of time and emotional energy chasing pipe dreams, so a good reality check is important.