



CAREER MANAGEMENT: ALIGNING EMPLOYEE ASPIRATIONS TO ORGANIZATION OBJECTIVES

Dr. Jyotsna Diwan Mehta

Professor, S.S. Jain Subodh Management Institute, Jaipur

ABSTRACT

The significance of Career Management emerges from the fact that it enables employees to recognize their career skills, and helps them to focus in the direction they must move in order to optimally utilize their skills and interests. Three elements that are an integral part of a career management program are: career planning, identifying a career path and career development. In fact, the presence of Career development opportunities is one of the main factors that contributes towards the loyalty & engagement of employees with the organization. This paper seeks to examine how an organization can make career development an integral part of its functioning and how existing career development programs can be made more effective. The analysis shows that an effective Career Management Programme will be one that examines several key questions that every employee on the career growth path must answer, especially when they have achieved a position of leadership and authority and hope to climb the corporate ladder further. The paper identifies these questions and relates the very act of mulling over them to the expected impact on career development in the organization. These questions do not have any right answers but examining these questions can lead to proactive effort towards performance enhancement and even identify the challenges that may emerge in the career path. This paper also identifies the career development programs of some companies and helps to identify the elements that must be incorporated in an effective career development program.

KEY WORDS: *Career planning, Career path, Career development, succession planning*

INTRODUCTION

A visible and well established Career Development path enables the employees to recognize their career skills, and helps them to focus upon the direction they must move in thereby utilizing their skills and interests. Take the example of Seattle Genetics which is a biotechnology company that develops antibody-based therapies to treat cancer. The company encourages and supports continuing education, offers onsite training to enhance job- and management-related skills to its employees. It works on the principle that careers are an investment for the employees as well as for the future of Seattle Genetics.

Well managed and detailed career management activities result in realistic, career oriented appraisals, and offer employees an opportunity to tap their potential. Career management is not a single identifiable goal rather it involves a lifelong series of activities that contribute towards an

individual's career exploration, establishment, growth, success, and work satisfaction. Career planning can be identified as a deliberate process undertaken by an individual in order to become aware of the personal skills, interests, motivations, knowledge and other such characteristics that he or she possess. It also offers an opportunity for a person to seek and acquire information about the opportunities and choices at hand, identifies career-related goals and establishes a plan to attain identified goals. Career management and career planning activities are therefore complementary and must be used to reinforce each other.

Research Shows that the presence of a Career development opportunities is one of the main factors that contributes towards the loyalty & engagement with the company as is shown by the bar chart below:-

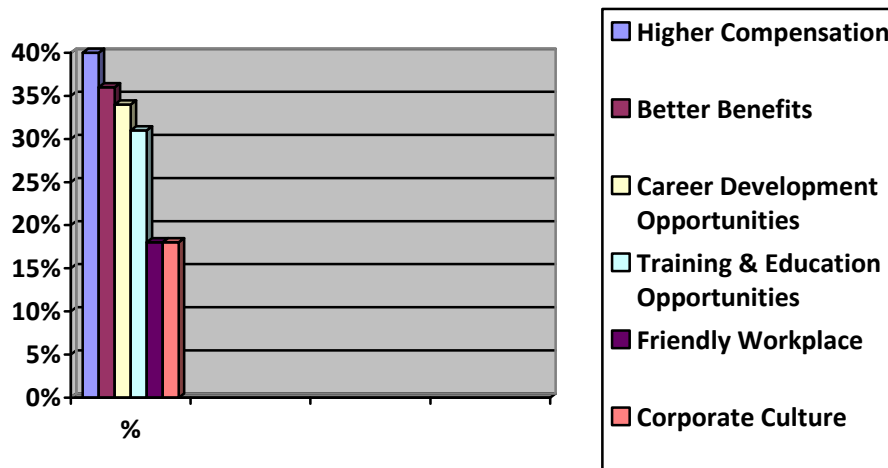


Figure 1: Importance of Career Development opportunity for employees

What is a Career Management Program?

Essentially three elements that form a part of a career management programmes are: career planning, identifying a career path and career development. Let us first understand what these are:

Career Planning: Career planning involves a deliberate process that helps an individual to become aware of the opportunities, constraints, choices and consequences involved in career related goals. It results in the identification of various steps, the education and related development experiences which are required to attain a specific career goal, understand the direction to move in, and understand the timing and sequence of steps involved in the effort. The process must be undertaken by employees in conjunction with their supervisors.

Self-assessment, identification of career interests and development needs are an integral part of this process. This is possible when the existing skills and experience of the employee as well as his or her strengths and weaknesses are assessed against the requirements as per job description of the desired position and the opportunities and threats that are present in the external environment. While Career Planning for an individual is a chance to grow in the right direction, the organization too has a stake in successful career planning to fulfill its need for a steady supply of adequately trained people to perform at every level of the organization.

Mapping a Career Path: Career planning must lead to identifying all the possible career paths that an employee can opt for. Career paths map out the sequence of positions to which employees can be promoted, transferred and rotated. An employee may have several possible career paths options. The organization's career development system must identify all possible choices available to the employee as this will help to communicate the immediate objective at each step and also help the employee to choose a role model in the organization.

Career Development: Career development is a deliberate and planned effort to link individual career needs to the organization's workforce requirements. It can therefore help individuals to use their understanding of an organization's business requirements and the strategic direction in which it is moving to plan their own career path. It must however be noted that alignment of individual goals to organizational goal shall be an ongoing process and shall continue to evolve over the passage of time.

The chart below shows the four main stages in the career of an individual, namely, Exploration, establishment, Maintenance and Disengagement. Each of these stages requires that development tasks be performed at every stage so that the assigned activities can be performed optimally and assigned role for each stage can be well played.

**Four Main Stages in The Career Of An Individual**

	Exploration	Establishment	Maintenance	Disengagement
Development Tasks to be performed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On boarding Identify interests and skills Finding the fit between personal Knowledge, Sills & Attitude and the work assigned Buddy programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth, advancement, Security, Establishing a desired lifestyle Networking Identifying High Potential workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Skills, Refresh ideas Share ideas Motivate employees Career Mentoring Diversity Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for retirement, Upgrading skills Succession Planning
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Experimenting Practicing Perfecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Contributing in decision making Supervising Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training Policy making Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience sharing Knowledge Transfer Phasing out of work
Relationship with other employees	Intern, Probationer, Apprentice, Assistant	Colleague, middle management	Leader, Top Management, Mentor	Sponsor, Consultant

OBJECTIVES OF CAREER MANAGEMENT

Career Management programmes include several human resource management practices that strive to achieve the following objectives:

- **Offer performance enhancement opportunities to employees and support their efforts:** Efforts are made to involve employees in personal goal setting and recognizing and working upon their strengths and weaknesses. It helps employees to identify training needs and facilitates training programs to address training requirements. This is possible by building feedback systems and encouraging discussions in the performance management system.
- **Help to explore all available career options:** Employees are encouraged and helped to explore their career options within the organization. It also helps employees to identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that current and future jobs require. Focusing the employees' career plans on the current organization shall also increase their commitment to the organization as well as help in developing career paths that shall showcase the mobility of jobs in the organization.
- **Helps to align employee aspirations to organizational objectives:** Career management programmes aim at finding the

right fit between jobs and employees. Assessing the skills, abilities and attitudes of employees will enable them to aspire for positions they are best suited for. The institution's operational effectiveness can thus be improved through practices like transfers and rotation. Career management programmes help to reduce external recruitments and motivate existing employees by placing them in positions that optimally utilize their talent and capabilities

SAS, a leader in business analytics software and services offers several programs including the emerging leadership programs for professional training and development, career mentoring and a career resource center. The SAS Academics program for sales and technical enablement provides both in-class and on-the-job training to ensure that recent graduates are set up for success before moving into their full-time roles. The company believes that knowledge workers must never be stagnant, therefore SAS provides opportunities for growth to keep our employees challenged, motivated and engaged.

ADVANTAGES OF CAREER MANAGEMENT TO THE ORGANIZATION

1. A steady supply of professional, technical and managerial talent to meet organizational goals shall be available to the organization.
2. Organizations can promote current employees to available positions and accrue



advantages like motivating and rewarding employees, reduced cost of training new employees and building the image of being a model employer.

3. Employee turnover can be reduced if employees feel that excellent opportunities for growth are available within the organization.
4. Employees who are aspirational and have acquired higher levels of education or enhanced their skills are likely to have higher career expectations from the employer. Better opportunities for realization of their career expectations shall cause them satisfaction at the organization.
5. Since career growth in the career path is directly linked to job performance, an employee shall be highly motivated to perform at the highest levels in order to achieve their career goals.
6. Effective career development emerges from fair and unbiased recruitment, selection and placement and attempts to eliminate discriminatory practices with respect to promotions and career mobility. Affirmative programmes put into place the formal provisions that may enhance career mobility for women and other minorities groups thus supporting workplace diversity and emphasizing employment equity.

It is seen that guidance and support is available in the early stages of the career. It is also true that employees are not only alert to opportunities for self improvement at that point but also that they are more open to seeking advice and guidance from mentors. But as employees rise up the ladder they find themselves on their own with respect to growth. They may even become complacent once they believe that having achieved a certain level of work-performance they do not require to make any changes or improvements. In fact, once the employee has achieved a certain position in the hierarchy, people hesitate to give honest feed-back! This, leads to problems because no matter how talented and successful the employee is, the world around is dynamic and changing – often rendering behavior that was earlier useful, ineffective and requiring constant learning and changing to stay relevant to the times.

An effective Career Management Programme will be one that examines several key questions that every employee on the career growth path must answer, especially when they have achieved a leadership position and hope to climb the corporate ladder further. These questions do not have any right answers but examining these questions can lead to proactive effort towards performance enhancement

and help to identify the challenges that may emerge in the career path.

Let us examine some of the questions that can create a Work environment that supports Career Management & Development:-

Q1) What is your Vision and where do your priorities lie?

The first question that an employee must ask himself is: Am I able to communicate a vision and priorities for myself and my work? If yes, how often do I do so? If my subordinates are asked what this vision and priorities are, how likely are they to know the answer?

This is because while you may have wonderful ideas and a clear vision of where you need to go and you may possess the best leadership talents, if you cannot convey this vision to your subordinates and employees, you will not be able to implement your ideas. It is imperative that people understand exactly what they have to do, why and how and what is expected of them. This question will therefore assess whether your vision and priorities are clear to them and consequently is their own vision clear to them.

Q2) How efficient are you at time management?

The second question employees must ask themselves is – ‘How do I spend my time?’

If a manager has several priorities, he may just as well have none! Time is a manager’s most precious resource! Leaders must learn to delegate and not spend excessive time on operational and administrative matters that can be delegated. In the daily grind, unexpected events, crises, surprises, personal issues and interruptions overwhelm an employee often relegating the real priorities and vision to the back. The answer to this question will therefore help in recognizing this and help in making adaptive changes.

Q.3 How well is Stress Managed in the organization?

How do managers behave under stress and pressure?

What signals do they send to employees?

The leader’s actions in times of stress are observed and emulated by subordinates. This has a profound impact on the organization culture. It indicates that it is important to assess the events that trigger off negative responses to stress and how employees behave under pressure. Leaders must ensure that their own behavior under pressure stays consistent with their beliefs and values. The balance and mature behavior of leaders sends reassuring signals to employees and subordinates and gives them confidence in dealing with crises.

**Q.4 Is a proper feedback process in place?**

Receiving and giving Feedback is of equal importance and as valuable as the leader's behavior and actions! Two questions to be asked are–

- Do managers give timely, direct, unbiased and constructive feedback?

Professional development can be effective only when coaching and direct feedback is given to employees on a continuous basis. Honest and timely feedback helps in gaining the confidence of employees and contributes towards better performance and the confidence to develop new skills.

- Are employees from diverse areas and ideologies, encouraged to give frank feedback?

Getting feedback from employees is even more challenging. After achieving a certain position in the career, the feedback of subordinates is valuable but the task of giving enough confidence to them to trust the leader enough to give constructive feedback is difficult.

Q.5 Is Succession planning in place in the organization?

An important question that is often ignored is that has time and effort been invested in picking out and training potential successors?

A leader maybe efficient, performing well, and a good decision maker, but failure to delegate, cultivate leadership skills amongst juniors and lack of support of the growth of promising subordinates will leave a gaping hole in his or her success, not to mention keep them overburdened at all times. It is imperative that potential successor be identified, mentored challenged, assigned responsibilities and helped to tap into their potential. This will result in creating a pool of talented leaders who help the organization to grow along with supporting the individual growth of the leader by freeing them up to focus on critical and strategic matters.

Q.6 Are you staying relevant by changing and adapting?

Change is the only constant and the world around us is constantly changing. Innovations are constantly emerging in products, processes, ideas, technology, people and organizations in response to the dynamic environment. The question to ask oneself is whether the leader is responding to changes in the business environment that will change the way business is organized and run.

Change requires hard decisions like downsizing and retrenchment of employees, or even changing your own behavior and operating style. Aligning your ways to the challenges posed by a changing world is of vital importance.

Q.7 Does your Leadership Style resonate with the real you?

A crucial question to be asked is whether your style of Leadership reflects who you really are and does it translate into work performance?

It is imperative to continuously review and reflect upon whether the adopted leadership style reflects the person who is the leader. If it doesn't then the constant role – playing will create constant pressures and give rise to ethical dilemmas.

An effective Career Development programme will encourage employees to ask themselves these questions. When employees ask themselves these questions it will help them to step-back, get a larger, perspective and develop a strategy which will revive a positive energy in them, leading to greater success – both organizational and individual. Confrontation and disagreements are crucial to effective decision – making and conflict can be the crucible of creativity.

An example of a company that has several career development programs is General Electric. The chart below shows the programs instituted for different levels of the organization-

Program	Description	Target Audience	Courses
Executive Development Sequence	Emphasis on strategic thinking, leadership, cross-functional integration, competing globally, customer satisfaction	Senior professionals and executives identified as high potential	Management Development Global Business Executive Development
Core Leadership Program	Development of functional expertise, business excellence, management change	Managers	Corporate Entry Leadership, Professional Development, New Management Development, Experienced Managers
Professional Development Program	Emphasis on preparation for specific career path	New Employees	Audit Staff, Financial Management, Human Resources, Technical Leadership

Development Programs at General Electric



CONCLUSION

Companies around the world have understood the importance of career Development and have introduced innovative programs, relevant to their own particular company. For example Amazon.com, the world's leading e-commerce Company, is guided by four principles: customer obsession, passion for invention, commitment to operational excellence and long-term thinking. As part of the last principle it is deeply committed to career development. Career Development Programs at Amazon include an intensive, month-long training and leadership program prior to hire. Amazon prepays 95% of tuition for employees at fulfillment centers to take courses in in-demand fields. A "Virtual Contact Center" trains employees to work from home. Teal Pennebaker, corporate communications manager at Amazon says that the company offers this perk because it wants employees to be owners from day one and trains them to take ownership over products and services that impact millions of customers. This helps them pioneer a career at Amazon."

Another example of a company that professes commitment to Career development is Marriott International, a leading hotel and lodging company, with more than 4,400 properties in 85 countries and territories offers a variety of training opportunities to employees worldwide using multiple training delivery methods, like virtual and in-person. The training focuses on developing skills, and provides both professional and career development training. Training areas include work-life balance, leadership and management. Marriott International offers training to its employees because it has a strong belief in the well-being and growth of each and every one, according to Arne Sorenson, President and CEO, Marriott International.

Clearly successful companies understand the importance of a career development program. It's critical to work for a company that's invested in your development. When employees look good, the company looks good.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1) *Ball, B., Career Management Competencies – The Individual Perspective, Career Development International, 2 (2) 1997.*
- 2) *Garnesby Steven, Career Planning & Development: The path towards your dream job, Createspace Independent Publisher, 2013*
- 3) *Valentich, Mary & Gripton James , "Sexism and sex differences in career management of social workers, The Social Science Journal. 15(2),(1978)*
- 4) *Cavoulacos Alexandra, Minshew Kathryn, The new rules of Work: The modern Playbook for navigating your career, Crown Publishing Company, Penguin Random House LLC, New York, 2017*
- 5) *Career Development: A Policy Statement of the National Career Development Association Board of Directors, USA (Adopted March 16, 1993; revised 2003)*
- 6) *Greenhaus Jeffery H, Career Management, Dryden Press, 1987*
- 7) *Greenhaus Jeffery H, Callanan Gerard A, Godshalk Veronica M., Career Management for life, Routledge, 2018*
- 8) *Herr, E.L., & Cramer, S. H., Career guidance and counseling through the lifespan: Systematic approach, New York: HarperCollins, (1996)*
- 9) *Niles, S. G. & Harris-Bowlsbey, J, Career Development Interventions in the 21st Century. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall, (2002)*
- 10) *Pope, M., Jesse Buttrick Davis (1871-1955): Pioneer of vocational guidance in the schools, Career Development Quarterly, 57(2009)*