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GUIDE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

beverly 1. Kaye



a guide for career development practitioners

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I live in Los Angeles. A transplant from the East Coast. Like all local transplants, I soon realized that Los Angeles is not so much a city in the familiar sense, but rather a car-oriented conglomerate of widely dispersed suburbs. We commonly spend an hour or more each day on an intricately interconnected inner city belt of expressways (called "freeways" because of the absence of those pernicious Eastern Coast highway toll charges) traveling to and from work, dining out, or simply visiting some "close" friends.

To use the freeway system efficiently, we have to refer constantly to a large selection of detailed maps, typically one map per local area, which occupies the greater portion of our car glove compartments. However, when venturing to some distant suburb, before these extensive local maps can be used, we usually consult one chart which provides a concise, compact overview of the entire Los Angeles freeway network, along with some major city thoroughfares. This indispensible six-inch-by-eight-inch aid is treasured above all of the other maps because it provides us with 90 percent of the directions needed to arrive at our intended destinations in an orderly, uncluttered format, devoid of extraneous or tangential information.

Certainly, no one ignores the necessity of the large unwieldly local maps (which I somehow can never quite refold into their original flat states) for completing the final details of our automobile safaris. But I must confess to you, unashamedly, that I would never know where to even begin most of my trips without resorting to that one handy freeway map.

A concise map created for the career development practitioner, this book was written to help you design and implement a career development effort that meets the specific needs of your organization. In an easy-to-read format it provides a general overview of all of the steps required to successfully complete the process—from the initial conceptualization through program implementation. In most situations it will contain enough depth of information to serve as a self-contained guidebook. However, no single reference source can anticipate all of its readers' needs. For those programmatic areas in which you need more detail, it will point you in the right direction and tell you which additional maps are most appropriate. Using it as your primary career development aid, however, you will fall into the habit of consulting it frequently along the road to your program goals, to avoid costly and time-consuming detours over nonproductive pathways.

This book will highlight six distinct stages that together comprise an effective career development effort. Each stage by itself contributes substantially to the organization and to the development of individual participants, but together the stages become synergistic.

The first of these, *Preparation*, will direct you through some painstaking steps in readying your organization for the career development effort. Much of this is done behind the scenes—not much applause here, but if it's well done, the applause will ring loud and clear later.

Profiling, the second stage, will give you some very specific tips on how to assist employees in your organization in identifying and verifying the skills they possess. This is a vital step in producing a realistic career development plan.

The essence of the *Targeting* Stage is alluded to in the title of the book—there *are* more ways to move, grow, and develop in an organization than just vertically. The sooner the practitioner appreciates this and translates it into terms that are meaningful to managers and employees alike, the better.

The fourth stage, Strategizing, will remind you of the many nuances existing in the informal organization, as well as in the structured formal one, so that you, in turn, will be able to deliver this information to employees. It also teaches several methods of devising action plans that help program participants take responsibility for their particular career development goals and plot the appropriate course of action.

The Execution Stage provides specific ideas which will enable you to properly advise employees of the many options for acquiring the tools and skills required to make their plans materialize. It emphasizes the importance of demonstrating these new skills once they have been duly acquired.

The sixth and last stage, *Integration*, assists you in developing evaluation procedures to demonstrate that all-important return on investment. It also reminds you to consider systems which would reward employees who by this time have changed, moved, or grown in valuable directions. It discusses rewards for managers who have taken particular care in the development of their subordinates.

Preface xiii

Human resource activities that are relevant to each stage are also reviewed. They are presented, not to fully educate the practitioner about any one activity, but rather to show how they can reinforce the career development process and become part of a larger integrated whole.

The original delineation of the stages and their components is derived from my dissertation work done at UCLA which was then massaged with many years of practice in the field of career development in business and industry. I hope you use it as a basis on which to build a still clearer framework. Maps change with growth.

Surveying and mapping any terrain is usually not done in isolation or as a solo journey. I have had some very special and necessary assistance in my attempt to provide this map. I am thankful to have had mentors like Sam Culbert, Warren Schmidt and Lena Astin who prodded and pushed the original work, and colleagues like Rosabeth Kanter, Alice Sargent, Caela Farren, Suzanne Bryant, and Betsy Jacobson, who either read chapters, or dialogued with me, and always, always urged me on. I am also thankful (and smart) for having enlisted the superb technical assistance and active encouragement of Katherine Janka and, later, Hugh Taylor, who listened to my ideas and helped me to organize my thoughts in a coherent fashion. The long, tedious work of my support staff, Sandra Marley and Rolanda Irvin, made the final product possible—they worked above and beyond the call of duty.

I am appreciative of the clients who believed in my efforts and basic framework and invited me to work with them on a great variety of careerrelated interventions.

I am fortunate in having a close loving family. Their weekly telephone calls provided me with much needed reassurance and nurturance.

Most of all, I wish to acknowledge my husband, Barry Levitt, who seemed to know from the start that this project was something I had to do, could do, and would do. His patience and encouragement enabled me to begin—and to continue to completion. His support, understanding, and pride in my accomplishments have been vital underpinnings of my own career development.

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	Preface	xi
1	The Process and the Payoff	1
2	Readying Resources: The Preparation Stage	18
<i>3</i>	Tapping Talent: The Profiling Stage	66
4	Optimizing Options: The Targeting Stage	98
5	Mapping Movement: The Strategizing Stage	138
6	Pursuing Plans: The Execution Stage	181
7	Reaping Rewards: The Integration Stage	219
8	Participating Practitioners	248
	Index	261
		vii

Delit S

1-1	Interacting Players	7
1-2	The Six Stages of Career Development	9
2-1	Two Major Phases of the Preparation Stage	20
2-2	Message Analysis: A Technique for Finding a Starting Place	22
2-3	A Contribution Matrix	29
2-4	Career Development Task Force Planner	29
2-5	The Career Development Process and Human Resource	
	Development Links	31
2-6	The Performance Appraisal Process as an HRD Link	33
2-7	Range of Organizational Involvement in Career Development	42
2-8	Human Resource Problems	51
2-9	Success Indicators for Program Participants	53
?-10	Success Indicators for Managers of Participants	53
?-11	Success Indicators for Top Management	54
2-12	Planning Matrix	56
2-13	Management Responsibility Guide	59
?-14	Roles of Practitioners and Managers	62
!-15	Errors of a Grievous Kind	65
3-1	Technical Skills	70
3-2	Human Skills	71
3-3	Conceptual Skills	72
3-4	The Skills Necessary at Various Levels of an Organization	73
3-5	The Skill "Search"	79
3-6	Skill Identification Techniques	80

X	Exhibits

4-1	A Targeting Model	101
4-2	A Form for Rating Job Enrichment Potential	115
4-3	Exploratory Research Worksheet	118
4-4	Goal Matrix	120
4-5	Marketing Survey Form	121
4-6	Subgoal Statement Format	129
5-1	Formal and Informal Structures	140
5-2	Organizational Politics Diagram	147
5-3	Mentor Roles	150
5-4	Strategizing Matrix	162
5-5	Planning Map	165
5-6	Force Field Analysis	166
5-7	Message Decoding Form	168
5-8	Action Plan	173
6-1	Shared Responsibilities at the Execution Stage	183
6-2	Information that Contributes to Planning of Training Programs	185
6-3	Program Type and Level Versus Organization Size	190
6-4	Financial Aid Decision Guide	192
6-5	Job Rotation Alternatives	197
6-6	An Individual Personal Source Directory	207
6-7	Skill Acquisition Plan	210
6-8	The Four Stages of Learning	215
6-9	Execution Activities: An Employee	217
6-10	Execution Activities: By Activity	217
7-1	Format for Using Records in Evaluation	224
7-2	Potential Return on Investment at Each Stage	233
7-3	Reward Programs Survey	240
7-4	Job Factors that Can Lead to Enrichment	242
8-1	Value to Practitioner of Career Development Effort	250



THE PROCESS AND THE PAYOFF

"What we seem to be missing is an integrating framework."

It all used to be so simple. American workers selected a career area, educated themselves to pursue it, settled into an organization that could use their talents, worked to achieve higher rungs on the corporate ladder, and collected a gold watch at the mandatory 65-year retirement age.

Myriad social, economic, and legal changes of recent years have radically disrupted this long-standing pattern; and organizational mechanisms for dealing with accelerating change are still in the early stages of development and experimentation. Many individuals and organizations seem at a loss for means to anticipate and cope with the rapid evolution of their environments. Rather than direct their own progress, individuals and organizations are instead controlled by their environments, with a subsequent loss of power and productivity. It is important that both the organization and the individual develop the ability to manage and direct such change to their own benefit.

Long-range strategic planning is a process that has recently received considerable attention as a possible answer for organizations wishing to regain control over their environment. This process includes closely examining every aspect of the firm—its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It then seeks to carve out a planned and orderly future based upon an honest appraisal of the firm and its present and anticipated future environments. This process includes planning for unexpected possibilities and provides periodic measurement and compari-

son of reality with the plan, in order to ensure that assumptions are still valid (or that timely revisions are made).

Career planning and development activities are to the individual what strategic planning is to the firm. Career development involves looking realistically at the present conditions and at the career environments of today and tomorrow in order to regain the control necessary to ensure future productivity and job satisfaction. It also includes contingency planning and reality-testing.

But career development is more than this. Not only does it aid the individual in confronting and coping with a rapidly evolving working world, but it can also be a vital link between individual and organizational goals and objectives. It can become the vehicle for implementing the human resource aspects of a company's strategic plan (for such a plan must also look closely at this resource and formulate a framework for its development and use). Career development in this sense, therefore, is not simply another human resource activity, but instead an integrating concept that systematically ties together and builds upon human resource programs that already exist, so that they simultaneously support individual and organizational growth.

This book addresses the rationale and design of such career development efforts and is directed to those individuals who are charged with initiating and implementing those efforts within the organization.

THE EMPLOYEE STIMULUS

The rising interest in career development has been stimulated by new (or at least more vociferously articulated) employee expectations, such as

- · increased personal responsibility for their careers
- increased career opportunities
- · increased participation in decision making
- · more meaningful work leading to a feeling of contribution to society
- · increased job challenge and satisfaction
- · more opportunities for self-actualization
- more on-the-job learning experiences
- · more flexible work schedules
- freedom to immediately experience leisure activities, such as: sabbaticals and community projects
- · more openness and honesty from management
- more return on their investment in the organization: wanting an organization that shows that it cares.

Employees who are dissatisfied with any of the above areas or with the "old" motivators of money, status, or other tangible rewards are not hesitating to leave the firm at the first sign of a better offer. And they will

leave the second job if conditions are not much better. Job changing, especially among the younger workers who are needed to prime the future management pump, is becoming a common phenomenon. And it is costing management a bundle, especially when the turnover occurs just at the point where the employee is beginning to return some of the initial investment made in training and development. Besides hopscotching from firm to firm, employees of all ages and persuasions are beginning to see "dropping out" as a viable alternative to job stress and dissatisfaction. Men and women, young and old alike, are dropping out, returning to school, touring the country, or changing careers in midstream with increasing frequency.

In addition, employees are prepared to back up their demands for a new lease on working life. The spectacular sales records of self-insight, self-help books, such as What Color Is Your Parachute?, point to a population which is ready to assume responsibility for its own career decisions. Today's workers do not show the blind faith or undying loyalty to their employers that those of a decade or so ago demonstrated. Their first loyalty seems to be to themselves.

If this revolution in work attitudes were the only issue with which employers had to deal, some simple resolution, such as sabbaticals or the four-day work week, might help stem the tide. But nothing is ever quite that simple. For while society may have unconsciously developed this attitude revolution, government is also doing all it can to enforce what amounts to a revolution in employment policies.

Beginning with the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and moving quickly along to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Orders #11141 and #11246, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, this country endorsed the concept of equal employment opportunity, but the concept alone was not sufficient to change the status quo. Affirmative legal action was required for carrying out the spirit of the law, and employers soon found themselves squarely in the middle of the battle.

Beyond simply opening certain job categories to women and minorities, EEO ultimately alters recruitment and selection procedures, paper and pencil tests, physical exams, interviews, and other screening devices, as well as pension plans, compensation systems, seniority systems, performance appraisal processes, job analysis and classification systems, and opportunities for job bidding and training and development. In effect, many businesses have had their personnel systems pulled out from under them. Faced with what boils down to a legislative and judicial imperative, numerous firms have had to change their entire approach to managing human resources. This has meant unanticipated costs for legal fees, internal reviews, validation procedures, policy and procedural changes, labor union disputes, and revisions in selection, promotion, and compensation systems, not to mention back pay awards, reinstatements, and trust funds for minority development.

To further confuse current corporation-employee relations, there are the increasing pressures and expense of keeping up with technological change. Our knowledge base is growing so quickly that individuals will no longer be able to think in terms of career education, but rather of a lifetime of multiple careers. It will be (and in fact already is) the job of the organization to assist its employees in coping with this rapid change. The firm must be prepared to help its employees avoid the erosion of their skills and the onset of individual obsolescence.

Rapid changes in business technology require flexible employees and employers who are receptive to change. Those who cannot meet this demand become difficult to utilize. Management is then faced with a difficult decision: how to maintain productivity levels without having to terminate employees who contributed years of effective performance before reaching obsolescence. Complicating this issue, of course, is the implication of possible age discrimination. It is not an easy decision to make.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

During the days of a rapidly growing economy, organizations could better bear the burden of retaining some marginal performers. Total revenue was growing fast enough to allow many companies to relax their vigilance on cost control. Under such conditions it was possible to avoid or postpone the ultimate blow to the employee's self-esteem by moving obsolescent employees out of the mainstream of activity and into a less vital position where they could be carried until retirement. Today this option has virtually disappeared.

Economic growth has greatly slowed and inflationary costs are eroding profits. Efficiency, profitability, corporate growth, and perhaps even survival of the firm depend upon maximum utilization and development of all corporate resources, including the individual employee. With legal and regulatory actions, capital costs, and governmental procurement shifts largely beyond the control of individual companies, management has turned to areas within its direct influence and control to improve profitability and assure sustained growth. One of these areas is human resource management. Companies are more than ever coming to see that an investment in developing people, whether they are men or women, minority or majority, old or young, managerial or clerical, is an investment in the future of the organization.

Considerable attention is being directed toward getting maximum benefit from human resources. A company cannot succeed in meeting its corporate goals if it is plagued by high turnover rates and low productivity, or if it has an inadequate base from which to draw fresh management talent. How to attract, keep, and fully use talented, innovative employees who have their own personal concerns has become a basic corporate need.

To meet this need, a variety of personnel-related techniques have evolved. Recruitment programs, performance reviews and appraisals, training programs, and management development seminars are among the key tools of any personnel department. These tools were all designed to better use the talent that a corporation possesses in its employees. Unfortunately many of these programs are less effective than they might be because they are not integrated closely with (or may even be working at odds with) one another, and because they do not take into account the actual career interests of the individual.

A carefully planned and thoughtfully implemented career development program can provide the means to help an organization combat this lack of integration. Such a program pulls the assortment of human resource development activities together into a coherent unit and provides links with the organization's bottom line. A well-designed career development effort can (1) help identify individual talents and desires and place employees in work situations that are personally meaningful because of relevance to those talents and desires, (2) assist employees to view the organization as one that respects their unique abilities and encourages their utilization and growth, (3) involve employees in communicating their needs and aspirations at all levels of the organization, and (4) enable individuals to continually develop their potential and to be challenged by future learning possibilities. In short, a full range of human resource problems, evidenced by symptoms such as frequent turnover, skill deficiencies, low morale, or decreased productivity, may be addressed by a career development effort.

Career development supports the recognition that different individuals are motivated to on-the-job effectiveness by different organizational endeavors. For example, while the security of continually demonstrating talents on the same job may stimulate one person, new experiences or a perceived chance for growth and change may stimulate another. While some employees may be inspired by a sense of organizational "caring" about their well-being, others may want more specific rewards and incentives for continued growth. Career development, with its emphasis on ongoing diagnosis of individuals' unique needs and capacities, allows organizations to discover and direct appropriate means of satisfying a variety of employee preferences, while at the same time meeting organizational needs in the most efficient manner—filling jobs with people best suited to them.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

There is a need today to define a new relationship between the employee and the corporation, to develop a relationship that blends the individual's career objectives into overall corporate goals. When it is effective in this, career development cuts across traditional organizational boundaries. It cannot be constrained by arbitrary functional designations.

Human resource practitioners who restrict career development to the role of a single event (such as a goal-setting workshop or an annual career discussion) force it to become an isolated end with no particular influence over the organization or any of the other units of which the organization is comprised. Integration of the different aspects of career development and human resource development becomes virtually impossible under these conditions, and the potential effectiveness of the program is lost.

To be effective, then, a new system is in order—one that realigns these boundaries and allows the career development practitioner access to people and information throughout the organization. This can be accomplished by shifting our perspective to focus upon the career development effort as our system of interest, and by looking at other human resource development activities as they might relate to that effort.

The Players

Every career development effort requires the participation of three distinct groups of players: the organization, represented by top management; the individual, represented by those employees who elect (or are selected) to participate in the program; and the practitioner, represented by a professional staff with the responsibility for the career development effort. (In those organizations which may not have professional career development practitioners, the line supervisor will sometimes inherit the practitioner's role. In other situations the supervisor may have a follow-on role that is involved in the later implementation of career development efforts.) These players interact with one another within a common environment containing all the political, legal, social, economic, cultural, and natural forces that influence the program in different ways.

This book is addressed to persons termed practitioners. These practitioners might be full-time career development professionals; they may be human resource staff personnel who are charged with the development and implementation of a career development effort; they might be training and development professionals who find themselves working in the career development field as a result of organizational needs, EEO requisites, or AAP requirements; or they may be line managers and supervisors involved part time in career development programs for their subordinates. No matter what the case this book is aimed at and meant to serve as a guide for whoever is fulfilling the practitioner role at any particular time in the career development program.

The world of career development, then, can be shown to embrace a larger and more complex environment than that of the organization alone, or of a single individual's attempts at development. It is important to understand the interaction and interdependence between the individual and the organization, and the impact of programmatic intervention on

each, in order to manage an effective career development effort. Exhibit 1-1 illustrates the interaction between the players and their shared environment. This comprises the formal career development effort elaborated in this book.

The Six-Stage Process

A complete career development effort moves sequentially through six stages and involves separate as well as interactive participation by each of the three players described above. Each of these stages constitutes a vital step in a complete career development effort, yet each has substantial payoff of its own. Although the greatest return on investment comes at the completion of all six stages, there are distinct contributions to both the individual and the organization at the conclusion of each stage. The relative emphasis, discreteness, and interconnectedness of these stages, though, can vary greatly among organizations.

This six-stage career development model can provide the framework by which the practitioner can link the frequently disconnected activities of the human resource department. The same stages also serve as the guiding framework for the design of workshops and individually directed career

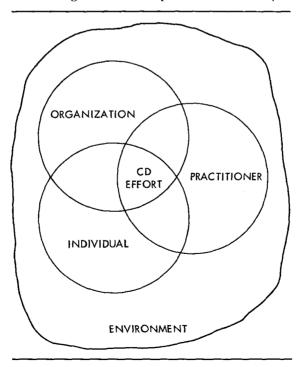


Exhibit 1-1 Interacting Players

counseling sessions. The stages become a checklist to facilitate evaluation—by comparing an existing program to the stages in the model, one can identify areas that have been neglected or areas that have been overemphasized. Practitioners can also use the model to identify stages within their influence, as well as to understand the broader picture of organizational career development. A clear understanding of the processes involved in each of the six stages will provide a guide to determining which steps must be undertaken to introduce career development as the human resource umbrella. The stages are introduced here and are described in detail in the ensuing chapters.

Stage 1: Preparation. Preparation, the first stage in the cycle, begins with an organizational response to a perceived need. Two distinct processes are involved: *analysis* and *planning*.

The combined processes involve several tasks: (1) analyzing needs and demands (2) formulating objectives that respond to those needs, (3) developing programming to accomplish those objectives, (4) assigning responsibility for execution of the programs, (5) determining evaluation methodology, (6) outlining the ongoing human resource activities that can be linked to the program, (7) charting new activities that must be accomplished to make the program work, and (8) readying resources necessary for the succeeding five stages. The thoroughness with which this is done will largely determine return on investment that the organization can expect to receive from the program.

While it is more effective to involve all three players at each stage, some clearly dominate others at different points in the cycle. At the Preparation Stage, the organization and the practitioner are the dominant players involved, although it is definitely to the advantage of the program to involve representatives of the target employee population to be addressed.

By the conclusion of the Preparation Stage organization members are introduced to the career development effort. The program design is determined, and resources are committed. These two outcomes—plans and commitment—largely determine the eventual effectiveness of the program.

Stage 2: Profiling. The Profiling Stage is the first to more actively involve individual employees. The dominant players become the practitioner and the employee who together undertake the processes of identification and reality-testing.

The identification phase poses the question, "Who am I?" The purpose of identification is to consider an individual's capacity (sum of personal skills, values, and interests, as well as work contexts or desired environ-