

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF
**CAREER
PLANNING**



INTRODUCTION

Career planning doesn't just end with meeting the career interests of individuals!

Organizations that put in the effort to meet the career aspirations of their employees are not only providing a benefit to their workforce, but they are also seeing an impact on their bottom line.

According to survey research conducted by Watson Wyatt (HR Magazine, August 2002), development is an important benefit that employees expect from their employer, as it typically falls in the top three. In particular, employees want "the opportunity to grow and learn and they search for organizations that will give them the tools to advance in their profession". Likewise, research by The Gallup Organization (1999) has shown that development opportunities play a significant role in employee engagement, productivity and profitability.

The research above highlights the importance to organizations for supporting employee development and the building of long-term relationships. Accordingly, organizations that provide employees with the tools and resources to plan their career progress will show them that they have a good reason to stay.

Career planning is best used when it is integrated with the succession planning process. The reason for this is that they focus on meeting different workforce planning needs. Succession plans focus on meeting future talent needs of the organization. Career plans involve employees charting their own career to meet their own interests. Ideally, career planning dovetails into succession plans such that upcoming openings for positions are already filled by those employees who aspire to be in that role. Please note that succession plan best practices are beyond the focus of this document.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CAREER PLANNING

Although individuals need to be active participants in their career plans, organizations play a key support role. After all, employees need to remain committed to professional development in order for career planning to work. Below are the five building blocks of career planning that organizations can use to keep the momentum going:



PART I: CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

To make a successful career plan, an individual's skills and interests must be in line with where the company is heading. By having a clear sense of where the company is going individuals can make the required comparison and search for a career that fits. As stated by Rothwell, Jackson, Knight and Lindholm, in their book *Career Planning and Succession Management*, "employees need to understand that, as long as they can be comfortable with the corporate direction, then they have a good reason to maintain their relationship with the organization." Accordingly, clarifying expectations is an essential step in order to provide a sense of direction.

Below is what best practice companies are doing to help clarify expectations:

- Conduct an organizational needs assessment with key stakeholders (e.g., CEO, board members, executives, management and/or employees). This would help confirm the organization's strategic goals and pin-point any talent deficiencies that can be addressed through career planning.
- Clearly define the goal of the career planning initiative and how it contributes to the organization's business objectives. By ensuring that career planning is aligned to the organization's strategy, it will be easier to gain senior leader support.
- Clarify the CEO's expectations and what can be expected in terms of senior level support for career planning. Reinforce the need for senior leaders to play an active part and their role in seeing the career plans through. Without senior management support any career development program would be vulnerable.

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PART I: CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

- Outline the roles and responsibilities of the employee, the supervisor and the organization as follows:
 1. The employee needs to be responsible for driving their overall career plan and taking advantage of the development opportunities available.
 2. The supervisor needs to be responsible for holding regular career discussions with the employee (i.e., annually), and coaching him/her along the way. Removing barriers too!
 3. The organization is responsible for providing access to the tools and resources required to help employees achieve their career goals.
- Build awareness and communicate a corporate message to kick off the career planning initiative (e.g., initiate town hall meetings). Describe the initiative's goal, along with how it supports the corporate direction (strategic objectives, and the mission, vision, and values).
- Position the career plan as a tool to help prepare individuals for the future of the organization.
- Initiate leadership sponsored educational programs to provide orientation to employees explaining the career plan process and how they will benefit from it.

Case Study:

BP Amoco (formerly Amoco)	Clorox
• The objective was to provide orientation on the career planning process. • Career planning program called BP Amoco Career Management, had four cornerstones: Education, Assessment, Development Planning and Outcomes. • Town-hall meetings obtained early buy-in. • Held half-day program called "Exploring ACM". • Supervisors and team leaders took a mandatory workshop, called "Supporting Employee Development". • In subsequent workshops, employees completed self-assessments to address interests and skills. Source: Best Practices LLC, Planning For Individual Development Success: Part 1 (2009).	• The objective was to encourage an environment of personal responsibility for employees and managers. • Employees were responsible for driving the plan. • Managers were responsible for having the "Career Interests Discussion" with employees (during the annual performance review). • Both individuals were required to complete a standard form capturing "the next type of assignment" desired over the short- and long-term. • The completed form was submitted to the Director of the division and HR. Source: Best Practices LLC, Planning For Individual Development Success: Part 2 (2009).

PART II: DISCUSS CAREER OBJECTIVES

Given that many individuals do not know exactly where they are headed in their careers, best practice companies are using self-assessment tools to provide insight into career interests. With this information in hand, individuals are in the position to more specifically pinpoint where they would like to be in the future.

Below is what best practice companies are doing to help promote the discussion on career objectives:

- Provide access to self-assessment tools to help shed light on an individual's interests, and level of knowledge, skills and abilities (AKA competencies), as well as personal values.
- Offer individuals feedback on relevant competencies to help promote their learning and development. This will give them a sense of where they stand relative to job-specific or universal criteria, as well as help to pinpoint personal strengths. Ideally, career plans are built around areas of performance where individuals are proficient.
- Encourage employees to create a career plan within the context of their life plan (i.e., family and spirituality).
- With each employee, hold meetings to discuss self-assessment data and to further solidify career objectives.
- Either through the HR department or onsite career centers, proactive organizations have built-in career counseling programs available to all employees.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CAREER PLANNING
PART II: DISCUSS CAREER OBJECTIVES

Case Study:

AT&T CCS	AlliedSignal, now owned by Honeywell
• The objective was to identify education and training needs through an assessment process. • Associates had a Career Plan summary that was updated annually. • Associate discussions with their managers were held to identify education and training needs relative to associate career goals. • For assessment purposes, associates received customer feedback, behavioral feedback, and job competency evaluation results. • Associate assessment results were used to make training and education decisions relative to their career plans. Source: Best Practices LLC, Planning For Individual Development Success: Part 1 (2009).	• The objective was to encourage ongoing communication between employees and supervisors regarding career planning. • Annually, employees revisited their career goals and re-submitted their statements to their supervisors. • Managers were responsible for coaching their employees towards achieving their career goals. • Employees were encouraged to create plans to develop talents that will increase their employability outside of the organization. Source: Best Practices LLC, Planning For Individual Development Success: Part 1 (2009).

PART III: UNCOVER CAREER PATHWAYS

Clarifying career pathways is an essential step because it allows employees to see where they are currently and where the potential opportunities are going to be in the future. This enables employees to understand what they need to do in terms of the professional development required to progress along the path to reaching their career goal. The aim is to define success in the current position and success required at each marker along the way.

Below is what best practice companies are doing to help uncover career pathways:

- Outline the career path to all positions throughout the organization. This will allow employees to get a view of the potential opportunities that might be coming up.
- For each position, create a career planning guide showing:
 1. Job duties and responsibilities
 2. Minimum education/experience requirements
 3. Desired competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities)
 4. Graphical depiction of the career path to arriving at the position
- Managers need to help employees see where they stand relative to the requirements and shed light on any skill gaps that need to be addressed.
- Provide access to the career planning guide for all positions.
- Openly post internal job opportunities as they come up.
- Communicate realistic expectations to ensure employees understand that advancement along a career path is not fully guaranteed as it is dependent upon several factors: economic conditions, positions opening up, employees meeting the requirements and being the best fit to the job.
- Reinforce the importance of employees building transferrable skills that will increase their employability both inside and outside the organization.

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PART III: UNCOVER CAREER PATHWAYS

Case Study:

Fidelity (Call Centre)	PacTel
• The objective was to create a career program that would help retain high-performing employees and provide them with desirable career opportunities. • Developed a clear set of job descriptions, career paths, competencies and self-assessments for each position. • All career plan documents were incorporated into a new career development portal. • Through the portal, employees could locate graphical depictions of different career paths, and obtain access to job descriptions, competencies and assessments. • Results: the portal was successful. Within a year, turnover had reduced by more than 30 percent. Source: Josh Bersin, Bersin & Associates, Dashboard, Career Planning: The Time for the Pinball Has Passed. August 2007.	• The objective was to re-direct career planning efforts toward exploring other options beyond vertical advancements. • Conducted employee survey to identify employee career aspirations. • In addition to vertical career pathways, provided education on exploring different (more realistic) options, including lateral moves and relocations. • Launched career workshops to teach self-assessment and planning skills to employees. • Taught managers how to be career coaches. Source: Best Practices LLC, Facilitating Employee Career Path Development (2009).

PART IV: ACTION PLAN

Ultimately, employees aim to find a match between their career aspirations and the opportunities available in the organization. Accordingly, when a match comes up a development plan is created. The aim of this plan is to provide a roadmap to help the employee drive their own learning and development needed to prepare him/her for the future.

Below is what best practice companies are doing to create career development plans:

- Provide guidance to assist the employee in selecting their desired career path.
- Based on the requirements for the desired career path, help the employee identify skills gaps. To address these skill gaps, outline the potential learning and development opportunities for the employee to experience over the short and long-term.
- Help plan appropriate skill development experiences as a means to the end of helping the employee qualify for higher level positions and achieving their own career objectives. Development experiences could include:
 1. Formal and informal training
 2. E-learning
 3. Job rotations
 4. Mentoring and coaching
 5. Degree programs
 6. Planned and unplanned on-the-job training
 7. Increasingly more challenging work assignments and acting positions

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PART IV: ACTION PLAN

- Most important is identifying opportunities for the employee to gain on-the-job experience (e.g., if a person needs to learn marketing skills, the best thing to do is assign them to a marketing project and make him/her accountable for its success).
- Monitor the employee's progression by establishing key markers along the action career action plan.
- For short term planning, work together with the employee to identify their first-30-day plan, along with the next 3 - 6 months. As for long-term planning, identify the plan for the next 2 - 3 years.
- Encourage self-directed learning so employees can manage their own time and effort and do what they think is necessary to progress. The aim is to promote long-term behavior change through personal experience or practice.
- Please note that any further best practices on employee development are beyond the focus of this document.

Case Study:

Corning	KPMG
• The objective was to integrate training needs into the career development process. • Each employee set his/her goal and created a personal development plan spanning two years. • The development plan was discussed/refined as part of the annual Performance, Development and Review process. • Employees were given access to development experiences focusing on basic skills/competencies, functional skills, and skills required for future growth. • Plan focused on the entire career of the employee and helps identify development and advancement opportunities. Source: Best Practices LLC, Planning For Individual Development Success: Part 3 (2009).	• The objective was to create an Employee Career Architecture that helped to meet the interest of employees. • Used to help employees plan their own professional development and progression. • The organization supported employees with the tools and resources to build and manage their careers. • Beyond tools, KPMG provided support to help employees to progress through the cultural landscape. Source: Great Place to Work Institute, Best Practices From Best Companies 2008.

PART V: EXECUTE, APPRAISE & REFINE

While individuals are actively seeking development experiences, the organization and its leaders must facilitate and assist employees in achieving their career objectives.

Below is what best practice companies are doing to execute, appraise and refine on their career planning system:

- Provide ongoing guidance to help employees achieve their career goals.
- Discuss and track plans on a regular basis.
- Renew the planning process as the organization is naturally chasing after new corporate objectives.
- Measure the success of the career plan program and any benefits to the organization (e.g., number of internal job posts) to see if employees are progressing toward their plans.

Case Study:

Corning
• The objective of the development program was to educate employees on the quality principles that drive operations. • Employees had access to over 200 courses for broad-based competencies. • Historically, the individual training goal was set at spending 5% of an employee's time in training activities (100 hours per employee annually). • Recently, the goal had been changed from measuring the time spent (i.e., 5%) to fulfillment of training objectives (measured in the performance review process). • The new goal helped the organization focus more on results produced than activity. •
Source: Best Practices LLC, Planning For Individual Development Success: Part 3 (2009).

RESOURCE GUIDE

“Playing the training game and losing: ‘training for future work’ and ‘hiring for potential’ can drain your company’s shareholder value”

Bruce Pfau, Ira Kay
(HR Magazine, August, 2002)

“Career Planning and Succession Management: Developing Your Organization’s Talent – For Today and Tomorrow”

William J. Rothwell, Robert D. Jackson, Shaun C. Knight, John E. Lindholm
(Praeger Publishers, 2005)

“New Directions in Career Planning and the Workplace: Practical Strategies for the Career Management Professional”

Jean M. Kummerow
(Davies-Black Publishing, 2000)

“A Hard Look at Soft Numbers: The Relationship Between Employee Perceptions and Business Outcomes”

Curt Hoffman, Jim Harter, Ph.D.
(The Gallup Organization, April 1999)