

Understanding Career Development

Posted on



Success in a career is defined individually. No one is guaranteed a career. What is guaranteed is the opportunity to pursue one.

A career development plan firstly, is a well thought-out plan of action for an individual's development over a short to medium time frame, which outlines several options which could become realisable, all other things remaining the same.

A career development plan could have as components training (viz: attendance at seminars, conferences, on the job assignments, project work) and possible job options within a short to medium term. All of the above are designed to provide growth opportunities. While the intention is to fulfill the above plan, given the nature of the business environment, the plan can change.



Secondly, a career development plan is not a move from one job to another, each at a higher level than the previous one at a set interval. “Moving on” doesn’t always mean “moving up”. Moves can also be lateral or even into another company. At times, there may not be any need for one to move at all. Jobs grow and individuals grow with their jobs.

Thirdly, a career development plan does not guarantee a staff member an upward movement in the title ladder within a specified time frame. In truth, functional organisations like marketing, sales, distribution, finance, technology, and human resources are large enough to provide full-time career opportunities for a good number of years, and a move to another functional group may not even be necessary. In addition, one can continue within one functional group for an entire career, growing in seniority with the corresponding adjustments in grade levels, titles and compensation.

Finally, a career development plan is not supposed to be an annual ritual which is documented and then filed away. It should be an ongoing process, wherein an individual and a manager actively participate in discussing career interests and objectives and planning areas for development.

Let it then be said that career development is actually managing oneself against real opportunities.

Likewise success in a career is defined individually. No one is guaranteed a career. What is guaranteed is the opportunity to pursue one. And the greatest potential for career advancement and growth comes through a record of solid performance in each of the assignments.

Because current and past performance is always a key factor in a career decision, its critical for people to stay in their jobs long enough to establish a clear record. How long this takes varies from sector to sector and job to job. Continuity of performance is essential.

The commitment of an organisation should therefore be to develop and retain the best people who will be your corporate property.