Build a Culture of Development

Design a system of partnerships.

by Beverly Kaye

ONE OF THE STRONGest messages for today's workforce is the necessity for self-accountability for one's own career.

Organizations are developing new attitudes that encourage employees to take the leadership role for developing their own career. These companies believe that their competitive advantage depends on their capacity to create a development culture that promotes individual development—not just promotion; career resiliency—not company reliance; and career empowerment—not company entitlement.

More organizations are espousing a philosophy that builds on strong performance management groundwork and provides a guided process for career growth and job satisfaction. These companies intend to benefit employees whether they stay or choose to seek opportunities elsewhere that more closely match their talents and aspirations.

The System

Excellent companies today are committed to develop a high-performing, competitive workforce ready to provide quality services and products to customers and to contribute to the company's success for as long as possible. When there is no longer a fit, employees are responsible for pursing their career options.

Career development is not a program, but a process that integrates and supports ongoing activities, maximizing the value of on-the-job experience with training and development opportunities. Career development expands career options through challenging job assignments, education, and training. The process fully involves employees by getting input from them on their career interests and expectations and placing them in positions that maximize their contribution.

The Business Need

Career development makes good business sense. All employees need to improve their skills—whether they are technical, administrative, or managerial—taking full advantage of their available learning resources.

A well-designed career development system enables leaders to tap their wealth of in-house talent for staffing and promotion by matching the skills, experience, and aspirations of individuals to the needs of the organization.

The Stakeholders

In designing a system supportive of development culture, a partnership must be developed between the

employee, the leader or the manger, and the organization. Each stakeholder has a specific role to play.

The individual's role. Career and development plans are available to employees to help them maximize job satisfaction and effectiveness—moving employees from inertia to initiative, from seeing problems to seeing possibilities, from being critical to taking control of their own future. This leads people to develop a portfolio that includes transferable skills and competencies, realities about options, and ideas from concrete action planning. In this way are employees empowered to be their own "talent agents", to sell themselves when the organization has a project opportunity. Being able to articulate their career aspirations not only helps employees but also helps the organization identify those who are prepared to meet future challenges.

The organization's role. The organization supports the process by developing and maintaining systems and structures that provide needed information, offer development opportunities, and establish evaluation and reward systems. Mobility processes enable people to make cross-functional moves where they have a strong interest and where they add value. Career development through management and specialist paths are equally valued. Excellent career systems are integrated with performance management, team building, compensation, and recruitment systems.

The team leader/manager's role. While the individual has primary responsibility for directing his or her own career, the manager needs to be the career advocate, having frequent discussions with employees about what they do best and what they want to do. The manager should provide candid feedback on strengths and weaknesses, offer advice regarding realistic career expectations, link the employees to the available resources, and offer support. Such ongoing dialogue enhances productivity and results in a partnership that matches people with the positions or projects that maximize their talents.

The Bottom Line

For some people, career planning may come naturally. They evaluate their strengths, decide what they want to do, and develop strategies to achieve their goals. However, for people who have a codependency with the organization there needs to be a more proactive and structured approach to self-development.

When we view career development as a strategic imperative and design systems that create a development culture, we prepare people for challenges.

When people can determine their professional and personal goals, they are more likely to learn instead of lament, to produce and perform instead of procrastinate, to be empowered instead of demanding entitlement. **LE**

Beverly Kaye is the founder and CEO of Career Systems International and a leading authority in career development, talent retention, satisfaction and mentoring programs. She is the author of Up is NOT the Only Way *(Davies-Black),* Love 'Em or Lose 'Em *(Berrett-Koehler) and* Love It, Don't Leave It *(Berrett-Koehler). Call 800-577-6916 or visit: www.CareerSystemsIntl.com*

ACTION: Engage your people in planning.