Career development in organisations: What works and what doesn’t

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Career development in organisations is (arguably) in a cul de sac – needs to look outside its field

If a performance orientation is taken, the business case for participation/high road/relational issues is now very strong

Common themes across human relations performance fields of effectiveness: personalised and goal focus, authenticity, and relationships

Career practice has a lot to offer as an individualised glue for workplace relationship, decision making and performance issues – but it has to move beyond helping people change jobs
Is Career Development in a cul de sac?

- Presented as employee not employer focussed
- Often given lip service only
- Focussed on deciding, re-emergence of test and tell
- Insufficient attention on behaviours to get there
- Not relevant to café discussions
- Needs to be relevant to organisations as well as employer – performance
- Vacuum is being taken up by career coaches and “work/life balance”
Are Interventions Effective?

- Yes
- .44 general effect size for human relations interventions
- Training programs specifically having an effect size of .77.

Career Work Effectiveness

- Career interventions work (e.g. Whiston, Sexton & Lasoff, 1998; Oliver & Spokane, 1988).
- Short interventions, using tools, are common and effective (Whiston et al, 1998).
- Counsellor/client relationships are important (Mahoney & Patterson, 1992).
- Computer plus counselling seems to be most efficient (Whiston).
- Software leads to more specific questions (Kapes, Borman & Frazier, 1989).
- More satisfaction when personal and career issues are addressed (Nevo, 1990; Kirschner et al, 1994).
Outcomes of Career Interventions

Outcomes are very diffuse: e.g. decidedness, job satisfaction, few PGs, self esteem, comfort, career maturity. But they seem to be most effective when they target:

- Career related skills
- Career decision making self efficacy
Career management can result in:

- Direction and motivation
- Sense of being valued
- Adaptability: e.g. should a job change be necessary due to mergers, acquisitions, restructuring, or downsizing.

Career motivation refers to:

- Employees’ energy to invest in their careers
- Their awareness of the direction they want their careers to take
- The ability to maintain energy and direction despite barriers they may encounter.
Organisational Benefits (Noe et al, 2004)

- To create and sustain a continuous learning environment, develop commitment
- Attract employees with new skills
- Improve effectiveness of training:
  - Motivation, expectation and choice of programs to attend

Good career development in organisations fosters (London, 1995)

- Staff direction, goals and feedback
- Self monitoring (London, 1995)
Career motivation has three aspects:

- **Career resilience** – the extent to which employees are able to cope with problems that affect their work

- **Career insight** -
  - how much employees know about their interests, skill strengths, and weaknesses
  - awareness of how these perceptions relate to their career goals

- **Career identity** – the degree to which employees define their personal values according to their work.
Heppner, 1994 – Career transitions
- Readiness - motivation
- Confidence
- Control
- Social support
- Decision independence

Ryff & Keyes, 1995 - Wellbeing
- Purpose in life
- Personal growth
- Self acceptance
- Environmental mastery
- Relationships with others
- Autonomy
Career Development – Don’ts

How not to do career development in organisations (Kossek et al, 1998)

Sought to develop career self management:
- Developmental feedback seeking
- Job mobility preparedness

3 day workshop based on premises: professionals in transportation industry

The intervention made things worse. Why?
Kossek et al, 1998 cont’d

- Not integrated with other HR policies
- “Higher standard” explanation – people judged themselves more harshly
- Raised expectations that weren’t met – training rhetoric didn’t match workplace reality
- The course about self management was compulsory – this led to a backlash

What could have been done differently?
Organisational Ecologies
(Colarelli, 1998)

Evolutionary perspective:
- People have overt and covert agendas
- Managers have limited information processing ability.

The competency model is based on:
- Command and control
- Stable tasks
- Fitting people to jobs, not jobs to people
- But people have varying strengths and weaknesses, and configure jobs in their own way.
Emotional Intelligence

- Appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself
- Appraisal and recognition in others
- Regulation of emotion
- Use of emotion to facilitate performance.

(Law et al, 2004)
Good Career Practice needs to:

- be individualised to staff
- and reflect organisational outcomes i.e. performance
- support existing HR practices
- be solution/future focussed, and
- will likely concern relational, emotional and agency issues.
The Psychological Contract

▪ “an individual’s belief in mutual obligations between that person and another party, such as an employer” (Rousseau, 1989)

Some types:

▪ Transactional – short-term, based on economic exchange

▪ Transitional – cognitive statement about organisational change – often characterised by mistrust, uncertainty and erosion.
Types of Contract


What Works?

- Develop confidence, sense of control
- Pursue intrinsically important goals that are personal
- Develop relationships with others
- Aspirations and individual uniqueness
- Tools × people × limited time (Whiston et al)
- Goal oriented (Locke)
- Awareness raising and information giving
- Feedback and monitoring focused
- Motivational and problem solving.
Career Development as a Framework

- Meets criteria of being effective, authentic, personalised, goal oriented, relational
- Adaptable to individual circumstances
- Opportunity to impart skills
- Can operate at individual level of detail – adaptable to individual circumstances
- Ethical issues need to be managed
- Can be aggregated up to organisational level
- Anything else?
“My name is Jane. I have been asked to get coaching by my CEO. I have a habit of shouting at staff when I get stressed because their work is just not good enough and there is so much to do. A recent climate survey of my team shows I am not trusted and people are reluctant to raise problems with me. I sense they talk about me behind my back for a lot. In my last performance review I got criticised for not meeting my goals.”

- As a trainer / career developer / coach how would you address this?
Self Management

(Noe, 2004)

Getting people to apply what they have learnt under their own steam

- Identify risks and inoculate
- Set goals
- Self reinforce
- Monitor
- Engage others – get support and understanding
- Report back
- What sort of obstacles can self management overcome?
- Time management.

Is this career development?
The Business Case

The case for high commitment work systems is very strong:

- Command and control versus commitment (Arthur, 1994)
- People and culture provide competitive advantage (Bresnahan et al, 1999)
- Human relations are essential to be able to use technology (Bailey).

Winning firms: T & D, participation, staff satisfaction.
Zacharatos et al, 2005

- People are competitive advantage
- Participative decision making
- High quality training
- Sharing information
- Respect
- Commitment in return.
Benefits of participation (Miller & Monge, 1986)

Different models are not mutually exclusive

Cognitive – more informed decision making

“We know more than management”

Affective/human relations

“Happy workers are productive ones”

Contingency

“You try participation when you’re under fire”

Didn’t stack up – no differences across sectors or status.
Herzenberg, Alic and Wial (1998):

- Ability to elicit, understand and respond to situations
- Many require both
- Extends to “unrationalised labour-intensive work” – such as hotel room cleaning and home care.
The Personal Case

The rise of relationships and character:

▪ Technology 1st replaced manual skills, now technical skills
▪ People expect work to fulfil
▪ Soft skills are replacing hierarchy
▪ People problems often underlie career problems
  ▪ Why do people change jobs
  ▪ What underlies performance problems
  ▪ Who gets ahead
Impact on Career Guidance

Beyond deciding - to performance, motivation, wellbeing, relationships

- Self knowledge
- Wider and more dynamic view of self than personality and IQ
- Personalised goals
- Self management and soft skills.

Know why, know whom, know what.
Planful attitudes, self and environmental exploration, and informed decision-making provide a counselling framework based on developing adaptability. Counsellors could help:

- “individuals to continually, throughout the life course, look ahead to and anticipate choices and transitions, explore possibilities, and improve fit and develop the self.” (Savickas, 1997, p. 254).
Coaches stress that coaching is not counselling because it is (Williams & Davis, 2002):

- **Effective**: Client centred (Rogers)
- **Personalised and goal oriented**: Goal and solution oriented
- **Authentic**: Strengths based (Krumboltz)
- **Relational**: Closer relationships between practitioners and client.

Solution-focussed brief therapies bridge coaching and traditional “therapy”

But have career counsellors ever done therapy?
**Effective:** Meta analysis (Whiston et al., 1998)
Identify barriers to performance

**Personalised and goal oriented:** Identify aspirations, developmental

**Relational:** Succession planning, Training needs, Performance (Knowdell)

**Authentic:** Help supervisors coach by fostering dialogue and constructive openness.
Team and Group Development

Requires (Landy, 1989; Zacharatos et al, 2005)

- **Effective:** Moderate effect sizes
- **Personalised and goal oriented:** Solutions that are likely to be achievable
- Detailed information, not high level labels
- **Authentic:** Awareness of issues and willingness to address them
- **Relational:** Support from team/group members
- Feedback loops.
Work/life balance (O’Driscoll et al, 2003)

**Effective:** Better recruitment, retention, productivity, less stress

- **Personalised and goal oriented:** Needs to be tailored specifically to needs of individuals e.g. don’t assume childcare is the issue

- **Authentic:** Needs to balance responsibilities and obligations, manage psychological contract, change norms rather than just rules, or there is a gap between management rhetoric and supervisory practice

- **Relational:** Help match personal goals with organisational goals.
Requirements

Worklife balance, career development, and OD all require:

- Motivation and constructive engagement about issues
- Choice at which level to target the intervention – e.g. individual or group
- Solutions not rumination
- Context and reality check, not labels.
But People Actually Want Help

- Should I stay or should I go?
- What are my strengths/skills?
- How do I solve these relationship difficulties with work/family?
  - Dealing with conflict
  - Self management
  - Relationship management
  - Raising difficult issues
  - Basic supervision skills.
Conclusion:

Why is career development important?

- For employers: Need to win the war for talent
- For employees: Changing world of work and the need to develop adaptability
- Interventions/instruments need to be quick and future focussed
- Standard, rational business issues such as renumeration are over-rated as predictor of turnover, performance and good hiring: Savickas: “The career is personal”: Figler “Emotions are the genie in the bottle when people talk about their careers”
- Hidden costs of avoiding these issues?