



Beverly Kaye

## Build a Culture of Development: Design a system of partnerships



Doris Bentley

### The Business Need

Today's news about talent management presents interesting and complex challenges, as organizations have taken on many forms that may include joint ventures, strategic alliances, project teams, or free agents. How do organizations maximize the productivity of their talented people in these kinds of 21st century structures? How do they provide career growth and development, and keep the pulse on employee satisfaction at the same time?

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, regardless of the structure it may hold.

### The Stakeholders

In designing a system supportive of development culture, a partnership must be developed between the employee, the leader or the manager, 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.

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

Successful 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 pursuing 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 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.

A career development system can first be integrated into the hiring process. This is most successful when organizations take the time before they begin their recruitment and interviewing activities to fully profile a position, and include the performance expectations for the new hire for specific milestones during the first year (such as three and six months). This ensures that the newly hired employee will be clear on what success will look like and ultimately how they can plan for ongoing opportunities after that critical first year in the position.

From there, careers developed through management and specialist paths are equally valued. Excellent career systems can then be integrated with performance management, team building, and compensation 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.

This is particularly important in today's multi-generational workplace, where recent university graduates work side by side with baby boomers anticipating retirement. Managers need to be aware of how career development must be adapted to meet the varying needs of individuals across the career spectrum. Getting to know each member of their team and the unique career concerns that each presents, allows manager to apply the career development process in the way that is meaningful for all.

### 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.

*Beverly Kaye is the founder and CEO of Career Systems International ([www.CareerSystemsIntl.com](http://www.CareerSystemsIntl.com)) 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).*

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