

Planning for career development

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What is career development?

Career development is an essential recipe for career planning. It can either occur at the individual or organizational level. Career development is the process a person goes through in changing and shaping their occupational status. It is a lifelong process aimed at identifying ones' strengths, weaknesses, natural abilities, and interests, shaping those skills, and matching them to the available career options. Career development is premised on matching individual goals, interests, and needs with the job opportunities in an organization or the industry.

The reasoning is that there is an ideal job for an individual. In pursuit of the perfect career, individuals can use on-the-job and off-job training methods to shape the necessary skills required for the jobs they aspire for. An individual SWOT analysis is very crucial for the identification of strengths and weaknesses in career development planning. The knowledge enables one to move towards careers that suit those natural abilities, following [career guidance good practices](#). The understanding of weaknesses enables one to work on improvements and changes.

Career development is not a once-off event but rather a series of activities that involve setting new goals and acquiring new skills. Development of the career requires a proactive approach and deliberate manoeuvres towards a predetermined end. The setting of new goals engenders new challenges that shape individual skills and produce growth. To get the desired ideal jobs, individuals must possess the necessary skills because interest and strength alone are not enough, hence it's vital to acquire new skills.

Career development produces a good [person-individual fit](#), which benefits both the person and the organization. Personal benefits like high job satisfaction and career fulfilment are accrued. The organization then benefits from high employee motivation, morale, low turnover, etc., which all contribute to organizational effectiveness.

How to plan for career development

Planning for career development empowers an individual to manage the direction in which they progress. A career development plan allows one to make long-term learning decisions to align personal needs with career advancement. This proactive approach gives one the power to shape their career and

determine their future.

A career development plan follows the basic framework of all other plans but leaning towards career development. Its development process closely mirrors that of other business plans, which most people are familiar with. It can be summed into five critical stages, which are:

- Identifying current position
- Identifying destination
- Gap analysis
- Creating the plan
- Measuring progress

1. Identifying current position

The first step in the development of a career plan is the identification of where an individual is. This is akin to the [situational analysis](#) carried out before a business plan is created. At this stage, an individual takes stock of the current status to formulate a strategy. An individual looks at their current job, strengths, weaknesses, interest, and personal needs. Since career development is about creating a fit between the job and personal needs, one needs to figure out their needs at this stage. An individual SWOT analysis is also carried out at this stage to determine strengths and weaknesses. It can also assess the opportunities available. Threats like the declining economy, automation of jobs, etc., are also factored in. Personal needs like the desire to spend more time with the family, raise own children, pursue an interest, and stay closer to the ageing parents also feature in identifying current position. The current job is also placed under a microscope, with issues like job satisfaction, current earnings, need to change industries, industry growth rate, etc., being considered.

2. Identifying the destination

[Habit 2](#) of Stephen Covey's famous 7 habits of highly effective people talk about beginning with the end in mind, which is critical when creating plans. Individuals must have a clear image of where they want to be in terms of their careers. A sensible career development plan cannot be created until a person determine where they want to be. Individual interests explored in the first stage help in the determination of the career an individual wants. Factors like personal ambition, physical & physiological needs, interest, etc., play a critical role in shaping the desirable destination. Another significant factor that determines the desired destination is the available options. As an example, regardless of passion, interest, and ambitions, a Zimbabwean's unlikely to decide on being an astronaut.

3. Gap analysis

This stage interrogates the difference between the current position and the destination point. It helps in the creation of a strategy. The gap analysis helps an individual develop the necessary steps and actions essential for them to reach their ideal jobs. For example, the difference between the current skills and the required skills is brought to light. Of importance also is the gap between possessed qualifications and required qualifications. The significance of the gap analysis is in shedding light on the discrepancies between the current status and the destination.

4. Creating the plan

With the three above stages done, the next stage will be the creation of the plan itself. The process starts with the setting of career goals that speak to the desired career. For example, the goal may be to become the CEO of a leading pharmaceutical company in the next 10 years. Goals help the individual to focus on critical areas that can help in realizing the desired state. Like any other goals, they must follow the [SMART](#) criteria, which are specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable, and time-bound. It is the goals that help an individual develop a strategy and tactics to reach the final destination. From the previous example, a person aspiring to be a CEO can use the following strategies:

- Going to business school to acquire an MBA.
- Looking for a mentor who is already succeeding in that role.
- Reading more books
- Developing other relevant skills like leadership, time management, etc

The necessary resources needed to execute the career development plan fully are outlined beforehand. Clarification of the resources is an essential part of a career development plan. These resources may include finances for upskilling and reskilling, time for studies, etc.

5. Measuring progress

This is the final stage of the career development planning process. It involves the incorporation of control measures in the plan.

Executing career development plan

1. Upskilling and reskilling

Upskilling and reskilling are significant ways in the execution of the career development plan. Career development is about acquiring new skills that help any individual secure positions in their desired roles. New skills can be developed through [upskilling](#) and [reskilling](#). Upskilling can be achieved in many ways, including on-the-job training, [online courses](#), professional courses, going back to the university, etc.

2. Having a mentor

[Mentorship](#) provides a good way to learn from the actual practitioners and people who have already achieved what you seek. Guidance from a mentor can help one to avoid pitfalls and unnecessary veering from the predetermined course. Mentors are a great source of career development opportunities.

3. Seeking promotions and role expansion

For individuals with a career development ambition, proactively and actively seeking [promotion](#) opportunities is one good way of achieving their goals. Seeking a promotion involves hard work, delivering results, increasing your value in the organization, canvassing for support, and mastering organizational politics. Seeking the expansion of one's role in the organization is critical for developing skills and learning new things.

Conclusion

Career development planning is a process that focuses on matching individuals' interests, strengths, and ambitions with the job. The method includes determining where one is, desired destination, gap analysis, and making the plan. Career development benefits are job satisfaction and fulfilment for the individual and more effectiveness for the organization.

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