



SELF-MANAGED CAREERS: WE'RE ALL IN THIS ALONE?

Career Management For The Future

It is generally accepted that there are now no jobs for life, and no organisations for life. People change jobs or their jobs change, on average every three years. A six-career working life will soon become the norm. This means that individuals could have six separate, discrete types of activity during their working life.

The results of a recent CIPD survey (Reflections on Employee Well Being and the Psychological Contract – August 2005) reflect some of the reasons employees may choose to change their jobs:

- Only 39% of the UK workforce considered themselves to be in 'Good jobs' -A good job was described as interesting and exciting incorporating job variety and role clarity
- 21% of the workforce found their jobs unduly stressful
- Only 38% were willing to trust senior management to look after their interests – this fell to 25% in the private sector

The Psychological Contract

Traditionally the longstanding psychological contract implied that if an individual worked diligently for an organisation, the organisation would 'look after' them with regard to career progress. In terms of career practises Bruce Tulgan in 'Transformation of Organisational Structure' describes traditional organisations as exhibiting five discrete types:

- Long term relationships with long term employees
- Fixed entry levels
- Stepping up the ladder over time
- Stability and predictability
- Succession planning in a static organisation chart

Unfortunately organisations are finding they can no longer fulfil this 'contract' for a number of reasons. The movement to shared services and the outsourcing of functions such as human resources means that the focus on the 'softer' side of people is reduced. A major contributory factor is the degree of change and uncertainty that most organisations operate within making the future unpredictable. Organisations are in continuous change, with many disappearing as new ones form. During a single decade 46% of companies disappeared from the 'Fortune 500' listing. Only 30% of the first Times Top Hundred companies were still around 30 years later. In order to achieve success in the future organisations need to be able to adapt their practises and react rapidly to:

- New situations
- Unexpected new and lost opportunities
- Rapid expansion / contraction (maybe at the same time)
- Staffing needs in constant flux
- Let go of rigid structures and employment models
- Finding more ways to employ people (i.e. Full timers, Part timers, Some timers, Contractors)

The Current status of Career Management

The 2003 'Managing Employee Careers Survey' conducted by the CIPD showed that HR practitioners want to improve career development for all employees. However only one third felt that senior management are as committed to this goal and only 5% had trained line managers to support staff career development. The survey found that where career development does occur, effort tends to be directed to small groups of senior staff or 'high-fliers'. From the employee perspective the most common complaint was that they don't get access to really honest advice tailored to their needs and situations.

Research undertaken by Yale University showed that in a large sample group only 3% had written career plans whilst 97% didn't have plans and found that their career just happened to them. Revisiting the group 20 years later, the 3% with career plans were seen to enjoy better health, better relationships and were wealthier. Quo's work with large organisations in the UK including a leading midland Business School and a large Public Sector Agency supports this assertion that the majority, between 90 – 95%, do not have written career plans.



The Benefits of Career Management

There are significant benefits to be gained however from proactive career management, not solely for the individual but also for the organisation. 'Standing still is lethal'. Career development within the job is as important as career development by moving jobs.

Research has shown that effective career discussions can offer the following advantages for individual employees:

- A clearer sense of career direction
- Increased self-insight
- Better information on, and broader understanding of career options
- Increased confidence and motivation
- Positive job moves

Career management has been identified as one of the key practices associated with organisational performance and success. Furthermore career management can be used as a tool to:

- Grow the skills and experience the business needs
- Ensure effective deployment of skills
- Development of flexibility
- Attract and retain high quality employees
- Optimise each employees time with the company

Career Management in New Organisations

The implications of this evolving future and the continuing erosion of the old psychological contract has meant that career management is now essentially the responsibility of the individual. However, 'good' organisations will try to compensate by helping employees to self manage and take control of their own careers and by providing learning and a framework that enables the individual the opportunity for success. Many HR practitioners are now seeing that providing opportunities for individuals to improve their own career management and development are key elements of the New Psychological Contract.

Figure 1 provides some examples of organisations that are taking a proactive stance in career management not only to ensure employee engagement and satisfaction but also to aid talent retention.

Cap Gemini Ernst & Young have dispensed with their tradition hierarchy based structure and moved to a flexible structure. This incorporates 15 different roles that consultants can apply for specifically on each new assignment. This provides fluid career paths and the opportunity to continually develop competencies defined by the work not the job.

Deloitte Consulting have introduced a 'Senior Leaders Programme' where they retain the best and the brightest by allowing them to write their Dream Job Description. This programme is currently available to those who could retire at 50 and the company wants to keep.

Figure 1 Examples of Career Management in 'New Organisations'

So how can you support individuals in your organisation to manage their careers in an environment where uncertainty and ambiguity are the norm?

SELF MANAGED CAREERS

The Quo approach to self - career management is based upon current thinking and research in the area.

Zella King of the University of Reading Business School describes effective career management as being a 3 way partnership between the Line Manager, Employee and HR Professional, with the Employee often as lead partner (as illustrated in Figure 2). This is the approach Quo advocates.

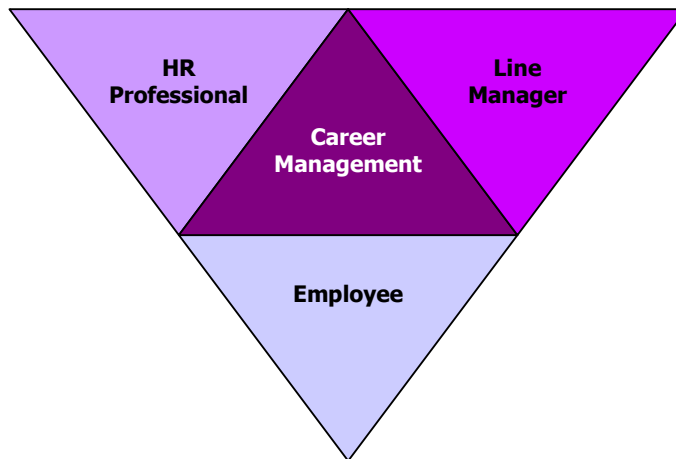


Figure 2 The partnership approach to career management

George Harrison once sang – *'If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there'* – so the idea behind this approach is that you help the employee define their own destination and plan their own route (whether it is internal or external). Whilst the organisation provides help and support, the employee has ownership of the process.

A study by Chris Orpen of Bournemouth University involving 129 individuals in public and private organisations confirmed a strong correlation between organisational supported career management and career success. When joint responsibility for career management was adopted and support was provided it was found that:

- Employees were more successful
- Organisations retained more successful employees
- Employees 'feel' more positive about their careers
- Employers reported having more effective, hard working and committed employees

From the results, Chris Orpen drew out three key three success criteria in effective career management:

1. Having *organisation plans and procedures* which support career management
2. Individual *ownership* of the career
3. Clearly signposted *opportunity information* on career development and progression
- 4.

These conclusions are consistent with the CIPD model of career management presented in Figure 3. It is these that serve the foundation of the Quo approach.

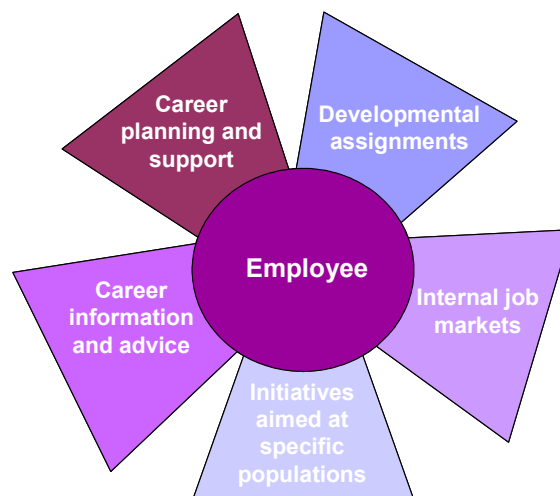


Figure 3. The 5 core components of career management (CIPD)

CAREER PLANNING AND SUPPORT – THE QUO APPROACH

Our approach to career planning and support has been developed around the self management approach to career management, taking into account the theory discussed above.

The aim is to enable organisations to maximise individual contribution at work by guiding employee self development and career management. The organisation forms a new psychological contract with the employee thereby heightening employee, organisational and business performance.

The approach is comprised of 3 phases – *Analysis, Preparation and Action*.

Phase 1: Analysis

In phase 1 we use a variety of prompts and tools to enable the individual to better understand themselves. This includes exploring:

- Work and adult life stages
- Motives & values
- Competences which they enjoy applying
- Competences to develop
- Preferred career patterns
- Transferable skills and appropriate functions within which to apply them
- Personal strategies to maximise effectiveness
- Back to the future – building on past success
- Understanding generation issues
- Work/life balance

Phase 2: Preparation

During the preparation phase we focus on:

- Defining the ideal role
- Reality checks
- Developing action plans - short, medium and long term
- Prioritising

- Doing the 'do-able'
- Learning and development needs
- Support available – internally and externally

Phase 3: Action

The final stage involves 'Doing it'!

Delivery Options

The programme can be tailored to individual's or specific groups where talent retention, succession planning, organisational change might be specific challenges.

The Analysis and Preparation phases can be provided in a workshop format supported with some pre-work.

A workshop to prepare line managers to facilitate career management within their teams is also available.



QUO CAPABILITY

The following benefits have been achieved through previous Quo Career Management interventions:

- Following a focused Career Management Programme a leading telecommunications company retained 29 out of 30 top talented staff during a period of major change and uncertainty
- Working with a high potential individual to chart their future career within a commercial organisation, enabled them to identify their internal direction and gain buy-in from the CEO. This led to planned development experiences to build their skill and experience.
- An interesting long term benefit for an organisation was achieved when a highly talented and frustrated director left the business following a Career Management programme. The programme highlighted that the business could not match their needs and that they were potentially disruptive to its success.
- A manufacturing organisation was looking to accelerate the career development of 3 talented individuals into board positions. Through a Career Management Programme key areas for developing their careers effectively were identified including familiarisation with other functions and personal planning. The 3 individuals were appointed to the board and subsequently 2 of the 3 were appointed to Group Director roles.

Career Management is a Win/Win issue – it helps the organisation and the individual!

EXAMPLE CAREER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

Illustrated below are outlines of previous Career Management Programmes that we have run.



Figure 4 One-to-One Career Development Outline Programme



Figure 5 Group Career Management Group Workshop

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WWW.QUOGROUP.COM