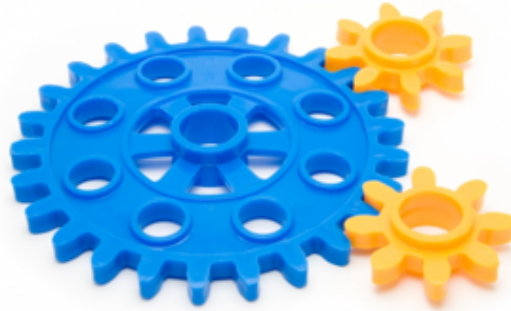


Empowering Employees to Own Their Careers



Many employees complain about lack of job satisfaction, and specifically the roles that managers and human resources representatives play in individual career development. However, most employees fail to consider themselves as active participants in their own career paths and job happiness, as well as overall professional development. For companies that want to be successful with their number one asset—especially in an economic climate where employee development funds can be scarce—it is crucial for employees to understand the importance of guiding their own career development.

How can you help? Provide support and training and your employees will be able to overcome the following five career obstacles and take control of their own future:

1. **Fuzzy Aspirations.** If an employee doesn't know where they want to go, how will they know how to get there? I've often asked employees what they want to be doing in five or 10 years, and their answers are generally along the lines of: "I'm sure if I do my job well, my boss will notice and eventually promote me." Maybe, but maybe not.

Encourage employees to take time to clearly define their aspirations. When they identify their own objectives, they are more likely to own and implement them without outside help.

2. **No Actionable Plan.** As the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery said, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." Would you ever try to drive across the country to a specific destination without a map? Achieving success requires a plan.

Encourage employees to create their own actionable plans which detail activities that will help them realize their career aspirations and goals efficiently and quickly.

3. **Limited Experience.** Many employees lack the breadth of experience needed to advance their careers. Additionally, lateral moves are often looked down upon because many employees believe they should advance upwards with every job change. It's imperative for employees to understand that a common pre-requisite to successfully handle most high-level management positions is a lateral job move.

Encourage employees to make lateral career moves to broaden their experience and enrich your company's management talent pool.

- 4. No Coach or Mentor.** Most people tell me they hadn't really thought about hiring a coach or asking someone to act as their mentor. When Sun Microsystems^[1] compared the career progress of about 1,000 employees over a five-year period, it turned out that both mentors and mentees were over 20% more likely to get a raise than people who did not participate in the mentoring program. Additionally, 25% of mentees and 28% of mentors received a raise – versus only 5% of managers who were not mentors. Employees who received mentoring were promoted five times more often than people who didn't have mentors, and mentors were six times more likely to have been promoted to a bigger job. Your employees' success is your success.

Encourage internal mentoring programs at your company. Help create high-potential employees and provide them with expert guidance and support through external, certified coaches.

- 5. Going It Alone.** Many people don't consider networking to be a method for achieving career aspirations, when in fact networking should be a key element of every employee's career. Networking is a great way to get to know people in the community, in the workplace, and in other businesses. It helps expand circles of friends, provides additional contacts for current and future job opportunities, and helps create a solid support system as employees advance within their careers.

Create networking opportunities for employees within your company and encourage active participation. Examples include Lunch 'n Learn sessions with outside speakers, Breakfasts with the Boss, Women's Networks, and any other opportunities that bring employees together to learn from and get to know each other.

Help your employees realize the importance of taking ownership of their career development and success. By doing so, you'll be integral in the creation of a more productive and content work environment, where your employees can thrive and your business can sustain success. Remember: "The best way to predict your future is to create it."

~ Lisa Quast

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Lisa Quast's passion in life is making a difference in the lives of women by helping them achieve their dreams. Lisa is a career coach, author, business consultant, and the founder and president of Career Woman Inc., a Seattle-based international career development consulting company dedicated to helping women achieve career success. She's an accomplished speaker and coach, inspiring audiences with her charismatic approach, actionable recommendations, and proven methodology.

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1 Sun MicroSystems, Human Resources Report, as quoted by Anne Fisher, Fortune senior writer, on March 13, 2007 on www.cnnmoney.com