

A Business Case
for
Corporate Career Development Programs

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Executive Summary

At a time when growing talent is a Human Capital imperative for businesses world-wide, industry research confirms that corporate career development programs add significant value. Career services are essential if employers expect to attract and retain engaged, productive talent. Managers, trained to coach employees, may not be sufficiently skilled to address and satisfy the range of unique individual needs. Employee-driven development is emerging and necessary, requiring companies to have a wide array of integrated processes and resources available for employees' professional growth. Career development professionals are central to this network of resources and, as such, partner with employees to find viable solutions that meet individual and organizational goals.

Corporate Career Development Programs:
A Best – Innovative – Cost-effective Practice

I can think of no better case for corporate career development (CD) programs than those that led to the creation of CD programs I've helped establish and worked in over the past 15 years. Such programs were not instituted because they were a "nice idea" or "the right thing to do." They came about as a salient solution to clear and growing feedback on employee opinion and engagement surveys. (In one organization, workers threatened to unionize if management did not address their need for career development assistance.) Implementing CD programs became a way to overcome real and pending challenges facing the companies. According to Insala's 2012 Career Development Survey, respondents indicated the primary reasons for their CD programs are engagement, succession planning and retention.

In the past, employee needs for career guidance might be met at performance review time - handled in a transactional, rather than strategic way, by design and in practice. Today, many assume such support will be available year-round and comprehensive. This is particularly true of younger generations of employees who were promised challenges and opportunities when recruited. The results of Korn/Ferry's recent Innovation Imperative Survey indicate "41 percent of candidates said they would consider leaving a company if they did not receive first-class development."

A number of corporations have decided to address this problem by beefing up their leadership programs, hoping to improve managers' skills in coaching employees around their development. Since the employee-manager relationship is so vital to employee engagement and retention, this makes good sense. But if one's manager has difficulty finding the time to coach, doesn't feel competent or confident in guiding such discussions or is hampered by personal differences (personality, communication, cultural, generational, etc.), employees may become disheartened, confused or stuck – not reaching or contributing their full potential.

There is growing recognition that to create a development culture, the notion of career self-reliance must be engendered among the employees themselves. That is, that each individual must take ownership of and drive their own career. This approach is a huge paradigm shift for many who relied on the former "Beam me up, Scotty" approach -- when employee's looked to management to advance their careers. In many cases, that dependence on one's manager for informed guidance and solutions could be a set up for employee disappointment or could even create problems that are counter-productive to the organization (e.g. holding a high potential employee back so as not to lose their contributions to the existing team).

Active, on-going career development support is what employees seek and what corporations must offer. It may "take a village" – including professionally trained career specialists with knowledge of the company's goals, operating structure, products and staffing requirements -- to successfully provide it. But doing so can leverage existing resources, expand opportunities and meet both individual and company needs.

The Purpose of a Career Development Program:

- Align employee goals with corporate goals
- Attract, develop and retain employees; help win the War for Talent by building the perception as an "Employer of Choice"
- Support a high-performance culture through motivating and developing all employees, promoting cultural assimilation, increasing bench strength and right-framing 21st century opportunities and challenges
- Promote workforce development by delivering practical educational workshops for employees, managers, and executive leadership about their respective roles in career planning and support
- Cultivate leadership characteristics in all employees
- Communicate trends and themes that may be impeding organizational effectiveness
- Diminish uncertainty and confusion on the part of employees; encourage them to be more enterprising

Career Development Program Offerings

The primary intent of corporate CD programs is to provide employees, managers and teams with an integrated support system – including structure, guidance and resources – for effective career planning, on-going learning and engagement, and enhanced performance to achieve the business’ success.

(It is not an outplacement services program.)

Services often include:

- Employee triage to worthwhile development opportunities and resources; efficiently and effectively serving as a “one-stop shop” for accessing career services (in person and virtually)
- One-on-one, individualized consultations with a career professional, including personal-assessment, exploration of options, goal setting and action planning (in person and virtually)
- On-line self-service tools for “on demand” learning, self-assessment, research, networking and information solutions
- Workshops, briefings, short courses and presentations (in person and virtually)
- Special events sponsorship (e.g. Career Development Campaigns, Education Fairs, Career Days)
- Advisement on the creation of new development initiatives (e.g. mentoring programs)
- Linkage to other People-development programs
- Organizational “climate sensing” and feedback
- Career Center tours and orientations

Materials and Resources may include:

- Hard copy and electronic books
- Career-related tip sheets
- People-related program brochures
- Website links (internal and external) for research and education
- E-learning systems and tools
- Development-related computer programs
- Employee development frameworks and models

Operating Principles:

- Provide career development services that are based on the identified needs of the geographic location/culture, organization and/or individual
- Assure accessibility by all employees; deliver services through a variety of mediums
- Collaborate with other People-programs to synergize efforts and leverage respective assets (See examples of partnership programs on Page 6)
- Educate company leaders on how career development offerings can address specific business and organization goals
- Staff the program with Career Development professionals who have business experience and utilize coaching/counseling fundamentals
- Market the program widely
- Sanctioned and commended by the highest levels of leadership

Career Development Program’s Alignment with Corporate Constituents’ Needs and Goals

Organizational Goals	Corp- orate Level	Leaders				Individual Contributors *	HR Organization		
		Senior	Mid- level	Front- line	Emerg- ing		L&D / TM	Business Partners	Staff -ing
<p><u>Performance*</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps bring the right person to the right job at the right time, using assessments and research tools, networking and information interviewing techniques, as well as resume assistance and interviewing practice <p><i>*Given the correlation between Performance and Engagement, see “Engagement” on page 6.</i></p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
<p><u>Affordability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A low-cost, sustainable program providing cost-effective, individualized development guidance and support ROI: significant money and time saved through employee retention (no need to recruit, train, and on-board); savings can greatly exceed costs Utilizes technology to reach maximum number of staff Program services are generally provided as a “no cost” resource for individuals, teams and other internal customers 	X					X	X	X	
	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
		X	X	X					

***Individual Contributors to target include:**

- New Hires (0-6 months)
- 6 month -1 year employees
- 1-5 year employees
- 5+ years – mid-career employees
- 15 + years “seasoned employees”
- Represented employees
- Interns (high school, college, etc.)

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Leadership Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports Leaders with their career development planning and the development plans of their employees Provides 1:1 professional development consulting to managers on their roles as coach and mentor Provides Leadership Assessment (360⁰) debriefs Encourages all employees to display leadership characteristics Improves succession planning 			X	X	X	X	X		
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps employees identify "right fit" careers and development opportunities, leading to greater commitment, quality performance, teamwork, a desire for excellence Available to help high-value employees that otherwise feel overlooked, under-used, out of sync with their management or team Confirms company as an "Employer of Choice" A resource for those wanting to be more engaged A partner for those already engaged but wanting to go to "next level" or new area 	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
			X	X	X	X		X	
			X	X	X	X	X	X	

Strategically Links to and Extends Other Development Efforts*

- Mentoring
- Cross-training
- Leadership programs
- E-learning
- Performance Management Processes
- Internal mobility/Rotation Programs
- Stretch assignments
- Communities of Practice
- Employee Resource Groups
- Education financing assistance
- On-the-job learning
- Coaching services
- New Hire Orientation/ On-boarding
- Management Clubs
- Internal Toastmasters group
- Work-Life Programs
- Internships
- Succession Planning
- Knowledge Management
- Shadowing

**Integrated into HR processes and programs*

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Organizational Goals	Corporate Level	Leaders				Individual Contributors	HR Organization		
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<p><u>Diversity & Inclusion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps employees from diverse backgrounds with networking strategies, self-promotion and marketing Increases pipeline diversity and inclusion by partnering with diversity-focused organizations (internal and external) and supporting individual candidates Assists employees, who might not otherwise get exposure, in competing for special honors and awards 	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
<p><u>Flexibility/Adaptability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides 1:1 consulting around issues related to change management Encourages new ways of thinking and behaving when developing and implementing career plans Demonstrates and encourages use of tools and resources available to, but often unknown by, employees Maximizes employee flexibility for team and organizational effectiveness 	X	X	X	X	X		X		

Promotes a Development and Performance Culture

- Facilitates growth and the acquisition of skills and resources
- Builds core competencies
- Maximizes potential in order to meet or exceed goals
- Avails managers, mentors and human resources professionals of in-house career development experts who can assist with development strategies, programs and processes
- Motivates, engages and empowers employees beyond perceived limitations
- Responds to the needs of business units, operating sites, teams and individuals
- Avails employees of services in person or virtually, through a variety of mediums and approaches

Sample Impact Statements

- “What the Center provides is the critical link to bridge the divide between where people are at and where they can be – and that gap may be small but it sure feels big without a link!”
- “I joined [the company] because I heard that it was a great place to work and that [the company] invests in training and development.”
- “I appreciate that the career program affirms [the company’s] policy of supporting career growth. The counseling and services I received definitely motivated me to take charge of my future. [The Coach] gave me the structure I needed to make informed decisions.”
- “The salient feature of the program is the one on one opportunity for disclosure and prescription. I would like to see this feature of the service retained. From my perspective, this has been the most effective aspect of the program and well worth the investment.”
- “I came to [the career development program] with questions on how to tailor my resume to reflect my job experience, and from that point in time, I realized that there were many other key factors missing in my professional development as an employee of [the company]. With [the Career Coach]’s help and assistance, I have been able to develop my interpersonal skills in and out of the office environment. I plan to continue with my coaching as I grow and my career goals continue to evolve.”
- “[The career development program] provides the opportunity to reflect upon accomplishments, and effectively assess where self-improvements are achievable. [The Career Coach]’s expertise, encouragement and trust remind me that the future is mine to own, and to positively affect. I leave each session feeling better about my professional and personal growth.”
- “It’s very nice and a privilege to be able to pause during the day and think about items that have a much longer effect than most of the tasks I put on a schedule.”
- “[Career Coach], you have this rarest of ability to look deep into one’s soul and awaken strengths in individuals that they never knew they had. You pull it out of them and massage it in a way that nurtures and plants seeds for abilities and potential they never imagined. Thank you!”
- “[The Career Consultant] gave me the structure I needed to use the company’s resources online to prepare me to find and interview colleagues at and above my pay grade, thus enabling me to make informed decisions.”
- “I was not getting any calls from hiring managers. So I decided to use the services of the career center. [The Center’s staff person] took time to analyze my resume and suggested some modifications to my resume. I did those changes and she recommended further changes. She also advised not to just apply for any job but to apply for the jobs which match my job skills. Based on the recommendation and advice she gave me, I applied to the jobs I felt I was qualified for. I believe the game changer was the fact that my revised resume highlighted clearly what my job experiences and my accomplishments were. My resume before the changes did not stand out. I currently have a new role. I highly recommend the good job the career center is doing to help employees advance their career.”

The Impact of a Career Development Program:

- Attracts new and diverse talent
- Updates, develops and broadens employee skills
- Increases adaptability and flexibility amidst organizational change
- Helps shift responsibility for one’s development from the manager to each employee
- Prepares the work-force for new opportunities and sustains competitive advantage
- Engenders career satisfaction leading to greater performance
- Becomes a valuable means to “pulse” the organization
- Enhances employee morale
- Models and reinforces corporate values and ethics
- Keeps the focus on quality and continuous improvement
- Serves as a buffer to the constant threat of change
- Demonstrates the corporation’s commitment to employees
- Enhances the effectiveness of the Human Resources function

Sample Success Stories

- **A Fork in the Road Leads to Collaboration**– A Project Manager with a BS in Mechanical Engineering and an MBA came into the career center because he felt he was at a significant crossroad in his career. He knew he wanted to grow and advance in his leadership role, but he was not sure if he would be better suited to advance in technical management or pursue a management position in Business or Finance. His Coach suggested that part of his career dilemma was due to insufficient information regarding the Business Management programs, how his background could be an asset to the success of those programs and what kind of additional training might be required. She encouraged him to seek out Business Management staff who would be willing to participate in informational interviews that would help him assess his situation. He met with several leaders who agreed that it would be very beneficial to the company for Business Management and Engineering to forge closer working relationships. Discussions led to the creation of rotational assignments, cross training and greater cross-discipline collaboration.
- **Insight Brings “Dream Job”** – An action-oriented Financial Planner came to the career center wanting to know more about herself, including her leadership style, because she was seeking a job with greater responsibility. Being a “go-getter”, she’d put herself in situations that she thought should lead to promotions, but they never came. This had her feeling limited and stuck, and wondering if she should job hunt outside the company. Several in-depth discussions with a Career Consultant revealed unrealistic assumptions about her visibility within the organization and unrealistic expectations about her career advancement. With new self-awareness and guidance on how she might proceed with networking, getting greater exposure and doing more targeted self-marketing, she was able to land her “dream job” within the company. When offered the position, she was told “We really want you. We really need you on our team!” This was powerful for her to hear after so many disappointments and perceived set-backs up to that point. Her enthusiasm about her new role was infectious.
- **A Compass on the Path to Success** – An enthusiastic new hire came to the Career Center to discuss his ambitious 5-year career plan. He knew he wanted to reach a certain level of management by a certain time, but was unsure how to chart his course. The Career Consultant suggested he take advantage of his diversified work environment and talk with program directors, functional managers and other leaders with whom he worked. She suggested that among those willing to share their experiences and perspectives, might be someone willing to serve as a Mentor. One month later, the young engineer and his new Program Director-Mentor came back to the Center to discuss the structure and process of their newly formed mentor/protégé partnership.
- **Reframing a Situation Can Renew Engagement**– A focused and highly skilled employee came into the career center concerned about being at his income ceiling, feeling under-appreciated and conflicted about competing personal priorities and interests. Coaching sessions helped him identify things he could do to enrich his current work and feel more fulfilled. Discussions also opened his eyes to intrinsic values being met through his current job and helped him appreciate the personal, professional and financial contributions it provided. He continued in his position with greater job appreciation and acceptance of his existing circumstances.
- **Hourly Job to Salaried Career** – A lead mechanic with many years of experience came to the career center after hearing a lunch-time presentation about the program. He had identified a salaried position he wanted to apply for and needed guidance on how to prepare an effective application and resume. Advised by the Coach to gather as much information as possible from co-workers and the hiring manager about the job and its requirements, he would then be able to match his specific qualifications to those needed. He did just that, which demonstrated initiative and leadership ability and gave him heightened visibility. This proactive effort combined with his outstanding background might have been enough to get him the position, but he went further and, using the researched job description as a springboard, was able to write a resume that presented his comprehensive experience in terms of the critical skills required. He was the successful candidate and advised his co-workers, “Visiting the career center can be the beginning of a brighter future.”
- **Recommitment Before Retirement**– A highly skilled, 24 year technical employee came to the career center to see if there was anything staff could offer him regarding his retirement planning. A meeting with a Career Coach helped him identify meaningful ventures he could pursue and activities that would prepare him now for those future ventures. From further discussion with the Coach, he became aware that some of the pre-retirement activities they had identified would actually be helpful to him in his current job. By the end of the session, not only was he excited about his long-term future, but also reinvigorated about adding to his current skill set and addressing existing organizational needs.



For over fifteen years, Ms. Fried has been instrumental in the design, delivery and management of professional and organizational development programs and has served as a **Career Coach** and **Professional Development Consultant** for internally-based corporate career centers. In those roles, she has assisted corporate employees at all levels and in all functional areas with evaluating and planning their career opportunities and directions, as well as helping corporations effectively use staff resources to accomplish organizational goals. Paulette has worked in a variety of industries (including social and health services, engineering and manufacturing, arts and entertainment, and real estate) in the for-profit and non-profit sectors, as well as with public agencies at every level of government.

After beginning her career as a Management Consultant in Washington, D.C., Paulette then moved on to administer and direct local and national programs based in that area. She later relocated to Los Angeles where she established, directed and grew the western regional operation of a national corporation. Since 1993, she has combined her counseling expertise with her knowledge of the business world to support others in their efforts to make informed occupational choices and optimize their career satisfaction and performance. She is currently based in Atlanta, Georgia.

Ms. Fried is a graduate of the University of Michigan and holds a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Maryland, where she also took core graduate courses toward a Master degree in Business Administration. In addition, she received training for her graduate certificate in Career Education and Counseling from California State University, Northridge. Ms. Fried is a Nationally Certified Career Counselor, a Board Certified Coach and is qualified to use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator for personality assessment, along with many other diagnostic tools widely used in corporate settings.