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## ***CAREER DEVELOPMENT in CORPORATIONS***

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## Chapter 9

# CORPORATE CAREER DEVELOPMENT: Fundamentals

by Paulette Fried

When I started working as a career development professional in a corporate setting, I had already had both academic and real-world experience in counseling and business management. It was during one of my own career crossroads that I recognized I could attain my *best fit* career by going into the career counseling field. It married both areas of keen interest to me in an ideal way. I entered our profession at a time when corporate career development programs were taking hold—thanks to early thought leaders like Zandy Leibowitz, Bev Kaye and Peggy Simonsen. In the 1990s, the Career Action Center was thriving in the Silicon Valley and *Harvard Business Review* published Betsy Collard's article, *Toward a Career-Resilient Workforce*. The work and writings of these corporate career development pioneers spoke directly to me, affirming my previously unknown aspirations and assuring me this new professional *north star* I'd found could be trusted. Career counseling on the west coast, where I lived at the time, was flourishing with many universities offering degrees and specialty certifications. A few, often technology-based companies, like TRW, Cal-Tech, Southern California Gas and Kodak, had started initiating and staffing internal career development centers. Their focus was on helping employees develop their career within the organization. It was not outplacement work for employees being laid off. It was at that time, in the 1990s, that I began the work that continues to fuel my creativity and sense of purpose.

### Why We Do It

Forward-thinking company leaders have known for many years, even decades, that technological advances and globalization were going to demand new ways of doing business. Those that were tracking demographics also realized that the aging of U.S. baby-boomers and their opting out of the work-force was going to be another variable to factor into the company's long-term strategic planning equation. It was primarily with these trends in mind that some organizations started establishing career development programs when I moved into doing corporate work. It was not because such programs were a nice idea or the right thing to do. Rather, it was hoped that they would be a way to overcome real and pending challenges facing the companies. From the corporation's point of view, the impetus for providing employees development support, beyond performance reviews and training classes, has been:

- To stay competitive through continuous workforce improvement.
- To be more flexible and adaptable to organizational change.
- To attract, motivate, retain and re-engage employees.
- To leverage existing and future development resources.
- To forestall real or perceived threats to waning staff morale, as reflected in employee opinion surveys, unrest from internal groups threatening unionization—or both.

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In addition, companies hope to engender a high-performance, learning organizational culture. Today, if employers are to attract and retain engaged and productive talent, professional development programs are needed. They are what employees want and now expect. The results of a recent Korn/Ferry Innovation Imperative Survey indicated *41 per cent of candidates [those seeking employment] said they would consider leaving a company if they did not receive first-class development*. Employees at all levels and in all functional areas of an organization want to derive more satisfaction from their work. Active, on-going career development support is what they seek. According to Insala's 2012 Career Development Survey of corporate leaders and HR professionals, respondents indicated that the primary reasons for their career development programs are engagement, succession planning and retention. It should not go unmentioned that a Human Capital Institute and Knightsbridge study revealed that *Effective implementation of career management leads to greater financial returns*. This was one of their Top 10 research insights of 2013.

### **What We Do**

Whether referred to as career counselors, career coaches, professional development consultants or something else, companies are looking to career development specialists to provide a broad array of career resources and information, products and services that will enable employees—individual contributors and managers—to broaden their knowledge of career development and effectively plan their career within the company. We often serve as a *hub* for accessing corporate development resources, information, tools and opportunities. Career services should help facilitate employees building relevant experiences, skills and competencies to enhance job and company performance—now and in the future. Underlying it all is the now pervasive notion of career self-reliance, that each individual take ownership of and drive their own career. Part of the offerings, although not always apparent, include enlightening managers and executives on their respective roles in corporate career development planning—from knowing how to forge conversations and what questions to ask, to creating an environment of openness and opportunity with essential supports (financial, political, organizational). Embedded, more often than not, within corporations' HR organization, career service providers need to serve as strategic partners to employees, managers and even executive leadership.

### **Areas of impact for corporate career professionals include:**

**Talent Management**—by addressing employees' needs, interests and issues; promoting career self-reliance; aligning employee development with corporate goals:

**On-boarding / assimilating into the corporate culture**

**Navigating job and organizational changes**

**Grappling with career / life transitions and balance**

**Networking and exploration** —for one's enrichment, challenge, advancement and organizational awareness

**Self-assessment and discovery** (values, interests, skills, style, strengths)

**Branding, self-marketing and resume development**

**Internal interviewing**

**Skill enhancement**, including non-technical **soft skills**, e.g. EQ, time and priority management

**Performance management** – seeking feedback, setting goals

**Strategic successor planning**

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### **Internal and external training/education**

**Stretch assignments** and special projects

**Integrating and reinforcing the company's goals, values, competency requirements**

**Fostering creativity, innovation**

**Legacy/ Retirement planning**

**Becoming more strategic** by spotting trends, identifying opportunities and challenges (individually, organizationally, by and across industries, globally)

### **Leadership Development—by coaching and training**

- Developing coaching skills for performance and development discussions
- Enhancing the effectiveness of communication, presentation skills
- Improving team dynamics, team building and collaboration
- Getting and giving feedback
- Promoting diversity and inclusion
- Shadowing leaders at staff meetings
- Supporting mentoring partnerships
- Processing 3600, 1800, 900 feedback results for professional development

### **Optimizing Performance and Organization Success—by contributing to and enhancing the enterprise**

- Preparing for/responding to organizational change
- Collaborating across Human Resource functions
- Encouraging rotation programs and Communities of Practice
- Supporting Employee Resource Groups
- Promoting knowledge management efforts
- Conducting career and education fairs
- Providing climate sensing feedback on noted issues, trend, themes
- Engendering a culture of caring, trust and encouragement

### **How We Do It**

Modes of service delivery are changing as individual organizations adopt emerging technologies and expand their geographic and cultural boundaries. Even so, core offerings tend to include:

**Triaging**—directing or referring clients to information, resources, individuals, opportunities and other ancillary employee-development programs to effectively and efficiently meet their needs.

These may include self-guided platforms, physical and virtual libraries, websites, learning exchanges and such. Essentially, corporate career development programs can serve as the *one-stop shop* for development services.

**One-on-one meetings**—personalized, confidential career and leadership development planning consultations. Counseling/coaching sessions can address career development, education, self-assessment, exploration, development planning, knowledge-sharing about the company.

**One-to-two coaching or facilitation**—to mentoring partners and employee-manager dyads.

**One-to-many events** (direct- and virtually-delivered)—Examples are program introductions and orientations, workshops (around traditional career development topics or customized to meet specific needs), and briefings to educate on or report the program's status; work group development facilitation or other specialized consulting to teams, guiding peer support and discussion

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groups; coordinating networking and educational events; staging group mentoring and *hot topic* presentations. Writing career-related articles and blogs is another example.

- Conducting research—to support client progress, to track business needs (e.g. skills and competencies) and to follow trends.
- Providing feedback and reporting—to stakeholder groups: corporate leaders, people-program partners and individual clients.

### **Who Does It**

I highly recommend professionally trained career development specialists to work with clients in a corporate setting. Because career conversations take place within a business context, knowledge of business management principles, operations, processes and procedures is a definite advantage, if not a must. Over time, it will be imperative to understand the workings of the company, its goals, its operating structure, its products and its human capital requirements.

### **Requirements I've identified for working as a Corporate Career Development Specialist:**

#### **Skills**

Counseling/coaching, training

Presentation and facilitation

Ability to build and maintain organizational relationships

Interpersonal, project management, strategic planning and multi-tasking skills

Qualified to administer and interpret career assessments widely used in corporate settings, such as MBTI, DiSC, Skill Scan, Strong Interest Inventory/ SDS, Strengths Finder

Research and analytical skills

Ability to articulate and impart information, ideas and observations about career development and the CD program; to influence the awareness, thinking and decisions of those in positions of responsibility and authority

Marketing savvy

Organizational skills for maintaining schedules, appointments and client notes, managing a program database, and filing essential records and documents

Compiling data, monitoring analytics and reporting metrics

Instructional design and/or program evaluation, may be desired

Proficiency with MS Office Suite (Word, Excel & PowerPoint) and knowledge of working in a networked environment

#### **Experience**

Minimum of 3-5 years professional experience providing both career counseling/coaching and training/facilitation services within an organization to a broad range of corporate employees

Providing guidance and feedback on resume writing, interviewing, career planning and management, networking and marketing strategies

Delivering information on a broad range of career development topics

Addressing change management (individually, organizationally)

Experience working with college hires (school to work, on-boarding and assimilation)

Contributing to or developing marketing campaigns for program services, including status briefings to leadership

Tapping on-line information and resources (internet and intranet), using telephonic and electronic mediums for client sessions, group web chats, presenting webinars, among others.

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Working as an Independent Contractor/Consultant (vs. employee) may be preferred

**Knowledge**

Master's degree in career counseling, a counseling related field and/or organizational psychology or equivalent experience

Knowledge of adult development and career development theory (in general and in organizations), models and techniques for working with clients

Being current on learning and development, HR and business trends/issues

**Personal Qualities**

Comfortable working independently in a corporate environment, as well as actively contributing as a member of a team

Exhibiting and engendering professionalism by providing the highest quality of service and taking great pride in every aspect of the work role

Being resourceful, flexible, and willing to take initiative

Dedication to customer service and collaboration

**Final Recommendations and Observations from my Experiences**

The value to companies of having career development programs and professionals is undeniable. Based on my work, here are some added recommendations and observations:

**Recommendations**

**Create a high-performance development culture** by taking a Systems Approach, establishing a full range of integrated development programs within the organization. Career development professionals can be, not only coach-partners, but a central point for making sense of the system for users and guiding them to other internal development opportunities.

**Make the program services Universally Available and Accessible** to all employees who are interested in their career and professional development, including those who may not be identified, as yet, as high-performers.

**Establish Stakeholder Groups** to ensure the support and on-going visibility needed for program success. Such groups may be comprised of 1) top leadership (i.e. Board of Directors), 2) other people-enrichment programs (i.e. Partners Committee) and 3) even employee-clients (i.e. Voice of the Customer Collective).

**Observations**

Program success is more likely if high-level leaders serve as champions and partners in the design, rollout of the program and participate in on-going oversight. Services should be designed to be delivered through a variety of modes and mediums. The traditional career development process is used as a core program model to trigger meaningful insights by clients. Use of the Career Development program should *not* be mandated. The program should be for those who are willing to voluntarily commit their time to career development. It is possible, and even desirable, to customize offerings to a variety of staff constituencies, i.e. interns, new hires (0-1 year), emerging employees (1-5 years), mid-career employees (5+ years), leaders, and late career/legacy planning employees. Collaborating with other talent-focused programs will strengthen efforts and amplify impact. Such programs exist to support, not supplant, the manager's role in employee development. Consistent, on-going out-reach and marketing of the existence and commitment of the program will be required.



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A corporate career development program is not only an employee development service, but also a corporate climate-sensing opportunity. Cross training programs (i.e. across functional domains, through stretch assignments and via special projects) are advantageous for employee development and for corporate flexibility in dynamic times and environments. Once involved in coaching (and having had their own insights deepened), it is not unusual for managers to promote individual and team development for their people. Employees' thinking about career development shifts from one of *promotion* to one of good position-employee *fit*. Regardless of whether a leader-client begins coaching to focus on their own career development or to become a better coach to their employees, both will naturally come up in the course of the coaching experience. Career development helps prevent valued employees from resigning, *retiring in place* or becoming negative or cynical. Having well qualified, highly dedicated and impactful Career Services staff is an essential component.

### About the author



**Paulette Fried** is Principal of Sustaining Careers, Inc. Atlanta, Georgia, a career development coaching and consulting services firm. In these roles, she assists individuals in evaluating and planning their career opportunities and direction, and helps corporations effectively use staff resources to accomplish organizational goals. She has over twenty years of experience in the for-profit, non-profit and public sectors. She earned the bachelor's degree at the University of Michigan (with honors). She earned the Master of Social Work at the University of

Maryland [where she also took the core graduate courses toward the MBA], and also a graduate certificate in Career Education and Counseling at California State University, Northridge. She is a Nationally Certified Career Counselor, Board Certified Coach, Distance Credentialed Counselor and is qualified to administer the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

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