

Managing Your Career - Continuous Personal Development - There's No Escape !

This article is designed to provide advice and guidance on career development, to managers and aspiring managers, of all ages, and at all levels.

I guess the first question you ask will be why use the word "managing" ?

Well this is because "career" development, at least for managers and specialist professionals, is much more complicated than it used to be, certainly here in Europe, and also in most highly advanced countries, and is becoming equally more complex in the rapidly developing countries also.

The days of: leave school or university, find job, work there for 20, 30, 40 years, is over in almost all sectors - thankfully !

It may have been a form of "security" for individuals, but it led to sterility, poor practice, inefficiency, laziness, and hostile resistance to change.

True, some rare individuals behaved creatively, enthusiastically, took risks, were ambitious, but these few could never counter the millions who settled in, kept their heads down, and looked forward to retirement sometime in the next century !

Thankfully (again) those days are over.

Now, all organisations in the commercial sectors, and most organisations in the public sector, are demanding evidence that each individual is continuously developing, is learning new skills, and is preparing for change positively and enthusiastically.

Years and years in the same job, promotion by "stepping into dead men's shoes", individuals with only the same skills and knowledge that they had when they started, "10 years in the job, 1 year's experience" -

These are no longer tolerated, not by the organisation's senior managers, nor by customers.

The organisation has a people development policy, each department has a local staff development plan, each individual is now expected to have a personal development plan

In some professions, such as accountancy, the legal profession, engineering, teaching, nursing (a list that is growing rapidly) the specialist must show hard evidence that they are up to date in the knowledge and skills needed currently, otherwise they risk being prevented from continuing in that role.

So for those employed by organisations, career development is now ... you guessed it ... a permanent, part-time, job.

A series of activities, such as being aware of developments in the business sector, planning ahead, identifying training needs, selecting appropriate ways to achieve those needs, finding courses, choosing between classroom and distance learning, and of course, finding a way to pay the study fees !

And this has to go on year after year after year ... continuous, continuing, professional development.

If you are familiar with quality management techniques, you will recognise this as a form of continuous improvement - kaizen as the Japanese call it.

It's a major, never-ending, personal task - and as such, needs considerable thought, considerable effort, a strategy, a plan - to ensure that you don't fall by the wayside and watch others race ahead, beating you to the best jobs, the key roles, the interesting projects, the higher salaries, the better conditions.

And if you are, or are planning to be, an entrepreneur ?

There's no escape for you just because you don't work for someone else - you have others in your life who are equally demanding:

suppliers, clients, customers, employees, other entrepreneurs, professional colleagues, - these groups rely on you, expect you, to be as knowledgeable and skilled as it is reasonably possible to be.

If you are not, your suppliers will take advantage of you, your clients will reject you, your customers will disappear, your employees will leave you, other entrepreneurs will take away your suppliers, clients, customers, and best employees, and your professional colleagues will lose respect for you.

As you can see ... there's no escape !

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