Career Development Strategies 5

> To laugh often and much;
> To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;
> To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;
> To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;
> To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;
> To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.
> This is to have succeeded.
>
> —Attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson[*]

Many in the baby-boom generation were raised with a stereotypical view of work, careers, and success. In the best cases work meant a regular schedule, often 8–5 Monday through Friday. A typical day was spent at the office, commuting to and from the office was a part of the daily regimen, and the commute usually was short or at least manageable. The typical week might include some overtime, occasionally requiring work on weekends, and although getting home from the office in a timely fashion wasn't easy, most people could manage it. Once you were home, work was somewhere else. The physical distance between one's workplace and one's home made the two spheres distinct.

Success was also easy to define. The person who rose to the highest point on the organization chart embodied success. He or she had the most impressive job title, all the desired perks, and the nicest home. (Remember

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[*]This poem has been widely attributed to Emerson, but an exhaustive search of his work by an Emerson scholar could find no copy of this poem in an anthology by him.

the old joke "He who dies with the most toys wins"?) But even as the world has gotten more hectic and work has become more consuming, people realize, perhaps more than ever before, that no matter what their level of ambition, success is a subjective construct with many dimensions. As Randall Tobias, former chair and CEO of Eli Lilly, said, "We have a clearer perspective when we get a little maturity. . . . When it comes time for someone to write my obituary, I don't want to be defined solely by the boxes I happened to occupy on organization charts. As important as that is to me, I want to be defined as the father of my children, as someone who made my community a better place" (Shellenbarger, 2000, p. 145).

Today, work, careers, and definitions of success are changing rapidly and in many new directions, some of which may be viewed as positive and some not. As travel has become easier and markets more global, some professionals are away from home often and for long periods of time. With advanced technology, late-night teleconferences with international partners and customers often are expected. Feeling secure in a job with a company or organization that takes care of its employees is less common. The pervasiveness of cell phones, personal digital assistants, and access to e-mail have blurred the work and home boundaries. The old image of work as a 9–5 arrangement has changed (for better and for worse).

On the other hand, many organizations are becoming more flexible in how and when work gets done, and more work can be completed at home or in remote locations. Individuals have many more options to shape their work lives to fit with the rest of their lives, especially as their needs change in different life circumstances and stages. Because the lines between work and family have become blurred, we all must be clearer than ever about what we want our lives to look like.

As organizational rules and career paths have changed and the boundaries between work and home become less clear, we need to create our own paths, establish our own priorities, and set our own limits. How we do so will depend, to a great extent, on what we are trying to achieve in our lives and our work. We need to ask ourselves,

What are the most important drivers of our satisfaction?

Is advancement in an organization the key to our sense of succeeding?

Is balancing work and family our most important task?

Is having time to pursue outside interests or support the community a critical element in our pursuit of a meaningful life?

THE CAREER AND LIFE ORIENTATION INDEX

The following activity will help you determine your need or desire to have flexibility and control in your career or work life—how protean you are. It will provide you with a rating on six different facets of your life and career: self-direction, organizational orientation, value expression, whole life balance focus, family focus, and community involvement.

Career and Life Orientation Index

Please indicate the extent to which the following statements are true for you, using the following response scale. Write the number for your response in the space next to each statement.

    1 = To little or no extent   4 = To a considerable extent
    2 = To a limited extent   5 = To a great extent
    3 = To some extent

1. I try to shape my career to maximize freedom and autonomy. _____

2. Finding time for myself is important to my overall quality of life. _____

3. My career decisions are made in terms of how they will affect my family.* _____

4. I am in charge of my own career. _____

5. If my current work does not support my values, I'll try to change it. _____

6. It is important to me to have a job that allows me the flexibility to be involved in my community. _____

7. I navigate my own career based on my personal priorities, as opposed to my employer's priorities. _____

8. Having a good fit between my work life and my home life is an important aspect of career success to me. _____

9. My career plans are centered on my present organization. _____

10. Making time to contribute to the well-being of my community is a priority for me. ____

11. Continuous personal development is more important to me than external career rewards such as promotions and income. _____

12. My sense of self, or identity, is focused primarily on my career. _____

13. It is really important to me to consider my family's* needs when making career plans. _____

14. Achieving a high position is an important aspect of career success to me. _____

15. Overall, I have a very independent, self-directed career. _____

(Continued)

(Continued)

16. I would really not want to have a job that did not allow me time to volunteer in my community. _____

17. I believe that I am most effective at work when I am more committed to my own goals than to the organization's goals. _____

18. People who try to do things their own way as opposed to using prescribed procedures are not helpful to the organization's performance. _____

19. Those who work with me are aware of my personal beliefs and principles based on things I do or say. _____

20. If I can't express my values through my work, it's okay, as long as I achieve promotion or financial success. _____

21. My career plans are centered on my family's* needs. _____

22. When a decision comes up that pits life balance against career success, life balance is most important to me. _____

23. When I make a decision about my career, I consider how well the new situation would fit with my personal beliefs and values. _____

24. When I make a decision about my career, I consider how well the new situation would fit with my family's* priorities. _____

25. In the past I have left a job, or strongly considered leaving a job, because it did not allow me to express myself in terms of what is most important to me in life. _____

26. It's important that I find ways to express my own values at work, regardless of whether they match perfectly the organization's values. _____

27. I value being of service to other people in the community where I live. _____

28. Having time for my family* is a driving force in my career decisions. _____

29. When choosing between two career options, I tend to prefer the one that provides the best work–life balance. _____

30. Expressing my values at work is just as important to me as expressing them in other parts of my life. _____

31. Advancement and promotion are very important to me. _____

32. To feel successful in my career, I must have other outlets for expression of my personal interests and talents. _____

33. Following my own path is more important than moving up my organization's career ladder. _____

_____ **Total Score**
_____ **Average Score** (equals Total Score divided by 33)

Scoring

First, add up the numbers for your responses to all of the questions. Enter this total next to "Total Score" above. Then divide this score by 33. This will give your Average Score. Enter this score next to "Average Score" above.

Interpreting Your Average Score

>4.4:	Extremely protean (top 2%)
4.0–4.39:	Highly protean (top 15%)
3.6–3.99:	Moderately protean
3.2–3.59:	Moderately organizational
2.8–3.19:	Highly organizational (top 15%)
<2.8:	Extremely organizational (top 2%)

Hypothesized Life and Career Facets

To compute your Life and Career Facets, add up the scores you assigned to the questions listed in each of the following categories (e.g., for self-direction, add up the scores for questions 1, 4, 7, 12, 15, and 33). Then divide the total by the total number of questions indicated (e.g., to calculate self-direction, divide the sum of your answers by 6).

1. Self-direction $1 + 4 + 7 + 12 + 15 + 33 =$ _____ $/ 6 =$ _____
2. Organizational orientation $9 + 14 + 18 + 20 + 31 =$ _____ $/ 5 =$ _____
3. Value expression $5 + 17 + 19 + 23 + 25 + 26 + 30 =$ _____ $/ 7 =$ _____
4. Whole life balance focus $2 + 11 + 22 + 29 + 32 =$ _____ $/ 5 =$ _____
5. Family* focus $3 + 8 + 13 + 21 + 24 + 28 =$ _____ $/ 6 =$ _____
6. Community involvement $6 + 10 + 16 + 27 =$ _____ $/ 4 =$ _____

Explanation of Terms

- Self-direction: high degree of autonomy
- Organizational orientation: desire to stay with employer
- Value expression: chance to do value-based work
- Whole life balance focus: opportunity to maintain balance
- Family* focus: emphasis on family
- Community involvement: opportunity to work in the community

*The term *family* may include your spouse or partner, children, parents, or others with whom you share your life or home.

As you go through this chapter, the Career and Life Orientation Index should serve as a highly useful point of reference. As you think about your personal career plans, you will want to consider how much control you want over your career path, what the major drivers of satisfaction are, what shape development will take, and what kinds of boundaries you want between your home life and your work life. There was a time, not so long ago, when organizations provided clear career paths for all employees. Some organizations still maintain an "up or out" approach to development that suggests that career development equals moving up the hierarchy. But today, people have more license to create their own path. It is now incumbent on each of us to make these decisions and navigate our own unique approach to ongoing development.

Organizational Career Paths

There is good news and bad news about organizational career paths today. The bad news is that many organizations have downsized and delayered, so that there are fewer opportunities for upward mobility than there were 10 or 15 years ago. In short, the old career paths are, for the most part, gone (one meaning of Tim's book title, *The Career Is Dead—Long Live the Career*). The good news is that there is less external pressure for people to move in prescribed career paths. With flatter organizations, the remaining jobs are broader (i.e., have wider scope of responsibilities), and there are far more options for lateral moves.

What remains, though, are some very general directions that people might take in their careers. They include the following:

- *Functional paths.* It is still possible to build your career around a functional specialty, such as finance or marketing, because larger organizations tend to have a hierarchy of positions within these functions. However, in the era of the boundaryless career—a career that is no longer seen in the context of one particular organization— fewer people spend long periods of time in one organization and work their way up a functional path. They might move between organizations while staying within their functional specialty.

- *Industry paths.* Increasingly, people are coming to identify with a broad industry sector rather than a specific organization. Examples include healthcare, information technology, or financial services. We are also seeing professional communities of practice grow up around certain industries, and this reinforces these industry career paths. For example, in the optics industry we have seen the rise of clusters, informal networks of people and companies in the optics industry that are networked for the purpose of information sharing and support.

- *Institutional sector.* Although many people who read this book may be heading toward a career in the business or for-profit sector, many people are oriented more toward the public or nonprofit sectors. In the business school community we are seeing an increased focus on the nonprofit sector as an arena for people with a values-oriented personal mission to pursue their "path with a heart." They are willing to trade a certain amount of financial reward for the chance to pursue a purpose that has greater meaning for them. Although it is certainly possible to cross sector boundaries throughout one's career, people often define their professional identity in terms of the sector in which they work.

FROM CAREER LADDERS TO CAREER LATTICES

Cliff Hakim, the author of *We Are All Self-Employed,* presents us with the following dialogue:

Question: "How does a career ladder fit in flattening organizations?"

Answer: "For the majority, it doesn't." (1994, p. 33)

Hakim explains that as organizations downsize and delayer, more latitude is necessary. People have bigger jobs, with more responsibility and scope. They are empowered, and decisions have to be made where the problems and the customers are and where the work gets done. Organizations can no longer afford hierarchies.

In the past it was the hierarchy that provided the path for career development. Up was the only way for career growth to occur. But now, when organizations work laterally rather than vertically, lateral is the primary way. Thus, as Hakim points out, the new career reality is not the career ladder but the *career lattice.* He describes the career lattice as follows:

A career ladder suggests that there are only three ways to go: up, down, or falling off. Up usually means success; going down or falling off . . . well, most of us try to avoid these.

By contrast, the career lattice is a viable alternative for career mobility and job productivity, for its structure supports different paths, each one involving career choices based on skills, values, interests, competition, workplace and customer needs, and individual and group initiative. A career lattice provides many options that a career ladder cannot. Douglas, for example, worked his way up the ladder to become a partner in a public relations firm. As partner, his role changed from direct consulting with clients to managing workers. But as the marketplace changed, he needed to lay off staff and step off the ladder. Douglas became a consultant again, moving in any

direction—that is, using the career lattice—so that customers would be served and the firm would succeed. (1994, p. 34)

As you move from career ladder thinking to career lattice thinking, Hakim suggests that you reframe your career perspective as described in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1   Reframing Your Career Perspective

From Career Ladder Perspective	*To Career Lattice Perspective*
Moves are limited.	Moves can go in any direction (up, down, across).
Promotions and titles are the main rewards.	What people contribute matters most.
The boss provides answers and direction.	We collaborate ("Let's figure it out.").
Rewards are based on loyalty.	Rewards are based on results.
Employees are dependent on others.	Independence, flexibility, and teamwork are the ways work gets done.

What this change means is that the important currency in the career is not advancement but learning. Your current skills are your main form of security in a turbulent business environment, and when you stop learning, your career lifeblood is cut off. Lattice thinking and the mobility and learning that it leads to will keep you on the most promising paths to career development.

One barrier that makes it difficult for people to switch between different career paths is what we call the search for the perfect fit. This mindset is the tendency of employers to look for a job candidate who has done exactly the same job in the past. Thus, they can select someone who has already demonstrated good performance in that job. Although this might appear to be a safe strategy for the employer, it doesn't work for either party. It certainly does not serve a job candidate well who wants to make any kind of career change or a move to a different path.

Even for the organization, this "perfect fit" approach could result in an employee not feeling stimulated and challenged by something new. Even though he or she has the experience and ability to perform well, his or her motivation level might be lower than that of the candidate for whom the

job is new. *Career variety* is a powerful source of motivation and adaptability, especially as the person becomes more senior. If an employer selects a person for whom the job represents *low* variety (i.e., a job the person has done before), they are losing out on a good motivational opportunity.

VERTICAL CAREERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Despite all that has been said about protean careers and a subjective view of success and all that will be said about alternative career paths, many people still think of careers and career development in more traditional ways. For many, career development and success are equated with how far and how quickly one moves up the hierarchy.

Although we present many alternatives to the traditional view that up is the only way, we recognize that this organizational view of success is both common and, for many, desirable. With that in mind, how does one increase the likelihood of achieving organizational success and moving up the career ladder? A number of tried-and-true approaches to moving ahead in an organizational career are grounded in both conventional wisdom and empirical research.

Linda Hill of Harvard Business School has extensively studied the area of career development and management development in organizations. Hill (1994) offers some sound advice for those looking to be "successful" and to advance within their organizations. She states that managers must take charge of their careers and become self-directed learners willing to invent themselves time and again. They must be prepared to continually learn and grow in response to an ever-changing environment.

Hill outlines what she terms "creating a success syndrome"—the idea that success snowballs and contributions get noticed and build a reputation that garners even higher visibility assignments. How do you do this? According to Hill, one should:

1. *Land stretch assignments.* Find the right balance between assignments where you are learning but also contributing. Learning without contributing or contributing without learning are both recipes for long term problems.

2. *Pay attention to the tangibles but also the intangibles*: Focusing on salary, promotions, and titles is fine but you must also look at other intangible factors that will significantly influence your long-term success. Things to consider: Am I learning? Am I building my support network? Am I building a solid reputation? Am I increasing my self-confidence?

3. *Think strategically*: Don't just think about moving up, think about how lateral moves can broaden and build your skill set.

4. *Think globally:* With the increased emphasis on globalization, the importance of gaining international experience has also increased. The advantages of securing international experience are that you will gain leadership skills, learn new language(s) and cultures, build empathy for other countries, and learn to cope with ambiguity.

As Hill makes clear, even for those who are looking for career advancement in a vertical sense, simply pursuing vertical paths could be a mistake. Especially early in one's career it is important to look for ways to diversify your skills, broaden your understanding of the organization you work for, and build a large support network. While lateral moves and international assignments may not be the fastest ways to advance within an organization, in our experience they increase the likelihood of the long-term attainment of your advancement goals.

MANAGING UP

Like it or not, anyone looking to move up the hierarchy in an organization needs to be skilled in managing up. In 2001, three research organizations—the Families and Work Institute, Catalyst, and the Boston College Center for Work & Family—completed the Global Leaders Study (Box 5.1). This study examined the career development of more than 1,000 senior executives in very large organizations. For the majority of the participants in study, the people most influential in helping them to advance were their direct manager or a manager at a higher level in the organization. When asked, "Who is the one person in your current organization who has helped you most to develop in your career?" nearly 45% of the respondents answered "My manager." Remember, this response is from people at the very highest echelons of major corporations, probably people who enjoy a large and influential network and high visibility in their organizations.

If you are looking to advance through the management ranks, how well you manage your boss is likely to be more important than how well you manage your team or your horizontal relationships. Many senior managers will judge your performance more on how you perform and are perceived than by the way your workgroup operates. Until recently, with the increasing use of 360-degree feedback as a standard part of the evaluation process, few senior managers would solicit feedback on a manager's performance and leadership abilities from that manager's workgroup. Managing your workgroup poorly is a significant impediment to upward mobility, but managing your manager poorly is potentially fatal. Conversely, managing your manager well can be enormously helpful.

A number of years ago professors John Gabarro and John Kotter wrote what has become a classic article in the *Harvard Business Review,*

"Managing Your Boss" (Gabarro & Kotter, 2005). They pointed out that managers can offer a lot to an aspiring junior manager, including sponsorship, resources, coaching, and visibility. They offered some advice for how to manage this most important relationship. It included the following:

- Understand that relationships are always made up of two fallible human beings. It's not enough to be aware of your boss's failings; you also need to think about how to compensate for them.

- Make it a point to know things such as your boss's highest priorities, what his or her boss is expecting from him or her (pressures), your boss's strengths and weaknesses, and how your manager likes to be informed (how often and in what format).

Gabarro and Kotter also offer the following suggestions for managing this relationship:

Be dependable and honest.

Provide a good flow of information.

Make good use of your manager's limited time.

Initiate contact regularly.

Understand mutual expectations (his or hers of you and yours of him or her).

Making your boss a hero or removing a major headache will always be appreciated. Think of your boss as your customer and ask yourself, "What are the two or three things my customer would most want from me?" and "What can I do that would add the most value or eliminate his or her biggest problem?"

Box 5.1 Organizational Career Advancement: The Global Leaders Study

In 2001, three research organizations—the Families and Work Institute, Catalyst, and the Boston College Center for Work & Family—completed the Global Leaders Study. This study was the largest ever done of senior executives in major U.S. global corporations; 1,100 executives in 10 corporations participated. This research focused heavily on women for two primary reasons. First, women play increasingly important roles in business and in the global economy. Second, companies needed to find ways to retain their top female talent. Retaining women in leadership positions had been

(Continued)

(Continued)

(and remains) a serious concern for organizations, where many women find juggling top management positions with family roles to be quite difficult.

Working time for executives in the study averaged about 62 hours a week, with little difference in men's and women's work hours. When they were asked why they work the long hours they do, a few key reasons emerged:

- 76% said, "To meet my own standards for doing good work."

- 66% said, "It takes that long to do the work I need to do."

- Between one third and one half of the participants suggested that they put in the long hours to meet customer needs and to improve the company's bottom line.

- One quarter of the participants said, "To advance at my job."

So although the jobs these people held were indeed demanding, perhaps the greater reason for working the hours they did was an internal standard of quality.

The demographics of the study participants also revealed some clear differences between male and female executives. For example, 91% of the men in the study were married, and 90% had children. By contrast, 72% of the women were married, and only 65% had children. This statistic mirrors a number of other studies of successful women and the high percentage of these women who are childless (e.g., Hewlett, 2002b). Perhaps even more telling, only 11% of the men in the study had a spouse who worked full time, whereas 74% of the women had a spouse or partner working full time.

One of the key areas where gender differences remained clear was in responsibility for child rearing. When participants were asked, "Who takes more responsibility for child care?" 57% of the women and only 1% of the men answered, "I do." In addition to the obvious psychological and physical burden this places on women, it can also affect their ability to fulfill some job requirements. When asked how often overnight business travel was required by their jobs, 38% of participants answered "several times a month." But in this instance there was a significant difference between men's and women's answers. Of those who said this amount of travel was required, 46% were men and 30% were women. These numbers suggest that women might be avoiding jobs that carry a heavy travel requirement due, in some measure, to their family responsibilities. As corporate consolidations increase and long-distance business travel is increasingly becoming part of the landscape for those who seek upward mobility, the still radically unequal distribution of child care responsibilities creates another organizational obstacle to women's advancement into senior-level roles.

Also related to work hours and work demands was the issue of what one puts first, work or personal life. Those who put work ahead of their personal life we called *work-centric,* those who put family first are *family-centric,* and those who try to balance the two evenly are *dual-centric* (Galinsky et al., 2003). As one might imagine, the

majority of senior executives are work-centric: 57% stated that they put job ahead of family life often or very often. These executives were more likely to miss family events or work at night and on weekends. This finding was expected. However, an interesting finding was that those who are dual-centric reported higher levels of satisfaction and fulfillment both at home and on the job than those who were work-centric. This suggests that although being work-centric facilitates advancement, having a dual-centric approach to work and life might yield greater feelings of fulfillment.

Key messages from the participants regarding development and the obstacles to advancement included the following:

When asked, "What has your employer done to help you succeed?"

83% said, "Provided opportunities for leadership."

80% said, "Gave me challenging assignments."

50% said, "Provided exposure to senior leaders early in my career."

35% said, "Provided opportunity for international assignments."

21% said, "Provided leadership training."

These responses mirror many of the suggestions from Linda Hill's work on management development. They also support the well-accepted notion that management development occurs primarily on the job, not in the classroom.

When asked, "What factors have been most limiting to you?"

24% said, "A limited number of mentors."

19% said, "Exclusion from important networks" (not surprisingly, the number here was more than twice as high for women as men).

19% said, "Limited role models" (again, this number was twice as high for women).

17% said, "A limited number of sponsors."

17% said, "The need to sacrifice everything for work in our corporate culture."

Finally, the study suggests that if you want to get to a high level in a major organization, this does not occur by accident: 75% of the study participants said that they had planned their career to some or to a great extent.

Alternative Career Paths

If the shift in the employment contract and the struggle for work–life balance has accomplished anything, it has helped many people realize two things:

- Ultimately the true measure of success is determined by one's sense of satisfaction and psychological well-being, not by one's position in an organizational hierarchy. Although it might be argued that this measure of success has always been true, today the illusion that the organization defines success has been stripped away for many of us.

- There are fewer and fewer examples of people following a linear career path up the organization. Today, career paths tend to be more idiosyncratic and more likely to resemble the career lattice mentioned earlier.

Because these trends have now been more widely recognized, there is greater openness to the notion that up is not the only way. Even for those who have chosen and succeeded on a traditional career path, happiness is not assured. In fact, a recent study suggests that CEOs, the consummate organizational advancement role models, may be a rather unhappy lot. A survey conducted at the New York global communication consultancy Burston-Marsteller found that "73 percent of the 369 CEOs surveyed answered yes to the question, 'Do you think about quitting your job?'" ("Survey: CEOs mull quitting their jobs," 2003). In addition, more than four out of five respondents said they are kept awake at night by "company demons," including worries about the competition, how to increase business, and how to keep shareholders happy. More than a third of the executives one rung down from CEO and more than 50% of the women in the survey reported that they would decline a promotion to the top spot if they were offered it. Beyond the pressures that go with the role, the organization that conducted that study further speculated that the rise in corporate scandals had also decreased the desirability of the role of CEO.

Also contributing to the acceptance that moving up the ladder may provide riches but not a rich life is the growing popularity of the simplicity movement, which espouses making a conscious choice to "work to live rather than live to work." This shift has also been influenced by environmentalists, who believe that the consumption trap many Americans are caught in has fueled overwork, created complexity in people's lives, and damaged the environment (Schor, 1992).

But perhaps the most important trend relating to alternative career paths comes about as a result of changing demographics. Recent studies of Generations X and Y indicate that members of these post–baby-boom generations are simply not as interested in upward advancement as their baby-boomer counterparts once were. The voice of these younger people seems to echo the theme that work–life balance and time with family are more important than organizational advancement. As of this writing, a majority of men ages 21–39 (more than 70%) said they want to spend more time with their families than their fathers did and would be willing to sacrifice pay to do so. Furthermore, these men have stated that the most important job characteristic they are seeking is a work schedule that allows

them to spend time with their families (Radcliffe Public Policy Center and Harris Interactive, 2000). More evidence of this comes from Families and Work Institute's recent study that found that Generation X fathers spend on average 3.4 hours per day with their children, compared with the 2.2 hours baby-boomer fathers spend with their children of the same age (Families and Work Institute, 2004). And the issue is even more important to women in this group: 83% of women in an earlier study reported that flexible work arrangements are key to career advancement and satisfaction (Catalyst, 2001).

These shifts have led many people to consider alternative career paths. Many of these might fall under the broad umbrella of "downshifting." As Amy Salzman states in her book *Downshifting: Reinventing Success on a Slower Track,*

> Moving ahead on a career track will always be an important part of the success equation for many of us. Work is our anchor—and tells us who we are and whether we measure up financially. But in our quest to conform to a predetermined image of success, we have lost track of our true goals: to lead meaningful and worthwhile lives. We have allowed our careers to control us.
>
> Pulling back will of course, require making sacrifices, the most obvious of which are financial. In terms of pure monetary and lifestyle impact, however, those sacrifices may be surprisingly minimal. Rather than moving backwards economically, the majority of downshifters merely end up plateauing their lifestyles. They learn to live without the remodeled kitchen, a new car every five years, and the bigger dream house they once believed they had to have. Instead they come to appreciate the comforts and sense of belonging that results from staying put. Money, they begin to see matters far less when they are personally and professionally satisfied. (1992, p. 67)

Salzman, a journalist, profiled a number of high-visibility downshifters in her book. She offers five models or prototypes for those who are looking for alternative career paths.

BACKTRACKERS: PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE SELF-DEMOTION TO HAVE MORE TIME AND LESS STRESS

Salzman points out that if there is one given about a stereotypical career it is that we travel up, not down. Moving backwards as a purposeful choice is one that a person might choose only after traveling upward, with an accompanying feeling that one is moving away from where he or she wants to be. As Salzman states,

> Getting over the idea that they will be cast as failures is the greatest challenge facing Backtrackers. For females, for example, who have climbed to a position of authority in male-dominated fields, the

thought of abruptly stepping backward seems to legitimize the stereo-type that women don't have what it takes to make it at the top. . . . In fact, for men and women alike, stepping back is frequently the culmi-nation of a painful personal battle between personal needs and professional expectations. In the competitive world of masculine achievement, backtracking is often viewed as copping out. (1992, p. 97)

For many career climbers the early years of the career are seductive. "Successful" people see changes occurring that are difficult to resist. These changes include increases in power and autonomy, increasingly visible and important assignments, positive feedback from senior management, and often significant increases in earnings. "In the midst of such professional highs, setting limits and saying 'no' seems impossible" (Salzman, 1992, p. 99). Another challenge is that society tells young high achievers that they should feel happy and privileged with the success they have achieved, that "others would kill to be in your shoes."

PLATEAUERS: PEOPLE WHO INTENTIONALLY STAY IN PLACE BY TURNING DOWN PROMOTIONS TO STAY IN CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES

Salzman (1992) states,

Not so long ago the "plateauer" was a kinder, gentler word for "dead-wood." In the corporate world, the plateaued were typically middle managers whose solid but unspectacular performance allowed them to coast comfortably toward retirement while making a minimal con-tribution to the organization. Today, Plateauers are no longer synony-mous with deadwood, and the opportunity to stay in place and avoid political entanglements of the upward track may actually lead to new opportunities for creative and intellectual development. (p. 74)

Salzman goes on to say that confining one's career to an upward or vertical track actually can limit choices, make it difficult to do work one enjoys, and limit the range of skills one can develop. She points out that the delayering of the corporate world actually makes this a very reasonable means of growing and developing while not necessarily seeing manage-ment as the only path to development.

CAREER SHIFTERS: PEOPLE WHO TRANSFER THEIR SKILLS TO LESS PRESSURED FIELDS

Salzman makes a clear distinction between *career shifters* and *career changers.* A career changer is someone who goes from being a doctor to a

business executive or a lawyer to a novelist (also known today as *John Grisham syndrome,* fairly common among lawyers). Career changers are not downshifters. They may be going from one high-pressure role to a different one. They are motivated by the desire to do something that they believe is different and more fundamentally aligned with their interests.

By contrast, career shifters are those who still get satisfaction and enjoyment from their professions but feel they have committed to an unnecessarily rigorous course within that profession. Salzman (1992) points out,

> The approach they take is more appropriately labeled career shifting because it involves a refocusing rather than a complete redoing of their professional pursuits. Career changing by contrast often requires returning to school and then reestablishing a whole new set of professional contacts to open doors and help gain a solid footing in a new profession. Such changes can take years and are often a major shock to the ego and the pocketbook. Achieving a more balanced life on a slower track, career shifters realize, will not come from completely dismantling their careers and starting from scratch. (p. 122)

SELF-EMPLOYERS: PEOPLE WHO GO SOLO TO GAIN MORE CONTROL OVER THEIR WORK HOURS AND LOCATION

Somewhat different from the stereotype of a driven entrepreneur, who sinks his or her whole being into a startup business, the self-employer chooses entrepreneurship as a lifestyle. The desire to be one's own boss, set one's own schedule, and avoid corporate bureaucracy is the motivation for this person. In fact, Salzman points to a study of 3,000 new business owners conducted by the National Federation of Independent Businesses. The survey found that "54% said that 'having greater control over their life' was among the most important reasons for choosing entrepreneurship and 32% said that being able to 'live where and how I like' was at the top of their list. By contrast, only 19% said that earning a lot of money and gaining more respect and recognition were primary motivators" (Salzman, 1992, p. 148).

The shift toward self-employment is also a logical response to the growing instability of the corporate world. As Charles Handy postulates in *The Age of Unreason* (1989), corporations are decreasing in overall employment and are creating opportunities for small service companies, contract workers, and consultants to complement or supplement their full-time workforce. Self-employers might see these roles as being more desirable despite their lack of benefits because they create opportunities for greater autonomy and control over one's work life.

URBAN ESCAPEES: PEOPLE WHO OPT FOR MORE HOSPITABLE, LESS STRESSFUL ENVIRONMENTS

Salzman describes this phenomenon as one that has existed for many years: seeking the peace and serenity of the countryside, escaping the pace and lifestyle of the large city in favor of a quieter, simpler life. She suggests that urban escape is gaining momentum for several reasons. The first is the desire to find a greater sense of community and a less expensive way of life. Salzman (1992) states,

> An underlying theme seems to fuel most urban escapees: It is the belief that the high prices, honking horns, and impatient tenor of urban and suburban life have pushed them further and further away from the sense of neighborhood and community found in small-town America. (p. 174)

Additionally, the quest for a less stressful environment in which to pursue careers is compelling. "There is no question that expectations about careers and emphasis on work are much greater in some areas of the country than they are in others. Most notably, the big cities of the East Coast, which attract a large percentage of young professionals, are far more focused on career status and macho workaholism than even comparable cities in the Midwest and on the West Coast" (Salzman, 1992, p. 175). There is little question that Silicon Valley area and other areas of California have joined the East Coast in their reputation for workaholism since the publication of Salzman's book.

Salzman suggests that the transition to urban escapee is not easy. Making a living in a small town is a significant challenge. Salzman uses the example of people who move from an urban environment to open a rural bed & breakfast, a common dream for the urban escapee. Quoting innkeepers' association studies, Salzman states that "the average B&B owner calls it quits after one to two years" and that a study of Colorado B&Bs suggests that "only 14% of establishment owners used them as the sole source of income" (1992, p. 173).

In summary, downshifting may be a desirable career alternative for those who take a more protean rather than organizational view of careers. It also is consistent with Hall's notion of psychological success. As Salzman maintains,

> Creating and following a personal success path means learning to set work patterns that reinforce rather than sabotage our deepest notions about what constitutes a successful life. This is more difficult than it sounds. Even if we know what we want from our careers, the pressures to always strive for more are difficult to resist. More power, more money, more prestige, are the essence of success in our culture. These exaggerated goals push us to accept jobs we don't particularly want and take on more responsibility than we can reasonably handle. (p. 79)

The Portfolio Career

As previously mentioned, in 1989 Charles Handy of the London School of Economics wrote an influential book called *The Age of Unreason.* In this work, Handy put forth a view of the "new organizations" that would no longer directly employ the majority of their staffs. Instead, staffs would be made up of a core group of employees who would be complemented by outsourcing, contractors, and consultants in what Handy called a "shamrock organization." Many of Handy's ideas have come to pass in recent years.

In his book, Handy also raised the notion of the *portfolio* career. He characterized a work portfolio as a way of describing "how the different bits of work fit together in our life in order to form a balanced whole" (1989, p. 183). Handy suggests that to have a portfolio career means that you will no longer be able to answer the question, "What do you do?" with a job title as a response. To understand the portfolio, you must first understand what Handy calls the main categories of work that can make up one's portfolio: wage work, fee work, home work, gift work, and study work. Here's how Handy defines these terms:

- *Wage work* represents time given for money paid. Employees of organizations do wage work and get paid a salary.

- *Fee work* is results delivered for money paid. Consultants or freelancers often do this kind of work, maintaining independence from the organization but getting paid only for the result of their efforts.

- *Home work* includes the whole catalogue of tasks that go on in the home (i.e., domestic tasks and child rearing).

- *Gift work* refers to work done outside the home, typically for free as a volunteer, to support causes and institutions in which one believes.

- *Study work* refers to work you do to maintain or improve your professional abilities.

Handy suggests that seeing work as being made up of these five categories may be a more appropriate way to reframe one's career. Portfolios, he argues, are not new because all small businesses have them in terms of clients. Handy states, "As more people move their paid work outside organizations, or are moved, they are pushed or lured into becoming small independent businesses. They are paid in fees, not wages, and have to develop their own portfolios of customer and activities" (1989, p. 190). If one pursues this logic, it is important to make conscious decisions about what your portfolio should contain. It may mean being conscious about working for a lesser fee or wage work to spend more time in home work with family, for example. By doing this, you are not simply living consistently with your priorities; more importantly, you are saving money that you would spend if you outsourced domestic activities (e.g., daycare or

gardening tasks) to a service. In this way you are constructing, rather than accepting in a reactive fashion, the mix of work activities in which you would like to engage.

These career options—organizational, alternative, or portfolio—are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to follow an organizational career path but not look for upward mobility by plateauing or even taking a demotion, for example. Although this was rarely done voluntarily a few years ago, today many women and men take steps "backward" in an organization to make more time for family or other outside interests. It is also possible to have a portfolio career yet still be employed primarily by one organization (your wage work). Many portfolio individuals do this to have a "home base" that provides highly valued benefits such as healthcare insurance but also offer latitude for pursuing other important forms of work.

Ongoing Development

Regardless of what career strategy one pursues, organizational advancement, alternative, or portfolio career, ongoing development is critically important. Even if one is not motivated to climb to the top of the organizational pyramid, it is not a license to stop developing. Almost no job or organization guarantees permanence or security these days, so regardless of your level of ambition, your most important goal is to ensure your ongoing *employability.* And given the number of years we will be working, ongoing development or lifelong learning is a never-ending process.

Certain factors in success cut across all stages; they are always important. These factors include job challenge, relationships, formal training and education, and hardship. First in importance is *job challenge.* The developmental importance of challenge is nothing new (although the organizational research on it is recent). Abigail Adams gave the following advice to her son, John Quincy Adams, who was accompanying his father, John Adams, on what was then a hazardous ocean voyage to their newly independent country:

> These are the times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed. The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised, and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities that would otherwise lay dormant, wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman. (McCullough, 2001, p. 226)

Although challenge in the very first job is critical, research at AT&T and the Center for Creative Leadership has shown that challenge continues to

be important for learning throughout the career. A challenging job gives you not only important new skills, self-confidence, and resilience but also high exposure and visibility.

Although some people see really difficult assignments as potential career booby traps or setups, not learning challenges, in our experience a challenging assignment is simply that: a challenge that can lead to personal stretching, growth, and the development of character.

How can you tell when a difficult assignment is a true developmental challenge (as opposed to a setup)? Tune in to the signals you are receiving from your manager. If she or he is willing to respond to your questions about the assignment, provides you with good coaching, and expresses confidence in your ability to succeed, then it's probably a genuinely development assignment.

The second critical success element is *relationships.* You do not live and work in a vacuum, and you need the support and help of others to succeed (Hall & Kahn, 2001). The most familiar form of helping relationship is mentoring, which was briefly touched on in chapter 4. Here, we discuss it as an important continuing component of career success (Box 5.2).

Do not expect that any one person will be the perfect mentor; you will be disappointed if that is what you are seeking. Look for different people to help you in different ways, and if one special person emerges to "do it all" for you, consider it a nice surprise.

In a mentoring relationship, the mentor learns at least as much as the protégé and is often flattered by the request, so do not feel shy about initiating contact with people who might be helpful to you. However, keep sight of the reciprocity of the relationship. You may be able to provide him or her with new ideas, new methods, appreciation, recognition, and assistance in meeting his or her job objectives.

Many other kinds of developmental relationships will be available to you in your career, and it will be up to you to notice and cultivate them. A major form of learning will come from your *peer relationships* (peer mentoring), which can be at least as helpful as mentoring by a senior person. Peers often are much closer to you in age and life experience, so in some ways they may be more relevant role models than seniors and may be able to provide more emotional support.

Other help, for example in the form of feedback, can come from subordinates, customers, colleagues in the organization, and family or friends. There is now much emphasis in business on 360-degree feedback, or feedback from all sources in all directions. You never know where or when you might encounter good feedback and learning opportunities. And remember Ken Blanchard's dictum, "Feedback is the breakfast of champions."

You will also be spending a lot of your time in teams, which are excellent sources of developmental relationships. Because teams usually are designed to span many boundaries (e.g., different functions, businesses, geographic locations, ages, genders, ethnicities) so that they include a rich

diversity of talents and backgrounds, in turn they present terrific learning opportunities for each member.

Two other kinds of relationships that people are using more in a turbulent environment are personal networks and support groups. In the aftermath of the World Trade Center destruction and related air crashes of September 11, 2001, one important source of hope for the world was the way people came forward so quickly and willingly to help other people. A support group can be any formal or informal group of people who come together to provide help to one another and to others. This can be emotional support (e.g., encouragement, empathy, and acknowledgment), or it can be instrumental (e.g., information, advice, coaching). For example, Tim is part of a men's support group that meets every month or 6 weeks, for a morning, in one member's home. There is no formal agenda, but they start by going around the room for a "check-in" to see what people have brought and then talk about whatever seems most pressing to someone or most common to everyone. They sometimes discuss problems at work, life stage or personal issues, or family issues and occasionally take on one of the problems of the world or discuss some academic issue. The group has been meeting for more than 20 years, and attendance is a high priority for all of us as a support network.

People create similar groups with colleagues at work, in professional organizations, in their local communities, and in other settings. In a career context, they can exist as job search support groups, outplacement assistance groups, and career coaching networks. Employee networks are becoming more common for members who are from a common group or share common challenges at work. Examples include groups based on gender, ethnic or racial groups, groups for gay and lesbian employees, or groups caring for children, older adults, and those with special needs. If none of these exist in your present work environment, you can organize one yourself. You can call it a peer coaching group if no other name comes to mind.

Formal education and training is the third source of learning for success in the career. Surprisingly, this factor is not as important by itself as are job challenge and relationships. But in combination with job challenge and relationships, formal education is a potent success factor. You can best use a seminar or conference for management development when as a result of a job assignment you have a clear need to learn. And if you can get help through a relationship (e.g., from your boss) in deciding when is a good time for training and what is a good job project to work on in the seminar, then you are getting real leverage out of that training. So do not think of training as simply "ticket punching" for getting the next job; think of it as a means of enhancing your learning and performance in your current job, which will, of course, also help you get the next job.

The final factor that is critical to success is *hardship.* This factor has been identified in research by Morgan McCall and his colleagues in which people were studied who had either arrived at the top of their organizations or had derailed along the way (i.e., they had been fired, plateaued, or quit; McCall

et al., 1988; McCall, 1998). Surprisingly, the "Arrivers" were just as likely to hit failures or setbacks along the way as were the "Derailers." The big difference was that the "Arrivers" were more likely to learn from their failures. They were more likely to ask others for help, feedback, and ideas on what to do next. The Derailers were more likely to blame someone else, avoid personal feedback, and thus repeat their mistakes. In fact, a study of accelerated development (in which people were promoted very quickly and reached the top of their organizations) found that these fast trackers, though initially successful, were more likely than slower developers to leave their organizations. Why? Because they had moved so fast, they had not experienced hardships or failures along the way and had not developed their resilience and coping skills. They had also not taken the time to develop supportive social networks along the way. In fact, in their rush to the top, they had alienated many people, who were only too happy to see them get tripped up. Therefore, when these fast trackers eventually experienced a setback, they lacked the internal and external resources that would enable them to learn from the failure and to move on (Hall, 1999, pp. 237–239).

You should anticipate that there will be some setbacks along the way in your career. However, you can do your own research, perhaps with information from a mentor or helpful peers, about pitfalls that have hurt other people in your organization, and you can try to avoid those situations. And you can prepare for the inevitable setbacks that will occur by having your network of supporters there, ready to help when you stumble.

Obviously, personal qualities also play a role in career success. In this turbulent environment, personal flexibility, tolerance of uncertainty, and drive are important. Resilience, the ability to bounce from setbacks, is becoming increasingly necessary. Again, these personal qualities become more important in connection with specific experiences that you might encounter in the job environment. Also, note that the three qualities just mentioned can be developed. In other words, effort can make a difference. The most important qualities are not inborn abilities or qualities such as height or eye color. You cannot change your height, but it is not so hard to work on your flexibility, reaction to uncertainty, or motivation if you choose to do so.

Box 5.2 Reconceptualizing Mentoring as Developmental Relationships

Because of its importance, we would like to look at the topic of relationships in greater depth and consider a special kind of relationship, one in which the parties are intentionally working to promote the development of one another. We use terms such as *mentoring* or *developmental relationships* to describe this kind of growth-inducing relationship.

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One of the leading thinkers and writers in the field of mentoring is Kathy Kram of Boston University. A traditional mentoring relationship is one in which a senior person working in the protégé's organization assists with the protégé's personal and professional development (Kram, 1985). More recently, Kram and co-author Monica Higgins of Harvard Business School have begun to reframe the notion of mentoring and put it in a new and more contemporary light. In "Reconceptualizing Mentoring at Work: A Developmental Network Perspective" (2001), Higgins and Kram consider the limitation of traditional mentoring practices. The traditional view depended on identifying a particular person who was more senior in one's organization, but this view had many limitations, especially in light of today's workplace realities. The authors include their own observations on this:

• The employment contract between individuals and their employers has changed, and job security is a thing of the past.

• The changing nature of technology has also affected the form and function of careers and career development. Today, organizations put a premium on people who can adapt and learn quickly. This development may bring into question the value of seniority in organizations.

• The changing nature of organizational structures affects the sources from which people receive development assistance. These new organizational configurations may limit the degree to which people look inside one particular organization for development.

• Organizational membership has become increasingly diverse, which affects both the need for and resources available for development (Higgins & Kram, 2001, pp. 265–267).

A contemporary view of mentoring is characterized more as a developmental network where not one but a number of others provide many (perhaps more) of the resources historically derived from a traditional mentoring relationship. (Some writers call this a "Board of Directors" for your career.) One's network might provide different roles at different times. These roles could include providing peer advising and coaching, developing an understanding of a new work situation or culture, providing psychological support, pointing out new opportunities, providing sponsorship for those opportunities, and providing insight into how other areas of an organization operate. When you consider all the roles traditional mentors were expected to play, it is not hard to understand how a network such as the one Kram and others describe could serve this purpose more effectively.
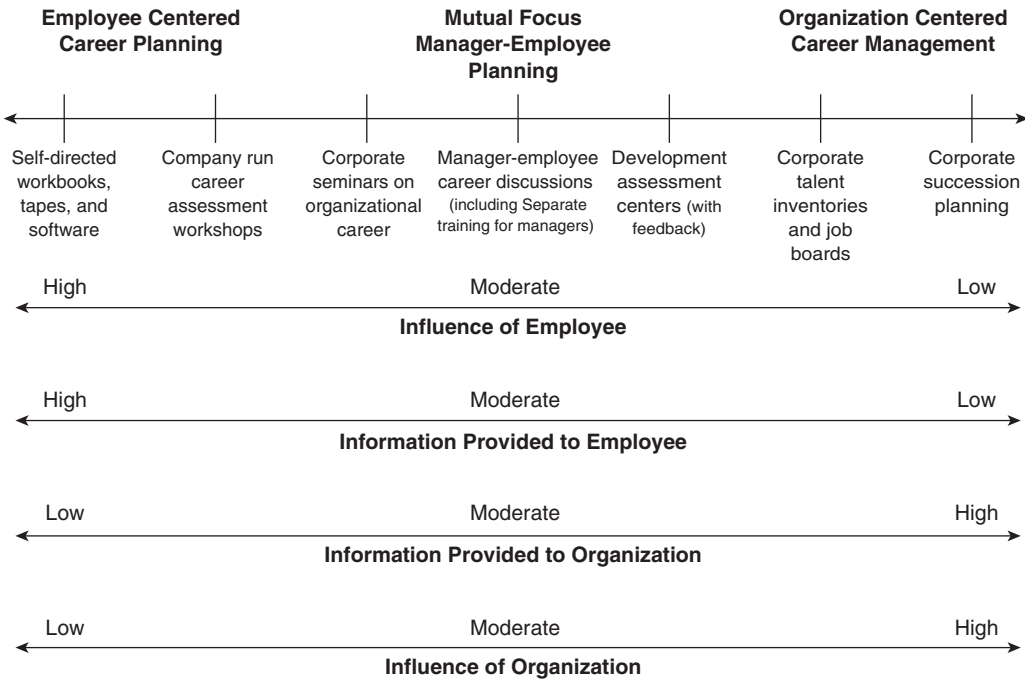
Organizational Career Systems

When you are doing a job search or making a decision involving different job offers, what are some important things to consider in the company's career development process? How can you decide whether the company is doing a good job supporting the career development and ongoing learning of its employees? Beyond the components highlighted earlier, what else are good employers doing to support employee development?

One way to think about organizational career programs is in terms of whom are they aimed at: Are they employee centered or organization centered? The continuum in Figure 5.1 illustrates this approach with some examples. On the left-hand side of the continuum, we find activities that are entirely employee driven (self-directed training) or are company sponsored and run activities that are aimed at helping employees make their own choices and map out their own career plans. Such an orientation is somewhat consistent with the self-directed philosophy we have outlined in the book. However, this approach should not be confused with a sink-or-swim approach. Companies that are skilled at developing their employees may encourage employees to direct their own development, but this does not mean they do not provide resources or support. For example, there is a major difference between an organization that does not offer tuition reimbursement and one that allows the employee to choose how to spend their company-supported after-hours tuition. In the first instance the company is saying, "We do not provide financial support to assist you in your ongoing education efforts." In the second instance the company is offering excellent support to employees but allowing them to choose the direction of their development.

On the other end of the continuum are programs that are more organization centered. Such activities are driven more by the organization, with the aim of directing talent in the company in a way that is consistent with the organization's strategies and needs. For example, this might take the form of highly structured succession planning systems that not only identify employees who are likely candidates for promotion but also stipulate short-term job assignments that will develop the skills those employees need to increase their readiness for promotion. These systems can work fine and can increase organizational investment in training and development, but we offer a few cautions:

• Given the dynamic environment that exists in organizations, predicting who will be available to do what job in 3 to 5 years can be tricky. The instability of organizational life often can render even the best-laid plans useless over time as changes in organizations and key players occur.

Employee Centered Career Planning		Mutual Focus Manager-Employee Planning			Organization Centered Career Management	
Self-directed workbooks, tapes, and software	Company run career assessment workshops	Corporate seminars on organizational career	Manager-employee career discussions (including Separate training for managers)	Development assessment centers (with feedback)	Corporate talent inventories and job boards	Corporate succession planning

High   Moderate   Low
Influence of Employee

High   Moderate   Low
Information Provided to Employee

Low   Moderate   High
Information Provided to Organization

Low   Moderate   High
Influence of Organization

Figure 5.1   The Spectrum of Career Development Activities

SOURCE: Adapted from Hall, D. T. and Associates (1986). The Spectrum of Career Development Activities. In *Career Development in Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

NOTE: This is a sample of program activities to illustrate different points on the continuum between career planning and career management. This is not a complete list of possible career development activities.

• Such systems can run the risk of creating "crowned princes and princesses" in the eyes of fellow employees. When a subset of employees is designated as "high potentials," if this designation is known to others it may create negative feelings on the part of other employees who have not been afforded this designation. Although it is important for organizations to actively manage performance and development for key human resources, if this creates a culture of haves and have-nots, the consequences may be negative for the organization overall.

• Finally, the organization-centered approach, taken to the extreme, could assume that the organization has more control over individuals' choices than is in fact the case. It may fit an organization's plans to have a high-potential employee take on a challenging 2-year project thousands of miles from home. But with the rise of dual-career couples, single-parent households, and individuals choosing lifestyle over career, such a move may serve the company's interest but not the individual's.

This leads us to the middle ground. This approach suggests a more shared responsibility that ensures that both the employee and the organization are involved in the process, and the needs of both parties are considered. It also ensures that the organization is providing support to the individual, financial and otherwise, in order for the goals of each party to be met.

So in addition to some of the things we have already mentioned (e.g., challenging job assignments, performance feedback, developmental relationships and mentoring), the following are other ways corporations can foster employee development.

Company-sponsored training: Training done on company time that is made available to employees based on need or interest can be very helpful. These offerings can range from brown-bag "lunch and learns" to full-blown graduate degree programs. Especially in jobs with significant change occurring (e.g., technology-related jobs in engineering or computer science), employees may find such learning opportunities not only valuable but necessary.

Tuition assistance: Many progressive companies offer tuition assistance to employees for further education. Specific policies differ somewhat. Some organizations pay for almost anything the employee is interested in. In our experience, most offer to fund education that is related to the employee's present role or to one that they might reasonably attain with their employer. Some organizations approve this education on a course-by-course basis, whereas others support an entire degree program, including courses that are required but may not be (or seem to be) very relevant to the employer's needs. Although tax laws related to the treatment of tuition assistance programs are subject to change, this benefit can be worth a tremendous amount of money to employees. Even more importantly, using these benefits can greatly increase their employability with their present employer and future employers.

Development planning: As a part of or in addition to performance evaluations, a focused development planning activity can be highly useful on at least an annual basis. Such a structured discussion can accomplish a number of things, including making one's manager aware of professional aspirations, planning for attendance at specific courses or conferences, identifying next-step career opportunities, or assigning special projects that might give the employees the skills they need to achieve their career objectives.

Job posting systems and promotion from within: Many employers put a premium on developing and promoting talent from within. This can make good sense for a number of reasons. One is the high level of attrition or failure rates among managers brought in from outside the organization.

According to one expert cited recently in a human resource publication, 40% of executives brought in from outside a company fail within 18 months, and half leave the company (Grossman, 2006, p. 42). Other reasons are the desire to tap into existing talent, reduce recruitment costs, and increase the likelihood of a good cultural fit. Perhaps the best reason for a promote-from-within approach is the extra motivation it gives employees who believe they have the opportunity to develop and advance with their present employer. An effective system of this type often posts all or most jobs internally, gives current employees early news on openings, and gives them preference in the hiring process.

Seminars on career and life planning: Given the focus of this book, this point probably needs little explanation. We believe that many of the ideas and exercises contained here could easily be used in organizational career planning seminars for all employees. There are some limitations to offering in-house programs, however. For example, if one of your preferences is to leave your current employer, this might be difficult or unwise to discuss in an in-house program. On the other hand, an internal program can convey the organization's commitment to developing its people, and it has the added advantage of being tailored to the particulars of the organization with regard to career opportunities and processes for pursuing them.

Although this list is not comprehensive, it does point out some of the things employees or potential employees should look for from their employers. Good employers invest in the skills and development of their people and see this as a primary way to gain and maintain competitive advantage.

International Assignments

At some point, given the unceasing movement toward globalization, you may be offered an opportunity to take on an international assignment. Although some of the merits of such an assignment have already been touched on, you will need to carefully consider what the value of such an assignment would be and what the challenges would be for you.

The value of an international assignment for the organization and the individual is that it is one of the best ways for companies to develop their managerial and executive talent. We have just discussed the value of challenge for career development, and an international position is loaded with challenges. You are exposed to novel situations and great uncertainty. You are in a foreign culture, often surrounded by people speaking a language you don't understand, where the rules seem mysterious. Your standard routines no longer work as they did at home, and no one is motivated to help you

learn the new rules. In fact, many of the job factors that have been found to be developmental by researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership (McCall et al., 1988), are reflected in an international assignment:

> Often the international assignment involves a start-up or a turn-around process, which provides wonderful stretching experiences for development. Starting something from scratch produces learning situations, such as identifying what's important, building a team, surviving adversity and realizing the power of leadership. Succeeding in a fix-it assignment helps the person learn to be tough and persuasive and to be tough and instrumental.
>
> And then, in some cases, the international assignment entails a huge jump in scope, going from running a relatively small domestic operation to being head of, say, the company's business in Europe. With a sudden move to a larger operation, the person has no choice but to learn how to depend on other people (she can no longer do it all herself) and to think like an executive. (Hall et al., 2001, p. 335)

In addition to the work challenge, international assignments can also be extremely taxing on a personal level for you, your spouse, and your family. While your adjustment at work may be going smoothly, your family may be feeling lost and depressed. Your kids may resent being dragged away from their friends, and your partner or spouse may be unable to find employment (and may not be able to work under local laws). Because of the new and challenging assignment, you may find yourself working long hours, exacerbating your family's feeling that they are completely on their own. Yet the people from the corporate office expect you to perform at full effectiveness, just as you always have. All in all, it's a very demanding, stressful way of living and working. It usually takes a year before you begin to feel at home.

The challenge and stress usually stimulate a process of self-reflection and experimentation with new behaviors. As a result of these behavior changes, the person comes to see herself in a new way, with greater self-insights and self-awareness. Thus, the international assignment can lead to a *transformed identity*. The manager feels like a different person upon returning home.

For the company, international assignments are part of good management. The most admired *Fortune* companies are twice as likely as other companies to use carefully planned career assignments across countries (Hall et al., 2001).

In addition to these challenges during the international (often called *expatriate*) assignment, there are often even greater difficulties on the return home. Although the manager and her family may have been looking forward to the return for years, with great expectations, they often find that home does not meet those expectations. First, home has changed while they were away, so they may again feel like strangers, but now it's even worse because they are strangers in their own land. And *they* have

changed, been transformed, yet no one seems to know or to care. For the manager, often there is not a good back-home assignment. Ironically, for expatriate assignments great care goes into finding an ideal match between the person and the job. But upon return, the person might be put on a special assignment or even into a role very much like the one she had before she left. For these reasons, repatriated managers often leave their companies shortly after they return home. Unless the company and executives who care a lot about the expatriate's career put a lot of work into planning the repatriate assignment, she will probably end up with a poorly fitting job and a negative attitude toward the company.

One of the things the company can do to help ensure success in international assignments is to appoint a senior executive in the home organization to be a mentor for the expatriate. This mentor needs to be in frequent contact with the expatriate, monitoring the person's experiences overseas, running interference with the corporate office back home when the person runs into bureaucratic problems, and helping to plan a good repatriation assignment that leverages the new skills the employee has developed in her time overseas. Attaining a good back-home job may be the most important factor in the retention of repatriated managers.

How do we know when an international assignment has been successful? We need to answer that question from both the individual and the organizational perspective. We also need to consider what success means, both during the expatriate phase and in the repatriation period. During the expatriate phase, success for the individual means good task performance, new skills, learning and growth, and job satisfaction. For the organization it means accomplishing organizational tasks (e.g., successfully opening and operating a new office in that country) and achieving certain objectives (e.g., reaching a certain level of profitability in the new location).

In the repatriation stage, success from the individual's perspective could mean continued development, a promotion, enlargement of one's responsibilities, and the likelihood of attractive future assignments. For the organization, successful repatriation would include the retention of repatriated employees, the use of the person's newly acquired expertise, and the transfer of that expertise to other personnel back home.

Financial Considerations

No book on careers would be complete without a discussion of a major reason we have work careers in the first place: to earn money to support ourselves. This is not to belittle the importance of the sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment that we get from working, but most of us have to work for financial reasons. Therefore, good financial planning is a foundation of good career planning.

Financial considerations play an increasingly important role in people's career choices and plans. Married mothers are much more likely to work today than in the 1970s, and one might surmise that, given this additional income, many couples feel they have greater choices about whether only one spouse should be working. However, many dual-career couples find that it is financially necessary for both husband and wife to work full time.

There are different views on why both spouses feel the need to work in families with children. The most obvious reason is simply that things are expensive today, and both spouses need to work in order to meet the family's expenses. A second reason, put forth by Juliet Schor and others, is that the need for both members of a dual-career couple to work is driven by consumption. The thinking goes that we live in a more materialistic time when the need for possessions has created a culture in which parents must work to pay for all their luxuries. This thinking has been contested by others, including Elizabeth Warren and Amelia Warren Tyagi (2003) in *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers Are Going Broke.* The authors do not believe that overconsumption is at the root of most families' economic problems. Although they concede that families do spend more money on some items—electronic entertainment equipment, computers, and eating out, for example—they reject the notion that Americans are spending more on everything. They argue that Americans actually spend less (inflation adjusted) on many items than they did 30 years ago. They suggest that the impact of globalization has decreased prices for many items, including clothing, groceries, and major appliances.

If Warren and Tyagi are correct, what do they believe accounts for the challenging financial picture experienced by many working families despite the fact that most have two incomes? They outline a few key areas where expenses have spiraled out of control, but not as the result of "greedy consumers." According to Warren and Tyagi, the main problem areas seem to be the following:

The high cost of housing: Without doubt, couples spend far more on housing than was the case a generation ago. At least in part, the rise in housing prices has been the result of the increasing number of dual-earner couples, which has led to bidding wars for many homes. Two factors that make a home in a desirable suburb so expensive, according to the authors, are safety and education. In search of a safe place to raise children and a good school system, parents will pay a premium to live in a particular neighborhood or community.

The price of education: Despite our system of free public schools, the price of education has continued to escalate. Specifically, Warren and Tyagi suggest that it is the cost of preschool and college, which "now account for one-third (or more) of the years a typical middle class kid spends in school, are paid for almost exclusively by the child's family. . . . Today,

nearly two-thirds of America's three- and four-year-olds attend pre-school compared with just 4% in the middle 1960s" (2003, p. 39). Furthermore, most Americans now also believe a college degree is a necessity, and the cost of that education is higher than ever. Simply to pay the cost of education (tuition, room, and board) at a public institution, the "average family in the United States would have to commit 17% of its pre-tax income to this one expense" (2003, p. 42). In the meantime, the cost of private colleges and universities has gone beyond the reach of many.

Cars: Families today spend more on cars because the need for a second car is greater. Once a luxury, a second car is now needed in part because both spouses work.

Two other expenses are also costing families more than ever. First, healthcare expenses have gone up dramatically over the past decade. An increasing number of people have lost job security. Given that in the United States healthcare coverage usually is provided by an employer, the burden for worrying about healthcare insurance payments and premiums has fallen more on the individual. Second, much has been written about the aging workforce and the aging population. We live longer in retirement today, and the need for and cost of long-term care are greater than ever. This is happening at the same time that defined-benefit retirement plans are becoming increasingly rare. This adds pressure on working people to save more money whenever possible in individual retirement plans.

So what can working people do to manage the financial aspects of their careers? A good guide to the financial aspects of career planning can be found in John Eckblad and David Kiel's book *If Your Life Were a Business, Would You Invest in It?* (2003). As they point out, if you want to achieve financial independence in your work, you will need three things:

• Knowledge of how much money you need now to live a satisfying life, how much you are likely to need in the future, and when you'll need it.

• Knowledge of how much money you have or can access now and a good estimate of how much you are likely to earn or receive in the future.

• A plan in which you expect to produce the funds you need, when you need them (Eckblad & Kiel, 2003, p. 142).

Eckblad and Kiel also state that the keys to this sort of financial planning process are how you organize the information and the new sense of self-confidence and freedom you feel when you are done. They contend that having worked out your plan, you will stop worrying about money as a constraint on your behavior. You therefore will achieve a level of financial independence (freedom from worry about money), regardless of the actual income you are earning. As they put it, "Enabling you to achieve

your chosen Dreams while experiencing independence from your finances is the essential goal of Life Business work" (2003, p. 142).

Eckblad and Kiel have learned from their experience in their career coaching work that people need to be clear on three kinds of budgets.

- *12-month historical budget:* This is a detailed, accurate list of what you have spent, line by line, over the last year. Go back through your financial records from last year and capture, as accurately as possible, every bit of money that you spent on items such as vacations, going out to eat, clothing, food, and entertainment. Your tax records for last year could be a good place to start. And if you use financial planning software, such as Quicken or Microsoft Money, you can use the "Report" tool there to complete this step quickly and easily.

- *12-month look-ahead budget:* This is an extrapolation of next year's expected budget, based on what you spent last year. Think about new or additional expenses that arise. For example, perhaps you just bought a new car, which will mean that your car insurance and auto taxes will be higher next year. Also, think about ways that you might want to reduce your expenses. For example, when Tim and his wife did this exercise, they were astounded to see how much of their money goes to eating out in restaurants. When they thought about it, they realized that they often ended up going out to eat as a default option when they came home late or had no food in the refrigerator. So they started buying frozen prepared foods, and they were able to cut down on their restaurant expenses.

- *12-month plan-ahead budget:* This is an annual budget, based on the line-item funding that would be necessary to implement your life and career plan. This is the budget that will translate your future life and career plan into a financial reality. In your plan-ahead budget there is no space for sources of income. The idea is for you to get clear about what you will need to support what you want to do, without consideration of whether you will have the funding. Eckblad and Kiel's position is that "Dreams drive resourcing, not vice versa" (2003, p. 152). Thus, your plan-ahead budget should focus on your dreams and passions and then indicate how much you will need to support that kind of life.

One of the ironies Eckblad and Kiel find in this approach is that after people do some serious work costing out what they need to live their dreams, they are often surprised to find that they already have the available resources to do so.

Another thing to remember in the financial planning process is that it is often easier to reduce financial stress by cutting your expenses than by increasing your income. For example, one young two-career couple recently was in a financial bind: They had just had their second child when

the wife was laid off. Down to one income, with a big mortgage, college loans, daycare, and other big commitments, they were about to make two major commitments that they did not really want to make, but they felt forced to do so for financial reasons. She was about to take a new executive position that would have involved a lot of travel, no flexibility, and a lot of stress, but it paid very well. And they were thinking of selling their house and moving to an adjacent state that they saw as having lower real estate prices and lower taxes.

However, their career advisor encouraged them to avoid making any major decisions right away. Also, he suggested that they go through the life planning and budgeting process we have just discussed. Through this process, they became very clear on their dream for where they wanted to live: They loved their present home and community, and they did not want to move. And she really wanted to use this opportunity to start her own consulting practice. But if they moved to the other state, the taxes on her self-employed business income would be far higher than in the state where they lived. They also realized that they could refinance their mortgage and consolidate their college loans to reduce the rates and take out some cash on their home equity at the same time. By working at home, she was able to keep the baby home for half of the week, enabling them to cut their daycare fees. As a result, they were able to reduce their monthly fixed expenses by more than $4,000 and save themselves the work and stress of selling and buying houses and moving to another state. But it all started by getting clear on how they wanted to live and work and then figuring out just how much money that dream would cost.

Summary

In this chapter we have explored a variety of career development strategies. We have looked at more traditional, organizational career paths and have also discussed alternative options for those who do not see advancement as their primary career path. We have also discussed a new career construct: the portfolio career. The portfolio approach may become more common in the future as more people, out of necessity or choice, work not for an employer but for a set of customers. We have discussed the importance of continuous learning and forming networks as key capabilities in the new career.

In the next chapter, we will look at the issue of work and family. We will discuss how the roles of working parents have changed over the years as fewer families have someone at home to focus on domestic tasks and child rearing. Then, in chapter 7, we will look at the ways leading companies have responded to these challenges by offering family-friendly policies and greater flexibility to their employees.

For Further Reading

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