

CAREER PLANNING PROCESS AND ITS ROLE IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

ELIZA ANTONIU *

ABSTRACT: *This paper addresses specific questions on career planning, activity which plays an increasingly representative role in the human resources management. People were always concerned about choosing and building careers to meet their needs and aspirations. Career planning process involves both individual and organization responsibility. In the contemporary business environment, highly competitive, we find that career management responsibility rests increasingly on the individuals. Organizations also play an important role; its need to have and maintain a competent staff, considered as the main source for obtaining competitive advantage, most advanced companies develop and apply an integrated management career system, beneficial both for themselves and for their employees.*

KEY WORDS: *planning activities; career management; human resource; system*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M12*

1. CAREER PLANNING – AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The current economic context, marked by increased competition, integration in the European Union and especially the need to maintain competitive advantage in an increasingly uncertain business environment, have led to the introduction and the deployment of human resources activities until recently neglected. Thus, more companies in Romania have started to develop and implement organized planning and career development systems of employees.

In human resource management, career planning aims to identify needs, aspirations and opportunities for individuals' career and the implementation of developing human resources programs to support that career. According to Edgar Schein *career planning* (Manolescu, 2003) is *a continuous process of discovery in which an individual slowly develops his own occupational concept as a result of skills or*

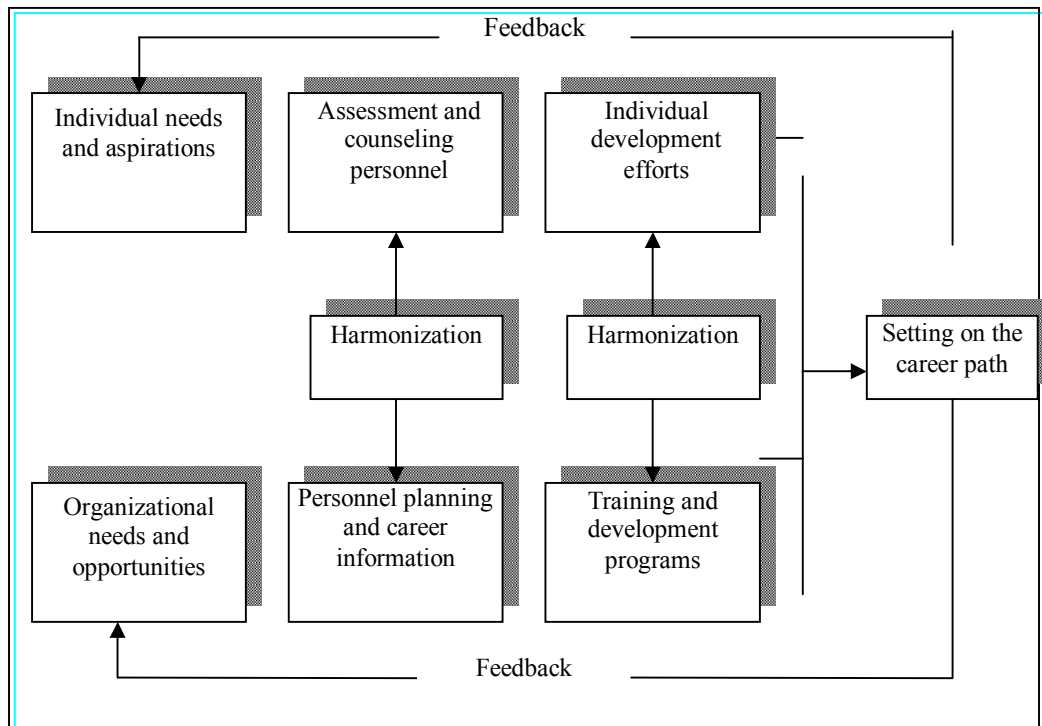
* *Teaching Assistant, Ph.D. Student, University of Pitești, Romania, elizantoni@yahoo.com*

abilities, needs, motivations and aspirations of his own value system . Career planning is seen as a very systematic and comprehensive process of targeting career development and implementation of strategies, self assessment and analysis of opportunities and evaluate the results.

The career planning process involves both the organization and the individual responsibility. Thus, the individuals must identify their aspirations and abilities, and through assessment and counseling to understand their needs of training and development; the organization needs to identify its needs and opportunities, to plan its employees and to ensure its staff the necessary information and appropriate training for career development.

Therefore, *career planning* (Popescu Neveanu, 2003) must *link individual needs and aspirations with organizational needs and opportunities, evaluating, advising and informing its staff on career planning, individual development efforts with training and development programs*. Most often this match is not done, the organizations paying a differential attention to its employees, planning career of the high performance individuals with greater opportunities for promotion and not taking into account the performance potential employees.

A *career planning model*, taken from the literature is presented in the following figure:



Source: J.M. Ivancevich and W.F. Glueck, in Aurel Manolescu – Human Resource Management

Figure 1. The career planning process

The issues to be considered in the planning of career are:

- organization members should be recognized and treated as individuals with needs, desires and unique skills;
- individuals are more motivated in an organization that meets their aspirations;
- individuals may develop, change and discover new courses of action if they are shown exactly the opportunities or if they are encouraged and guided.

The specialized literature recommends that career counseling activities should be introduced for all the employees, as a formalized activity of the human resources department. Creating a special service for career counseling, consisting of specialists with psychosocial and / or managerial training, who knows both individuals and organizations needs, would lead to a better alignment between the individuals needs of fulfillment and organization objectives.

According to the experts in human resources management (Mathis et al., 1997) are the following models of career planning:

- **„chance and luck” model.** This model is that employee, to get the desired position, is based only on luck. He must be persevering and always be in place at the right time.
- **„organization knows best” model.** The model is based on the fact that the employee is moved from one job to another according to the needs. This model is supported mainly by young employees, who are dependent on adults for all the views, and less than adults employees.
- **„self – oriented” model.** This model provides importance to the individuals; the employees are establishing their own development during their career, while having assistance too.

There are two approaches to career planning (Manolescu, 2003)), depending on the emphasis on the needs of the organization or on the individual objectives:

a) the organization centered planning system which aims:

- the development of Human Resource needs;
- to improve the quality of human resources to increase productivity;
- defining career paths;
- individual potential of job evaluation;
- harmonization of organizational and career needs;
- career counseling of work and life quality;
- audit and control of the planning and career development system.

b) the person centered planning system which aims:

- to identify the potential, skills and interests of the individual;
- to identify the purposes of his life and his career goals;
- to develop a written plan to achieve individual goals;
- researching or seeking and obtaining the best career start;
- to communicate the career plan directly to individual by his manager;
- request career guidance;
- internal and external opportunities’ assessment;
- request mentor or sponsor support;
- promote their self image or recognition of their own qualities.

2. EMPLOYEES' CAREER PLANNING RESPONSIBILITY

An important aspect of career planning is to establish the extent to which the two parties (**individuals** and **organizations**) are responsible in this process. On one hand, the individual is responsible for its development along the stages of his life and, secondly, the organization involved in planning and development of career helps to improve the organizational environment and enhance employee satisfaction at work.

2.1. Individual responsibility on career planning

According to the theory and practice of management, the career planning process focuses particularly on individual skills, abilities, needs or aspirations. Given all this, the individual will create a basic information necessary to ensure preparedness for a possible promotion.

Individual career planning (Zlate, 2004) can be defined as *all actions of self assessment, exploration of opportunities, establishing goals etc., designed to help the individual to make informed choices and changes about career*. It is a complex action that requires systematic and careful thinking in formulating short and long term objectives.

Career planning is based, therefore, on the evaluation of individual skills, interests and motivation, on the analysis of organizational opportunities, setting goals for their careers and develop a strategy to achieve those goals.

Individual career planning ((Zlate, 2004)) can browse through *five* steps:

1. *Self assessment* is the collection of information about yourself (values, interests, skills), continuous assessment and reporting to others;
2. *Exploring opportunities* involves gathering information about existing opportunities within but also outside organizations (training and other development methods);
3. *Making decisions and setting goals* on short and long term for training requirements, change of job / department etc.
4. *Planning* consists of determining ways and means of achieving goals, ordering their actions to achieve them, considering its consequences, setting deadlines and resource requirements
5. *Pursuit of achievement goals*, action by the individual accounts for his successes and failures and make decisions to retain or change career course.

Individual perspective on career (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development - CIPD, 2005) is determined by the *status of the individual professional and personal life, age, family circumstances, financial expectations, desired lifestyle*, etc. Some individuals are hoping to be promoted to a senior position within an organization, others want to take a new job in another organization, accepting new and different responsibilities by investing in developing new skills and acquiring new abilities, reducing or increasing the number of work hours, or looking for jobs with a flexible working schedule. All these aspects are covered by the following synthetic scheme:

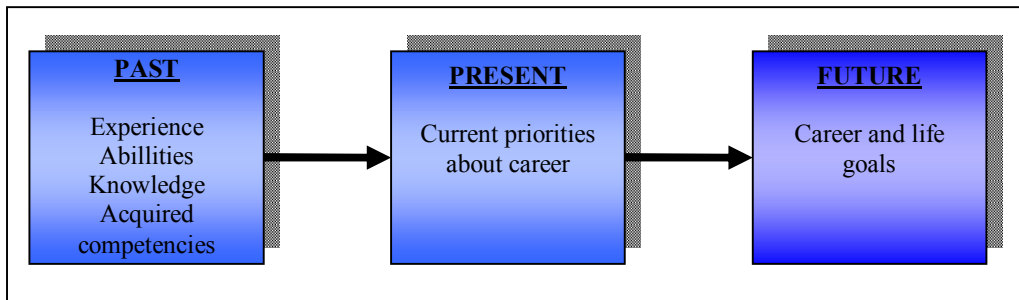


Figure 2. Individual's perspective on career

2.2. Organizational responsibility on career planning

To be viable, on short-term, or to maintain competitive advantage, in the long term, organizations must match employees with appropriate skills in the right positions. The type and skills of the employees are different, depending on the scope of the firm, economic sector, specific technology, consumer characteristics, etc.. Peculiarities of organization affects the jobs structure, the types of recruited employees for each job and the development ways on the job. Many employers offer numerous promote opportunities to certain types of positions (especially those involving unique skills to give value to the organization) and limited opportunities for others.

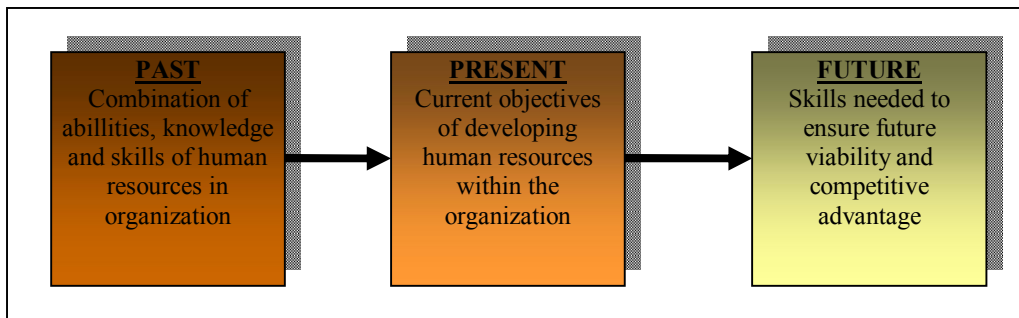


Figure 3. Organization's perspective on career

Organizational career planning has a critical role in attracting, developing and maintaining the staff. Without organization's involvement in establishing, supporting and strengthening the careers of its employees it can not achieve the expected results at both organizational and individual level.

3. THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER PLANNING SYSTEM

Due to numerous changes manifested in the lives of individuals and organizations, the idea of developing a fixed career trajectory has become somewhat outdated because fewer are those who plan on long term. Careers are shorter and more unstable, job security is reducing and the short-term employment becomes more

common. Most individuals are expected to change several jobs throughout their working lives and to participate in a variety of projects.

The reduced number of jobs available within organizations and restrict managerial levels have led to changes in the traditional route to an organizational career development. There are fewer promotion opportunities so that employees are keeping the same job on longer periods before being promoted. The traditional career path involved an upward mobility, giving to the employees the certainty of an well-defined promote pathways. Currently, the emphasis is on **job rotation**, **multiple skills development** and **sideways promotion**.

Designing and implementing a career planning system is useful to the organizations for identifying the employees development needs and matching them to the business needs.

The **career planning system** contribute to increased employees professional satisfaction because it helps them to identify and take positions consistent with their objectives and plans. From *the perspective of the company*, career planning system *reduces the needed time to fill the vacancies*, help *succession planning* (preparing employees for filling positions that became vacant following staff turnover or retirement), *identify employees with management potential* and ensure to all employees *the opportunity to identify career goals and develop plans* to achieve them.

2.1. The main components of career management system

Career planning systems differ in terms of complexity and of emphasis on certain components of it. However, all career planning systems include the following components:

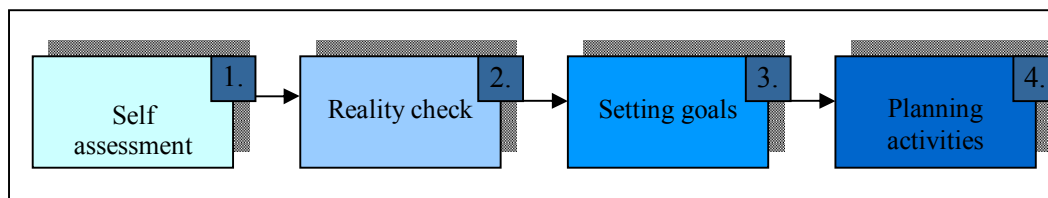


Figure 4. The career planning process

1. **Self assessment** assists employees in setting goals, values, skills and behavioral trends. Psychological tests are used as „Inventory goals Strong – Campbell” (it helps employees to identify occupational and professional goals) and „self quest” (it identify the employee’ preferences for different working environments - sales, consulting, etc.) which contributes to identify the level of emphasis on work and leisure. Career counselors are often used to assist employees in self-evaluation process and in interpreting test results.
2. **Reality check**: the employees are informed on how the company assess their skills and knowledge and what place they took on company plans (eg opportunities for promotion, lateral moves). Usually, this information is

provided by the direct managers in the performance evaluation process; the discussion on career development can take place separately.

3. **Setting goals:** Employees establish the short and long term career objectives that are related to concerned *professional positions, the necessary level of competence, setting steps forward, learning new skills*. These objectives are discussed with the manager and recorded in the individual development plan.
4. **Planning activities:** during this phase, the employees determine how to achieve short and long term career goals. These plans may include attending lectures and seminars, applications to fill vacancies within the company or participating in interviews.

4. THE ROLES OF THE EMPLOYEES, MANAGERS AND ORGANIZATION IN CAREER PLANNING

The employees, managers and organizations (Hollenbeck, et al., 2008) share the responsibility for career planning.

4.1. The Employee's Role

Regardless of the operating organization, the individuals must be actively involved in managing their careers, motivated of its beneficial effects on welfare (the economic and psychological standpoint) (George, et al., 2007).

- **The economic standpoint** – at a basic level, the work provides an income to the individuals to ensure their existence and their families and to satisfy other interests, hobbies and recreation; career opportunities are a source of *extrinsic motivation* (external) for employees.
- **The psychological standpoint** – as a source of spiritual comfort, the work provides a sense of accomplishment and gives a meaning to the individual existence. Psychologically, career opportunities are an important source of *intrinsic motivation* (internal) for employees.

The Psychological Contract consists of *all the expectations that employers and their employees have from each other*. In general, the *psychological contract* emphasizes that *the organization will offer job security and promotion opportunities if the employee remain in the company and maintain a high level of professional performance*. However, due to technological change, competition and structural social, psychological contract between employees and organizations has changed. The organizations can no longer offer job security and promotion opportunities and employees are more interested in a job that offers challenges, diversity and opportunity to be creative. The employees are still interested in job security even if they realize that having a job within the same company throughout working life is an unrealistic goal.

The **new psychological contract** suggests that *employees can become more valuable to employers by taking responsibility for their career planning*.

The organizations which have structured career planning systems expects from their employees to take responsibility for planning their own careers. Some of it

provide to the employees a crash course to familiarize them with the organization's specific career system; the participation is voluntary and employees are doing their self assessment, identify their career goals and prepare their action plans. Follows that, after a discussion with team manager, to work towards reaching the targets. Other organizations develop and make available to employees a planning guide which guides the development stages of self-assessment, target setting, development planning and action plan.

Regardless of the complexity of the career planning system, employees should take the following actions:

- to take the initiative in the sense of requiring feedback from peers and chiefs regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their skills;
- to identify the stage of career development and the development needs;
- to seize as many opportunities to learn (about sales, product design etc.);
- to interact with employees from different work groups within and outside the organization (eg professional associations, project teams).

4.2. The Manager's Role

Regardless of the career planning system type in the organization, managers have a key role in its planning process. Generally, the employees ask for advice on career to their direct managers because they are the ones that determine the level of training and assess their ability to promote. However, the managers are the main source of information on job vacancies, training courses and other development opportunities. Unfortunately, many managers are reluctant to engage in the employees' career planning activities because they do not feel prepared to answer questions related to their career, have a limited time allocated for these activities or they are not able to relate to a full understanding of their needs. To help the employees in this process, managers must demonstrate effectiveness in four parts: a coach, evaluator, counselor and referral agent. The success of manager- employee discussion about career (Otte, et al., 1992) is based on achieving the following aspects:

- The managers need to form a complete picture of the employee's work-related purposes and goals;
- The manager and the employee agree on the next steps for development;
- The employee understands the manager's perception of his performance, development needs and career options;
- The manager and the employee agree on how the employee's needs are satisfied with the current job;
- The manager identify the resources to help the employee to achieve the committed objectives set out in their discussion.

A key role of a manager (Zeus et al., 2008) within an organization is to provide employees with *career development coaching*. The purpose of this type of coaching is to help employees to consider various career options and make decisions for them. In return, the organization will benefit from identifying the employee's career prospects, thereby could plan and provide the opportunities to achieve their goals. Outside the manager, the coaching could be provided by the human resources professionals within

the organization. The coach manager can help the employees to assume different roles within the organization such as: a coach for the new employees, mentoring for potential successors, or leadership teams or committees. Thus, individuals perform their generative task: they share to others what they know, giving themselves what they received, thus showing care for the next generation.

One of the difficulties created by *the flattening of career and lateral transfers* is that *the employee status* is determined rather by *the job, title, number of promotions and salary*, and less by the performance, expertise, entrepreneurial and team spirit. Redefining the prestige and held position will encourage the employees to remain in the organization and not to seek a job elsewhere or preferment.

The specific items of the manager's role in career counseling are:

- To design and to implement systems and standards of performance assessment: the role of helping to clarify the organization's opportunities to develop and discuss options and directions for future development organization that employees can prepare and adapt to new requirements;
- Analyzing current and future career plans;
- Setting Goals: manager occupies a unique position to assess and discuss the employee's dedication to his professional goals. Manager may refer the employee to assess his motivations and choices regarding career, getting actively involved in setting career goals and planning actions;
- Systematic encouragement and support of staff during the implementation of the agreed strategies for career;
- Working with employees who feel stressed or unhappy at work: interpersonal problems of the work place (eg. disputes with colleagues or other team members) may adversely affect one's performance. Coaching to develop communication skills and to find ways of conflict resolution can improve performance and it can keep the employee on his career path.

4.3. The Organization's Role

The organizations are responsible for providing the necessary resources to be successful in the employees' career planning. These resources include:

- **Career workshops**: seminars on various topics (how does the system of career planning, self assessment or setting goals);
- **Career centers** or **information systems** (or databases places where / from where the employees can learn about job openings or training programs);
- **Career planning guides** (printed matter for guidance the staff which contain exercises, discussion and advice on career planning);
- **Career counseling** (advice by a specialized professional counselor in assisting the employees interested in career planning);
- **Career paths (directions)** (planning job stages, identifying the skills needed to advance within the same family of channels such as wireless promoting a technical professional position in a managerial position).

The organization must monitor the career planning system to ensure that both managers and employees use it properly and especially to assess how it is useful in achieving its business objectives (eg. reducing the period of coverage vacant posts).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Restructuring of the organizations in the current crisis (marked by mergers, layoffs and restrictions on activity) and change their strategies make career planning a very important process for both employees and employers.

From *the company perspective*, the failure to motivate the employees by planning their careers can lead to *hinder the process of filling vacant posts*, a decrease of the staff involvement and an inappropriate use of the money allocated to training and development programs. From *the employees' perspective*, the lack of career planning can lead to *frustration, feelings of not being appreciated by the company* and non identifying the right position leads to the need of a job change and / or the company (particularly in the current crisis).

Career planning is effective when the organizations use fully the skills and knowledge of their employees and they are motivated to achieve maximum performance and be satisfied with their work, which helps the organization to achieve its objectives. The frequent manifestation of layoffs, especially in the current crisis, requires that employees demonstrate certain skills and competencies that prove indispensable to the actual or potential employers.

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