
How to drive and sustain a Career Development Strategy

Ci Virtual Roundtable - Wednesday, 17th July 2013

This roundtable set out to explore how to build a career development strategy, engage all stakeholders and then maintain momentum for the long-term.

PART 1: INSIGHT

While the drivers for a career development strategy may have been identified in many organisations, translating theory into practice can be problematic. The experience of participants and Ci research singles out three key prompts for strategy development:

- *Retention and attraction issues* - to attract and prevent loss of key skills and talent
- *Supporting change* - to optimise organisational flexibility, especially following merger or business transformation
- *Employee engagement* - to manage differentiated expectations of new generation and long tenure staff

Participants shared their challenges; reducing voluntary exit, aligning systems and cultures from legacy businesses, and equipping managers to facilitate the career agility of their employees.

Ci's approach to career strategy is employee centric, driven by business needs; enabled by aligning organisational processes, and providing holistic career support and information to deliver compelling career deals. Effective career conversations are a key component.

PART 2: INNOVATION

Provocateur Bill Walton's (Applied Materials) story started with an opportunity to improve scores for career development in an employee survey, and ended with a transformative increase in satisfaction two years on following design and implementation of a career development strategy. Central to the turnaround was a major research piece that asked 500+ global employees what career development meant to them before creating a 3 year plan.

Executive management support was secured through a business case with predictions for improvements in retention, commitment, performance and revenue. Integration of existing processes such as IDP (Individual Development Plan) with high profile events and new tools accelerated efforts in Y2 having laid initial

foundations in Y1. To sustain commitment for the long-term, it was important in Y3 to operationalize the strategy by embedding it into annual performance management programmes and aligning it to other company objectives.

Specific ideas for winning over stakeholders to drive and sustain a career development strategy were discussed:

- devise and display career pathway frameworks to help employees navigate their own route including via lateral moves and advise managers on succession planning
- supply managers with devices (videos, scripts, 9 box grid; see also Ci career conversation planner) for sensitive as well as routine discussions
- raise visibility through F2F events (career fairs, career month, speed mentoring) starting at on-boarding stage
- facilitate technical vs. managerial development with rotations, job swaps, special projects, cross-functional assignments

PART 3: IMPACT

Organisations estimate the success of initiatives through individual programme metrics as well as business impact and employee satisfaction. Identifying the right metrics to measure effect is not always self-evident. For example, voluntary turnover rate is usually context-specific. It may be necessary to narrow prioritisation of particular benchmarks over time.

Success can be identified through:

- numbers of employees and managers trained on IDP and coaching, and completion of plans
- page views of career development portal
- attendance at career events
- revenue generated through innovation projects
- career development questions on satisfaction survey

Participants concurred that career development strategy sustainability objectives are best reached via regular employee touch-point events while reducing the strategy's financial commitment through amalgamation with existing processes.