Faster Professional Career Development is in Your Own Hands

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The career landscape is different in that there will likely to be fewer traditional jobs going forward than there are workers. Organizations are learning to do more with fewer employees, but that doesn't mean they don't need consultants who specialize in certain functional areas. We'll see an increase in sole proprietors (contractors) and small businesses. Employment tenure is also shortening so those that do have jobs can't expect to stay as long in the job as our parents might have. It might be of the employer's choosing, but it might also be of the employees choosing in order to keep gaining skills and experiences. We are operating on a global landscape which means we have to be willing to move to other parts of the world to do the work we might want to do.

Turn your "vague longings" into a concrete career path

People should think beyond what they have done in the past. Surrender to your dreams and longings, and explore how to integrate them into something that provides a living and even service to others. Remember that you also don't have to do the same thing forever. Consider this a journey during which you expand possible options with each experience and set of new competencies. My career mapping framework is intended to assist people in realizing some of those dreams by bringing the longings into focus and implementing a strategy that you create at every stage of your life. The longing might not play out in your work life, but can be addressed in your personal life.

Identify workplaces and positions that will meet your career needs

Start by identifying your needs based on what you are bringing to the table and what your goals are - now and longer term. Do your homework to create a viable target list of companies that are in the industries you have identified, offer functions you want to work in, are in geographies you want to live in, etc. Â In other words, have a rationale for why these companies are appealing to you. Â Create prototype job descriptions for yourself by finding various job descriptions from your target companies' web sites. Don't apply to these jobs just yet; get smart first. Â Once you have these laid out, you will approach these companies for opportunities, even if they don't have posted openings.

Become a "free agent" to find the right career

Most job seekers wait to be chosen for a job. Instead, you choose; create and pursue things that make sense for you based on your goals, competencies and values at this point in your life. Find companies that are worthy of you and meet your needs. You and the company are better off if you are bringing more conscious, deliberate thinking to your job. You know your value and are empowered with the ability to determine your needs and objectives. It doesn't mean you are disloyal, just that you know what you want and aren't waiting for it to come to you; you are asking for it and always mindful of new possibilities.

Be more competitive in a new career field

Career mapping process is essential for career changers, or as I call them "Detour" people. You have to compel a prospective employer (or investor if becoming an entrepreneur) that you have the competencies for the role, even if you don't have the experience. This means that again, you do your homework to know what competencies are required. These are not the responsibilities or past experiences, but the skill elements that you can lift from other roles you have performed to apply to this one. The onus is on you to do this since most people want to just scan resumes for relevant experiences and titles. Building a resume to include functional highlights as well as chronological

descriptions focuses the reader on competencies first, then experience.

Resume writing and interviewing strategies

In terms of resume writing, create more than one resume to address the 2-3 functions and industries you have chosen as your aspirational roles. Â Work from a lengthier base resume with everything on it and update that one at least annually with accomplishments and responsibilities. For each role (even within the same company), describe your responsibilities in a short narrative, including reporting relationships, direct reports, etc. Then list in bullet form 3-5 accomplishments. Keep the formatting simple, legible (font not too small), proofread and know that it can be more than one page.

Interviewing, the key is to know yourself; refer back to the map to review your key messages and competencies. Practice and perfect your elevator pitch and be ready for a longer version as an intro in an interview if asked. Do your homework to know as much as possible about the role, the company, and the individuals you will be interviewing with.

Some important career mapping tips

Networking is a critical element of the career mapping framework as people are your best resource to identifying new opportunities and enhancing your career progression. Build a network throughout your work life with the different types of people. Network strategically and purposefully based on your career map; know what you need from someone and know what you can offer them. Learn the art of reciprocity and staying connected to people when you don't need anything.

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