

Career Planning

Introduction

The term career means advancement in terms of achievements or higher assignments/positions in activities one is pursuing. Career reflects the individual and organizational definition of what is worthwhile set of activities to pursue throughout a life time.

Career planning is a shared responsibility. Development of individuals is possible only when they are able to recognize that in developing themselves to meet the organizational needs, their needs are also being met; where career planning is not a shared responsibility but only a responsibility of the organization, it means that there is no career planning, although there may be organizational planning for human resources.

Career planning is the systematic process by which one selects career goals and the path to these goals.

From the organization's viewpoint, it means helping the employees to plan their career in terms of their capacities within the context of organization's needs.

A career can be developed by an individual within one organization or several others. Considering career planning as a process within the organization, career planning is that part of personnel administration which aims at developing paths through which employees may progress in the organization over time.

Definitions of Career Planning

- Schwind Das and Wagar defines as, "Career planning is the process of enhancing an employee's future value."
- Douglas T. Hall states that, "An individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life."

Stages of Career Planning

The proper way to analyze and discuss careers is to look at them as made up of stages. We can identify five career stages that most people will go through during their adult years, regardless of the type of work they do. These stages are exploration, establishment, mid-career, late career and decline.

1. Exploration

Many of the critical choices individuals make about their careers are made prior to entering the workforce on a paid basis. Very early in our lives, our parents and teachers begin to narrow our alternatives and lead us in certain directions. The careers of our parents, their aspirations for their children and their financial sources are crucial factors in determining our perception of what careers are open to us. The exploration period ends for most of us in our mid-twenties as we make the transition from college to work. From an organizational standpoint this stage has little relevance since it occurs prior to employment.

2. Establishment

The establishment period begins with the search for work and includes our First job, being accepted by our peers, learning the job and gaining the first tangible evidence of success or failure in the real world. It is a time which begins with uncertainties, anxieties and risks. It is also marked by making mistakes and learning from these mistakes and the gradual assumption of increased responsibilities. However, the individual in this stage has yet to reach his peak productivity and rarely gets the job that carries great power or high status.

3. Mid-career

Most people do not face their first severe dilemmas until they reach their mid-career stage. This is a time when individuals may continue their prior improvements in performance or begin to deteriorate. At this point in a career, one is expected to have moved beyond apprenticeship to worker-status. Those who make a successful transition assume greater responsibilities and get rewards. For others, it may be a time for reassessment, job changes, adjustment of priorities or the pursuit of alternative lifestyles.

4. Late career

For those who continue to grow through the mid- career stage, the late career usually is a pleasant time when one is allowed the luxury to relax a bit. It is the time when one can enjoy the respect given to him by younger employees. During the late career, individuals are no longer learning, they teach others on the basis of the knowledge they have gained. To those who have stagnated during the previous stage, the late career brings the reality that they cannot change the world as they had once thought. It is a time when individuals have decreased work mobility and may be locked into their current job. One starts looking forward to retirement and the opportunities of doing something different.

5. Decline

The final stage in one's career is difficult for everyone but it is hardest for those who have had continued successes in the earlier stages. After several decades of continuous achievements and high levels of performance, the time has come for retirement. The individuals step out of the limelight and relinquish a major component of their identity. For those who have seen their performance deteriorate over the years, it may be a pleasant time; the frustrations that have been associated with the work are left behind.

Career Planning Process



1. Preparation of Personal Profile

The first important step in the process of career planning is the preparation of personal profile. It comprises of various personality traits of the person. It is very difficult to be familiar with one's own nature, but it is essential for preparing personal profile. One should answer some questions to oneself like attitudes towards nature, work, initiative, confidence, future expectations etc. This will help in determining the direction of one's professional career.

2. Formulation of Personal and Professional Goals

To plan one's career it is necessary to formulate both personal and professional goals. This is because the personal goals enable the person to enter into a profession and then professional goals direct the person in achieving higher heights in the career.

3. Analyzing Environment Effect

A systematic analysis of the environmental opportunities is required in career planning. Career planning process is by both inside and outside environment for opportunities. While deciding about career strategy it is necessary to consider the stage of growth of the organization, future expansion plans, thinking of management etc. Further for formulation of career strategy, the outside environmental factors including economic, social, political, technological etc should need to be discussed. Both future and present environment should be considered which requires forecasting. Since many factors need to be analyzed, one should plan the career necessities, should be selective and should only concentrate on those factors which are critical to personal success.

4. Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

Job requirements and environmental opportunities should be matched with the strengths and weaknesses of a person. Different type of jobs requires different type of skills on the part of the performer. One person may be more suitable at supervisory level only, while the other may go up to middle level management and so on. So it becomes necessary for the individual to analyze his/her own strengths and weaknesses and match them with the available jobs within and outside the organization.

5. Development of Alternatives

The several alternatives are required to be developed under good career planning process. The assessment of alternatives is done in view of the environment and available opportunities. One alternative may be suitable under particular situation while the other may benefit under different condition. Sometimes efforts are made to overcome weaknesses to take advantage of the available opportunities.

6. Development of Contingency Plans

In the environment of uncertainty the individual develops his career plans. Even though some future assumptions are made but these may not prove correct. So, contingency plan may be formulated for facing the uncertain future conditions.

7. Monitoring Career Plan

The individual should monitor his/her career plan for finding out whether the plans are moving according to the pre determined assumptions. The monitoring can also be done at the time of Performance Appraisal or when some project or assignment is completed. Some adjustments may be needed as required under the changing situation.