

## ***What's coming...***

Before I begin, I want you to know how pleased I am to be able to share my personal insights and experiences, personal success stories and career strategies from over 15 years in international career development, human resources, and consulting.

Through these articles, we'll discuss success strategies for all aspects of personal and career development, the job search, transition, regardless of whether you are researching the market, exploring a better opportunity, excited about your present role or direction, underemployed and not utilized, or unemployed. We'll find out how career savvy you are; learn more about what career development looks like today, the responsibilities for taking career ownership in today's work environment. You'll also receive tips on becoming a champion of diversity, building a dynamite, knock-your-socks-off resume, and learn the five strategies for creating chemistry and rapport in the interview...just to name a few.

We'll regularly explore these issues and more, that are related to achieving the success in our work and life that we deserve. Let's raise the bar, create energy and passion in our work life. We owe it to ourselves.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT TODAY— *How Would You Describe It?* Part 1**

### ***Why is this important?***

I wanted to start our series of articles and discussions with trying to figure this one out. Why? Well, if you and I know the ground rules and playing field, then the ball is in our court. That's where I want it. You know the drill; we are responsible for managing our career direction and creating opportunities. Now that's not news, but here's the catch. Believe me, I have coached so many employees who caught the "you-own-your-career" piece but missed the rest of the sentence, that is, our success in work and life is directly proportional to the strength of the relationships we develop with our families, friends, managers, supervisors, team members, community. That means, on the work front we have to be politically correct in how we take ownership. It can't be in isolation of our managers and supervisors. I'm convinced that with a better understanding of today's ground rules, including our view of this career stuff, we can create more opportunities. Conversely, I've recently seen employees lose opportunities for not understanding what it means to take ownership of their career (we'll discuss this at a later date) or for expecting their manager or the organization to be responsible. They were living in the old paradigm.

Of course, our view or attitude is directly related to our personal work-related experiences and to those around us. So if you or others close to you have been outsourced, downsized or spun off (and there is a good likelihood), or if you've survived 6 or 7 bosses over the past year-as was the case with someone I spoke with recently-then your view and attitude will most likely reflect your experiences, and respectfully, your "baggage."

How we communicate our view of "career" through our attitude and actions, as you might expect, influences our success or lack of it.

## ***What does it look like? Here are a few ideas...***

Well, what do you think? How would you describe Career Development in today's environment of accelerating changes, high technology, flattened organizations with a focus on the customer and bottom line? I know what you're thinking, and I'm trying to stay positive.

- Is it this great career ladder in the sky that we may have clung to over the years? (We've had this on-again, off-again relationship.) Look at the "Ladder" today: it's lopsided at best, and probably on its side looking more like a footstool. Actually, the fact that it's somewhat dismantled may be the best thing that ever happened to us. Anybody want to take a crack at why? I'm going to hold you in suspense on this one. We'll cover it in Part 2 on this topic.
- I can take the career approach that I'm a "hired hand," no loyalty or commitment other than to get the job done. Interested in getting as much as I can, as quickly as I can. Or I can position myself as more of a "business partner" with my team, department, the organization, focusing on both my success and that of the organization. There is enough evidence to support either view and everything in between.
- Is it this murky, unclear direction or goal? (Been there, done that!)
- What about describing Career Development as creating opportunities/promotions, facing challenges, solving problems? Now we're getting warmer. I'm convinced the opportunities are much greater than ever. But, we have to learn to look at work/life change as challenges, adversity as an opportunity waiting to happen. Attitude may be the single most important factor in determining career success. We'll spend quite a bit of time on this at a later date.
- What about stretching yourself, learning new skills? Right on. We have to be continuous learners, dedicated to personal growth. I look no further than those many employees I meet and work with each day who are starting college for the first time, working on their GED, pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees, all the while working full-time, raising a family, many are single parents. That's dedication to personal growth!

You know, we could have gone another direction in describing what's happened to careers as of late. However, with that thinking we'll only continue to get more of the negative stuff. Of course, we have to process and deal with our baggage, but it's that positive paradigm shift (which takes time) where we begin to see these tough career experiences as challenges and opportunities, that will make or break us. Then, we have to take action.

To better understand your view and attitude regarding career development, take out a sheet of paper and list the 5-7 most difficult work-related changes that you've experienced over the last 3 years. Identify what you've lost (i.e., career is unclear, burnout/stress, fear of losing your job), and what you have gained (i.e., new training, better balance work and family, inner self-renewal) for each one of those experiences. Focus on the gains and look for the silver lining. It's time to move forward and put the past behind.

## ***This is one view...***

Let me leave you with what has become a guiding principle or definition of Career Development that I use every day in my work.

***Career Development is...a lifelong process of self-directed learning and personal growth integrating work and life experiences, education and training which leads to work contributions, rewards and self-fulfillment.***

### ***Some final thoughts...***

What strikes you as being unique or different as you read this principle? How does this “Life” piece fit in? What’s next? As I say in my classes, this is certainly not rocket science. I also say, this is, however, one of the most important people concepts, one that you and I need to understand. But the real key is, how can I take these words on paper and create energy, make something happen in my work and life? I’ll talk further about this principle, discuss some specific strategies, and then we’ll take a much closer look at what replaced the career “Ladder” in the workplace and what it looks like, in the second part of this article.

Remember, this is all part of creating awareness about the ground rules and playing field to be successful in *today’s* environment.