



CAREER

DEVELOPMENT

REROUTING INC.

ROAD MAP SERIES

Part 6 - Career Development and Planning

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

I've had several conversations with employees over the years who have said, "I am unhappy in my role and I feel there is no room for progression or development". My response is often, "can you tell me about the conversations you have had with your manager about this". All too often employees exclaim, "oh I have never spoken to my manager about this".

Another common response is "I told my manager I am looking to develop and would like to progress my career, but nothing has changed, my job hasn't changed, and I haven't received a promotion". When I ask them about the plan that they have put in place and the list of skills that they need to develop to get where they want to go, the response back is, "oh, there is no plan in place and I don't know what I need to work on".

So, here's the thing...

Some companies have it embedded into their culture. They have development planning sessions and tools to help facilitate managers and employees' conversations around training and development.

BUT, it's not required.

It is something that employees need to take ownership of, even when employee development is part of the company's culture.

An added tip, if a company expects you to manage your development and progression, and you don't, it may be frowned upon. Companies provide the tools and resources, but it is what you make of it. Don't wait around for someone to create a plan for you, it's up to you to ask your manager to help facilitate it. Let them know what your goals are, provide them with YOUR plan, ask for their suggestions and support. If you need help with developing a career plan, reach out to the HR department within your organization. If you do not have an HR department, then it may be beneficial to invest in a coach or consultant. If you are lucky enough to have a mentor, then they might be a great resource to help you develop your path forward.

In this part of the Road Map Series, I am going to give you a simple DIY approach to planning your career. Here is how you can take things into your own hands!

As part of a company's annual performance review program, (the majority of) companies will also include a development component as an optional section for employees to complete. Use it. Complete it. Include specifics. You can't just state... I am interested in taking leadership courses so I can be a manager one day.

Determine your goal, document what is required to get you there, establish a plan to attack those requirements, set timelines, and check those boxes off when you are done!

There are a lot of people out there who want to sit in the same job for their entire career and are happy doing so –most managers don't force career development on employees to move them out of a job.

Career Progress

I want to start off this section by saying that it is okay to not have a plan for progression, it is okay to just go where your job takes you...or stay exactly where you are. There is this expectation that everyone needs to constantly strive for more. But ya know what? It's okay to stay in the same place when it comes to your career. I know several individuals who have worked in the same job for 20+ years and have no desire to change companies, positions, or to move up the ladder. They are happy with what they are doing and feel they are compensated fairly. They don't need "more" money or "more" internal validation. They already feel successful where they are. They often tell me that their job is just a means of paying their bills...AND...there is nothing wrong with that!

In this section we will talk about progressing your career (both horizontally and vertically) and planning for it, if it is what YOU want!

The Career Ladder

We often think of career progress as moving up a hierarchy, which is referred to as the career “ladder”. Starting in a support role, and then moving upwards into a senior position, then on to a leadership position such as a manager, director, VP, etc. In addition to the desire to move up the career ladder, a select set of skills need to be obtained and demonstrated to make an effective leader.

Employees often believe that if they master a job/position, then it makes sense that they would be eligible to lead and manage a team of individuals performing “that” job. However, it is more important to master the skills that make a good manager or leader. Not necessarily the technical skills of an individual contributor.

You see, a good manager or leader doesn’t necessarily need to master all of the skills and tasks that the employees who work for them perform. What they need to master is providing support, removing barriers, effective coaching and delivery of feedback, decision making, and several other skills that make a good leader. If you want to move UP the hierarchy, you should take courses aligned with the skills that are required to be an effective leader.

But, most importantly, you need to practice and demonstrate some key skills when you are an independent contributor. Take the initiative to provide ongoing support to your team members and the organization you work for. Work on your ability to receive and deliver feedback. Take accountability for your actions and own every task and project you complete. Fess up and learn from your mistakes. Always strive to remove barriers within the immediate and cross-functional teams you work with. Stay out of company gossip and maintain professionalism when faced with office politics. When you have mastered these skills as an independent contributor, you’ll be ahead of your peers when opportunities for promotions arise.

As more Sr. positions become available within your organization, be prepared apply for them. The best way to prepare is ensuring that you are working towards meeting all of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the role. If you are not selected for the position, ASK for feedback! And yes, you likely need to apply for a promotion within the organization you work for (unless a job is considered an in-line promotion - but we won't get into that here).

If you feel like you will not have the opportunity to move up the hierarchy within the organization you work for, and it is important for you to have that upward progress,then the best piece of advice I can give you is to move on from the organization. If you haven’t noticed, I am a big cheerleader of the mantra “you create your path”.

Lateral Career Moves

A lateral career move is usually the route for individuals who want to change positions, learn new skills, push themselves out of their comfort zones, and potentially make a “bit” more money. A lateral move means moving to a new position, at the same level (job grade) as their current role.

Lateral career moves can be made possible by developing transferable and specialized skills as well as gaining industry knowledge. It is always easier to make a lateral career move within the same company because of rapport and demonstrated work ethic established in a given organization and within an industry because of the developed industry knowledge base.

As discussed in earlier parts of the Road Map Series, it is easier to find an entry-level role, with no experience in that role, when you have industry knowledge. For example, if you worked at retail clothing stores during high-school and university, and want to establish a career in HR or Marketing, look for HR and Marketing jobs in the retail clothing industry such as H&M, Old Navy, etc. because you will carry forward the industry knowledge. The same goes for making career moves later in life. Then once you have developed job-specific skills, again we will use HR or Marketing, you can branch out into different industries.

Career Planning

Let's take this as an opportunity to go back to **Part 1: Career Discovery**, where you set your short and long-term goals.

- What were those goals?
- What are you currently doing to accomplish them?
- What do you need to do to keep pushing forward?
- Is what you are doing working?
- Have you obtained summer jobs, internships, co-op placements in line with your future career goals, or are you struggling to get your foot in the door?
- Are you seeing the returns of your hard work? If not, it may be time to evaluate and reroute your plan. (...or maybe you just need to clean up your resume if you skipped that part of the Road Map Series, go back and use the tools I provided to you).

Create a new map to get where you want to go!

When writing out your map, note these details:

- What education and certifications are required to land you the position you are looking for? Use the skills learned in Career Discovery and Job Searching 101.
- What professional seminars can you attend?
- What courses do you need to take and where are these courses available?
- What practical experience do you need?
- How can you obtain that practical experience?
- Can you get practical experience in your current job?
- Can you ask to gain that practical experience within the company you are currently working for by taking on additional responsibilities?

List your plans to gain that practical experience. Make your move. Start pushing forward. Because a goal without a plan is just a wish...right?

In **Part 1: Career Discovery** I talked about how over time, you will change. Your interests, your motivators, and your values will evolve as you do. Don't be inclined to think that your plan is a path that you must stick to.

The most important aspect of a career plan for progression that I want to highlight, is that if you don't have a goal and a "road map", there is a good chance that you might just sit still. Don't get me wrong, you can continue to progress and develop if you fall into a job, I just want to ensure that you are happy with what you are doing and living your life intentionally.

So, let me ask you this again...

What is your goal? What is your plan? What does your road map look like to get you there?