



The Blake Group
Organizational Consulting LLC

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Your Career Goal Options

All of us, like organizations, are facing change and turbulence. In today's society career development is no longer a nicety, but a necessity. We need to cope with, adapt to, and plan for change. A manager can help subordinates with their career concerns. The manager acts as an advisor, pointing out career goal choices. The following article provides an outline of career choices that we need to consider and as managers, we can discuss with our employees.

1. **Moving Up:** For many, movement up equals success; all other movement either does not count or counts against one. Many consider upward mobility the only acceptable and rewarding way to develop a career. Upward mobility provides additional status, responsibility, compensation, and the weight of title to a professional reputation. Vertical goals are usually focused one or two levels above the current position.

As a manager, you can assist your employees by discussing positions at the next higher level or by organizing resource material to help them make plans. For example, you could identify key contact people within the organization who might act as information resources. You can also encourage employees to use data available in the system, such as job posting bulletins, so that they can determine what the job requirements are for positions in other parts of the organization.

2. **Moving Across:** Lateral movement involves a change in function or title without necessarily undergoing a change in status or salary. Horizontal or lateral moves clearly demonstrate the concept of the transferability of skills, abilities, and job knowledge. An employee who has strong product knowledge from a background in production and who has demonstrated successful sales skills by selling production proposals to top management may, indeed, be qualified to make a lateral move into a position in marketing by virtue of transferable skills and knowledge.

Lateral moves are fast becoming a way of demonstrating adaptive abilities and broadening skills, learning about other areas of the organization, and developing new talents. Providing individuals with this kind of exposure is becoming a grooming mechanism for positions in higher management, since it broadens an individual's base of knowledge and provides an opportunity to demonstrate management skills.

3. **Moving Down:** Realignment involves a downward move in the organization's hierarchy. Moving down is another option that our changing value system has made more feasible during the last few years. Many people look toward outside interests for self-fulfillment and see the opportunity to move downward as a chance to free themselves from time-consuming positions.

Of course, employees probably will have difficulty in making this type of move because of the stigma of failure attached. As their manager, you can help make the transition easier by pointing out the positive aspects of the move. Some workers may look to downward movement for health reasons or to relieve job-related tension and stress. After all, most people will agree that it is better to do what they do well than to struggle along in a job that is not suited to them.

4. **Exploring:** Exploring involves the process of researching, interviewing, and testing out ideas and opportunities so that a decision about another field of interest can eventually be made. Exploratory goals involve seeking the answers to such questions as "What else can I do?" and "Where else can I go?"

Exploratory goals encourage employees to consider other areas of the organization without yet committing to an actual move in another direction. Discussing exploratory goals with employees replaces fantasizing about greener pastures with planning for action. Exploratory goals do require effort, but they can easily be pursued in tandem with other goals.

5. **Staying Put:** Staying put suggests that opportunity begins at home. In fact, when employees recognize the advantages of their present assignments, it is not unusual for them to decide to remain in their current jobs a little longer.

Enrichment is a process in which you seek to expand or change the responsibilities of your current job in order to provide a growth experience for yourself.

In his early work on job enrichment, Richard Hackman suggested that jobs can be improved by: 1) increasing the number and variety of skills and talents used in performing the job; 2) having the opportunity to work on a job from beginning to end; 3) determining and understanding the type and degree of impact the particular job has on the lives and work of other people in the organization and on the organization as a whole; 4) increasing responsibility, independence, and discretion in determining one's own work procedures; and 5) seeking or establishing opportunities for feedback from the job itself as well as from coworkers and supervisors.

6. **Moving Out:** The final option is moving to another position outside the organization. Relocation involves moving out of a particular division of an organization or out of the organization totally. While manager-employee career development discussions should be aimed at keeping the employee satisfied and challenged within the organization, it is naive to assume that this will always be possible.

After serious introspection, some individuals may find their present occupation, industry, profession, or firm does not meet their needs and may opt to move out. One aim of the career development discussion is to ensure that your employee has not made this decision too quickly. Needless to say, employees who would be better situated elsewhere should not be discouraged from leaving jobs at which they are only marginally productive or satisfied.

To help your employees focus on their goal possibilities, have them identify potential goals for the different options.

Have a happy and safe holiday season. See you next year.

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www.blake-group.com and www.leaderspath.net and www.lifespithcoaching.net

Or call us: 877.844.4969 or 520.455.9393

The Blake Group, HC 1 Box 577, Elgin Arizona 85611