

## CAREER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES – A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FROM AN INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Seema\*

Dr. S. Sujatha\*\*

### ABSTRACT

Career management is the process of improving the individual's ability to develop and to become aware of concepts about self and also about career opportunities and requirements of one's own career decision making skills. This study is proposed to cover the career management strategies from an individual perspective, and identifies the importance of career management and implications of effective career management. And also reviews the concepts of careers, career management, career management process, effects of career exploration on career management. This paper examines to study the career management strategies from an individual perspective.

**Keywords:** Career, Career Management, Career Management Process, Career Management Strategies, Career Exploration, Individual Perspective

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\* Assistant Professor (Jr), VIT Business School VIT University, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

\*\* Associate Professor, VIT Business School, VIT University, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

## INTRODUCTION

Since 1990s the focus on career has moved from traditional “organizational careers” to the term coined by Arthur (1994) called “boundaryless career”. The meaning of boundaryless career is the process of seeking out one’s own career path to satisfy their own personal motivations and circumstances. It involves creating their own path rather than following a structured or pre-designed career path. Late 1980s and 1990s also suggested that the individuals have changed their values and priorities and are more willing to have control of one’s own career and ready to accept the idea of boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). This is in line with the boundaryless career concept in which individuals are interested in pursuing such work to satisfy individual goals (Hall, 1996b). Careers of twenty-first century would no longer be automatic nor linear, they would be boundaryless. Individuals would direct their own career rather than organizations and it will be driven by the changes in the person and its environment. Individuals are required to be more flexible and adaptive (Hall, 1996a). According to Hall (1996b) the careers need to continuously to develop the skills and knowledge to meet the individual goals. Adamson et al. (1998) stated, that employees will have to ensure that even if they do not progress within their organization, they will have their jobs to provide them with professional challenge so that they remain engaged, skilful in their profession, and marketable. At this point, the concept of career management was considered to be an important/inevitable aspect of career of an individual.

### Career

A career according to D.E. Super, (1957) defined as a series of positions in which an individual carries out during his lifetime. It also refers to progressions to higher rewards or better things. E.A. Krause, (1971) pointed out that progression can be measured by various criteria like the extend of upward mobility, amount of job satisfaction, improvement in one’s standard of living or, simply continuation of employment in the case of some unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

Individual level career research deals with the issues such as personal flexibility, work-life balance, and ways to have a fulfilling and rewarding career (e.g. Hall, 2002; Kidd and Smewig, 2001; McCarthy, 2002; Seibert et al., 2001a). Earlier career was considered to be only for the professional or to those who got promoted through organizational ladder. But nowadays

the term career is applied widely and is commonly considered to be the lifelong process of role-related activities of individuals (Hall, 2002).

The view of traditional career which was mostly determined by an employee's preliminary training and by opportunities provided by employees, has moved to the concept of dynamic career, guided largely by the employees him- or herself. During few decades job tenure was the only career possibilities. It depended on how long employees have worked for the company. Dessler (2003) proposed careers were assumed "as an upward, linear progression in one or two firms or as stable employment within profession". This was the custom in small organization where people have the possibility to develop a career, in the company for long time, and they do a good job. The job security is what the employees get for their loyalty. Presently employees' job satisfaction and motivation are the two factors associated with career and it is the only means of keeping people in the company. According to Ball career prospects are an instrument to retain and to motivate personnel. (Ball 1997) have felt that they have to create and design a long-term career path for their employees and also invest in their human development that they get loyalty as a return. (Cappelli, 2004) One of the more widely-accepted conceptualizations of career is that of Hall who defines a career as a sequence of related work experiences and activities, directed at personal and organizational goals, through which a person passes during his or her lifetime, that are partly under their control and partly under that of others. Beckhard, pointed out that there are four distinctive features of this conceptualization that provide the source of its wide acceptance. First, it has a long-term perspective, which extends beyond the current satisfaction and performance of employees. Second, the definition focuses on either objective or external aspects of the activities career, and also experiences on subjective or internal aspects that accompany these activities. Third, it considers career effectiveness from a variety of perspectives, as realizing goals that are personally important to the individual him or herself and not just attaining socially-sanctioned positions or ranks, Finally, and the fourth important is that this definition explicitly recognizes that career outcomes are the combined result of individual efforts and of external forces over which the individual does not have any control.

### **Career Management**

Previous research in this area was termed as "Career development", and recently is coined and named as "Career management". Career management as a process by which

individuals can make informed decisions regarding their work lives. Tuckman (1974) has used Katzell's hypothesis for developing the an operational definition of 'career development': A process which enhances a person's ability to 1) develop and become aware of concepts about himself (self-awareness), 2) develop and become aware of his environment, including occupations, and 3) make career choices (career decision-making). In other words, career management is the process where the individual improve their ability in order to develop and to become aware of the concepts and self and also about the various career opportunities and the requirements of their own career decision making skills. Career management also been defined as 'attempts made to influence the career development of one of more people' (Arnold, 1997, p.19) and may take the form of a range of more or less formal activities ranging from training courses and assessment centres to mentoring and careers advice. Career self-management is a process of gathering information's under the control of the individual and plans for career problem solving and decision-making. It involves two main behaviors: continuous improvement in one's current job is one behaviour and the other being preparedness for job mobility (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998, p.938). Hence, this makes it for the involvement of both the organization and the individual to actively play a role in the employee career development (Baruch, 2003, 2006). The employees are responsible for assessing themselves and for planning to meet their individual career needs, and the organizations needs to provide the tools, resources and structure to help the employees to assess and develop themselves and create plans based on the organizational realities. The employees of high organization and line manager support, are highly motivated to perform activities to manage their careers within the organization (Sturges et al., 2010). Point to consider, it is not only organizations have to involve in the employees career development but it is also the duty of the individual employee to take care of their career development. (Herriot and Pemberton, 1996; Orpen, 1994; Pazy, 1988).

#### **CAREER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FROM AN INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE:**

Career management from an individual view is the process by which individuals can make informed decisions regarding their work lives (Greenhaus, J.H, Callanan, G.A., 1994). This research on career management emphasizes the need for the people to manage their career and not the careers managing them. Career management is always an ongoing process of problem-solving which involves gathering the information and awareness over oneself and the environment is increased, career goals and strategies are developed, and feedback is obtained.

This process helps individuals to deal with the tasks and issues they are facing in various stages of their careers. According to this perspective, individuals are required to engage in enhance their various forms of career exploration so that they will enhance their awareness about themselves (values, interests, talents, and preferred lifestyle) and their environment (occupations, jobs, career paths, organizations, industries, and family constraints). This increased awareness of oneself and environment would enable the individuals to set realistic career goals that are compatible with their personal qualities which would in turn help in the development and implementation of appropriate career strategies or action plans. The career strategy implementation should be able to provide feedback regarding progress towards achieving the career goal, and also provide additional information concerning the appropriateness of the strategy and the career goal itself. Career appraisal is the process of continuous utilization of career-related feedback, that enables the career management cycle (Jeffrey H. Greenhaus, Gerard A. Callanan and Eileen Kaplan, 1995, pg. 3-12). The career management process involves three aspects such as 1. Career exploration, 2. Development of career goals, and 3. Use of career strategies to obtain career goals. "Career management is the process by which individuals collect information about values, interests, and skill strengths and weaknesses (career exploration), identify a career goal, and engage in career strategies that increase the probability that career goals will be achieved (Greenhaus, 1987). Past researches of career management has focused mainly on one aspect of career management process, that is exploration behavior or career goal setting (e.g. Stumpf, Colarelli and Hartman, 1983; Sugalski and Greenhaus, 1986).

#### Career Management

- Career Exploration
- Development of career goals
- Career strategy Implementation

But this paper tries to give overview mainly on repeated three aspects, i.e., career exploration, career goal setting and career strategy implementation. Each of the aspect is explained below in detail.

#### Career Exploration

Career exploration is the process of collection and analysis of information and issues related to career. The theory of career exploration is based on the theory of exploration.

Exploratory behavior encompass of mental or physical activities which provide information about oneself or the environment (Jordaan, 1963).

It is the responsibility of the individuals to collect information in order that so they can become more precisely aware of their own values, interests, and talents, as well as the opportunities and obstacles in their environment. This information can be used for the development of the individual and the occupational concepts. Stumpf et al. (1983) suggest the following career exploration four components: 1. Where one explores (environment versus self) 2. How one explores (intended versus systematic) 3. How much one explores (frequency and amount of information) and 4. What one explores (the focus of the exploration). Many studies show that career exploration is linked with development behavior that includes acceptance of mobility opportunities and participation in courses and seminars (Noe and Wilk, 1993; Stumpf and Hartman, 1987; Sugalski and Greenhaus, 1986).

### **Effects of Career Exploration on Career Management**

Research studies of the past suggested that career exploration can have a beneficial effect on career management. The most important effect of career exploration is an enhanced awareness of self and environment. Many studies clearly explain that when individual involve in more and more of career exploration, they will become more aware of themselves and the career that they have selected (D. L. Blustein, 1997). In a similar element, career exploration can improve the amount of information that the individual need during the process of job search (S. A. Stumpf and K. Hartman, 1984).

Studies indicate that career exploration can help people develop occupational goals, and also it is the focus and quality of career exploration is important than the quantity to improve goal setting (J. H. Greenhaus and T. F. Connolly, 1982). Extensive career exploration can help the individuals in taking the appropriate decisions and also means to satisfy their decisions (Greenhaus, Hawkins, and Brenner).

Stephen Stumpf has demonstrated using his extensive research on career exploration which helps people in pursuing job prospects. It was also found when individuals engage in extensive exploration could generate more job interviews and offers, obtain higher salary offers, and develop more realistic job expectations (S. A. Stumpf, E. J. Austin, and K. Hartman, 1984). Career exploration can also lead the people to develop more extensive career strategies and perform more effectively in job-interview situations (Sugalski and Greenhaus; Stumpf et al.,).

In a nut shell, career exploration helps people to become more aware of themselves and the world of work. They are always ready to perform the task of formulating career goals and decisions and are capable to develop strategies necessary to accomplish significant goals. This do not often mean that career exploration is easy or will guarantee to provide profound and useful information. It suggests that conducting a solid foundation of acquiring adequate information through career exploration will help in managing the careers very effectively.

### **Career goal setting**

A career goal can be termed as the desired career-related outcome that a person intends to achieve. (Locke and Latham, 1990) states, goal setting theory suggested that goals influence the development of strategies for goal attainment. According to Greenhaus (1987), “a career goal is a career-related outcome (such as promotion, salary increase, or skill acquisition) that an employee desires to attain”.

Various career related literature has focused on goal as an important determinant of career goal attainment, satisfaction with career progress, and participation in activities related to career goal attainment (e.g. Stevens, 1973; Sugalski and Greenhaus, 1986). The way in which the person is sure about their goal or preference for a specific occupation, job in which they work is termed as goal focus (Stumpf et al. 1983).

### **Career Strategy Implementation**

A sequence of activities designed to help an individual to attain a career goal is termed as career strategy. A career strategy can be termed as an activity or behavior, such as involving in a mentoring relationship to increase the opportunity of career goal attainment. Gould and Penley (1984) stated that networking and self-nomination was always related to managers' salary progression. The two authors have suggested that the use of both interpersonal and intrapersonal career strategies will result in managers giving employees more favorable performance evaluations and these strategies can help managers to develop positive affect toward employees. The interpersonal career strategies are assumed to increase responsibility (self-nomination), and develop contacts inside the company to provide one's boss with access to information and resources (networking). Developing intrapersonal strategy is an important skill and competency to the success of the work unit (expertise development).

Usages of career strategies by the employees are likely to kindle the development of their behaviour. For example, employees who are using expertise development and networking as

their career strategies are more likely to read technical reports and journals and attend courses and seminars and these activities help maintain and expand their knowledge and skills and develop contacts in the organization.

### **Career Management Strategies:**

Career strategies are the important activities of individual career management (Aryee et al., 1993; Gould and Penley, 1984). Gould and Penley (1984, p. 244) defined career management strategies, as “behaviours which may be utilised by an individual to decrease the time required for and uncertainty surrounding the attainment of important career objectives” (p. 244). Career management strategies includes different types of employee behaviours that includes networking, attempts to develop critical expertise, seeking career guidance from an experienced person, and engaging in self-nomination (Gould and Penley, 1984). There are ample literature that brings out the importance of career management strategies that helps in promoting career success (Gould and Penley, 1984; Osnowitz, 2006).

Career goals of a person can met through the properly designed activities called the career strategies. A career strategy involves the activities that an individual has to undertake to achieve his or her career goals or objectives. The implementation and development of career strategy activities should help in not only attainment of individual goals but also to progress in his or her career. Past researches has identified seven types of strategies like 1. Creating opportunities, 2. Extending work involvement, 3. Self-nominating, 4. Seeking career guidance, 5. Networking, 6. Conforming to others’ opinions, and 7. Ingratiating oneself with one’s supervisor (Gould and Penley, 1984). These researchers have identified the kind of strategies that employees use to improve their career success (Gould and Penley, 1984). Hall (1996) pointed out the future careers as “protean”, or it is the career that is driven by the person, not the organization, that requires increased self-knowledge and adaptability. Many authors have emphasized the increased importance for the employees to self-manage their careers (Strickland, 1997). In spite of the increased focus on individuals’ ability to manage their careers. There is lesser empirical research done to find the determinants or consequences of career management strategies or actions. One of the remarkable researches in this area was given by Gould and Penley’s (1984) in the exploratory study of career strategies. They have developed a Career Strategies Inventory to assess individuals’ use of career strategies and have given empirical support for a number of subscales. These scales included strategies like seeking guidance or



mentoring, networking, self-nomination or presentation, creating opportunities, extended work involvement and ingratiating behaviors (e.g. flattering the boss). The result of this study supports the point that career strategies influence in salary progression (a proxy for career advancement and success). Gould and Penley also brought out the factors which can predict or are associated with the use of various career strategies. They have found that the type of job (managers versus nonmanagers), career mobility and gender all have relationships with the tendency to use particular career strategies. Till date, there are a less number of researches on these initial results. This paper has thrown light as how to address this need by application of effective career management strategies from an individual perspective.

Employees who can set effective career goals in a vigilant manner based on insights into themselves and their alternatives as well as a balanced concern for their present and their future – would have the greatest likelihood for productive and satisfying careers. Effective management of career by people make them more sensitive and adaptive to changes in themselves and make them more flexible in making career decisions that are more compatible with their emerging selves.

### **NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF CAREER MANAGEMENT FROM AN INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE:**

Career management is important activity because it helps individuals to manage their careers more effectively. In this section, researcher tries to explain the importance of career management from an individual employee's perspective in the following ways. The importances of career development are in the following ways: It helps – 1. To assess training and development needs 2. To improve current performance 3. To assess further potential/promotability 4. Trying to get people involved in managing their own careers. So, career management is primarily an individual responsibility. It is a life-long process for an individual where he/she continuously learns about his/her purpose, personality, skills and interests for career planning and pursuing the desired career. The processes involved in career management by an individual are rigour and focus at each step. Individual must continuously review learning from his assignments and try to develop alternate perspectives of the job, which helps in enriching ones' experience. And periodic relook at the job and the company serves one to get along with the opportunities available outside will definitely help an individual in giving boost to his career advancement. Individual career planning is the process of identifying what

one needs from one's career by assessing one's strengths and weaknesses in respect to these career goals, and forming what steps need to be taken to make these goals to happen with of one's own strengths and weaknesses. It includes a series of individual decisions that need to be made rationally and systematically if planning is to contribute to career success. This needs that career planning to be supported by right tactics for implementation, amidst the changing circumstances that are often impossible to predict in prior. The success of an individual in carrying out the plan depends on the individual's capability in developing and executing the strategies. All the career tactics that are advocated involves manipulating the situation so that individuals find themselves advantageous to successfully realize their goals. The career plans and tactics measure employed in this study derives heavily from the psychological success model of Hall and Foster and Hall. It suggest how individuals need to plan their careers, what steps are required to be taken for such planning to be effective, and what career tactics can be generalized to have a good chance of succeeding in normal circumstances.

### Conclusion

Effective career management requires periodic adaptation to changing circum-stances to maintain or improve the compatibility between the employee and his or her work experiences. People who manage their careers effectively are sensitive to such changes in themselves, and are sufficiently flexible to make career decisions that are more compatible with their emerging selves. In summary, career management is an ongoing decision-making process designed to promote employee wellbeing through compatibility of work experiences with personal qualities. Information is acquired, awareness is heightened, goals are set, strategies are implemented, feedback is utilized, and adaptation is sought.

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