

Improving technical and career development through the creation of a strategy that aligns organization and individual goals

*Nathalie Colón Torres
Master of Engineering Management
Prof. Héctor J. Cruzado, PhD
Graduate School
Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico*

Abstract — *Career development is considered one of the building blocks for the success of both professionals and organizations. High performing companies tend to build career development through business needs with minimal to no concern for the individual's goals. A career development plan (CDP) was designed for a recently established aerospace company as part of the organization's goals to be competitive in the market and retain new talent in the island. This was implemented with the use of survey, self-assessment, and resource allocation. Survey results showed how participants feel about career development within the company. This helped create specific career development plan targeted to support the individual's goals while maintain business needs. A future work would be the integration of the CDP platform to a more robust system for ease of use while also gaining feedback on how the career development plan has helped support the employees' goals and measuring the impact of the organization's performance and culture.*

Key Terms — *Career Development Plan, Career Growth, Skill Development, Organization, Leadership*

INTRODUCTION

High performing companies, such as aerospace industries, are subjected to constant change. These rapid changes can be seen as challenges that can also affect employees, as they must continue to increase their skillset to stay in a competitive and rapidly changing industry. To adapt to these changes, companies must adopt new strategies, such as developing new career development plans. Career development can be defined as the progression of short-term steps taken to achieve long-term professional goals [1].

It has been shown that the current strategy on career development do not have the same results as they used to [2]. A strategy that is focused on business needs solely results in the creation of negative work environments since the development areas are mostly based on manager's perspective. It has been shown that this approach has a negative effect on employee performance and productivity [2]. From an employee's perspective, it can be seen as if management does not allow them to grow professionally, thus impacting productivity levels.

Having a career path is fundamental for both employees and organizations due to the multiple benefits in productivity and performance [3]. A career development plan well implemented also enhances employability; employee retention and attract candidates. It promotes an environment where employees can trust their organization, expand their career knowledge and be of use in the right programs, increase performance and drive fastest results. For managers it provides the tools to build a pool of talents and contribute to delivering better solution to customer.

The project was performed on a recently established aerospace company in Puerto Rico. As part of the company's initiatives for both retention and market competitiveness is the implementation of a Career Development Plan (CDP). This plan aims on creating a career development culture in the workplace; improving work environment, increase motivation, and productivity levels between employees. The CDP consists of different building blocks: Employee Survey, Self-assessment, and Learning and Resources Allocation for a future implementation of a platform. These building blocks are focused in identifying development opportunities and how these contribute to the business.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rapid and constant changes have prompted people to re-evaluate their work, professional and personal life. Careers development and growth has taken on importance in recent years; where traditional work style is no longer the preferred style of the new generations, reassessing what they want in their professional life from developing a skill or moving to a new role is one of their priorities. One problem with this new work style is that many employers do not consider that they have the conditions to enable the development of their employees, losing an opportunity to lead their employees to reach their maximum potential. Investing in career growth and development serves as a bridge between employees and employers, sharing a common benefit: increase in performance [3].

Career growth is made up of those steps that an employee takes to achieve a goal in the professional field. These steps range from developing a new skill or getting a promotion. Most employees are now focused on advancing their career due to the benefits of career growth and development [3].

To gather feedback and understand from an employee perspective, the use of a survey was the preferred method. The survey included a random sample size that included all role levels. The use of software tools such as Path Analysis using Amos Software Version 23 and Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS Version. 21.0 were used for more accurate data analysis [4].

The benefits of investing in a Career Development Plan or initiative are great for both the employee and the employer [5]. From the employees' point of view, they are having better pay, work life balance, sense of purpose and increasing their knowledge in certain areas. This has a direct effect in both productivity and performance, increasing both and allowing employees to excel at their job. In the case of employers, employing a career of allow build skills set that set the current gap between roles. Career Development focused companies have a better image in the labor market

that can benefit in attracting new job candidates, retaining current ones, and improving their overall business performance [4]-[6].

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of the project, the following steps were taken:

- The development a survey to understand employee satisfaction with current Career Development Opportunities and identify areas of improvement and focus. Survey was aimed to the Engineering Team from the studied Aerospace Industry.
- An employee self- assessment that serves as tool for employees to reflect on their current roles, improvement, and development actions. This will serve as a base for building a formal CDP. The self-assessment includes self-evaluation and peer feedback.
- Developing a Career Development Plan template that target roles and responsibilities, identify career path and future roles, open communications channels for employees to articulate their interest and documents knowledge, experience, and progress.
- Resources, allocation and learning portal: this will allow managers and employees to find trainings, Community of Practices, certifications, and additional information that will help in targeting development actions.

RESULTS

The first action of this project was collecting input from employees. The main goal was to understand how employees perceived or felt in regards of the company's current career development opportunities. A group consisting of mostly engineers from the studied Aerospace Company was asked to provide feedback. Topics targeted by the survey were work-life balance, career development, relationship between management and employees and, career growth. The survey consisted of fifteen questions. Google Forms platform was used due to its accessibility and low cost.

Some important results are the level of satisfaction in terms of career growth within the company. **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.** present participants satisfaction results, where it was interpreted as lack of satisfaction with the career growth measures established by the company. Most participants also shared the same perception when it comes to management in supporting to explore new opportunities.



Figure 1
Employee feedback on company's performance

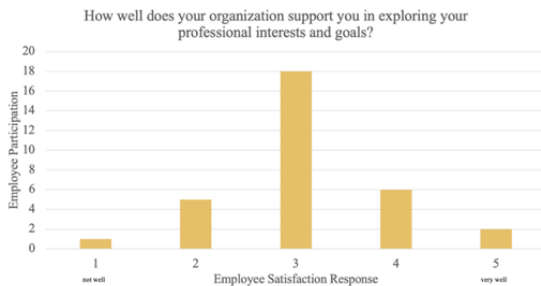


Figure 2
Employee Satisfaction regards to company's career exploration

It is important that, when creating a development plan, the career path or promotion path includes in the conversation. The career path allows employee development to align to role they wish to achieve. **Error! Reference source not found.** presents the results of the participants in terms of their career path, where the vast majority answered that they were not aware of a career path or how they can grow within their role or company. These results represent an area for improvement because the lack of information can translate into a lack of communication and transparency on the part of

management, which can negatively affect the experience and relationship of employees. It is important to note that having a good understanding of a career path allows employees to be more motivated to work and inspired in ways to achieve their goals.

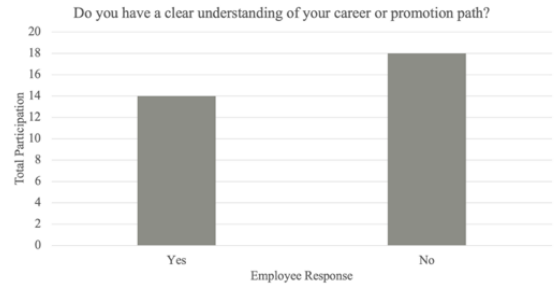


Figure 3
Career Path Response from employees

One of the goals of this project is to develop a Career Development Plan for the company studied that can benefit both employee and employer. As mentioned, companies tend to build career development through business needs with minimal to no concern for individuals' goals. Even though a Career Plan for this Industry is not implemented, is important to understand how the participants feel in terms of professional growth and business needs. **Error! Reference source not found.**, participants considered that career growth is usually based on business needs than on individual goals. This result supports the need to create a culture where career development is seen a valuable tool for managers to engage. Presenting the benefits of using a career development plan and the effects it has on employees and the organization itself are imperative in creating and preserving the culture.



Figure 4
Employee feedback on career development

A Career Development Plan must be combined with Learning Resources tools. As part of the objectives is the Learning and Resources Allocation for a platform implementation. This type of platform allows information to be transparent and accessible. Employees were asked about the need to create a portal and as shown in Figure 5, 100% of the participants were in favor of its creation. The focus is in enabling spaces in which employees have access tools or materials to learn new skills, develop current ones, or review necessary information. This type of portal includes information from both technical and non-technical areas or soft skills, such as communication and time management, which are soft skills but still necessary for the development of any employee.

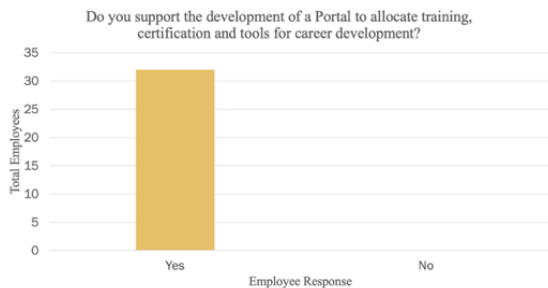


Figure 5
Employee response on Portal Development

The self-assessments allowed understanding current performance, opportunities and determine how skills are aligned to desired career moves. It served as a tool for designing a Career Development Plan (CDP). The CDP is learning-oriented and is focused on attaining a specific skill that is needed to achieve a career goal. The plan includes several types of goals: personal, professional, technical and of leadership.

The CDP template targets roles and responsibilities, identifies career path or future roles. It also enables communications channels for employees to articulate their interest and documents knowledge, experience, and progress. To have a successful CDP, the SMART model (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time Bound) is the preferred in helping create actions. The model helps in having more clearer, realistic, and detailed

goals, track progress, highlight the importance of the goal. Each critical item in the CDP is attained to a deadline, allowing management to design a strategy, and focus its efforts on the completion.

The CDP is a fill-in document that includes a section for each of the following sections: mentor or sponsors, career interest, strengths, skills, or abilities the employee would like to grow. An important section is the experiences needed, which focus on the specific knowledge required to achieve that goal. This can range from assignment, projects, task, networking, mentoring, or coaching, training, Community of Practices (CoP) and certifications.

As part of the scope of designing a CDP is the Resource Allocation. Managers, having knowledge of the available resources, serve as a link to facilitate the learning and development of employees' skills. The studied company has some resources such as trainings and certifications available, but it was found that managers were unaware of the resources available. Additionally, these available resources have not been reviewed and assigned to specific disciplines or roles. This current issue has been seen as an opportunity to review and classify these courses and to allocate new resources. This task can be performed in parallel with the CDP discussions, without causing delays in implementation. For near future, the goal is to develop a Learning Platform where employees can easily navigate through the offered resources.

In addition, resource allocation serves as an opportunity for management to enable a culture focused on learning, to design new trainings and engage in new discussions. An outcome from the resource allocation was the local implementation of Communities of Practices (CoP). These CoP consist of discipline that presents a topic of interest to the main public. Participation is highly encouraged since employees exposed to new topics that can be aligned to their career's goals.

The CDP is collaborative tool and is not a final path. It is designed to facilitate careers discussions about goals, available opportunities and how these can impact current area. Managers have the responsibility of implementing a good CDP. Their

actions are to review, provide feedback and allocate resources that support their career path. Currently, CDP, Self-Assessment and Resources (such as links to specific trainings) are managed through Microsoft Teams. For future, the integration and implementation of the CDP and the current Workday Employee Platform is being evaluated.

CONCLUSION

As discussed, career development is one of the most crucial factors that employees need to achieve individual goals. Whilst it is not always aligned with business needs, those individual goals can help eventually retain employees which maintains the talent for future projects and meet business needs. Survey showed that employees from the aerospace industry felt the need to improve career development. To correctly determine what the employee needs, the self-assessment guided as the baseline to create the unique career development plan. Thus, this career development plan achieves the main goals of the project by enabling communication channels between employer and employee, using the SMART method to set employee's goals and identify the career path and experiences to achieve those goals within the organization. These career development plans will always be changing as goals are constantly changing between the individual and the organization. These building blocks are meant to start a focused path to success to achieve the results that best meets the needs of all stakeholders involved.

As future work is the implementation of the strategy in terms of timeline, creating metrics to measure the impact on current employees, learning resources platform and CDP integration with current employee company homepage. Additionally, create and maintain a career development culture in the workplace which highlights the impact on work environment, performance, motivation, and productivity levels among employees.

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