

# *Strategically Managing Your Career*

---

- by Annette Cyr, MBA, as published in the Metro News

Someone once said that some of the most exciting jobs of the future are the ones that haven't yet been created – and the good news is, they may be just under your nose. Occupations such as business coaches, web designers, and forensic auditors did not exist twenty years ago and yet are fairly commonplace today. There is no better time than the present to take stock of your career and your level of satisfaction than right now.

You may be like many other folks right now who are feeling a little stagnant or are frustrated by what you see as the lack of opportunities out there right now. After all, organizations have fewer employees and have less opportunity for upward mobility and promotions than ever in the past. Companies are also dealing with scarce resources, increasing competitive pressures and overworked management. So how are we supposed to get ahead in this chaotic but challenging work environment of today?

The irony is that the more uncertain and chaotic the environment is in which we work, the greater the need for a well thought out and designed plan of action for career management. Thomas Edison once said that genius is 99 per cent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration – the same concept applies to managing your career success and your life. Success, however we may define it, doesn't fall into the laps of most of us - it is created. Over the years I have observed many employees come and go, often with the same complaint or level of frustration – 'There are no jobs out there'; or 'I have no opportunity to advance...', or 'I don't understand why I didn't get that job'. Without a solid career development plan that includes a look at the trends in the workplace, you leave your future in the hands of others or to sheer luck.

Why isn't your company doing more to help you? The reasons can be very diverse. Career development plans in organizations often focus solely on upward mobility, have little management involvement, and devote little time to the assessment of progress of the career development plan. Traditional career management systems within organizations have not had a terrific track record of success for effectively being able to meet future business requirements. What is needed is the systematic attention of both you and your manager – you must have an identified need in the organization, you must have a vision of how the organization will benefit from a newly identified role or development opportunity and a concrete action plan to make the change happen. You also need to anticipate the needs of your organization for the future, by looking at the business plan and evaluating what trends are happening in the business of the future.

Don't leave your career development in the hands of just your manager – she may not be able to give it the amount of time you require to fulfill your needs. Have a career management strategy which includes these five points:

1. A clear understanding of your own strengths, motivators and competencies. Author Peter Urs Bender in his book *Leadership from Within* (2001) talks about knowing yourself and understanding your motivations and personality type as well as what types of challenges and work opportunities energize you – what gets you excited about your work, or not. A good read for those of you who need help getting started.
2. You have to be visible. These days, it is not enough just to do good work. How often do we see others in a company get ahead, not for what they do or know, but for how visible they are and most importantly, how they are able to foster and develop relationships across the company? Look for opportunities to develop your personal network and to get to know other aspects of the business.
3. Link your development and contribution to the business strategy. Ensure alignment of your needs with that of the business, use a variety of approaches to learn (not just one day seminars – use other resource tools on-line, books, volunteerism, coach someone else, identify drivers of the business and look for opportunities to influence or get involved, seek out a strong mentor in the business or see if you are able to have the use of a professional business coach – there are many of us around.
4. Ensure your manager's participation. You need the support and guidance of a good manager or mentor in the company that can help you with a realistic career management plan and to provide you with the tools and environment to succeed.
5. Most importantly - hold yourself accountable for your own development. Evaluate your progress towards your goals and be prepared to alter your strategy if it isn't moving you in the right direction.



*Annette Cyr, MBA is an Associate of Logixsource Consulting Ltd. Annette helps organizations conduct executive searches, strategic planning, organizational design as well as creates leading-edge rewards and recognition programs, compensation strategies and competency development. She has over 20 years experience and was the Vice President of Human Resources for a major retail company and has held executive level positions in financial and food services industries in Canada and the U.S. Annette is certified in the delivery of Myers Briggs, EQI, Colors, PCSI, FIRO-B and PDI 360.*