



Women Career Development Model

Positive perceptions of career advancement opportunities are one of the most powerful determinants of employee commitment¹. There is now a general consensus that women's lives are fundamentally different from men's, and that they construct their careers in different ways². Women are generally keener to develop careers which take into account personal and family needs. Therefore a women career development model must be viewed in the context of the life and development of the whole person and not just the person as employee³. Women and men generally work an equal number of hours, but divide their time between paid and unpaid work differently. Women usually devote more time to unpaid work while men devote more time to paid work.⁴

Career development is a dynamic and ongoing process throughout an individual's whole professional life. It is about a subjective dimension which is linked to internal matters such as image of self and felt identity and it is about an objective dimension that concerns the public life including the individual's professional life. Thus career development is about individual career management and self-development but it is also about organisational involvement and intervention. The organisation's objective should be to develop and utilise the potential of human resources to the full extent in pursuit of the organisation's strategic objectives.

Therefore the psychological contract between employee and employer should be as clear as possible which means that perceptions and expectations must be pronounced by both employee and employer. Employees offer high productivity and total commitment to their employer, and the employer is expected to offer enhanced employability.

An individual's career can aim at hierarchical development, but it can also be non-hierarchical within the organisation aiming to broaden the employer's specialist skills and knowledge.

To maximize the effect of a career development model designed for women, the model should be implemented in an organisational culture where gender equality is promoted. Gender equality should be espoused in policy documents and actively supported by the management who must be knowledgeable about the implications of gender equality. Unique talents and aptitude learned through life experiences and non traditional work histories should be acknowledged.

The organisation structures must support the career development model. Emphasis should be on flexibility and the result should be much more relevant than the structures surrounding it.

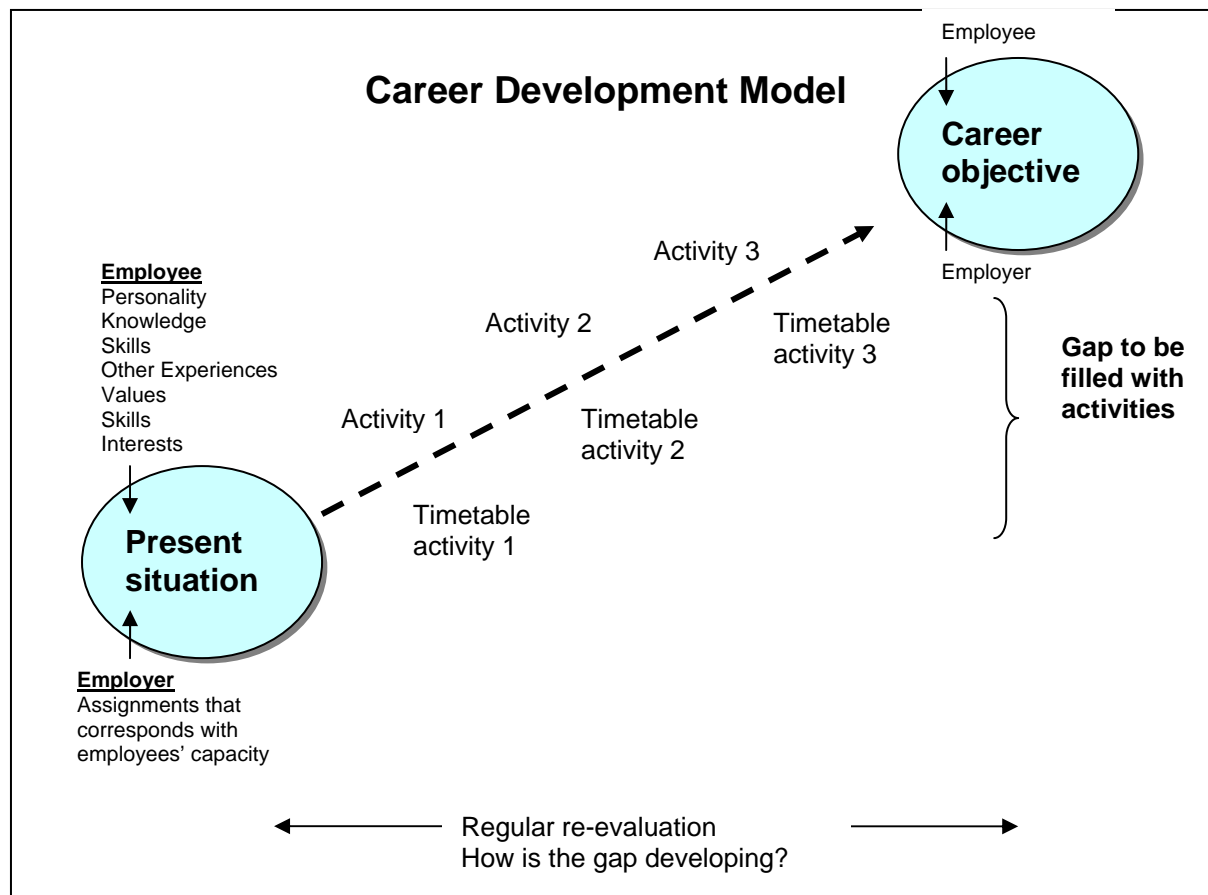
This career model starts with a survey of the present situation after which a career objective is established. The gap between the present situation and the desired objective is then filled with individually tailored actions to suit the individual. A timetable is set up for the different actions. Finally re-evaluation is done so that it is possible to take corrective actions in due time. The model requires active involvement of both the employee and the employer.

¹ Purcell et al.

² Redman and Wilkinson. (2006 p. 283)

³ Torrington et al. (2005 p.410)

⁴ <http://www.scb.se/statistik/LE/LE0103/2003M00/LE99SA0301.pdf#search=%22Tid%20f%C3%B6r%20vardagsliv%22> , 26 August 2006



Present situation

The present situation must illuminate both employee and employer. The key theme is a matching process between the employers strengths/weaknesses, values and desired lifestyle and the requirements and benefits of a range of assignments.

Perceptions and expectations of both employee and employer must be taken into account. A diagnosis of employee's perceptions and expectations is vital if motivation and commitment are to be maintained and if career management interventions are to achieve their desired results⁵. The employer's objective should be to develop and utilise the potential of human resources to the full in pursuit of the organisation's strategic objectives. It is important that the employer continuously give information about the sequence of jobs that people can do, or competencies they can acquire within the organisation, with details of how high the path goes, potential lateral moves, required qualifications/skills/experiences⁶.

One of the difficulties that can arise at this stage is a lack of individual self-awareness and that individuals limit their choices due to social, cultural, gender or racial characteristics⁷.

⁵ Redman, T. & Wilkinson, A. (2006, p.290)

⁶ Redman, T. & Wilkinson, A. (2006, p.289)

⁷ Torrington et al. (2005, p. 411)



The individual survey should include a self assessment focusing on strengths and weaknesses within the following areas:

- Personality
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Other experiences
- Values
- Interests

Tools that can be used are 360 degree assessment, performance appraisal, career counselling with specialist advisers or Human Resource Department, assessment and development centres.

Career objectives

The employees' career objectives must be coordinated with the employer objectives based on the organisations mission and strategies. Due to the context of the organisation these objectives changes over time. There is always a tension between individual and organisational needs. Successful career management is dependent on resolving these differences.

Activities

The organisation can support women career development through the following activities:

- Coaching
- Challenging assignments
- Internal networking.
- Female networking
internal or/and external
- Mentoring
- Job expansion
- External networking
- Management development
programmes designed for women

Timetable

The different career objectives are organised in short-term and long-term goals in a time table. Both career objectives and personal objectives must be taken into account as well as company mission and strategies. The time table must pay attention to the work-life balance during the woman's professional life cycle.

Re-evaluation

A regular re-evaluation must be done by the employee and the employer together. The context of both the employee and the employer changes and an up-date of the action plan may be needed.

References

- Purcell, J., Kinnie, N., Hutchinson, S., Rayton, B. and Swart, J.** (2003) *Understanding the people and performance link: Unlocking the black box*. London: CIPD.
- Redman, T. and Wilkinson, A.** (2006) *Contemporary Human Resource Management*. Prentice Hall.
- Torrington, D., Hall, L. and Taylor, S.** (2005) *Human Resource Management*. New York: FT Pr

Gender School has carried out two surveys about career conditions for women.

Read about the survey at Swedish Road Administration [here](#).

Read about the survey at Dalarna County Council [here](#).