

The Role of Career Development in Improving Organizational Effectiveness and Employee Development

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Abstract

Today's employees are more career conscious than ever. They are demanding more in terms of personal growth and development. Organizations that fail to allow employees to meet their individual needs will be losing valued employees.

This paper will examine the role and importance of Career Development Programs in developing and retaining employees. A Career Development Program seeks to match the needs of the employee with those of the organization with the major components being counseling and training.

Counseling provides employees with the opportunity to define career goals and to create plans within the context of organizational realities. Training allows the employee to develop and acquire knowledge, skills and abilities required to enhance his/her current job and prepares them for future job opportunities. As we approach the 21st Century, it is essential that organizations place a high value on career development. This will allow employees to fulfill their career needs, and organizations will benefit by retaining a greater number of their competent and qualified employees.

Introduction

Overview

Many organizations are faced with the problem of retaining employees. It is expensive to replace employees who leave for greener pastures or are lured away by other organizations. New employees have to be recruited, selected, oriented and trained. In fact, it is estimated that it costs an organization approximately 1½ times the salary of the vacated position to replace an employee.

Employee turnover can have a demoralizing effect on an organization, and it may also severely impact the overall efficiency of the organization. This becomes even more critical in organizations which are service-oriented, i.e. law enforcement, firefighters, etc., and require highly developed skills and competencies.

Unfortunately, there is no single answer that best addresses the issue of employee retention. However, a number of organizations have responded to this issue by implementing Career Development Programs in the workplace. These programs teach employees how to work toward their own goals while continuing to do productive work for the organization. Organizations with such programs claim they retain a greater number of employees.

Clearly, career development has evolved from an isolated tool for individual growth to a key strategic asset for many far-sighted organizations. Once left exclusively to the individual employee's own initiative, organizations have taken a more active role in their employees' careers through Career Development Programs.

Traditionally, it has been assumed that every employee wants, or should want, the same thing in a career, usually a direct path up the organizational ladder (Fink, 1992). However, career development is not about "getting ahead", but rather about getting to be the best an individual can be and finding a place in an organization where they can express excellence and contribute to the goals of the organization. Career development encompasses "vertical" issues such as promotions and upward mobility,

but also "horizontal" movement (lateral job transfers) within the organization. Career development deals with the fundamental nature of the relationship of individuals to their work and employees to their organizations. A clearly defined plan of action prepares employees for the future and preserves an organization's ability to meet both existing and future needs.

Rarely is enough attention given to alternative paths that reflect more personal aspirations, especially when those desires do not fit the familiar pattern of traditional organizational life. Today's employees are demanding more from their work in terms of fulfillment and personal satisfaction. They use words such as "empowerment" and "self-development" in expressing demands. This tells us much about the changing face of the workplace as we prepare to enter the 21st century.

In today's competitive environment, it is imperative that all organizations create a work environment which fosters growth and development. It is apparent this can be accomplished by implementing a Career Development Program in the workplace. This will enhance organizational loyalty among employees, result in higher levels of job satisfaction, lower employee turnover, and fewer employee complaints (Werther & Davis, 1992).

Purpose

Over the past several years, a number of highly-skilled and trained police officers have left the Altamonte Springs Police Department; it was not known whether these employees left for "greater opportunities elsewhere" or concerns about "no where to go". Information was gathered on former employees in hopes of identifying the reasons "why" they left. The data was analyzed and it was learned that a majority cited personal reasons or obtained employment with other police agencies. It was interesting to note that a high percentage of these officers had three years or less experience.

This writer decided to examine the merits of a Career Development Program for the Altamonte Springs Police Department, not only to address the employee retention issue, but also to provide a framework for current and future employees to follow throughout their career with this agency. This research will examine the career development process and focus on those methods and techniques that have been successfully used by organizations in establishing Career Development Programs. This will also provide a framework from which a Career Development Program can be developed for the Altamonte Springs Police Department.

Methods

Several key indicators pointing toward the need for a Career Development Program are turnover, employee complaints, lack of promotable talent, etc. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on employee turnover of police officers at the Altamonte Springs Police Department. Data was obtained on 100 police officers who resigned between October 1983 to April 1995. With the exception of two former officers, the reasons given for leaving were obtained by reviewing personnel files or speaking with former supervisors.

Next, an extensive literature review was conducted into the historical and theoretical basis of Career Development Programs. The historical perspective included a review of both the private and public sector. Several existing Career Development

Programs in large organizations were examined. The theoretical basis explored a number of motivational and organizational theories, as well as, other driving forces for Career Development Programs, including workforce changes, nature of employee motivation, managerial styles and technology. Additionally, components of a Career Development Program were explored.

Results

Turnover. Figure 1 reflects the five categories established as reasons given for leaving employment.

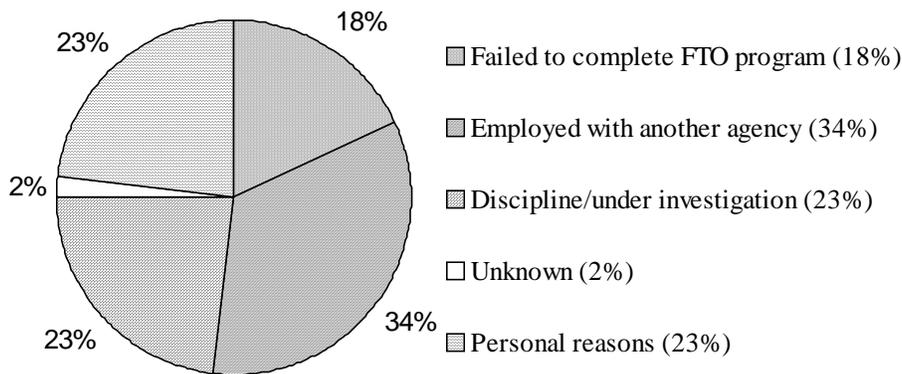


Figure 1. Altamonte Springs Police Department. Police Officer turnover, October 1983 – April 1995.

The data show that 57% of the employees left to work for another police agency or cited personal reasons. The following chart (figure 2) represents further analysis and additional information on tenure.

Approximately 60% of this target group had less than four years of service with our agency. It can be concluded from the data gathered, if we are able to have the employee enter his/her fourth year, there is a good chance they will remain with our department. It is this group (1-3 years) of employees which our organization must focus our career development efforts.

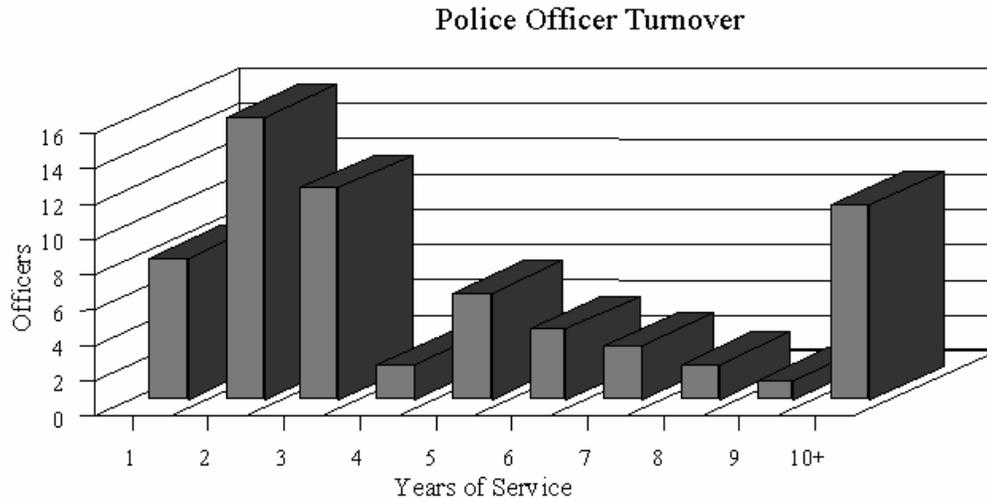


Figure 2. Altamonte Springs Police Department. Police Officer turnover, October 1983 – April 1995. Officers leaving for personal reasons or for employment with another agency by years of service.

Historical Perspective of Career Development Programs

Private Sector

Career Development Programs have been around since the turn of the century. The number of organizations using them has steadily increased since the mid-1970s, as more organizations strive to meet the needs and expectations of their employees. A 1991 survey of 1000 private agencies, 70% of the respondents had or were planning to implement Career Development Programs in the workplace (Gutteridge, Leibowitz, & Shore, 1993). The increasing popularity of Career Development Programs suggests many organizations are willing to play a major role in career planning and employee development. Organizations that emphasized customer service, organizational performance, professionalism and employee empowerment were most likely to have Career Development Programs.

In a 1978 survey conducted by the American Management Association on company-sponsored Career Development Programs, over 90% of the respondents found them to enhance job performance, help employees use personnel systems more effectively, and improve the utilization of available talent (Walker & Gutteridge, 1979).

In the late 1980's, a number of large corporations (British Petroleum Exploration, Amoco, Baxter Healthcare and John Deere) developed and implemented comprehensive and visible Career Development Programs in the workplace. Each of these companies used methods such as career counseling, workshops, workbooks, along with techniques such as self-assessment testing and job rotations to enhance their employees opportunity for growth and development. This resulted in lower employee turnover, fewer employee complaints and higher levels of job satisfaction. In fact, Baxter Healthcare has the lowest employee turnover in their industry segment. The results achieved by larger organizations caused even mid-size and smaller organizations to implement Career Development Programs.

Public Sector

Even with the increased popularity of Career Development Programs, the public sector has lagged behind the private sector in instituting these programs (West & Berman, 1993). Why is this? First, organizations in the private sector are extremely competitive and their bottom line is directly tied to corporate profits. Competition occurs in a global rather than a national context. Also, technological advances have occurred more quickly in the private sector that requires more highly skilled workers. Quite simply, organizations in the private sector must maintain a competitive edge and their overall success translates into corporate profits. Conversely, organizations in the public sector are service-driven and operate on budgets that are generated primarily by taxes.

Career Development Programs in law enforcement have been even slower in developing. In fact, "career development has been traditionally viewed as nothing more than promoting officers through the ranks until they are eligible to retire" (Gibbons 1995, p. 16). At best, employees are given limited guidance in professional development and little, if any, guidance in areas pertaining to personal growth.

Economic pressures have also attributed to the slow growth of Career Development Programs in law enforcement. In the mid-1980's, many police departments were forced to reorganize in an effort to reduce costs. The terms "flattening and downsizing crept into the vocabulary of many administrators" (Grossman & Doherty, 1994, p. 11). This resulted in fewer and fewer opportunities for promotions, and this trend will most likely continue into the 21st century. As a result, organizations must emphasize the strong value of growing and learning one's current job, as well as, exploring other areas within the organization.

In recent years, many law enforcement agencies have sought accreditation through the Commission for the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA). This independent accreditation process ensures that law enforcement agencies have met specific requirements and prescribed standards. Participating agencies devote considerable manpower and resources in order to be accredited. CALEA requires that participating agencies have a documented Career Development Program (Commission on the Accreditation for Law Enforcement, Inc., 1991). As a result, an increasing number of law enforcement administrators realize the importance of Career Development Programs and they are viewed in similar context to the private sector.

Theoretical Basis for Career Development

Career Development Programs have evolved because of changes in the workforce (work-life balance, diversity, focus on quality), advances in management theory (employee motivation), changes in managerial styles and the increasing complexity of technology. It is these contemporary trends which have fostered the growth of Career Development Programs.

Work Force Changes

In the past, "employees tended to remain attached to one or two organizations throughout their careers, with loyalty to the organization and acceptance of the employer's authority being the norm" (Lewis, 1986, p. 16). It wasn't too long ago that

social class guided one's career. An individual usually did what their parents or grandparents did.

However, employees who entered the workforce in 1990, "will work for as many as five different companies and have ten different jobs before they retire" (Scheele, 1992, p. 16). This does not mean that employees are disloyal or uncommitted, but they may have multiple loyalties and commitments to their professions, families, avocations, and their personal well being. Where employee loyalty exists, it is often to a profession rather than to an organization.

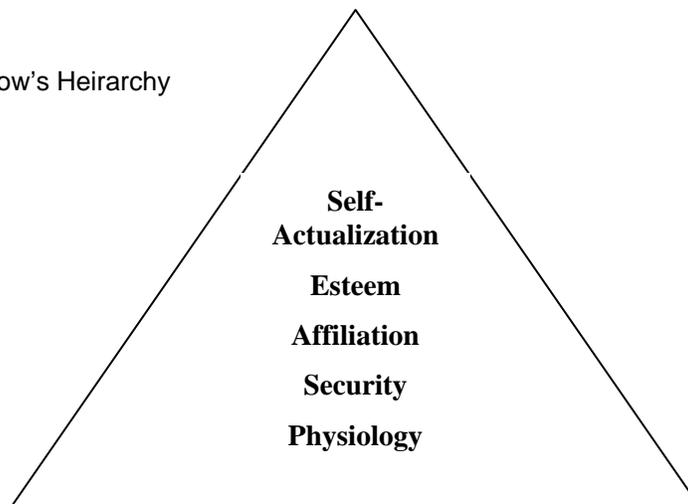
An even more pressing reason for organizational change involves the demographics of the workforce, which is experiencing a steady increase of women, minorities, disabled, as well as, older workers. All of the factors have caused organizations to re-evaluate and assess their most valued and importance resource, their employees. Also, Total Quality Management (TQM) has become a dominant concern of many organizations. With the emphasis on customer service, quality in daily work and continuous improvement, it is seen as essential to organizations that desire to maintain a competitive edge.

Nature of Employee Motivation

All employees are motivated, but organizations must realize every employee is motivated by a different set of needs. It is an employee's ability to satisfy these needs which propel human activity. An organization's ability to understand and address these needs will result in higher levels of job satisfaction and enhanced performance by its employees.

In the 1940's, a behavioral scientist, Abraham Maslow (1954), developed a general theory of motivation. Maslow acknowledged that people really have a great many needs which he condensed into five distinct categories. They were arranged in order of importance, from the most basic needs (physiological) ascending to the most complex needs (self-actualization). These five categories, became known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Maslow's Heirarchy Of Needs.



It was Maslow's belief that one's needs must be satisfied at one level before ascending to the next level. Maslow insisted that one could not experience some of these intrinsic motives unless more basic motives in one's career were first achieved,

such as earning enough money, being secure in one's job, and having pleasant colleagues with whom to associate. Conversely, if one's needs go unsatisfied over along period of time, an individual will either quit their job or engage in some form of dysfunctional behavior.

Maslow's ultimate need, "self-actualization", is described in terms of one's desire to reach their potential and achieve personal fulfillment and growth as a person. In other words, people seek to become all they are capable of becoming. People want to realize their potential, growth, fulfillment, and to feel a sense of accomplishment. According to McAfee and Champagne (1989), few people reach a point of total self-actualization. They believe individuals can always achieve greater competency and mastery in what they are doing.

Another motivational theory developed by Clayton Aldefer (1972) called the ERG Theory, also arranged people's needs in a hierarchy. Aldefer incorporated Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs into 3 categories; i.e., existence, relatedness and growth. Aldefer theorized the less each need level goes unsatisfied, the more it will be desired. However, if the higher-level needs, which includes the need for personal growth, goes unsatisfied, the individual will become frustrated and seek lower-level satisfaction. This frustration-regression process is the major difference between his and Maslow's motivational theories.

In another motivational theory, Frederick Herzberg (1975) points out that while maintenance factors such as salary and job security can be associated with job satisfaction, the real motivators are the opportunity for growth and recognition and the opportunity to demonstrate a higher degree of competency in one's job.

Finally, Vroom's (1967) motivational theory concludes that individuals exhibit a higher level of motivation if they believe that their efforts will be rewarded and the rewards are of importance to them.

It is important that organizations understand that differences exist among individuals and what motivates one employee may have little or no effect on another employee. Career development can provide a chance for employees to clarify their individual goals and identify what paths they can take within the organization to reach their objectives and earn valued rewards. If organizations can assist employees in satisfying their needs, they are more likely to be committed to the organization and its goals.

Managerial Styles

Changes in managerial styles have contributed greatly to the overall success of career development. Management scholars have long been aware of the distinctions between Douglas McGregor's "Theory X" and "Theory Y" management styles.

According to McGregor (1960), Theory X managers assume that employees dislike work, seek to avoid responsibility, and need coercion and control to make them work toward organizational goals. The Theory Y manager believes in the inherent creativity of employees and assumes that they are generally interested in directing their own work. The Theory X manager was also concerned with productivity, rather than with employees' needs for involvement. The Theory Y manager tends to emphasize the human aspects of the work environment.

Organizations must no longer choose between concern for people or concern for production. According to Blake and Mouton (1978), the most effective managers are those who realize that employee commitment and productivity are directly related to the organization's overall effectiveness.

Technology

Rapid changes in technology have transformed every aspect of the workplace. Advances in technology (computers, communication, etc.) have resulted in the need for skilled professionals, and this has caused problems for many organizations. As a result, these organizations were forced to hire skilled technicians or fill these positions with untrained personnel. These technological advances further stress the importance of having a Career Development Program. Employees would be able to make practical career decisions based upon the organization's current and future needs. Organizations will benefit by being able to use existing personnel to fill "new" positions.

Components of a Career Development Program

The desired outcome of a Career Development Program is to match the needs of the employee with those of the organization. Employees must have the opportunity to identify career needs and the organization should assist them in achieving these needs within organizational realities. A Career Development Program does not require elaborate procedures. The essential components are counseling and training. Career counseling provides an avenue for the employee to assess their career needs. The training component assists employees in growth and development by enhancing their knowledge, skills and abilities in their present job assignments or prepares them for future opportunities. Proficient in-service training and career specialty training can accomplish this. Each of these components is vital to the success of the career development initiative.

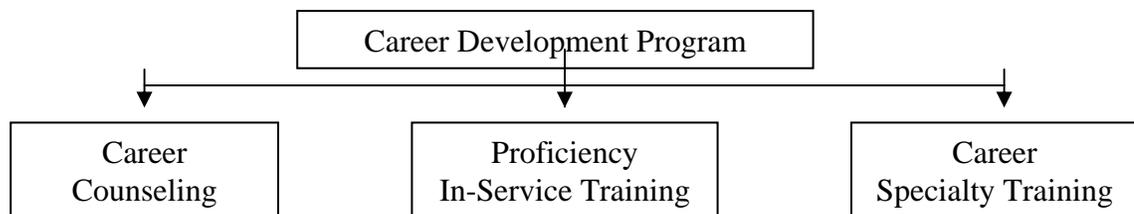


Figure 4. Components of a career development program.

Career Counseling

Overview

One of the most logical and important aspects of the career development process involves career counseling. It is a key component or the foundation of the employee development process and can produce big dividends for both the employees and organization. An effective Career Counseling Program not only assists an organization in identifying employees with high performance potential but also assists employees in mapping out realistic career opportunities.

It allows employees the opportunity to recognize, define, and redline their goals during the course of their careers. Conversely, it will afford management the opportunity to further assess employee needs to achieve a balance with those of the organization.

Career counseling has evolved because many organizations now realize that most employees cannot begin to manage their own growth and development without first having information on how their own needs match those of the organization. According to Myers (1985), employees who derive satisfaction from knowing that expectations can be met inside the organization will most likely become a highly productive employee.

Unfortunately, the term counseling can cause resistance because it signifies psychotherapy and is reserved for those with "problems". As a result, some employees may resist the organization's efforts. A possible solution could be to use the term career discussions instead of career counseling.

Furthermore, career counseling should not be confused with the purpose and intent of the performance appraisal system. The objective of career counseling is to assist employees in exploiting their strengths and potential and avoiding mismatches between individual aspirations, capabilities and organizational opportunities. It reduces the waste of preparing an employee for a position for which they are not suited, but might otherwise accept, in order to conform to the wishes of the organization. However, since career counseling will likely involve issues related to performance, it can appropriately be made part of an employee's performance appraisal.

Responsibilities

While it seems clear that career counseling will improve an organization's effectiveness and assist employees in achieving their individual needs, it is less clear who should do the counseling (Schein, 1978). In the vast majority of organizations, career counseling responsibilities are normally assigned to personnel within the organization, either by a specialized counseling staff or the employee's immediate supervisor. They are often knowledgeable about the employee abilities, experience and skills. Additionally, they have a good understanding of the work environment and the developmental activities within the organization. They are able to effectively monitor employee progress and facilitate, as well as advise on career directions.

However, many employees may not want to open up to their supervisors and may be concerned about ramifications of their counseling sessions. The employee may also have a hard time taking seriously advice that comes from a nonprofessional. Additionally, a comprehensive effort to interest and train supervisors in career counseling can be extremely costly to an organization.

Trained professionals may be better prepared to evaluate an employee's strengths and weaknesses than the employee's supervisor. Also, since they do not work directly with those employees they counsel, they are often able to create an atmosphere of greater ease and candor. In addition, employees being counseled feel that a professional knows more and, as a result, can be taken more seriously.

Few organizations rely on an external counseling staff. They can usually conduct a more comprehensive appraisal of the employee. But according to Filipowicz (1979),

they are isolated from the employee's work environment, lack familiarity with managerial philosophy and the groups with whom the employee interacts.

The vast majority of mid-size and smaller organizations have assigned career counseling responsibilities to either the employee's immediate supervisor or a specialized counseling staff. Regardless of who is ultimately responsible for the counseling of employees, it is imperative they receive support from the organization's personnel or human resources department. They are responsible for maintaining personnel files and have, at least, a basic understanding of the human resource initiative.

Overall, the career counseling process can be difficult, especially if the employee expresses unrealistic career aspirations. The person performing the career counseling session(s) must be prepared to give a frank assessment of the employee's career opportunities. However, it is extremely important that both the person conducting the session and the employee come to a mutual understanding as to the realistic expectations the employee should hold regarding career opportunities within the organization.

For career counseling to be effective, one must possess good counseling skills (sensitivity, flexibility, and communication) and have information about the employee being counseled; i.e., aptitudes, motives, experience, work characteristics and capabilities. This information can be obtained from an employee's self-assessment of their own needs, values, and personal goals. Additional information can be derived from employee performance appraisals and other parties who are in a good position to make valid judgements about the employee.

Process

Employees are ultimately responsible for assessing themselves, creating opportunities within the context of organizational needs, and carrying out certain development activities. In fact, most practitioners believe that 70% of that responsibility belongs to the employee (Myers, 1984). Employees who fail to plan their careers may do so because they think the organization or supervisor will assume that responsibility. The earlier employees are permitted to establish goals, make commitments and take action, the greater the chances of achieving long-term success within the organization.

The organization is responsible for providing the resources and structures to support the career counseling process. The organization's supervisors and managers play an important role by assisting the employees in the understanding of the organization's needs. Career counseling is not about making job commitments or promises to employees.

The career counseling process involves four basic steps. It begins with an employee's self-assessment. Secondly, it involves an assessment of one's work environment. The third step determines whether a match exists between one's preferences and those of the organization. It concludes with an action plan outlining specific tasks that the employee will pursue to accomplish the established goals. This structured process is designed to reduce or eliminate an employee's false hopes and expectations.

Prior to a career counseling session, the employee will be required to complete a self-assessment outlining their accomplishments and aspirations. The employee should

assess his/her goals, aspirations, and expectations with regards to their own career both short-term (1-4 years) and long-term (4+ years). This will enable employees to become more knowledgeable regarding their own needs, values, skills and personal goals. The employee should be encouraged to solicit feedback from both peers and supervisors, as well as, engage in private reflections in completing their self-assessment.

Organizational diagnosis involves having the employee assess their current job and what they can do to further enhance their skills and achieve a higher degree of competency. Additionally, what can the employee do in the way of further self-development to qualify for new opportunities?

For example, a police officer expresses a desire to transfer to a specialty position such as a detective. If that employee possesses the desirable traits, it would benefit both the employee and the organization to have them attend career development courses in death investigations, photography, interviews and interrogation, etc. This would not only benefit the officer in his/her current job but also allow for development of their skills and competencies beyond their current job.

An employee's career is usually nothing more than a sequence of jobs within an organization that contain common skills and certain competency characteristics. The employee's career path can move upward, laterally, or cross-functionally, as long as they have the opportunity to grow, develop and enhance their individual skills.

Analysis determines whether the needs of the employee are realistic and compatible with those of the department, and also, what the employee should have to do in the way of further self-development to qualify for "new" opportunities. Unfortunately, few individuals achieve a perfect match. In the event that a mismatch exists, then adjustments will have to be made to achieve a "better fit". If the matching process works, both the department and employee benefit. Employees need to be assured that their aspirations are appropriate to the organization's needs and that they will also have the opportunity of realizing their goals.

Action plans must be written and must outline the actual steps necessary to prepare the employee for further career growth. It must be realistic and measurable as to allow both the employee and organization to evaluate the employee's progress. It must be specific and contain achievable developmental objectives, as well as the resources necessary to achieve these goals. It must be flexible enough to enable the employee to reassess individual needs and desires throughout their careers. This is especially true if our department is to effectively address mid-career issues (plateaued employees), as well as, late career issues (retirement) among our employees.

A time frame for accomplishing these activities needs to be established and periodic follow-up must be conducted. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential, especially in the early part of the employee's career. Jobs may turn out to be something other than expected, or an employee's performance may indicate the need for a change in course. Employee development is multifaceted and must be viewed as a long-term process. There is no "one best way" to develop employees.

In short, through career counseling, employees learn about their own capabilities, assets, limitations, preferences, and objectives. This allows employees to become more proactive in the management of their careers and make the most of their opportunities.

Training

Proficiency in-service training

The second component of a Career Development Program encompasses Proficiency In-service Training. This component of the career development initiative must be closely coordinated with the organization's training efforts. This benefits both the organization and its employees by keeping them up-to-date on duties and responsibilities within present job assignments. It also allows employees the opportunity to maintain those skills and abilities necessary for the job they perform.

Proficiency training subjects must consist of those elements of the training program that are indigenous to the organization and its operations. This type of training is *job specific* and generally limited to areas that are essential to the overall job function.

A training program should be developed and implemented which encompasses all phases of training. This will allow employees to have a clear understanding of the organization's formal training requirements, as well as, demonstrate the department's commitment to employee development.

Career specialty training.

Career Specialty Training is the final component in a Career Development Program and provides employees with the opportunity to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform jobs beyond the minimum level. It also allows employees the opportunity to explore new areas of interest and specialization that will enhance abilities and skills in other specialized jobs.

The opportunity to attend specialty courses of instruction offered by other organizations or institutions must be afforded to all employees. This can be easily incorporated into the organization's training policy.

Discussion

The results of the Career Counseling session, along with Proficiency In-service Training courses and Career Specialty Training must be thoroughly documented. Information from each of these components can be used not only to determine existing and future training needs but to equate employee needs to those of the organization.

Career Development Programs enhance employee performance and have a positive impact on an organization's overall effectiveness. The challenge facing many organizations today is overcoming the traditional view of career development as a means to develop the "most" promotable employees. The cultural shift toward employee empowerment, technological advancement, a changing workforce (diversity, work-life balance, etc.) and the "new" role of managers, are very much in line with the career development initiative.

This change suggests a broadened definition of career development from a traditional notion of moving up the ladder toward creating an atmosphere that fosters growth, challenges and job enrichment. Employees must have the ability to "take charge" (ownership) of their own development, and the organization must provide the resources to facilitate this process.

However, along with positive implications, there are negative ones. Organizations facing restructuring or economic pressures may become less concerned

with employee development. This lack of job security will have a definite impact on employees who will become more concerned with survival and less interested in the career development initiative.

Organizations must overcome the negative implications and strive to develop their employees. They must create an atmosphere that is challenging to employees and contain support mechanisms that allow for personal growth and job satisfaction. The answer to developing and retaining employees, as supported by the existing literature, rests in a visible Career Development Program.

A Career Development Program does not guarantee success. However, unless organizations assist in the development of their employees, career development will be haphazard at best. After an extensive review of the literature and an examination of the programs in existence, the Altamonte Springs Police Department and its employees would benefit from a Career Development Program.

The Altamonte Springs Police Department already has two of the three required components for a Career Development Program firmly in place. A department policy and procedure specifically addresses the Proficiency In-Service Training and Career Specialty Training components.

This policy and procedure mandates Proficiency In-Service Training to ensure all members maintain expected levels of proficiency, i.e. firearms, defensive tactics, expandable baton, etc. This is accomplished through either in-service or roll-call training. The policy and procedure require the formation of a training committee to formulate a fiscal year Master Training Schedule for in-service training. This committee is comprised of personnel from all bureaus and their proposed schedule must be reviewed and approved by the chief of police.

The Career Specialty Training component allows employees the opportunity to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities through the attendance of specialized training courses. These courses are normally conducted through formal instruction, approved by the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, and offered at local institutions of higher education or other designated facilities.

Employees desiring to attend these courses must submit an External Training Request that has the endorsement of both his/her supervisor/manager and bureau commander. The employee's request and justification must be submitted to the chief of police for final approval.

Career Counseling is the remaining component, and is one of the most important in a Career Development Program. It is the basis from which current and future training needs can be identified for both the department and employee. This person-to-person exploration of our employees goals and aspirations will ensure commonality exists between the needs of the employee and those of the department. The desired outcome is a more efficient department, staffed with employees who are both productive and have a desire to remain employed.

Presently, it is not economically feasible for our department to request additional employees to assume career-counseling responsibilities. Also, our department's personnel office does not have the ability to assume this role. Therefore, career-counseling responsibilities should be handled by the employee's immediate supervisor/manager. Currently, employee performance appraisals are conducted

annually. Career counseling could appropriately be made part of an employee's annual performance review.

It is imperative that our department provides supervisors/managers with training to develop the skills necessary to conduct effective career counseling sessions. This training must be in skills (coaching, team building, etc.) required to facilitate the process. Career counselors' attempts to assist employees can be effective only to the degree the department supports them (Lewis & Lewis 1986).

Recommendations

The Altamonte Springs Police Department must develop creative significant solutions to the question of how to assist our employees in achieving career success, and at the same time, enhance organizational effectiveness. In order for our Career Development Program to be successful, we must develop and adopt strategies that support the career development initiative.

It is important that our department maintain an atmosphere of openness in the work environment. We cannot afford to be closed with respect to the control and release of information. There must be a free flow of information if the Career Development Program is to be successful.

Our employees have primary responsibility for managing their careers, but our department must support career development efforts and managers must facilitate, not control, the process. It is imperative that managers be held accountable for the development of employees.

The Altamonte Springs Police Department experienced tremendous growth in the 1980's. The size of our police force more than doubled. There were many opportunities for advancement. However, the 1990's have not been as kind. Consequently, there will be fewer opportunities for promotions. Our Career Development Program must emphasize the strong value of growing and learning in one's job, as well as, explore other career opportunities within the organization.

The quality improvement philosophy is entrenched within our department and can be easily incorporated into the career development initiative. In fact, both of these processes are closely related and complement each other. The career development process focuses on meeting the needs of the internal customers, our employees.

Conclusion

After researching the topic of Career Development Programs, I strongly believe that any organization, especially the Altamonte Springs Police Department, would benefit from such a program. A visible Career Development Program with support mechanisms in place will greatly assist us in retaining our most valued resource, our employees, especially, these employees with less than four (4) years of experience. If we are able to assist *all* employees in meeting their needs, then both the employees and department will benefit in the long run.

The success of a Career Development Program for the Altamonte Springs Police Department can be measured through employee satisfaction, development of promotable employees and lower turnover. In order to properly assess "why"

employees leave, it is necessary that our department conduct timely exit interviews. This would enable the department to further evaluate the success of our Career Development Program.

A proposed policy and procedure for a Career Development Program has been drafted, along with a form to be used by supervisors/managers in a career counseling session. It has been my desire since the inception of my research paper to choose a topic that benefits the Altamonte Springs Police Department and its employees. Our department is extremely progressive and the implementation of a Career Development Program will prepare us to enter the 21st Century and the challenges that confront us.

Deputy Chief Bob Merchant has been with the Altamonte Springs Police Department for 17 years. He is currently assigned to the management support bureau where he manages the department's information systems division, training division, Community Oriented Policing Division, and the Professional Standards Unit. Bob received his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy (178th session). Professional interests include the selection, hiring and retention of employees. He enjoys camping with his wife, Donna, and their two daughters.

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