

## PLANNING YOUR CAREER FOR THE LONG-TERM

### CCI Newsletter: November 2006

**Two months ago we exchanged ideas about career planning with an emphasis on the short term. Now we examine the steps to layout a strategy for your long term. You need to look ahead even if you are happily employed.**

### Reviewing 'How to Plan your Career'

In a previous CCI newsletter we specifically identified eight steps to help you plan the short-term aspect of your career development. To summarize, they included helping you discover who you are so that you really know what kind of job will satisfy your inner needs and creating a life story that tells not only your skill sets, but equally important what personal characteristics you bring to any job. It also involved distilling down to a succinct description of who you are, learning how to find the job you want, the way to market yourself and the means to negotiate a good deal for your self (painlessly).

Left unsaid from this eleven-step career plan were the last three steps, all of them focusing on the long term, namely keeping objectivity on the job, planning for a better job within your company and casting an eye outside of your present organization.

### Keeping Objectivity on the Job

While job searching may be an emotional experience, we all know that being in the heat of the job itself brings on its own emotional challenges too. They may stem from an inability to complete assignments as expected, working too many hours, having an unreasonable boss, enmity with peers, having a 'dud' working for you, miscommunications, poor rapport with suppliers etc. At the end of a tiring day, many of us come home to vent on a spouse or partner who, feeling somewhat helpless

offers impractical, but meant-to-be-sympathetic advice of: "I would punch that guy in the nose." Or "I don't understand why you stay there and put up with that abuse." While such comments are intended to be supportive, you are unlikely to act on suggestions that are that far a-field from reality. Then, how can we defuse our emotions?

Find a mentor, friend or coach – someone who understands the business environment, has seen and experienced these sorts of circumstances, and knows how to react to them<sup>1</sup>. As soon as an awkward situation develops for you in your workplace, you should be able to share it with this coach, who will help you search for the best answers. Perhaps you can make a swap: "Hey Charlie, you be my coach and I will be your coach." Ideally, the person will nudge you to find your own solutions.

That is, try to have someone to turn to in order to get through the day-to-day turmoil on the job. Relieve your stress by realizing the fact that two heads are better than one, especially when the second person can be objective.

We are starting here with the assumption that you know what kind of employment is good for you – based on actualizing the aforementioned eight career planning steps.

### Planning New Horizons within your Job

While you may be heavily committed to getting the right amount of sausages out of the sausage factory each day, enshrouded by 35-degree steamy temperature, that is, surrounded by pressure at every turn, you do need to pause to look ahead as well.

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<sup>1</sup> As part of the CCI career coaching agreement, the CCI Coach is available to the individual after the person has obtained a job, for as long as the employee wants, at no extra charge.

Where do you want to go within this company, especially, what is the next step? As before, we recommend you have an objective person at your side and preferably one experienced in assisting this way. Whether you enlist the aid of a friend or a professional career coach, you do need to take the time to look ahead. A responsible advisor will help you explore the options far ahead of you, but more urgently direct you towards the immediate next step for you in your career, but within your present enterprise.

Don't just look in your own department; look in other areas too. Often opportunities exist in the company that you would otherwise never have envisaged, if you had stuck only to your local turf. Conduct brief information meetings with key managers just to get an idea of what is happening elsewhere. Not only may you learn about activities relevant to your career aspirations, but also you may be surprised to unearth a job opportunity that fits you to a T, and is one that is not even advertised.<sup>2</sup> You can actually walk right into a new, better job.

### Looking beyond your Company

It pays to look outside your present company for opportunities, if nothing else, just to keep your own employer honest with you. And as you might expect, we recommend you have a non-family advisory person involved to keep you focused on the technical aspect and away from the emotional aspects. Of course, if your present work situation is untenable and your mentor agrees with you that it is so, you must look outside anyway.

The means to do this is NOT to job hunt, but to conduct information meetings. An information meeting is a 20-minute get together where you ask a manager or an executive: "How does the world of XYZ activities look from where you sit now?"

What are its ups and its downs?"<sup>3</sup> Since these meetings might be related to your present work, they can be helpful towards it (even if not in the job search, itself).

The key to success is for you to develop a consistent timetable, such as one or two information meetings per month, and stick to it. Through this process you will learn and will develop a renewed awareness – a sort of overview of your industry and how you fit into it.

While face-to-face interviews are preferable, the nature of your work may make telephone information meetings the only viable option. As you keep exploring, a plethora of useful information will be yours. And we believe, an improved job opportunity will flow out of it.

### Conclusion

For the long-term development of your career keep your options open, be curious, search proactively and be sure to have a friendly advisor sharing your direction and experiences.

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<sup>2</sup> We predict that not only you might, but in fact you *will* find these hidden gems of jobs if you conduct enough information meetings.

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<sup>3</sup> There is a little more to information meetings than that. For guidance, check the CCI Newsletter of April 2006.