

Professional Career Planning - Practice and Results

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Abstract

There are a number of factors that can put an emphasis on individual career plan, functioning as elements of insight and understanding of development needs, and understanding of others. A successful career management must take into account a number of clearly defined objectives focused on a policy based on an evaluation plan of employees, identifying their needs, identifying and retaining the best employees or those with the most effective prospects, providing training and development for employees, etc. However, the highest percentage in identifying the best potential in an employee is up to the employee himself, who often expects the organization to take all steps necessary to achieve his needs, but without making any effort on his own. The individual must be aware of his skills, professional knowledge, strengths and weaknesses, the needs and values of present and future, but also the long-term professional goals.

The study in an enterprise from the energy field in Romania with regard to career planning was an attempt to find a way to shape a career plan according to the organization. For this a questionnaire was applied structured in four dimensions: employment situation in which the employee is, preparedness for change and personality traits. Participants in the study believe that self-management of interpersonal relationships, professional achievement and commitment are very important features in the development of their career, even if more than 50% ask about their current situation in the company, regardless of hierarchical position occupied. Moreover, an important share of employees are able to manage change, if the circumstances are appropriate, in addition to personality traits suitable for making changes because over 60% of them are extroverted, realistic, pragmatic and dominant.

Key words: career planning, employees, personality, relationships, questionnaire,

JEL Codes: M54, L84

1. Introduction

Major changes in benchmark, demographic structure of the population, techniques and technologies, organizational culture, policies and tactics, people and styles have led businesses

to develop realistic and flexible strategies for adaptation and development. The human factor always had a particular importance for businesses that needed to seek new ways of making human resources more flexible and to be able to provide "flexible" labor force. In this context flexibility is „a vibration”, a spectrum of frequency on which people can communicate and the manager can exercise his leading task (Abrudan, 2012), and "they further underscore the relevance of three contextual variables – culture, climate and strategic integration of human resource management – as they are also related to more positive performance management outcomes" (Haines & St-Onge, 2012).

The dynamic of career development goes through three stages: expansion of early career; stabilization of career paths; career maturity. Through this we understand the way in which an employee’s career evolves (how employees build their careers): promotion, job enlargement and enrichment, responsibilities, skills and abilities. The role of management to promote employee’s career, to determine their potential and to determine the steps they need to take to climb the corporate hierarchy is crucial. For this, organizations undertake career development programs that reflect the actual situation of the performance for each employee giving the opportunity to not only promote a person, but mostly to seek "leadership ability - communication skills and effective interpersonal relationships" (Pell, 2003). Thus "career values and organizational support can predict career success. Implications: knowledge of the antecedents to career success should provide certain advantages to organizations attempting to select and motivate employees "(Yu, 2011). For this reason a career planning model must have two views: one strategic and one tactical. Author Brad Bemis also proposes a model for the two directions, to which for the strategic vision starts with professional goals and career path (which are established on a long-term plan, for five years and an annual plan); tactical vision starts with job requirements and skills matrix (found in the annual, quarterly goals and monthly activities) (Figure 1).

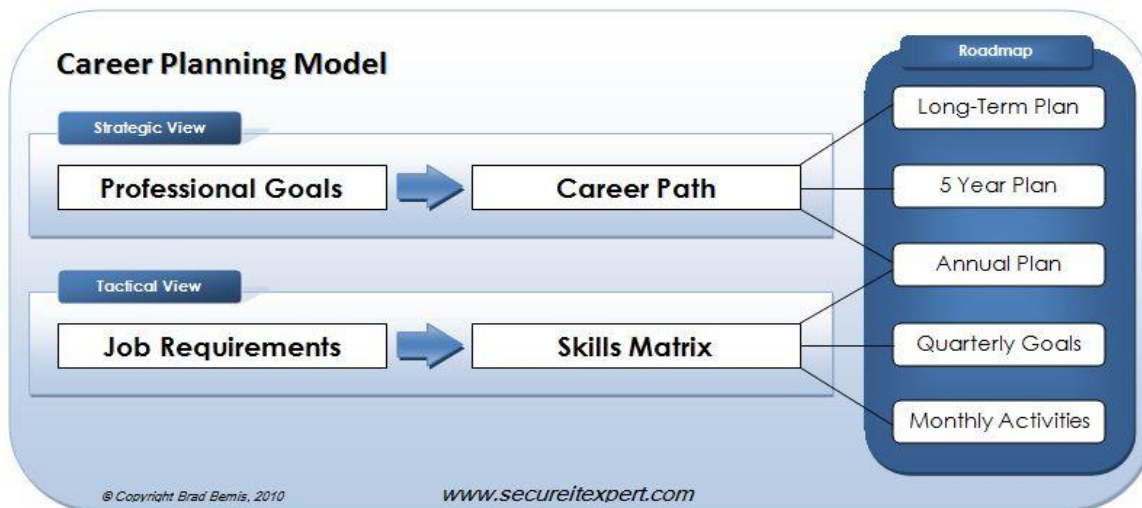


Figure 1. Career Planning Model (Bemis, 2010)

Other authors argue that "the strategic career plan includes seeking employment, examination of familiar topics such as interviewing, resume writing, negotiating, and work adjustment, from a cognitive and multidisciplinary perspective" (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson &

Peterson, 2009) and for this it is necessary *"to develop the skills necessary to manage their careers effectively, and to act as a mentor or human resource manager helping other workers develop their own careers"* (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2010).

Projections of supply and demand are based on planning techniques of human-resources and evaluation and performance assessment is made to identify the need-ties of training and development opportunities. It is envisaged that *"a professional plan and clearly defined objectives provide a professional with a road-map to his desired future successes. This is a form of organized goal setting that helps a person to guide professional progress and to judge his own success"* (Fredrick, 2014). Baruch says that the actual system of career is "are characterized by a boundary less career environment and dynamic labor markets. New career attitudes and orientations emerge, and their evaluation is challenging" (Baruch, 2014).

Career planning is based on the needs of the organization, on performance evaluations and potential, on management succession plans, then these are transposed in individual programs of career development. We must take into account the differences in the individual conduct of career because people are not all the same, being different in term of skills, values, goals and favorite activities. Starting from this approach, people still have many things in common (although they are different from each other), reason for which specific procedures are needed using career planning: personal development, instruction and management development, mentoring, career counseling.

2. Career models and theories

Career orientation (orientation of the course or career path) can be considered as the relative talent, values, attitudes and occupational activities pattern, namely those processes of acceleration, slowdown, stagnation, change in the career course depending on the degree of agreement /discrepancy between the general and the particular personality types and situational occupational activity. It usually occurs after a period spent working on a particular job or practicing a profession, is a voluntary process and is controlled by the person or the organization. Career guidance is a "phenomenon" that can never be forced or injured, being conscious and a voluntary controlled process that tends to obtain favorable effects both for individuals and for organizations. "Studying contemporary career concepts is hampered by the lack of quality measures for rigorous evaluation of constructs pertaining to evolved career models and theories" (Baruch, 2014), which establish links between personality typology and peculiarities of different human activities.

One of the most popular is the theory of career types by John Holland's or vocational personality theory. The author of this theory believes that the balance/imbalance of an individuals personality is influenced by the performance of a profession that favors or hinders the expression. Based on the establishment of a corresponding correlation between personality type and appropriate professional environment, Holland identifies six distinct patterns of career orientation: conventional, artistic, realistic, social, enterprising and investigative. As real world is so complex, people are basically a combination of two or more kinds. Thus personality assessment reflects the individual viewed from the perspective of an observer (i.e., an individual's "reputation") while interest measurement reflects the perspective of the actor (i.e., an individual's "identity")" (Hogan & Blake, 1999).

Another theory on career guidance is the career anchor theory developed by Edgar Schein. "An occupational self-concept begins to develop as the individual begins identifying who he or she is, and what kinds of things he or she can do well. This occupational self-concept is what Schein (1978) defined as the career anchor" (Beck, La Lopa & Hu, 2003). Schein defined five anchors of professional career: technical/functional, managerial, autonomy, security/stability, entrepreneurial creativity. After twelve years Schein identified three additional anchors during a follow-up study with a wider range of occupations: service or dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle integration. Ambition on its own carries some professionals to more responsibility and higher income brackets. However, the truly ambitious like to plan for advancement". Just as an anchor prevents a boat to float adrift, career anchors keep the individual focused on a specific type of activity.

In 1986 the author Krumboltz proposes the social learning theory of career selection, according to which personality and behavioral repertoire of a person appear particularly as a result of re-learning experiences rather than as a result of mental or developmental processes. According to this theory, career development is a process of lifelong learning (Krumboltz & Nichols, 1990). The individual begins with an initial growth potential, but this potential is shaped by the environment and the interaction between the environment and the individual. The confrontation between these two elements leads to learning. This theory presents four groups of factors which, by their interaction, influence career decisions, and of their combination results a multitude of possible options: genetic heritage and special abilities, environmental conditions and events of learning experiences, the ability to approach a task (Brown & Brooks, 1990).

Theories found in the literature show that the human person can interpret reality in a myriad of ways, with different beliefs about the world of work, applying relevant behaviors and actions based on career skills, individual experiences, learning process programs in order to achieve their own goals, but also for career guidance in ensuring organizational effectiveness.

3. Career planning in Romanian enterprises

Identifying the needs of career planning

Career planning within the organization is a topic studied intensely, as in many Romanian organizations, the hierarchical form is pyramidal. The posts are very well defined on levels of authority and clearly defined categories of activities. Employees know their position since the time of employment, and it is difficult to advance in terms of hierarchy. At the same time, being a company that provides services to other group companies, employees are specialized in their own fields and switching from one domain to another is virtually impossible because the necessary qualifications for the post. For this reason the preparation of a well-defined career plan requires "discovery" of employees' needs. At the same time, through this study and through employee implication, they discover the professional need and the way in which their work has brought satisfaction.

Nowadays it is becoming increasingly difficult for employees to be satisfied with the job. Confusion can grow from one day to another, often starting from a simple disagreement with superiors or an unresolved problem. Deadlines are becoming shorter, the expectations higher, communication is not so effective although we provide all possible technology. Changes that

may take place within an organization or the temporary nature of employment can create a stressful and overwhelming environment. Employees no longer identify with the company's image, they lose interest and go in search of "something better" or worse, they remain employed, lose interest and achieve frustration, results become visible decreased and negative feelings about these issues affect also the personal life.

Work methodology

Work methodology consisted of interviewing employees within a company in Romania with interconnected activities that complement each other: energy balance, consultancy for energy efficiency programs and renewable energy, design and service of specialized engineers projects, entrepreneurship for complex electrical installation works, production of equipment for medium and low voltage intensity, indoor and outdoor lighting, administrative services.

The questionnaire applied was a sum of four questionnaires proposed by author Julia Jensen in the book "Career Management - Practical Guide" (2007). We chose this option because it relies above all on self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-evaluation of the individual. Applied questionnaire covers **four dimensions** that are important to start compiling an individual and then an organizational career plan. These dimensions refer to:

- What is your professional situation?
- Attitudes
- Preparing for change
- Personality traits

What is your professional situation? - dimension where an employee can be found in a given moment of his career. Entry to one or more such situations will be taken into account based on the age, work experience, length of service in a particular post, the problems that happen in life or existent ambitions. The six cases are: What is the meaning?; I'm tired of doing the same thing, but I still have to make money; Hurt and hesitant; Bored and capped; I want to be on my own; On the verge of retirement.

Attitudes - self-confidence, self-awareness, managing interpersonal relationships, maintaining motivation, achievement orientation, professional commitment.

Preparing for change - Many individuals react very harshly to the idea of change. Getting out of the comfort zone, whether voluntary or enforced, creates a strong feeling of discomfort, and many people do not know, cannot or will not adapt to this new existence. Therefore, most refuse to evaluate their work place and refuse any possible change.

Personality traits - who we are and what we can do as individuals has always been one of the questions that wanted immediate answers. Personality types are: introvert or extravert, idealist or realist, sentimental or pragmatic, organized or spontaneous, dominant or submissive.

Respondents to the questionnaire were employees in all 3 categories: top management (7.6%), middle & line management (38.6%) and administrative executive staff (53.8%). From persons participating in this study, 30% were men aged 35-46 years and 70% of women aged 26-53

years. The educational level of persons included is 92.4% with higher education. With regard to seniority in the work filed, a percentage of 84.6% of the participants had seniority between 4 months and 10 years and 15.4% of participants have a seniority of 6-7 years. The "youngest" person of those participating in the study, as seniority on the position was of 4 months (job of execution), and the most senior in the company on the current position is of 7 years (top management and middle & line management). We should note that questions didn't have a single answer, but have several variants, the same respondent could fit into several types.

The results

The results to the dimension "**What is your professional situation?**" present a share of over 50% of people who try to understand the meaning; the "bored and capped" or "be on my own" have the same weight, similar values recorded for those who are "bored to do always the same thing, but still have to earn money" and those who "do not fit into any of the 6 cases" (Figure 2).

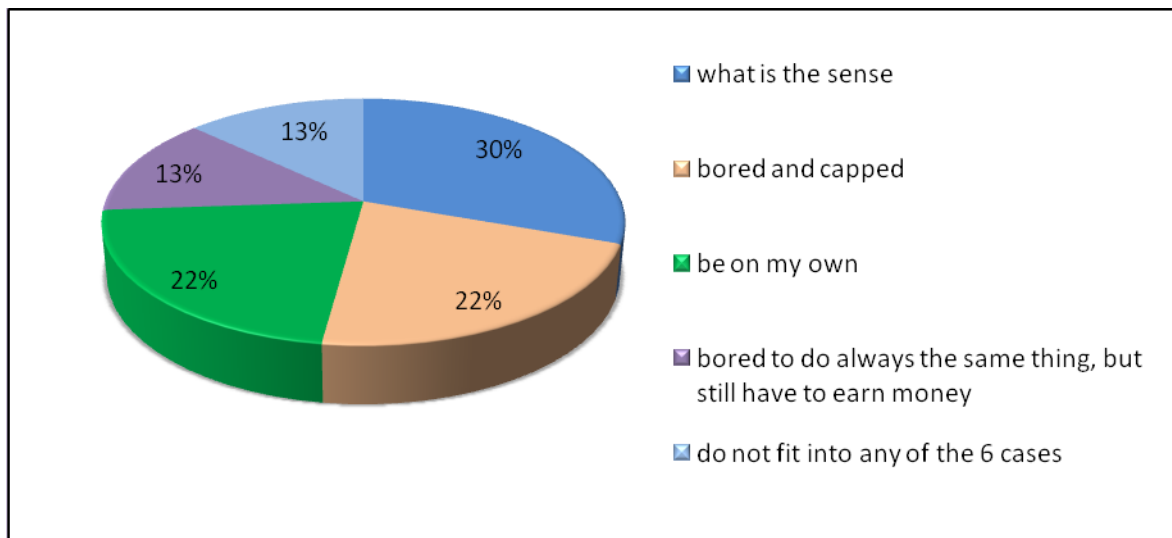


Figure 2. Results obtained to the dimension "What is your professional situation?"

According the dimension **Attitudes**, only 23.07% of respondents trust themselves. The rest consider that they don't have any value in terms of professional life and are not valued by employers as they should be. They do not take risks at work and the level of optimism has declined. A percentage of 76.9% think that real self-awareness matters and for them it is accurate. The rest believe that self-awareness is not so important and a feedback from the employer is necessary. For them it is difficult to find a job suited to their needs (Figure 3).

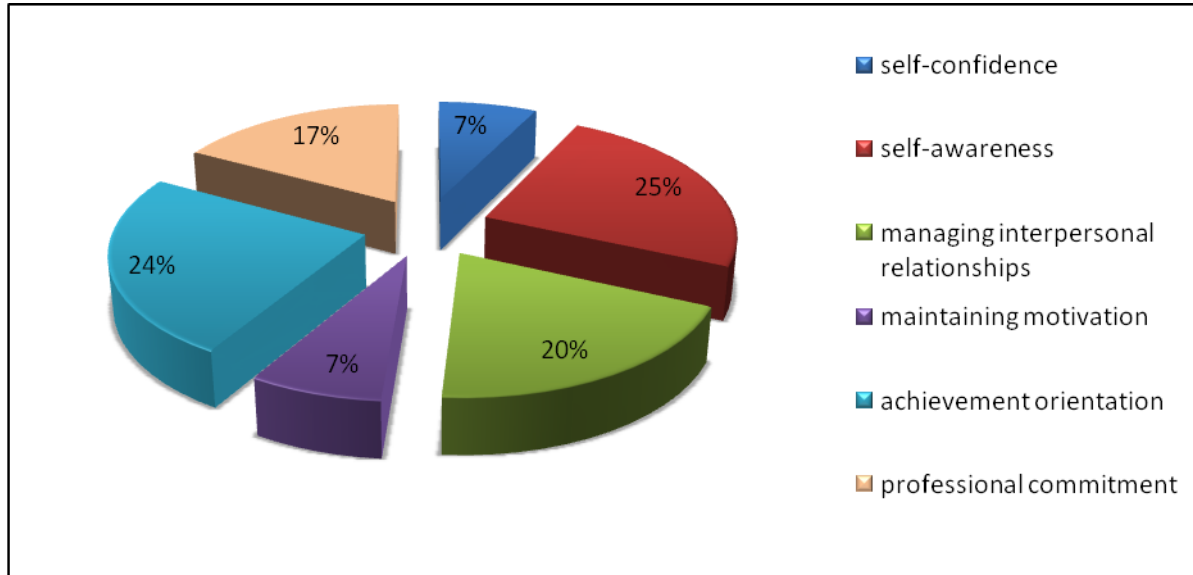


Figure 3. Results obtained in dimension "Attitudes"

Another percentage of 61.5% consider that the management of interpersonal relationships is important in the work your practice. The rest of the respondents do not put too much emphasis on the establishment of relations with others or on their effectiveness. A percentage of 23.07%, in terms of maintaining motivation are motivated to pursue their chosen career. The rest is likely to neglect their career, no longer being focused and optimistic.76,9% of those surveyed are focused on action and are directed towards the achievement of objectives, and 53.8% are still focused on professional commitment, the rest are tired of their work place and there is nothing to attract them towards it and the original reason for which they have chosen the specific job.

The third dimension established as important in the context of the existing company, is the **preparation for change**, which reveals that only 7% of respondents have the ability to anticipate and manipulate the change (Figure 4).

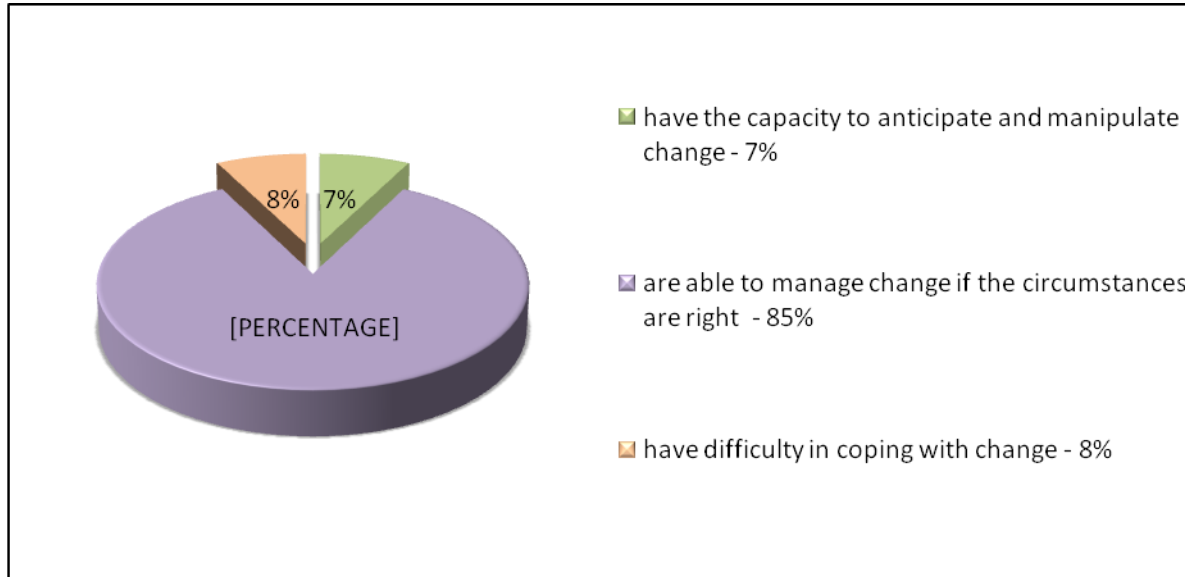


Figure 4. Results obtained in dimension results "Preparing for Change"

However, a percentage of 84.6% of respondents are able to manage change if circumstances are appropriate, but must be highly motivated to initiate it and only 8% of them have great difficulties in coping with change (cannot adapt to the idea of change and tend to avoid it).

The fourth dimension proposed for study, and the last, refers to **personality traits** which greatly influence the choice of a profession and an activity. Thus the accent falls in this part on the personality type of each respondent, but it should be noted that an individual doesn't have only one type of personality, but several, one being dominant in various situations in which the person is found (Figure 5).

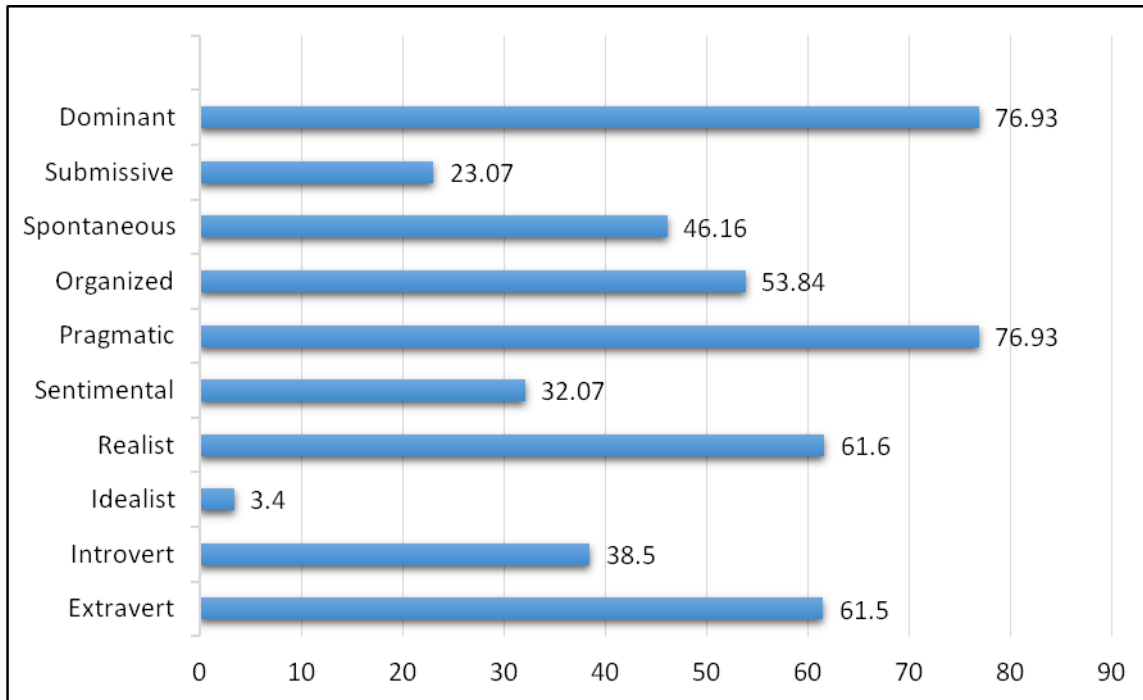


Figure 5. Personality traits of respondents

a. Extrovert or introvert

- 61.5% of respondents are extroverted. They often prefer to be in the company of other people, are very open, expressive and easy to read.
- 38.5% are introverted, preferring loneliness and solving problems themselves.

b. Idealist or realist

- 38.4% are idealists. They focus on the future and what could be, instead of focusing on what currently exists.
- 61.6% are realists. They focus on reality rather than the possibility. They see things as they are and adapt to this criterion.

c. Sentimental or pragmatic

- 23.07% are sentimental. They focus more on personal values and own feelings and of others.
- 76.93% are pragmatic. They are oriented towards the analysis, laws, rules and procedures.

d. Organized or spontaneous

- 53.84% are spontaneous. They prefer undefined terms, tend to be flexible and adaptable to change.
- 46.16% are organized. They prefer planning, fixed and clear goals and deadlines.

e. Dominant or submissive

- 23.07% are docile. They are passive, preferring to stay in the shadows than to take the lead.

- 76.93% are dominant. They tend to be bossy and determined and are able to meet their targets.

Given the above, the questionnaire applied can lead to interpretation of existing situations, relying on native individual capacities, but also professional capacities of employees, but also to the discovery of existing and persistent problems in the company.

Suggestions for improvement of career planning

There are a number of comments and suggestions that could help both employees and the company to understand the role of each party in the relationship between employer - employee and that is the way to resolve all issues and questions faced at this time. The questionnaire applied is only an identification tool of published situations, but through which **employees can to find solutions** such as:

- Prepare a self-assessment plan for individual professional situation, in order to understand what the values, areas of interest and in which direction they would like to move their career
- A realistic analysis of all blockages and the causes of these, and also possible opportunities
- Retrieval of self-confidence, leading to motivation and ability to see things clearly and objectively
- Accepting change and all things that come along with it. A positive attitude in spite of possible future events can bring a noticeable change in the mindset of the individual
- They have to learn to prioritize tasks. Everything is urgent today, the activities needed to be completed yesterday, but the fear and frustration towards them will not change anything in their daily conduct
- Adaptation of personality at work or finding another job. Being an area offering services to other companies, assertiveness and proactivity are the basic rules in this case
- Interest to participate in conferences, seminars or workshops debating everyday problems within a large company and finding explanations and solutions for specific cases
- Prepare a personal SWOT analysis, through which, frankly, the individual completes most accurately the information
- Outlining SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, achievable within a defined time)

At the same time, the **company** must come up with improvements in the relationship with its employees:

- Provide consistent feedback coherent and relevant to the work performed
- Employee involvement in social responsibility projects, encouraging teamwork outside working hours and volunteering
- Availability of open communication in case of any changes
- Understanding the needs of employee motivation and preparation of a plan in this regard

- Involvement of employees in important events of the company
- Return to the custom of the company to celebrate among employees
- Drawing clear objectives regarding work of middle & line management and placing responsibility to those who come with constructive ideas and can smoothly coordinate a project, even if not part of the management
- Prepare a plan for coaching the management staff. Distrust in their own forces is caused by lack of understanding and support, and large volume of activity does not allow the preparation of an action plan, but it is resolved "on the go"
- The possibility that, in time, all senior staff to become mentors to the subordinate.

4. Conclusions

Career is one of the roles and aims of an individual or organization in accordance with the system in which they are a part of. This is closely related to the individual's identity, organizational identity, respectively. If an organization will relate to the businesses environment, shareholders, employees, public opinion, etc., individual career will relate to family, organization, social groups, even the society in general. Analyzing everyday life, professional implications, reform in various mediums, globalization, we conclude that in the contemporary world organizations, the public, business and labor market requirements are constantly changing and the individual must develop and adapt to these new challenges. Training, and creating a personal career plan and adaptation, respectively integration in the organizational culture of each organization plays a decisive role. Quality services can be offered to those who wish to attain the proposed career level thus gaining quality of employment. To provide quality services, it is necessary to continue professional development geared to performance. In this respect it is necessary to draw up a career plan, which an individual to continuously adapt to the culture of the organization that he is integrated into and to company requirements.

The study represents a first attempt to find the best method that can lead to a suitable career plan. Many employees do not have any hope for things to change, to be heard and to receive feedback, but in discussions with them, they want this situation to change and existing limitation between top management and middle management to disappear and to feel that they have support and possibly guidance. Depending on the obtained results to the questionnaire, 50% of employees, regardless of their position, seem to put the same question about their current situation in the company: what is the meaning. They are closely followed by those who would try their luck on their own, but also those who are bored to do the same, but must earn money. The concept of capping is the moment or position of the career when the opportunity of promoting is very low. All individuals can reach this point, some sooner and some later. Also capping does not necessarily refer to a failure, because as one moves on a higher position, the number of positions available decline, especially in a single organization. At the same time, an individual can cap if he doesn't want to take on new responsibilities or risks of change, if he realizes that he reached the limit of his personal capacity. Although change is the leitmotif of activity in the organization in which the respondents operate, over 80% of them

believe that they are capable to manage change, if circumstances are right. Also, they have personality traits suited to make these changes, because over 60% of them are extroverted, realistic, pragmatic and dominant. Moreover, respondents believe that self-assessment, managing interpersonal relationships, professional achievement and commitment are extremely important features in career development.

Employees themselves must understand that everything depends only on the company and that their role is too small for them to not do anything for them and for their personal and professional development. Most times, it all starts from a better knowledge of oneself, of the desires and needs, as well as a capacity for adaptability to changes. The effectiveness of individual career is closely linked to organizational performance. Often we misunderstand the idea of corporation, that a firm loses its original identity and becomes a well-oiled mechanism where employees, as unique individuals, are just a mass of "robots", the role of which is no other than to perform tasks, without any personal implications. In the organization they belong to, the respondents, still campaigning for humanity, for understanding and providing feedback, even if often it loses sight of these goals. Keywords on which the development of training activity and developing of staff are based on could become key to the success of a long-term employer – employee relationship, are: mentoring, counseling, support, guidance towards development, orientation towards solutions, delegation, past experiences, community integration, communication, orientation, guidance, help in discovering own potential, enhance learning, mediation, patience, crisis resolution, understanding, young tigers, succession plan, satisfaction, motivation, accountability.

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