*CHAPTER 9*

*Encouraging Individually Directed Career Development*

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# EL 1: Debate - Should training be for ‘high potential’ or for everyone

 *General setting and task:* In reviewing training, Greg Rudd of the New Zealand Training Institute has been asked to convene a meeting of members of government and various sporting agencies who have been involved in sports. He wants to focus the majority of the discussion on addressing the general question ‘Should we focus on “high potentials” or do we encourage a “come one come all” approach to training?’

 Divide the class into groups of 4-5 people with different groups taking different positions as in favour of focusing training on high potential vs. those who are opposed and wish to have general programs for funding a wider group of athletes. Each group will have 5 minutes for their initial presentation followed by five minutes for preparing their rebuttal. Each group will then have 4 minutes to present their rebuttals followed by 5 minutes for preparing their final arguments. After final arguments where each group has 3 minutes, begin a general discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each position.

**1. Initial presentation: 5 minutes for each group**

Prepare for rebuttal: 5 minutes

**2. Rebuttal: 4 minutes for each group**

Prepare for final arguments: 5 minutes

**3. Final arguments: 3 minutes for each group**

# EL 2: Using metaphors to think creatively about your career

Gareth Morgan’s Images of Organization*[[1]](#endnote-1)* introduces the use of different metaphors to

encourage us to think creatively about organizations. In the same way, we might be able to use different metaphors of careers to think more creatively about what a career might mean for you. The different ways to describe a career represent different metaphors.[[2]](#endnote-2) A career might be like going up the promotional ladder for some people. Others see it as journey through many different times and geographical areas.

 Examples of metaphors include: (i) Career as inheritance or expectations, (ii) Career as construction, (iii) Career as cycle, (iv) Career as fit, (v) Career as journey, (vi) Career as network, as encounters and relationships, (vii)Career as theatre, (viii) Career as resource, and (ix) Career as a story.

Career as inheritance or expectations. Career can be a legacy which is passed on from one generation to the next, as when an individual is expected to take over a family business or feel obligated to seek political office. In other cases, individuals might have expectations to be lawyers or teachers because that is what their parents did. The inheritance metaphor defines our career by expectations others have or we have of ourselves. Metaphor: A career is a legacy or set of expectations held by others (eg., parents expect of me) or I have of myself.

Career as construction.Individuals can “craft” or construct their career. This defines a career as taking on the characteristics of self-creation or the on-going construction process of planning, goal setting, problem solving, and seeking the advice of experts in the same way as constructing a house. It also involves activities such as laying a foundation and developing a plan which resonates with the environment. Metaphor: A career is a craft or construction which includes steps (such as planning and laying the foundation) and creative problem solving (e.g, seeking mentors or special training).

Careers as cycle. Within this metaphor or a career waxes and wanes at different stages or seasons of one life. This image of career can be connected to the passing seasons, or age related phases of exploration, direction, mid-life transition, maintenance, and late adult transition.[[3]](#endnote-3) Metaphor: A career is a life cycle with stages where certain skills and competencies are more important than others.

Career as fit.A fit metaphor is popular among many career counsellors who suggest we should assess ourselves and find a career which fits with our values or preferences. This metaphor has several conceptual issues relating to how best to define fit and whether or not it is possibly to establish fit. The imagery of fit suggests that we should not put a square peg in a round hole. Metaphor: A career is a legacy or set of expectations by others (eg., parents expect of me) or I have of myself.

Career as journey. A career is a journey, or movement geographically, between organizations and jobs and occupations. The speed of the journey can be fast or slow or varied. The person might also be stalled or plateaued at certain stages of moving upward in the hierarchy. As a journey, we might want to be clear on our direction and to enjoy the trip. Metaphor: A career is a journey with a beginning and end, with or without a direction, where one can gain experience along the way.

Career as network, as encounters and relationships.A career might evolve through a series of social and political encounters. Careers are social experiences in that we are constantly encountering other people and we develop long term relationships and friendships. Careers are political in that we use our relationships to our personal advantage. Through these encounters, we integrate ourselves in organizations and society. Networks provide social capital for our progress and networking becomes a skill to exert our power and influence. Metaphor: A career is a social and political network for self promotion, managing impressions, and hunting for new experiences.

Career as theatre. The theatre has often been used to describe a career because it lends itself to devices such as: theme, plot, costume, acting, dramatization and rehearsing. We have scripts which we act out in organizations and with certain people. Some people play certain roles such as “loyal civil servant,” or “committed employee.” To perfect our career, we should try to play life’s defined roles or unique roles for new audiences. Metaphor: A career is a theatre where one plays a script for certain play. Learning one’s script is important in acting.

Career as resource. The resource metaphor highlights the economic potential of a career to create wealth. More recently, labour is seen as an asset and if we use it strategically, organizations are more effective. Human resource management has replaced the term personnel management. Human resource practices for developing careers include career planning, assessment, training, development, and mentorship. A career can be self-managed or organizationally managed. Metaphor: Careers are repositories of knowledge where people develop a set of competencies and are committed for long periods of working life. As career, people are human resources and inputs which aid production.

Career as a story. The stories the people tell and the collection of these stories provides a rich tapestry for others. We narrate our stories to our families and friends, embellish them and organize them in biographies. The act of reflecting on our careers and telling the story helps us see patterns and evolve. We change our ways when we reflect on our experience. However, we also create fictions to make us feel good or dramatize how others were better or worse than they were. The fictions are often used to assemble or interpret images such as “the organization man,” boundary-less career, and protean careers. Behind each image is a protagonist or lead story teller. Metaphor: A career is an image or snap shot which we proudly display to others to rationalize our experiences.

**Task 1: Apply 3-4 metaphors**

Working with others in a group, pick 3-4 metaphors from the above listing, but include the career ladder and fit metaphors (or the craft construction metaphor). For each metaphor, complete the following sentence.

A career is like a: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Summarize details of each different metaphors in providing examples of what this would mean in career development, an individual’s responsibility, the organization’s responsibility, and for it appropriateness for different public organizations (federal, local, non-profit, public corporation) and for different private organizations. Assess each metaphor for its relevance in describing your career development.

**Task 2: Pick a metaphor**

What metaphor or combination of metaphors is most useful? What steps should you take to live the metaphors you like and avoid the career of the metaphors you do not like?

# EL 3. Guiding Individual Career Development

In an individually directed model of career development, managers still have a great deal of responsibility in focusing and encouraging employees to plan their development for higher level positions. Their role is to help define the competencies and other criteria that the organization needs in the coming years so that employees know what to “aim for.” This involves being clear on the organization’s strategies and articulating a framework of competencies and skills that the organization will need. This gives employees a guide for their personal career development plans and something to “aim for” if they want to develop in the organization.

 **Task.** In building on the SHRM BSC framework in Table 9.1, define strategic competencies and initiatives that are important for implementing the strategic objective which illustrates your responsibility for your own career management. In forming competencies and initiatives, the framework asks you to recognize basic questions that are important to the implementation:

1. How do customers/clients (employers) who might hire me see me and what value do I offer which is unique? What competencies are important and what are initiatives for implementing them? – Client and Customer perspective
2. What must I excel at? What competencies are important and what are initiatives for implementing them? – Internal process perspective
3. How do I provide added financial value to clients? What competencies are important and what are initiatives for implementing them? – Financial perspective
4. What initiatives can I use to continue to improve and create value? What competencies are important and what are initiatives for implementing them? – Innovation and Learning perspective (or Learning and Growth)

**Table 9.1 Strategic Objective: Taking responsibility for your own career development**

|  |
| --- |
| **Strategic Objective: Taking responsibility for your own career development** |
| Competencies | Initiatives | Markers or Measures | Date |
| Customer or client perspective |
| Competency 1 | 1.2. |  |  |
| Competency 2 | 1.2. |  |  |
| Competency 3 | 1.2. |  |  |
| Internal business process |
| Competency 4 | 1.2. |  |  |
| Competency 5 | 1.2. |  |  |
| Financial |
| Competency 6 | 1.2 |  |  |
| Competency 7 | 1.2. |  |  |
| Learning and Growth |
| Competency 8 | 1.2. |  |  |
| Competency 9 | 1.2. |  |  |

# EL 4: Enriching your job and life

Even though your organization may not be interested in job enrichment, the ideas have relevance for enriching your job and career. You can do things which provide you with learning and growth in enriching your job and life, even if your job is constraining. For example, you could enrol in courses that improve your skills and make you more attractive to your present and future employers. You could involve yourself in volunteer work, something where you have personal accountability for the outcome of a project. You could establish a peer group to provide feedback on your presentation skills, or you could try to specialize in certain parts in improving your expertise. In some cases, this might be reading books and articles or involving yourself in discussions.

The following exercise encourages you to think of ways to enrich your job, life and career. Review Herzberg's job enrichment dimensions below and his suggestions for enrichment in chapter 4.

|  |
| --- |
| * *Direct feedback:* You get feedback directly from your performance (e.g., client feedback) rather than indirectly from a supervisors, people, or other indirect means (provides “recognition” in Herzberg’s model).
 |
| * *Client relationship:* You have a customer or client to focus on (provides “recognition” in Herzberg’s model).
 |
| * *New learning:* You have an opportunity to learn something purposeful and meaningful (provides “growth” in Herzberg’s model).
 |
| * *Scheduling:* You can schedule the pace of your work and how it is organized (provides “responsibility” in Herzberg’s model).
 |
| * *Unique expertise:* You have a personal expertise that gives you some personal uniqueness (provides “achievement” in Herzberg’s model).
 |
| * *Control over resources:* You have discretion in the use of financial or other resources (provides “responsibility” in Herzberg’s model).
 |
| * *Direct communications authority:* You have access to information to enable you to make decisions appropriate to your life (provides “recognition” and “responsibility” in Herzberg’s model).
 |
| * *Personal accountability:* You have control of and are accountable for the outcome of projects you are working on (provides “recognition” and “responsibility” in Herzberg’s model).
 |

**Task**

Using the table below, take each enrichment suggestion and brainstorm how you can apply them in your job and life.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Suggestions for Enriching Job** | **Suggestions for Enriching Life** |
| **Direct Feedback** |  |  |
| **Client Relationship** |  |  |
| **New Learning** |  |  |
| **Scheduling** |  |  |
| **Unique Expertise** |  |  |
| **Control Over Resources**  |  |  |
| **Direction Communications** |  |  |
| **Personal Accountability**  |  |  |

# References

1. Morgan, G. (1997). *Images of Organization*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Inkson, K. (2004). Images of career: Nine key metaphors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65, 96-111. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Levinson, D.J. (1978). The seasons of a man’s life. New York: Ballantine; Sheeny, F. (1995). New passages: Mapping your life across time. New York: Ballantine [↑](#endnote-ref-3)