

Developing & Managing Changing Career Development Strategic Plans

(a) Impacts of implementing major strategic changes, with regard to clients and career practitioners:

When implementing major strategic change career practitioners need to be mindful of the complexity and degree of difficulty of the change program that is being considered. Further, career practitioners need to have a clear view of their strengths and areas for development in all aspects of their work, as this is vital in leading and implementing major change programs. Moreover, change programs provide a unique opportunity to take a fresh perspective and be creative. This may take the form of developing new services previously not conceived or thought possible.

Career practitioners need to consider the following elements in contemplating a strategic change program:

- The scale of change versus the size of the organisation,
- Availability and accessibility of key skills,
- Learning styles, learning difficulties & disabilities,
- Complexity of entrenched organisational culture,
- Family/societal influences,
- Economic considerations,
- Government/ Political influences,
- Gender and age composition,
- Diversity / Cultural differences.

This is not an exhaustive list but more a representative one to illustrate that implementing major strategic change requires a multi-dimensional approach and careful consideration of a number of key variables to be successful. Implementing strategic change requires leadership and a clear strategic plan that provides the vision, rationale and roadmap articulated in actions. Therefore, as Gorby et. al (2002) in their conference paper article 'High Tech/High Touch: reinventing Career Counselling Service' point out, career practitioners have an important part to play in broadening their role from being a service provider and employee advocate to one of change agent and leader.

Watts et. al.(2000) in their paper 'Research to inform the Development of the New Connexions Service' further highlight the important role that research and evaluation plays in determining 'what works' in the pursuit of continuous learning and best practice in career development interventions. Watts et. al. contend that it is vital for career advisors to be empowered to meet the needs of their clients and in helping them make well-informed decisions.

Watts et. al.(2000) also highlight that there are many aspects that may impact a clients environment and motivation to learn and engage in change programs. This includes many of the elements listed above Watts et. al. highlight the impact of family and mental health

issues in young people among them.

Both Watts et. al and Gorby et. al underline the need to have a robust strategic plan underpinned by research to ensure the success of a major strategic change program.

(b) Maximising satisfaction and outcomes for all parties involved in major strategic changes.

Gorby et. al (2002) in their conference paper article 'High Tech/High Touch: reinventing Career Counselling Service' point out that implementing major strategic changes provides the opportunity for career practitioners to develop their role from one of the traditional employee advocate and service provider in an organisation to that of a change agent, supporting and facilitating organisational change. Gorby et. al further highlight that this expanded role requires, not only skill development, but importantly promotion, both organisationally and in the HR community. This, combined with a dynamic work environment, implies the need for career practitioners to forecast workplace trends and develop their skills accordingly. Both Goleman (2000) and Gorby et. al rightly point out that, as leaders, we must be role models for our clients and employees. That is to say, just as we encourage our clients to be 'continuous learners' so should we, as career practitioners, do the same. The notion of career practitioners as change agents provides the opportunity to demonstrate real leadership.

Watts et. al.(2000) in their paper 'Research to inform the Development of the New Connexions Service' similarly present a powerful case for 'evidence-based practice' and continuous improvement in career development. Watts et. al. further highlight the important role that research and evaluation plays in determining 'what works' in the pursuit of continuous learning and best practice in career development interventions. Watts et. al. contend that it is vital that career advisors are empowered to meet the need of their clients and in helping them make well informed decisions. Empowerment also extends to encouraging agencies to form effective partnerships and work collaboratively together for the benefit of their clients. Watts et. al. expand this concept into the need in career development for agencies to have a strategic plan and clear vision underpinned by culture of robust and connected research and evaluation. Additionally, research should include a balance between qualitative and quantitative studies and expert and practitioner elements. This paper also points out the benefits of having clear goals and action plans, building trust, recognition and praise and having a mentor can have on a 'young person's attitude to learning and employment'. Interestingly, these are concepts consistent with Goleman's (2002) view of leadership.



Summarising, both the Gorby et. al and Watts et. al. papers provide further evidence of the importance of leadership, having clear strategic plan and the role of continuous learning have on providing effective career development services. The strategic plan provides the 'blueprint' for change and will, if constructed and implemented effectively, consider the salient issues in helping individuals and organisations to move from the current state to desired future state. This has significant implications for career practitioners. Specifically career practitioners need to keep pace with the emerging trends in the workplace and broaden their role into being a change agent and leader. It is clear that both career practitioners and their clients benefit from continuous learning.

Therefore to establish this new broadened role, career practitioners need to develop their skills on a continuous basis and actively promote and advocate their role to others in organisations and the community. Career practitioners have an important role as leaders and change agents and in so doing must role model the behaviours that foster and nurture continuous learning. As a professional career practitioner inspired by and dedicated to continuous learning, reflective practice, professional development, and best practice career development, I consider these elements as imperatives to motivating and helping my clients and client organisations build the skills to identify and achieve their individual and organisational goals and satisfaction.

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