

## **From Optional to Critical: Why your organisation needs Career Development**

By Edwin Trevor-Roberts

Career development programs are often not implemented in organisations as they are seen as too complicated or too risky. And yet they are critical. Peter Carey, the national president of the Australian Association of Career Counsellors was quoted in the [Human Resources Magazine](#) (17 April 2007) as saying:

*'To enhance productivity and participation in the workforce, we need to address everything from cultural barriers and young people entering the work force to the rapid introduction of new technology and the impact it's having on mature age workers and our ageing workforce'.*

A Career Development approach is one way to address these and a number of other issues. This is because a career development strategy is fundamentally about helping each individual make the most of their career within their current organisation.

A career development strategy need not be complicated. We have developed a simple 3-prong career development approach that consists of the following strategies:

### **1. For Employees**

The aim of this strategy is to develop the skills necessary for employees to lead a successful and rewarding career with the support of their organisation. Employees are given the opportunity to assess the alignment of their individual career goals with the organisation's values, goals and strategic objectives. This may be through, for example, an individual Career Coaching program or a group workshop. Once a person has clarity around their preferred career direction they can then take action within their current environment.

### **2. For Managers**

This is the often overlooked but critical part of a career development approach: managers need to actively help and guide staff on their career journey. They can do this by holding effective career conversations with staff members in both formal and informal settings. Typical managers, however, find this confronting and challenging to do effectively. Practise and a solid knowledge base to draw on are critical for this leadership skill.

### **3. For the Organisation**

A career development approach is most effective when it does not sit in isolation from other people management strategies such as talent management, workforce planning, succession planning etc. The effective integration of career development into other strategies results in it becoming part of 'how things are done around here' rather than yet another management responsibility.

Career Development is not just another HR fad. It is a proven way to engage each individual more fully with your organisation and, in the process, retaining them and attracting others to join.

### **About the Author**

Edwin Trevor-Roberts is the General Manager of Trevor-Roberts Associates, Career Architects®, a specialist career consulting firm ([www.trevorroberts.com.au](http://www.trevorroberts.com.au)).

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HEAD OFFICE:  
Level 11, 39 Sherwood Road  
PO Box 142, Toowong Qld 4066  
Ph: 07 3217 7288 Fax: 07 3217 7480  
Email: [career@trevorroberts.com.au](mailto:career@trevorroberts.com.au)

[www.trevorroberts.com.au](http://www.trevorroberts.com.au)

Strategic Management Coaching Pty Ltd ABN 64 072 631 559