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Organizational Structure and Career Connections

How can you improve the productivity of knowledge workers?, asks the January 21st issue of *The Economist* in a special survey called “*The New Organisation*.” Knowledge workers are “networked persons”. To be more productive, they depend upon the complex communications technology now available. It isn’t useful to count the number of ideas they have or the hours they work. They work across internal organizational boundaries and externally, between outsourced functions and joint ventures.

The *Economist* points out that the structure of most organizations no longer supports the fluid way in which people work now. Neither the silos of hierarchical structures nor the matrix versions of those structures enhance the communication between knowledge workers and therefore their productivity.

One of Career Strategies’ clients asked us to come up with a program that would break down those organizational barriers and increase the knowledge, career skills, and productivity of the participants.

The result is *Career Connections*, a half-day workshop and three facilitated follow-on meetings. The program is designed to create an ongoing social network between managers that helps people move across organizational boundaries and create cross-functional synergies.

An important part of the workshop is the *Developmental Network Questionnaire*, an instrument designed at the Harvard Business School to help people assess their personal developmental networks and identify developmental goals.

The evaluation of the pilot program showed that both objectives were met. Participants developed contacts that helped them with career mobility, and the organization stands to gain from the synergies between participants. Here are a few of their comments.

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“We created lists of key contacts which we use to help customers who call us, but want information on a different product. We don’t have to say ‘I can’t help you’ any more.”

“I rolled out a new application and used members of the group for feedback and testing. It really helped.”

“Through the program, we met someone with interest in a career in our area. We are laying the groundwork for a career move.” ■

Ask...

How to Get What You Want and Need at Work

The book by Priscilla H. Claman

Available directly from Career Strategies at 617.227.5517.

Ask Us...

Career Change and My Current Boss...

Question: I am making a big career change that will probably mean changing where I work. Should I tell my boss?

Answer: Until you are sure you know where you are going, it probably doesn’t make any sense. But sooner or later you are going to need to use your contact network at work for either referrals or references. Then, that network will need to understand your reasons for making the change so they can explain it to others.

If you are using an interim step like further education to make a change, telling people is fine. And, if you are making the shift at your current place of employment, your boss is usually a person who can help you. ■

New...

On Our Website:

Priscilla Claman’s presentations at the NEHRA Metrics Conference and at the Merrill Lynch Fresh Start Program - both from this past February.

Also: Greek Travel Tips and links for those of you who keep asking for them.

Success Stories

Names of clients and some facts about them have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

Keith Adds to his Value

Keith knew he was in trouble. Not that anyone told him, exactly. His performance reviews weren't what they were five years ago, but they weren't bad reviews. But he just didn't feel as valued, or as valuable to the company.

Keith was hired eight years before as a project manager in the information systems department. Using his strong technical skills and his ability to inspire all kinds of people to be enthusiastic about his projects, Keith had accomplished what others hadn't been able to accomplish. But now, even though his contact network within the company was even broader than it had been, he knew he was not as up to date technically as he should be.

"Ironically, they were paying me more than I was worth on the technical job market, because I had received so many increases and promotions. That made me vulnerable. I had to figure out a way to become more productive in order to match my salary - and quickly."

Instead of waiting for the ax to fall, Keith joined professional societies and took classes in new technologies. Those activities would help him in the long run. He also knew that taking courses wasn't enough. He had to improve his work history.

Using his strong internal network he learned of a new product with new technical requirements that was being developed. A high-powered outsider had been hired to get

the new product up and running. With a carefully prepared presentation, Keith made the case that the new executive needed an insider to make the implementation of the product successful. He got the job! "I think of it as a trade," he said. "The new person gets the knowledge of how we work, and I get exposure to a brand new technology. That will make me valuable again - both here and anywhere else." ■

Valuable Connections

Dana works as an inside wholesaler for mutual funds. One of her clients, a high producer, made a transactional mistake that triggered a chain of errors in all his accounts. He was desperate to correct them. Since Dana was the only person he knew personally, she got the call.

Normally, Dana wouldn't know where to send him other than a general referral to the business area. But she remembered the presentation Walter made at a Career Connections meeting and realized he might know the right person for her client to call.

Sure enough Walter did. Dana was able to call her client back with a real contact name. The client was very grateful and very complimentary. Dana shared her new information with her colleagues on the sales desk. ■

We Recommend... Articles! Assessment!

The article cited is in a section of **The Economist** called "*The New Organisation*" and is available for purchase at www.economist.com/surveys. The survey is called *A Survey of the Company* and is under Business.

The *Developmental Network Questionnaire* is an excellent instrument for helping people assess their current helping network and plan to enhance it. The instrument is available for purchase from **Harvard Business School Press** on their web site: www.hbsp.harvard.edu

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