
The Company Survey Results

Career Connections Pilot — November 2005

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Key Results of the Study of Career Connections Pilot – November, 2005

1. Career Connections achieved its purpose of creating a working networking group. Participants expanded their knowledge of the business by learning about other business lines and meeting other professionals. And participants have started to use networking to do their own jobs more effectively, and they see the potential of managing their careers through networking in the future. The program also achieved its secondary purpose of breaking down the barriers between people in pre-merger The Other Company of The Company, in different business units, and in different buildings.
2. All participants found the program useful for expanding their personal networks and for increasing their knowledge of The Company.
3. Seven of the nine participants have already used the contacts they made in the program on the job.
4. Many volunteered that they have an improved attitude toward The Company as an employer as a result of the program.
5. All offered suggestions for improving the program, mostly around scheduling meetings.

Career Connections Data

Program Objectives

The Career Connections was originally designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- To create a working networking group
- To teach participants to use networking to expand their career horizons and manage their careers
- To expand participant knowledge of the business by learning about other business lines and meeting other professionals.

It was hoped that being in this networking group would help break down the organizational barriers that grow up between business units in a large company.

The Program So Far

The pilot program began in August, 2005 under the direction of Karen Liuzzo of Career Strategies. It started with a half-day workshop on August 10th and concluded in October, 2005. Ten participants started the program. One of them had to leave before the program concluded.

A second Career Connections program began in October, 2005. The introductory workshop was held on October 27th. This program has 18 participants, and the schedule was determined in advance of the first meeting.

How This Study Was Done

Priscilla Claman of Career Strategies interviewed all nine participants in the Career Connections pilot by phone between November 17th and November 28th.

These were the questions she asked:

1. *Think back to when you took the introductory workshop for Career Connections. Do you remember the diagram of your helping relationships at work? What would be different if you drew a similar diagram today?*
2. *What was the biggest benefit to you personally of the Career Connections Program?*
3. *What are the most important things you learned about The Company as a result of the program?*
4. *What did you think of the Pay It Forward part of the program?*
5. *Overall, how would you rate the program: Very valuable? Valuable? Somewhat valuable? Not valuable?*
6. *What recommendations do you have for future Career Connections programs?*

Survey Responses

1. **Do you feel you benefited from being a participant of the Career Connections Program? If so, how?**

All participants were enthusiastic about their participation in the program. The reasons varied from meeting and sharing their experiences as managers to learning more about The Company as a whole and making contacts in other parts of the organization. Here are some of their answers.

Yes. It was wonderful. I've only been here a couple of years. It was perfect for me with my limited exposure to other areas. It was fantastic. It would have taken me years of working on projects to obtain these contacts.

Yes. It was important for meeting people I would not normally come into contact with personally and for the group I manage. Good for internal career development.

Yes. It is a great way to learn about the different products and divisions. I was pre-merger The Other Company and this helped me learn and get connected to the whole organization.

I did benefit. I am a new manager so it was great hearing different people talk about their experiences – like what I am going through.

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2. Do you feel your participation helped you expand your knowledge of The Company business areas and operations? If so, how?

All participants agreed that the program helped them with their knowledge of The Company. Here are some of their answers.

Yes. I got to find out about different areas that I knew by name but had no clue what they did. I had no idea how much planning and number crunching goes on in the corporate areas and got a real appreciation for their process and what they go through. I also have a good understanding of the issues everyone faced relative to the merger.

Definitely. The thing I loved about it was that there was really wide participation. Helped personalize each area, go to know a face that went along with the business area. That was the biggest benefit of the program.

Good to hear about different parts of the organization. I'd been at The Company, so I didn't know much at all about the The Other Company areas.

Yes. I got to understand the challenges other business areas face.

Yes. I learned about different products and operations outside of my own area.

3. Have you already had the opportunity to leverage your participation in the program in your work? Will you in the future? If so, in what ways?

All saw the value of the program for future networking in relations to their careers. All but two had already used the network for a variety of job-related tasks, including contact lists, sharing of training modules and ideas, career exploration opportunities for two associates and problem solving. Here are some examples.

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

Yes, I've already reached out to a couple of people for things like, "Do you know who I should contact for..."

Yes. We created lists of key contacts which we are using to help customers who call us and want information about another product. We don't have to say, "I can't help you." I also have a go to person if I have a question or a problem.

One of my associates had an interest in one of the groupOps. I put her in touch. They had a two hour meeting which may result in potential opportunities down the road.

To some extent I am working with one of the people in the program and we have done things together. But I feel like I could call anyone in the group with a question or problem and have somebody know who I was.

4. What are the most important things you learned about The Company as a result of the program?

Many participants used this question to comment on the fact that the program showed The Company's concern for their own associates. Others used the opportunity to talk about the sense of community and common purpose they now feel they have with The Company. Here are some sample answers.

We all have the same basic philosophy no matter where we are working. People are very similar, and very busy. They had the same problems I had. We shared a lot of communality.

The Company is really diverse. There is a lot more to the company than what I knew going in. Also, it was important to learn that The Company wants to help people with their career goals and help them understand the organization as a whole. It shows they care about people.

We are all really busy we forget about others in the organization. But if we work together across The Company we will work more effectively.

I was really unaware that there was a commitment to talent management at The Company. It is nice to know that the company cares about its people.

I know it is a big company, but it feels bigger than it is . This program make the company feel more close knit. It makes me feel far more a part of the bigger picture and not out of control.

5. The Pay It Forward project was designed to provide Career Connections participants the opportunity to get to get better acquainted by working on a project and to allow them to share program participation with someone who works for them. Do you think the Pay it Forward project was valuable? If so, how?

This part of the Career Connections came at the end of the program. Some people reported that they didn't spend the amount of time they should have on this part of the program. Others were very positive. Here are some of their comments.

Yes, My associate got to meet people and make another contact. Through that contact we met someone with interest in a career in our area. We are laying the groundwork for a career move.

Yes, the most important part of the whole program was involving others in the process.

Yes. The person I picked doubled up all of his work to do the program. It was very valuable. He also found it valuable. He saw things we don't get to see every day.

Didn't really have the time to put into it. Only met once. If we have invested more time, it would have been better for us.

I wish my associate had gotten more out of it. It was a great opportunity, but I should have chosen a different person.

6. Think back to when you took the introductory workshop for Career Connections. Do you remember the diagram of your helping relationships at work? What would be different if you drew a similar diagram today?

One respondent didn't remember the diagram from the Developmental Network Questionnaire that was in the workshop that began the program. The rest reported an expanded personal network.

In the workshop it was all people in my department in the diagram. Now it would show people outside my area.

The diagram would show my new connections within the company.

I now know more people and am able to branch out if I want to.

Don't remember the diagram.

Basically, I'd have more contacts across more areas.

7. What recommendations do you have for future Career Connections programs?

All participants talked about fixing the schedule in advance and getting people to commit before the program begins. That was something that had already been put in place for the second group of Career Connections participants. Some of their comments are below.

To keep the continuity, we needed to meet more frequently. Karen did a great job keeping us focused and allowing us to have impact.

A preplanned schedule. Also presentations should be made available to people who weren't there or people could get together by phone or face to face to catch up. That would encourage more interaction.

Scheduling. Wasn't able to make all meetings. Loved visiting the other sites. It changes you mind about things.

The size of the group was really good. We all had a chance to speak. 2) It would be good to include something on the company's commitment to talent management in the first session. 3) Karen's strengths are her openness to new ideas. We rarely get a chance to think up things as opposed to do what we are told in a business setting. The question is what is the balance between providing the structure that we are used to in order to make things go more efficiently and giving us a different kind of experience. 4) I think we missed an opportunity in not getting someone from senior management to participate.

We need to set the schedule up front. I didn't want to miss any meetings. We were a very chatty bunch. We tended to go over. It was all interesting so we should either give people the extra time of limit people's time more severely. Loved the tours of the different locations. A great program.