

# ETHOS Organizational Career Management Model

A dynamic management tool designed to discover and capitalize on the alignment between corporate goals and employee career development needs.

Conceived by Glenn Kelso with assistance from the Career Management Connection team and the CMC Advisory Committee.

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### Introduction

The ETHOS Organizational Career Management Model is designed to address issues of organizational health, productivity and employee engagement. The premise behind the model's central concept is that an organization and its human resources have a co-operative, mutually beneficial relationship. Healthy organizations recognize its employees as partners in their success. Organizations that treat their employees as commodities from which to extract resources may have short-term gains, but will never have long-term success. An organization's long-term health and relevance is dependent on its ability to develop and maintain a committed and productive workforce. For this to occur, the workplace environment must be one that stimulates employees to continually perform at a high level. The ETHOS Organizational Career Management Model is an integrated system designed to fulfill both organizational and individual needs.

<p><b>Definition:</b> Organizational Career Management is a dynamic management practice designed to discover and capitalize on the alignment between corporate goals and employee career development needs.</p>
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Organizational Career Management is a relatively new concept. Its genesis is in the recognition that old ways of doing business are becoming increasingly ineffective. Innovative organizations recognize that today's knowledge and service-based economy requires greater investment in human capital. In a knowledge-based economy, a highly skilled and motivated staff is the organization's competitive edge. In an era of skills shortages, employers can no longer rely on simply hiring more people to meet the organization's need to increase production. Organizations need to find other strategies to build capacity.

Skills shortages is a major issue for virtually all western market-based economies. It is a particularly significant issue in Canada where our robust economy and decades of low birth rates have produced the lowest unemployment rates in over thirty years. Many Canadian employers are turning away business because they simply do not have the capacity to service it. A recent report from Manpower Inc, who conducted a major international talent shortage survey [January 2006] reveals the magnitude of this issue. Manpower's survey reports that the global skill shortage problem is particularly acute in Canada: "*Employers having the most difficulty finding the right people to fill jobs are those in Mexico [78% reporting shortages], **Canada [66%]** and Japan [58%].*"

Organizational Career Management is a capacity building strategy. This strategy is designed to increase employees' engagement in their work, as they gain understanding of how their work contributes to their career progression. It is well known that an individual's commitment to his/her occupation is a major driver of Employee Engagement (Corporate Leadership Council 2004 Employee Engagement Survey). By creating a process within the organization that enables employees to manage and grow their careers, the employer also creates a more skilled and motivated workforce.

### **Career Planning in an Organization**

Career Planning is the action-oriented aspect of an individual's personal Career Management. Career Management is a lifelong process in which individuals take proactive steps to determine their career paths. Good Career Management recognizes that while long and short-term goals are important, life situations and opportunities arise that influence these goals. Rather than having defined start and end-points, Career Management recognizes that individuals are dynamic and continually developing. With that in mind, goals are created to provide the means for navigating a career path. Career Management is an empowering endeavor that equips people to take charge of their careers.

Involvement in employees' Career Management makes sense for organizations of all types and sizes. Enabling individuals' career development is a win-win proposition. As employees develop, the organization's human capital grows, building its capacity to deliver and expand its services and/or products. An effective career planning process in an organization provides an opportunity to link an individual's goals with those of the organization. When this occurs, both the individual and organization benefit from its employees Career Planning.

For many people, "*getting a pay-cheque*" is their primary reason for working. It is rare for such individuals to be engaged with either their jobs or their organizations. These individuals often make up a significant percentage of an organization's workforce. ("*Only 26% of Canadian workers report being 'highly engaged' in their jobs, and 66% report being 'moderately engaged'; 24% report being 'actively disengaged'*" -The Ten C's of Employee Engagement, Seijts & Crim, Ivey Business Journal, March/April, 2006)

Two of the most common reasons that individuals think like this include:

1. They've never thought in terms of "career", and/or have never been given the tools for making informed career decisions and goals.
2. They do not understand how they can advance their careers within their organizations for which they work.

These employees become more engaged in their work and productive for the organization when they are able to frame their employment in the context of their career path. Their work takes on new meaning – it becomes part of their overall success. Organizations can create an atmosphere that fosters a stronger link between their employees and their career development by establishing a process that helps them set career goals and action plans in the context of the organization.

### **Sample Career Planning Process**

An integral part of Organizational Career Management is a Career Planning Process that creates a partnership between employees, their manager(s), and the organization. While career planning is the responsibility of the individual, support and involvement by organization for which she/he works helps forge a greater commitment to the organization's success. An important aspect of this partnership is a clear understanding of the type and amount of support available for employees as they carry out the action steps of their career development plans.

The Career Planning Process requires a framework in which employees develop career growth plans. An effective Career Management framework helps individuals identify the work that they're innately suited for, and provides information about the job options they may wish to pursue. In short, employees need to answer two questions:

- "What type of work am I suited for?"* and
- "What career options do I want to pursue?"*

While employees are responsible for carrying-out the work of Career Planning, managers can assist the process by monitoring the process and providing important feedback and coaching.

Employees answer these two main questions of the Career Planning Process through a combination of activities that include self-assessment, exploring job options, and identifying the skills / training / education / experience required for reaching their goals.

The first question – *What type of work am I suited for?* – can be answered through a self-assessment process. Through self-assessment, individuals discover:

- Personality-based Preferences: types of work that they are drawn towards on the basis of their in-born temperaments
- Occupational Interests – types of work they are most naturally interested in
- Workplace Values – the situations and activities that provide greatest amount of work satisfaction
- Preferred Skills – the skill-sets they enjoy most and want to develop
- Work-Life Balance – how their career fits into the bigger picture of their priorities.

Individuals answer the second question – *What career options do I want to pursue?* – through exploring their job options. Access to job descriptions within the organization, spending time with people who hold positions they are interested in, and job shadowing are some of the methods an organization can provide to assist employees with setting career goals.

Once an employee has determined his goals, he will meet with his immediate manager to discuss the plan and his next steps. The type and amount of support the organization will provide will vary according to organization's career management policies.

The Career Planning Process is a dynamic activity. As individuals reach their goals, they will likely develop new ones. When life situations and circumstances change, individuals may revisit their plans to establish different goals and action plans. The Career Planning Process is an outstanding tool for fostering employee engagement. When employees feel they are in control of their career paths, they become far more motivated in their jobs and their work takes on new meaning. Commitment to the organization markedly increases when employees believe that the organization is considering their interests at the same time it is fulfilling the corporate mission. In most cases, this type of organizational-employee partnership creates a deeper level of *buy-in* for organization's vision and goals.

## **Integration into Organizational Structure**

As the conceptual diagram on page 8 demonstrates, Organizational Career Management is not an “*add-on*”; it must be integrated into the entire organizational structure. The Career Planning Process is closely linked with other important functions in an organization, and particularly with succession planning. In fact, Organizational Career Management’s greatest impact is on succession planning. Once fully functional, Organizational Career Management gives an organization more succession planning options. Employees who are engaged in a process of developing their skills and capabilities create greater organizational capacity. This increased capacity gives organizations more stability, creativity, and ability to capitalize on new opportunities.

The decision to implement Organizational Career Management must be made at the executive leadership level. Because of the impacts that this process has on the overall organization – including its culture – the highest level decision makers need to be actively involved in its implementation.

## **Benefits**

Organizational Career Management significantly changes the nature of an organization providing numerous benefits including:

- Enhanced Employee Engagement levels
  - *Employees have greater commitment to their work.* When employees recognize how skillful performance in their jobs benefits them personally, they become more committed to high performance
  - *Employees have greater commitment to the organization.* Employees no longer view their employment as a “financial contract for duties performed.” They understand their employment as a partnership for reaching goals. They take a greater interest in and ownership of corporate goals.
- Improved Recruiting - Attracting new employees becomes easier as the organization establishes a reputation as “an employer of choice.”
- More Effective Succession Planning
  - *Organizational Stability* – “Bench strength” results from employees who are committed to their career development.
  - *Long-term Viability* – A workforce developing at all levels ensures an ongoing inventory of home-grown talent.
  - *Capacity for Expansion* – High skill levels amongst employees enables the organization to expand operations and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

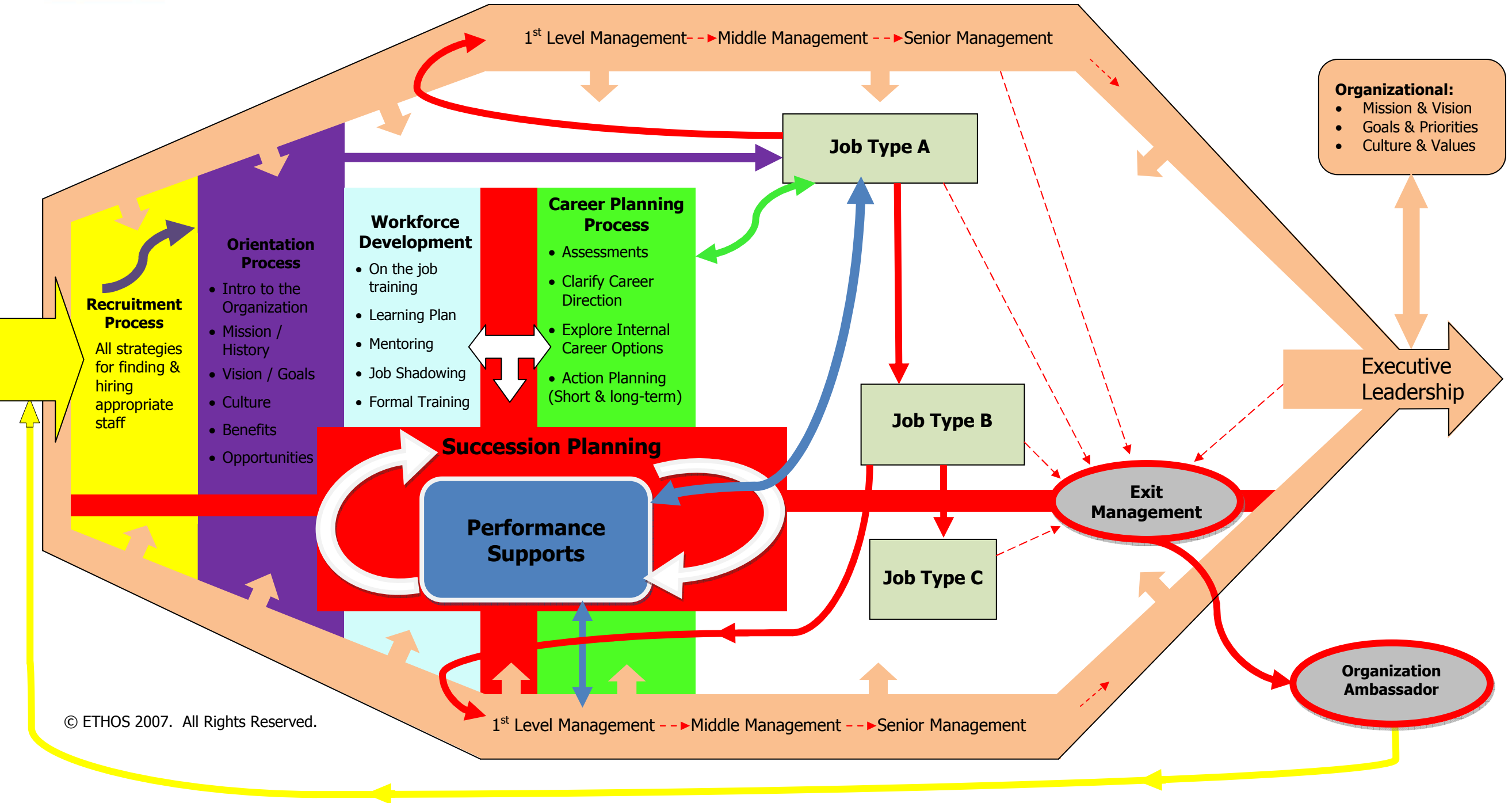
- Better Manager-Employee Relationships – The manager’s coaching relationship with employees creates stronger relationships and shared successes as people progress to new levels.
- Culture of Achievement – A workforce of continually improving people creates higher expectations.
- Culture of Learning – Career development requires attaining knowledge and learning new skills. When this becomes a common activity, a culture of learning is the result.
- Greater Creativity – Increased exposure to education, training and new experiences enhances employees’ creativity.
- Exit Management– If an organization needs to lay-off numerous employees, the staff members actively involved with their career development will have more opportunities to pursue and be better equipped to pursue them.
- More Effective Workforce Development Initiatives –Significantly more meaningful training and professional development opportunities take on new meaning when they are part of employees’ career development plans.
- Understanding Of Other’s Jobs – Career Planning opens one’s eyes to other’s jobs and the skills required to perform them. This exposure also leads to a greater understanding of the entire organization.
- Workforce Retention – Employees who are able to realize their career goals within the organization are unlikely to pursue “greener pastures.”
- Greater Likelihood Of *Boomerang* Returnees – Employees who leave the organization for career advancement are more likely to return to the organization. When they return they’ll bring new knowledge and experience.

## **The Model**

The conceptual diagram on the following page demonstrates Organizational Career Management's integration within a typical organization's structure. The model includes the basic functions and process within an organization. It is designed to be *expandable* for larger organizations (i.e. able to include additional organizational layers), and *collapsible* for smaller organizations (i.e. can become less complex when some of the processes included do not exist or are combined).

The model is designed in a generic way so as to be adaptable to organizations in different sectors. The model is applicable to business, government and not-for-profit organizations. Organizational Career Management is most applicable for organizations that have *fluid workforces* that include a variety of job types. A fluid workforce is one where it is possible for people to transition to new job types within the organization by attaining the new job's requirements through a variety of learning methods while they continue in their current jobs.

# ETHOS Organizational Career Management Model



## **ETHOS Organizational Career Management Model Guide for Navigating the Various Stages**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE MODEL**

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- **Shape of the Model:** The model is shaped like a ship to appreciate that all organizations have direction and are in motion.
- **The Nature of the Model:** The interconnectivity of the parts is drawn to communicate that Organizational Career Management results in a healthier organization that sustains itself. The investment into individuals' skill development benefits both individuals and the organization.
- **Organizational Direction:** Comes from the highest level leader/team, hence its placement at the front of the model. Executive leadership team(s) identify and clarify visions, missions and values. They are also responsible for ensuring a healthy culture that is congruent with the organization wants.
- **Placing of Job Types:**
  - **Management Positions** are on the perimeter of the model to communicate that they serve to support the organization and move it forward. Lower level management roles are further to the back-end of the model, while higher level roles are further to the front. Note, while these positions are drawn on the perimeter of the diagram for the above reasons, the soft colour of the border communicates that all management moves through and is involved throughout the organization.
  - **Job Type A, B, C** refers to the variety of jobs that exist in every organization from entry-level positions, to highly complex, specialist positions. The model recognizes that there are different job types, and that many of these jobs can be part of a progressive career path. The red lines from Job A to Job B, Job C and Management positions, demonstrate the numerous options and directions that any given employee's career path might travel. The red lines are the same color as the Succession Planning area of the model to communicate that all transitions between jobs are part of the Succession Planning strategy.

## INTERPRETING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER MANAGEMENT MODEL

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- **Organizational Mission, Vision, Goals, Priorities & Values** must permeate the organization at all levels. It is important to note how this starts at the earliest stage, Recruitment Process, and is emphasized at subsequent levels.
- Effective companies put a lot of energy into the **Recruitment Process** "Getting the right people on the bus" adds to the organization's human capital, potential, and saves the difficulties associated with staff turnover.
- Once hired, all employees are taken through an **Orientation Process**. This orientation includes an introduction to the organization's Career Planning process and how active involvement in this process will benefit them. Once Orientation is completed, the employee moves to the job for which she was hired.
- Each job has a **Performance Support** process attached to it. Managers will ensure that the employee understands his job and reaches a fully satisfactory level of competency through ongoing performance management. In most cases employees will not move to other jobs until they have become competent in their current assignment.
- **Workforce Development** refers to all the programs and tools the organization has in place to assist employees in their skills growth. Well-developed Workforce Development tools and processes will ensure that employees are prepared for new responsibilities and job types. Workforce Development strategies will ensure that all key jobs are filled and **Succession Plans** are in place. Workforce Development may be accessed by an employee to build their skills level for their current job, for general improvement, or as part of their career development plan.
- **Career Management** is concurrent throughout the employee's stay with the organization. The organization will provide the means for employees to clarify their career goals and understand how to manage their careers and achieve goals while employed by the organization.  
\*Note: Career Management is a partnership between the employee and the organization. However, while the organization provides the atmosphere and tools for career management, the individual takes full responsibility for managing her career and achieving goals. Because the Career Management Process is driven by the employee, managers will not be burdened with another program to support. Managers can oversee the

Career Management Process as part of their regular performance management duties. Typically, employees will be able to access Career Management activities after six months of employment.

- Through the **Career Planning Process**, employees will develop learning and career development plans. Employees will be given the tools they need to make informed career decisions. The organization will help employees understand where their career aspirations coincide with organizational needs. Through the involvement and support of the organization and its managers, the employee will move through the required stages of training for assuming greater responsibilities and new job assignments.
- Management's close involvement with employees' career management plans will significantly help the organization with its **Succession Planning**. Involvement in employees' career management will enable management to understand individuals' aspirations and create opportunities for individuals to obtain exposure to new opportunities and for managers to observe individual's potential for new job types.
- **Important – Performance Supports, Career Planning Process and Succession Planning are parts of an interconnected and synergistic process.** Even in the early stages of an employee's career during their training to reach a satisfactory level of competency, Succession Planning is taking place. As employees chart their career growth plans and attain new skills, higher levels of Succession Planning are achieved.
- Effective organizations have a well-thought-through **Exit Management** strategy. People leave organizations for a variety of reasons. A well-managed Exit Process will help both the organization and the individual with the transition. An Exit Process can also serve as a "feedback loop" that can help the company make needed improvements and become stronger. Recent research shows that a well-managed Exit Process supports "Boomerang" hiring, as former employees re-join the organization at a later stage in their careers.

The bottom-line to the process is better Employee Engagement and productivity. Hiring the right people, getting them engaged in the organization and equipping them for greater productivity will ensure sustainability with ongoing and long-term success for both the individual and organization.

## Essentials for Implementing

Organizational Career Management is not an add-on program; it significantly changes how organizations operate. Because of that, there is a fair amount of preparation required before introducing this process to employees. These essential steps include:

- Support from Senior Management: The decision to implement must come from executive leadership. Top leadership must recognize the value of this process and be committed to its implementation. This ensures that all levels of management are accountable for fulfilling their task and responsibilities for setting up the process.
- A Blueprint of the Process: The organization needs to know how the system works before it begins to implement the system. All tasks, responsibilities and lines of communication must be understood by everyone who operates the system. These managers need to understand how the entire process works in order to fully understand the importance of their individual tasks.
- Action Plan for Implementing the Process: A system that involves numerous people from different levels and departments to work together requires a well-planned implementation process. The plan should be structured along a realistic timeline for its implementation.
- Communication Plan for all Staff: In all likelihood, Organizational Career Management will be a new concept for most staff members. The communication plan will need to be educational in nature. Management should expect some resistance from staff members who are adverse to change or feel threatened by it. The communication plan should clearly outline the benefits for all staff members and articulate what will not be affected (I.E. internal processes, collective agreements, etc.).
- Career Planning Process: This document outlines the basics of a career planning process on page 3. Every organization will need to customize a process that will work in its context. Career Planning Processes have a fair range in levels of complexity. Effective career planning processes can be built around a fairly simple action planning process with minimal management involvement. At the other end of the spectrum is a process that includes specialized career management staff members dedicated to coaching staff through their career planning steps.
- Clearly Defined Expectations: Organizational Career Management is a three-way partnership between staff, management and the organization. Each partner in the process commits time, energy and resources. Clearly

defined expectations are crucial for implementing a successful process. Levels of support for career development will vary in each organization. Unmet expectation can lead to negative consequences such as frustration and cynicism. However, when policy clearly articulates the organization's level of involvement in staff career development, expectations are understood at the out-set and result in a smooth working relationship between all partners. We believe that employers should begin from the perspective that career management is fundamentally the individual's responsibility, and that the organization's involvement is for the mutual benefit of both parties.

### **Recommendations for Implementation**

Organizational Career Management is a strategy that promises to deliver significantly higher levels of Employee Engagement and greater productivity. To be effective, this strategy needs buy-in at all levels of the organization. Implementing the process properly is essential to its success. We recommend organizations take the following steps:

1. Understand the Strategy in Detail:  
Before committing to the process, leadership needs to fully understand how this strategy will affect the organization. Leadership needs to know the costs and energy involved for implementing and maintaining the process. Leaders need to be fully convinced that this strategy will deliver worthwhile benefits.
2. Test the Strategy With Small Group:  
Implementing a new process across an entire organization always has a degree of risk involved. We recommend that the strategy be piloted with a smaller group within the organization. This pilot will enable the organization to create a prototype process customized to its needs. It will also help leaders create a more comprehensive implementation strategy.
3. Commit to a Successful Organization-Wide Implementation:  
After a successful test phase, commit to implementing the strategy throughout the organization. The test phase will also help leaders create a communication plan that articulates the benefits of the strategy.
4. Strike Task Force to Implement the Strategy:  
A smaller group should be given the responsibility for implementing the process. This group will mobilize all the resources required to successfully establish the process across the organization.

## **Acknowledgements**

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**The ETHOS Organizational Career Management Model** – “a dynamic management tool designed to discover and capitalize on the alignment between corporate goals and employee career development needs”, was made possible by the following:

### **The Career Management Connection Project Team**

This graphic model and narrative is the result of the combined efforts of the project participants:

- Sherry Halfyard – Researcher/Writer
- Guillaume Peribere – Researcher/Writer
- Glenn Calder – Administration/Researcher/Writer
- Marie Rose Rowland – Administrative Assistant

### **The Career Management Connection Advisory Committee Members**

ETHOS recruited a community advisory committee to provide guidance and additional resources for the Career Management Connection project. Committee members’ feedback was essential for gaining an employers’ perspective on the study issues, and keeping our research and outcomes grounded in the realities of organizations’ day-to-day business. We would like to acknowledge the following committee members:

- Mr. Randy Chang, *Human Resources Manager* of Budget Car & Truck Rentals (Nanaimo, BC)
- Mr. Kirk Larson, *General Manager* of Costco Wholesale Canada Ltd (Nanaimo, BC)
- Ms. Denise Lloyd, *Executive Director* of the Career Management Association of BC (Victoria, BC)
- Ms. Lee Mason, *Executive Director* of the Greater Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce (Nanaimo, BC)
- Mr. Thomas Mayrhofer, *General Manager* of the Coast Bastion Inn (Nanaimo, BC)
- Mr. Allen Peabody, *Store Manager* of London Drugs at Port Place (Nanaimo, BC)
- Ms. Laurie Sagle, *Human Resources Manager* of Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa & Resort (Parksville, BC)

\* A special thank you to Lori Jackson, Employee Development Consultant, Envision Credit Union, who provided invaluable feedback to the graphic model at different times during its development.

**Service Canada**, Nanaimo, BC provided a significant portion of the total funding for this project through its Job Creation Partnership program.

### **Thank you to everyone involved!**

Glenn Kelso – Project Coordinator (ETHOS Career Management Group Ltd., Director of Strategic Planning and New Initiatives) – June 19, 2007