

On the Frontline

Managing your OWN development and career

It was only a generation ago that we left our career development to our employers. In fact when I started in this industry, back in the 1980's very little training existed for recruitment consultants and the only career development on offer was the hope of becoming a manager once you had "proved" yourself by becoming an exceptional biller. The multi-nationals had their own induction and ad hoc training but we were certainly never exposed to training outside of our own companies. I am sure many of you have heard the stories about the yellow pages and a telephone being how some of us started our recruitment careers and I have to admit that was certainly how I started out. Our industry has changed a great deal since those days I am pleased to say, however I believe that we do lag behind many other industries in the provision of structured career development and training to our people. Perhaps this is because many small business owners and managers are so focussed on the day to day issues that training becomes a band aid approach to problems that arise in the business. Certainly, many of the recruitment businesses that The Recruitment Training Company works with have little or no budget set aside for staff training and development and we are called in when consultants are for whatever reason not meeting their key performance indicators and as a result, revenues are dropping.

Why is career development so important?

I believe and always have done that career development is essential for anyone who wants to really achieve success within their working lives. That is why you as an individual must take some responsibility for managing your

own career and development. If you don't, then you will get left behind at some point. Our world is changing at such a rapid pace that to even play the game, you will need to understand the constantly changing rules.

I'm not getting any training – what should I do?

Perhaps you were promised training that didn't eventuate or even worse, you assumed that the reputable organisation you were joining had a detailed and on going training programme for it's staff. First port of call should be your manager. Make a time aside from your normal weekly meeting to discuss your career development. Have, if at all possible some information prepared on possible external training options that would meet your needs (see possible resources later in this article) and discuss how best your training needs will be met. If your manager commits to "internal" training, ensure that you have dates and times that the training will take place. Don't allow your manager to organise a "buddy" for you internally unless that "buddy" is in full co-operation otherwise you may not get your training needs met. A buddy system is great so long as an organisation has full buy in from all participants.

One of the most effective ways that I have learnt new skills during my recruitment career was to watch what more experienced consultants did. I diligently watched and listened to what worked and what didn't and then copied and as a result developed my own style. I am a big advocate of open plan workspaces for this reason. It is very difficult to learn from others when you are in an office and can't see or hear what is going on around you. If you have your own office, ask more experienced people if you can listen in when they make their

marketing calls and sit in on as many different interviews as you can.

I'm experienced, yet I seem to be stuck and am not developing further skills – what should I do?

I have found one of the best ways to find out where you need to develop further is to ask your clients and candidates. At the end of every interview, I always asked "how did the interview you have just been through compare with others?" "What could be improved?". The same thing with clients – "how did the service you received from me compare with my competitors?" "What could I improve to ensure that you receive an exceptional service next time?". We all get a little arrogant after continued success in our business, however if you are serious about developing further, then get used to evaluating constantly what you do and how well you do it. Once an experienced and successful recruiter I looked for wider inspiration to develop further. I literally devoured every book I could lay my hands on about selling and customer service as well as general motivational reading. I tried many new techniques as a result of what I learned and pushed myself to even greater success. This is a habit I created early in my recruitment career and continues to this day. If you are not reading a book a month that will teach you something, then you need to look at your time management!

Get yourself to the RCSA breakfasts and learn from the experts or attend "refresher" training sessions. I have trained many seasoned professionals whom have made the comment to me after the training "I am so glad I attended as you have reminded me what I learnt years ago and have forgotten!" I believe

Send us your training ideas to win!

This month we'd like to hear about your training ideas, what's missing from your career development, what help you would like most and how much difference you feel it would make to your tenure in the industry and with your current employer. **The first 10 readers to respond will receive a free case of wine to the value of \$150.00!** Write to editor@recruitmentextra.com.au

that if you take away one new technique that you can immediately implement, then the time away from your desk has been worthwhile.

I am thinking about changing employers – what should I look for in terms of training and career development?

You are currently in a buyers market. I talk to many rec 2 rec firms who just don't have experienced people to supply to their clients, this means that as an experienced recruiter you can afford to be selective in who you choose to work for. Before attending interview, have a number of questions ready to ask your interviewer about the career development the agency offers. Ask for examples of individuals who have followed the suggested career path – how long did it take and what position do they hold now? If promises are made, can they be included in the contract of employment? Ask about the training philosophy – does the agency have a budget set aside for consultant training? If yes, typically what types of training are offered? Is there a mix of internal and external training? How often can a consultant attend etc. If no budget is allocated then find out how training is undertaken. Establish how often external training is offered to the consulting team and who decides which consultant attends?

Once you have this information, you are better able to make an informed decision about the right company for you.

Why is external training so important?

Typically because you will be exposed to other consultants from different organisations who do things differently. Remember that you don't

know what you don't know – same goes for your organisation. I have trained in organisations where the training being offered internally reflects the market in the 1980's! The market changes regularly and to stay ahead you need to be exposed to training techniques that are up to date. That's why external training should form an important part of your skill development.

External training you attend may not even reflect the recruitment industry. You could for example attend an Anthony Robbins seminar – I promise you that the experience will change your life!

I know of recruitment companies that refuse to send their consultants to external recruitment seminars and breakfasts for fear of losing them to a competitor. This is a very short sighted approach and I would warn any consultant to think seriously before working for such an organisation.

Resources available

As mentioned earlier, I am a big believer in learning from books. There are a limited number of recruitment industry related books available. My book, "The Art of Recruitment" was designed to assist consultants in the day to day tasks they must undertake in order to be successful and is only available on my website (www.trtc.com.au). There are others but you are unlikely to find them in bookstores because they are considered "trade" and therefore have a limited readership. Use a search engine to find suitable material. Many training companies have resources for sale such as CD and DVD programmes. Indeed, my company will be releasing a CD programme this year for those that don't like reading but still want to improve their skills. Bookmark relevant sites so that you can be up to date with what is available.

For those new to the industry, consider undertaking the Certificate IV in Employment Services. It has been specially designed for our industry and I have spoken to a number of people who have completed the course and found it extremely worthwhile. Details can be found on the RCSA website <http://www.rcsa.com.au>.

There are a number of training companies run by ex-recruiters who are able to pass on their expertise as well as training companies that offer more generic skills training. A useful resource for what is going on is the training calendar that appears in each issue of Recruitment Extra magazine. It is a starting point for doing further research on workshops available.

It may take a bit of time but is well worth the effort in researching what is available. Remember that the development of your career is ultimately your responsibility. Take the time to know what is available so that you can have an informed discussion with your employer and ultimately be in control of your skill and career development. ■



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