

Running Head: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

From Chaos to Order:
Settling In With Career Development

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Introduction

For weeks, I was experiencing a push/pull relationship with researching and writing about career development. I felt drawn to it and repelled from it all at the same time. Research is interesting, and writing is fairly easy for me; so why the state of chaos? Then, the unsettled feelings intensified shortly after I got confirmation about my field experience assignment: assisting a large team of internal and external consultants with the design and implementation of a career development system. I alternated between dread and excitement.

My thoughts were swirling: “What exactly is career development (and what have I gotten myself into)?” “How can I immediately add value to the field experience, both as a student of the intervention and an experienced consultant (without messing things up)?”

Of course, by writing this paper, I eventually settled my mind and answered these questions. The order from chaos unfolded like this: first, by outlining the key drivers for career development and several characteristics that provide the condition for a successful intervention. Then, by explaining how the consultant brings value to a career development intervention. And, finally, by examining (retrospectively) the connections between chaos and complexity theories and career development systems.

What Is a Career Development System?

There was a time in American business when career development meant “upward mobility.” Career development was nearly synonymous with “promotability.” However, in today’s flatter organizational chart and ever changing business environment, career development has less to do with moving up and more to do with helping employees find the right “fit” between their individual interests, skills, values, needs, and work preferences and the organization’s business needs, regardless of whether employees are moving up, over, down — or not moving at all, but just expanding in their current positions (Kaye, 1997). In fact, to move away from the notion that

“career development” means “up,” some companies choose to use the term “*employee* development system.” Combining the ideas of several authors, what follows is a composite definition of an effective career development system:

“A career development system is an organized, formalized, planned effort that achieves balance between individual career needs and organizational work-force requirements” (Leibowitz, Farren, and Kaye, 1986, p. 4). The individuals’ desired outcomes range from status to job flexibility to monetary rewards, depending on the situation (Harrison, 1989, p. 1), and to be effective, the career development system must link individual goals to business needs (Simonsen, 1997, p. 7). The career development system integrates several components and activities that involve the employee, management, and the policies and procedures of the organization (Leibowitz, et. al, 1986, p. 4). The best career development systems are an ongoing program rather than a one-time event (Leibowitz, et. al, 1986, p. 4); they “...are embedded in the very fabric of the business” (Cohn, Khurana, and Reeves, 2005, p. 2).

Organizational Issues that Drive the Need for a Career Development System

Organizations have many reasons for implementing a career development system. However, according to Leibowitz, et al. (1981), “Career development for its own sake no longer works” (p. 1). Specifically, the authors, after conducting extensive research with 50 companies, concluded that a career development system must be implemented in response to a clearly defined organizational problem or need; the problem or need will drive the efforts of the initiative (Leibowitz, et al., 1981, p.1). Said another way, the career development system must address a point of pain so that the organization can measure the success of the intervention (Leibowitz, et al., 1981, p. 1). What follow are several organizational issues— from the employees’ perspective and the organization’s perspective — that often drive a career development system.

Key Issues — The Employees Want It

Often, an organization implements a career development system because the employees want it. For example, in an article in *The Journal of Accountancy* (2005), the authors cite Generation Xers — people born between 1964 and 1975 — and their desire for career advancement. According to research conducted by the journal, more than eight out of ten 10 Gen-Xers interviewed reported that extremely or very important to their job satisfaction were support from their supervisors (95%), feedback on performance (92%), identification and development of high-potential employees (82%) and long-range development plans (82%) (p. 38). A recent study of job retention conducted by Career Systems International also cites employees' desire for career development. Career growth, learning, and development ranked second on the list of the *Top 20 Retention Drivers*. Of the respondents, 42% indicated that job growth and learning opportunities are important to staying with their current organization (Training and Development, 2005). Generation X-ers are our future; organizations must pay attention to their needs.

The employee's desire for employee development is not a new phenomenon, however. Nearly 30 years ago, Hanson (1977) wrote:

Values are changing and so are attitudes about work. People want more than security and money, and they are speaking up. They want opportunity for growth in their careers; to be able to learn from work experiences, and to expand their knowledge and skills. They have career questions they want answered. Without answers, frustration leads to morale problems. Productivity suffers. Organizational climate becomes stifling if not downright unpleasant. More and more line managers know this and want to respond to this need. (p.443)

While the employee's desire for career development has not really changed in 30 years, the associated symptoms have. Thirty years ago, low morale and decreased productivity were cited as key organizational symptoms that warranted career development. Today, retention is the driver;

rather than sitting around with long faces and contempt for their employer, employees are likely to go find another job if they are not satisfied with career development opportunities. This contemporary nuance might be reflective of today's more mobile workforce.

Key Issues — The Organization Needs It

In addition to employee expectations, Simonsen (1997) sites organizational changes as a key issue that supports the need for career development. In particular, as organizations become flatter — eliminating jobs once sought after — employees who imagined ascending the corporate ladder must now be more self-directed in their career paths. Additionally, executives and managers who were formerly a source of networking and mentoring may have moved on to another organization or to early retirement. The employees left behind must develop new resources and contacts (p. 2).

Another vitally important reason for career development, from the organization's perspective, is that it supports succession planning — and the country may well be in a succession planning crisis.

A recent study by Development Dimensions International Inc. (DDI), an organizational development firm based in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, reveals that one-fifth of this country's large, established companies will be losing 40 percent or more of their top-level talent in the next five years as senior executives — baby boomers — reach retirement age. This, on its own, wouldn't be so bad. What makes this a potential crisis is that — thanks to a lack of planning and a lack of people — there's a severe shortage of qualified replacements.

(Caudron, 1999)

Cohn, et al. (2005) conducted a survey that concluded that only five out of the 20 CEOs (representing large corporations) interviewed had talent pipelines that extended at least three managerial levels below them (p. 3). Research also suggests that internal promotions are nearly always more successful than external promotions (Rioux and Bernthal, 1999). For example, studies

conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership revealed that 66 percent of senior managers hired from the outside usually fail within the first 18 months (Caudron, 1999). Internal candidates have, for example, an understanding of the culture and a well developed network. Additionally, because their career development has occurred within the organization, it has been evaluated along the way by managers and key leaders (Rioux and Bernthal, 1999). These individuals have been mentored and developed internally, giving them keen insights into the organization.

Finally, technology and the global marketplace are changing the way work is done; what is here today is gone tomorrow — and organizations must keep up (Simonsen, 1997, p. 13-15). To keep up with the fast-paced and ever changing business world, employees must be agile and adaptable. Plodding along will not do. Skill development and continuous improvement are imperatives in today's business world. And these improvements must be intentional and goal-oriented (Simonsen, 1997, p. 2-3).

Characteristics of a Successful Career Development System

Although generic in title, a career development system should, in fact, be unique to a company's business context and culture; the constituent parts should combine in a way that enable the company to operate and compete more effectively (Cohn, et al., 2005, p. 6). While there is not universal agreement on what those constituent parts are, the literature does suggest key characteristics that provide conditions for a successful intervention. What follow are nine characteristics that are frequently cited in the literature.

Alignment With Mission and Vision

Simonsen (1997) explains that to build a development culture, the career development system must be aligned with mission and vision (p. 48). Typically, companies make a general declaration about its "people policy" in the corporate mission and/or vision statement. Ultimately,

though, somewhere the company must translate its people policy in enough detail that employees can act on it (Simonsen, 1997, p. 48). For example, the Pepsico mission statement reads,

To be the world's premier consumer products company focused on convenient foods and beverages. We seek to produce healthy financial rewards to investors as we provide *opportunities for growth and enrichment to our employees*, our business partners and the communities in which we operate. And in everything we do, we strive for honesty, fairness and integrity." (Pepsico website, 2006)

This mission statement, like those at many companies, includes a generalized "people policy." However, on the company's career development website, the mission is interpreted in detail to link people with mission in greater detail:

A career in the PepsiCo organization is intended to be an accumulation of challenging experiences over the course of many years — with each experience contributing to the growth of the individual and organization. Our objective is to match great talent with important opportunities to build our business. When thinking about new opportunities and potential moves, we typically consider five factors. These are: proven results, leadership capability, functional excellence, knowing the business cold and critical experiences. These elements are evaluated against the current set of opportunities and our longer-term commitment to growth and development of our employees. (Pepsico website, 2006)

Each of the five factors listed above is then explained in detail, thus giving employees the detail to act on. For example, in defining critical experiences, the company emphasizes stretch assignments and special projects as a way for an employee to build depth, capability, and flexibility (Pepsico website, 2006). These traits are linked back to the company's mission to be the premier brand.

Core Competencies

Core competencies are a significant anchor in the foundation of career development. “A core competency or capability suggests technical skills and knowledge that are important for an individual to develop” (Green, 1999, p. 63). Core competencies provide a common language around which career development is organized (Church and Herena, 2003, p. 28) and should be tied to the organization’s vision, mission, and values (Green, 1999, p. 63). A core competency tells an employee what it takes to be a successful vice president, general manager, accountant, administrative assistant, etc. at his/her company (Church and Herena, 2003, p. 29). In the absence of core competencies, employees will have a difficult time: understanding how their job links to the company’s vision, mission, and values; identifying their strengths and weaknesses; and gaining feedback from others.

Well-defined core competencies describe specific behaviors, which allow a manager to observe and provide feedback about an employee’s strengths and weaknesses. Table 1 outlines one company’s behaviorally descriptive core competency for verbal communication.

Definition:

Transfers thoughts and expresses ideas or concepts clearly and accurately in either one-to-one or group situations; tailors language and tone to the intended audience and holds people’s attention; shares information appropriately and in a timely manner across the organization; translates and effectively discusses technical, complex or sensitive information. Promotes two-way discussion through effective questioning and actively listens to responses.

Behavioral Indicators

- Uses correct grammar and clear diction to present information to groups or one-to-one; uses language that is consistent with BGI values and global sensitivities.
- Delivers engaging, persuasive presentations to small, large or specialized audiences.
- Utilizes audio-visual support that promotes understanding and is appropriate to the audience.
- Uses empathy, natural gestures and movement to engage audiences; maintaining eye contact.
- Uses effective listening and questioning skills.
- Effectively presents or discusses technical, complex, or sensitive issues.

**Table 1. Core Competency for Effective Verbal Communication
(Barclays Global Investors, 2006)**

Caudron (1999) notes that companies that have existing but outdated core competencies must update those competencies to reflect today's more sophisticated business environment to include global business acumen, technological literacy, multicultural fluency, and the ability to manage non-hierarchical, ever changing organizations (p. 1).

Self-Assessment

Self assessment is a critical key characteristic of a career development system. "Helping individuals increase self-understanding of their abilities, interests, values, and goals is a vital foundation of the career development process" (National Career Development Association website, 2006). Many tools are available for self-assessment and focus on a variety of key issues such as personality, values, interests, and skills (Kaye, 1997). Additionally, Leibowitz, et al. (1986) outline four general questions that employees can use in self assessment to determine where they are, where they want to go, and what is necessary to bridge the gap between the two (pp. 96-97). Those key questions are outlined in Table 2.

Key Question	How This Question Relates to Career Development
Who am I?	Self-knowledge and assessment is basic to career planning. Employees may make statements such as, "I'm not sure what I'm good at" or "I'm not enjoying my work." The career development process can offer interventions that are designed to help employees identify their values, interests, strengths, and skills.
How am I seen?	Employees need feedback on their performance and their potential. They consider questions such as, "What can I do to improve my performance?" and "Do my manager and colleagues see me the way I see myself?" The career development process can offer interventions that provide employees with validation and information from their managers and colleagues. For example, 360-degree feedback is often useful for helping employees understand how others see them.
What are my alternatives and goals?	A key component of the career development system is investigating options and setting goals. When employees know their alternatives and goals, they can begin planning for growth — they need to know the possibilities. They are curious about, "What am I suited for? What jobs are available? What would happen if I refused a promotion and worked instead at growing in my current position?"
How can I achieve my goals?	Employees are not fully engaged in the career development process until they have a plan. This question helps to create detailed steps that will make goals a reality. By investigating this question, employees discover various training opportunities, how they can get more responsibility in their current position, and how to sell themselves to the organization.

Table 2. Four Key Questions for Self Assessment
(adapted from Leibowitz, et al., 1986, pp. 96-97)

A Variety of Planning Interventions

Planning for one's career development requires more than just talking out loud with one's manager and subsequently checking off boxes on a form. Companies that take their career development system seriously offer a variety of interventions designed to help employees self assess and explore. Leibowitz, et al. (1986) suggest three broad categories of interventions that assist employees in the assessment, exploration, and planning processes (p. 98). The categories of interventions, which can be used individually or in combination, are outlined in Table 3.

Category	Description
Group Activities	Individuals work in groups to learn about and plan for career development. Examples of group activities include workshops, formal training sessions, informal discussion groups, videos, and project teams. Workshops are the most common type of group activity. A benefit to the workshop setting is that the organization can reach many employees at one time. Also, employees benefit from “groupthink” as well as networking and support. A downside to workshops is that some participants may need more support prior to the workshop than the workshop assumes; those employees may feel lost and ill-prepared.
Support-Oriented Activities	An employee works one-on-one with a knowledgeable individual such as a career counselor, coach, or mentor. For some employees, this approach is more comfortable than group activities where they may feel inhibited. Also, in organizations where employees work virtually from remote locations, support-oriented activities may be more realistic than group activities. The disadvantage to this type of approach is that it is time intensive and does not allow the organization to reach a wide audience at one time.
Self-Directed Activities	Employees take sole responsibility for tailoring their own process and working at their own pace using tools such as workbooks and computer-assisted programs, including e-learning. This approach works well for motivated employees and in companies where the financial and human resources cannot support other types of activities. The downside to this approach is that some employees do not have the right level of motivation and/or would benefit more from the dynamic interaction that other interventions provide.

**Table 3. Three Categories of Planning Interventions
(adapted from Leibowitz, et al., 1986, pp. 99-116)**

A Variety of Learning Options

Effective career development systems offer a variety of approaches to acquiring skills, training, experience, and personal support systems (Kaye, 1997, p. 197). Unfortunately, however, locating the education, training, and developmental resources required to reach his/her goals typically is the most time consuming for the employee (Kaye, 1997, p. 221). Therefore, as a company begins to design and solidify its career development system, it should take inventory of current offerings and categorize those offerings according to key competencies (Kaye, 1997, p. 201). For example, if the company has a core competency around communication and offers a

business writing workshop, that workshop can be listed among the offerings for the communications competency. The company can also identify gaps in training/learning opportunities and determine how to best fill those gaps according to core competencies (Kaye, 1997, p. 201). A company might also find that some current offerings no longer are suited for helping employees develop core competencies (Kaye, 1997, p. 201). Kaye's (1997) five categories of resources are outlined in Table 4 (p. 199).

Five Categories of Resources	Description
Training and Education	Programs conducted on-site, off-site, or online that address, for example, technical skills; personal growth and development; and leadership and management training.
Experienced-Based Learning	Experiences aimed at expanding skills, such as on-the-job learning, new assignments, job rotation, special projects, etc. The manager and employee should think beyond the workplace; volunteer and community activities offer a breadth of development opportunities.
Support-Guided Development	Experiences that call on the skills and expertise of others including mentor relationships, professional associations, instructional groups/teams, informal support networks.
Computer-Assisted Development	Various tools that help the manager and employee explore such areas as strengths, weaknesses, learning preferences, personality type, etc. These tools include self-assessment, automated feedback models, online career discussion forums, etc.
Business Simulations	Tools that allow employees and managers to role-play various situations that require decision making, interpersonal problems at work, cross-cultural business scenarios, etc.

Table 4: Acquiring Resources (Kaye, 1997, p. 199)

Conger and Fulmer (2003) suggest action learning as the best way to utilize training and education resources in combination. For example, classroom training in combination with real-time job assignments and exposure to senior management helps employees put learning into practice (p. 2). Also, in today's highly automated and global business world, online learning — e-learning — is quickly becoming a preferred medium for training and development. For example, General Electric's website notes that, last year, nearly 200,000 GE employees took on-line courses, progressing through the learning programs at their own pace. Forty percent of GE's learning management system (20,000 courses) currently are offered online.

Multiple Owners

In many companies, HR owns career development. In their extensive research, however, Cohn, et al. (2005) determined that the best career development systems are not owned solely by HR; rather, the most successful systems “are embedded in the very fabric of the business” (p. 2). Having owners at multiple levels ensures long-term, sustainable results (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 7). Even board members, who typically have a more objective view of the people, should be involved (Cohn, et al., 2005, p. 5). As another example, evaluating and rewarding line managers for successfully supporting their employees’ career development can encourage their ownership in the career development system (Cohn, et al., 2005, p. 2).

Career development systems do require a home, though, where a person or people can, for example, create tools related to the system, update key data, prepare reports, organize career planning workshops, and write and distribute promotional communication. The HR department usually serves this purpose (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 7).

Access to Information About Career Options and Available Talent

Employees often use career development as a means for moving (vertically or laterally) from one position to another. A comprehensive and accessible data base provides information about where the jobs are (level, location, subfunctional area, etc.); the requirements of various jobs (accountabilities, required experience, competencies, etc.); and how an employee can get from one job to another (Church and Herena, 2003, p. 30). Depending on a company’s size, the data base might provide information about all positions. Although, in large companies, including information about every position may be impractical. For example, at Pepsico, where they employ 153,000 employees world wide (Pepsico website, 2006), the company limits information to jobs that have multi-incumbents and represent consistent, long-term roles to which employees can aspire (Church and Herena, 2003, p. 30).

Web-based systems can be also designed to provide easy access to information about the company's employee talent. For example, at Eli Lilly, the web-based system provides reports on the open positions, the names of candidates being groomed for each position and any skills gaps that currently exist between the candidates and the open positions. The names of the candidates (listed in a continually updated report) are linked to their individual online resumes, development plans, and a list of skill sets they will need before they can advance (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 5).

By putting information directly in front of its employees, a company creates a transparent system. And, when information is immediately and easily accessible, career development becomes less of an event and more of an ongoing activity (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 5).

Linkages to Other Programs/Initiatives

To be successful and sustainable and to fully integrate career development into a company's culture, the initiative must be linked appropriately to other strategies and processes. Simonsen (1997) writes that the single most important link is to organizational strategy: "If we want employees to act like owners, to make a commitment to the success of the endeavor, and to align their career goals with the direction and needs of the organization, they need to know the strategic direction and what is required of them to add value" (p. 71).

In some instances, the linkage between career development and other strategies and/or processes is significant and requires careful alignment. For example, a company's "people processes" must be linked to career development. These might include succession planning, recruitment efforts, job descriptions, behavioral interviewing tools, and , of course, compensation.

The company also needs to consider how its rewards system is linked to career development. For example, if the company only rewards for promotion, yet espouses career development as a way for an employee to grow in his/her existing job, they are sending a mixed message that only promotions are reward; this will discourage employees from growing in their current positions.

Simonsen (1997) writes, “A development culture celebrates successes of people who have found the right career or who are comfortable with the journey” (p. 6). Clearly, rewards must be carefully linked to create congruency between what is valued and what is rewarded and celebrated.

Ongoing Communication

A good advertising firm will advise that, to keep a product top of mind, the seller must repeatedly send messages to its consumers. This same practice applies to career development. According to Kaye (1997), “Many career interventions have died for a lack of solid communication strategy” (p. 232). Marketing of the program should be continuous. The company should send frequent and consistent messages — enforcing the necessity and benefits of taking responsibility for career development — using a variety of vehicles (Kaye, 1997, p. 235). Vehicles for communication might include, for example, email announcements, small- or large-group presentations, a career development blog, a regular bulletin from the President or another senior level sponsor, and a career development newsletter (always including success stories, of course). Many companies have even branded their career development programs complete with logos and taglines. For example, at Pepsico, career development is tagged *My Career Connection* and is positioned as a key component of the employee brand *Taste the Success* (Pepsico website, 2006).

Of course, as always, the most effective intervention is one that takes into consideration both the characteristics that are proven conditions for success and the unique needs of the organization. So, while the characteristics discussed in this section are common to effective career development systems, the consultant must always pay attention to the organization’s particular needs.

The Consultant’s Approach to a Career Development Intervention

As with all system-wide, long-term interventions, the organization must ultimately own its career development system. Therefore, throughout development and implementation, the consultant must have a mindset of knowledge transfer — educate the key stakeholders about career development so that they have a sense of ownership for and accountability to the system. If the organization does not take complete ownership of its career development initiative, the intervention will fail.

Additionally, throughout his/her involvement, the consultant must help various audiences within the organization develop a similar view on career development. For example, Knowdell (1996) describes how key groups have varying perspectives on career development (pp. 16-22). With an understanding of these perspectives, the consultant can prepare effective communications and assist the organization with various issues related to, for example, resistance, change, and mixed messages. The multiple perspectives on career development are outlined in Table 5.

From the Perspective of...	Career Development Means...	The Communication With This Group Should Emphasize...
The Employee	Upward mobility. "This is how I will move up the corporate ladder."	Career development is about moving up, over, down, or just staying put to grow in the current position.
The Supervisor	Motivation and retention. "Someone's trying to steal my people. Just give me some tools to motivate and retain them."	In today's flatter organizations, supervisors can use career development as a way to help employees expand in their current positions. It's a win-win situation.
Middle Management	Systems. How will this fit with our other systems, such as EEO, affirmative action, management training, job posting function, etc.?"	Career development carefully links to and/or aligns with other relevant systems.
Top Management	Succession planning. "Oh good. Who can we identify as heir apparent five years from now?"	Succession planning and career development are closely linked, but not the same. Succession planning identifies heirs for the top positions in the company; career development develops <i>many</i> employees, regardless of whether their ultimate destination is the corner office.

Table 5. Multiple Perspectives on Career Development (adapted from Knowdell, 1996, pp. 16-23)

Finally the consultant can assist the organization with the ongoing evaluation of the career development system. For a variety of reasons, the most common of which is a lack of money, the evaluation of an OD intervention often is omitted or abbreviated (Rothwell, Sullivan, and McLean, 1995, p. 311). Yet evaluation has so many advantages that, despite reasons for not doing it, it seems a prudent step in the process, particularly when dealing with an intervention that is meant to become a permanent part of a company's culture. For example, evaluation helps to promote the system's value, relay the employees' satisfaction and success stories, gain support for additional requirements of the process, and demonstrate the value of the consultant's role (Rothwell, et al., 1995, p. 320).

One way (of many) to evaluate a career development intervention is by comparing performance data pre- and post-OD intervention (Rothwell, et al., 1995, p. 350). An example of using performance data is to measure the extent to which an organization can fill important positions with internal candidates (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 6). For instance, at Dow Chemical, an internal hire rate of 75% - 80% is considered a sign of success (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 6). Dow also measures its attrition rate of its future leaders. In 2000, for example, the rate of attrition of future leaders was 1.5% compared with 5% globally. Dow viewed this as a sign that the developmental needs of its top performers were being met (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 6).

Other factors that can be measured before and after the career development intervention include, but are not limited to: the extent to which leaders and managers increase their effectiveness in leading and developing employees; the percentage of employees who believe that development, training, and career opportunities are available; the number of employees who have development plans; the number and type of internal moves (up, over, rotational, cross functional, etc.); and the number of "hits" and activity on website and intranet system tools (adapted from the Roche Molecular Diagnostics Employee Development System Initiative Proposal, 2006

Career Development from a Systems Perspective

One of the most intriguing learnings drawn from the literature focuses on applying systems theory to career development. The purpose of this section is to highlight a few of the revelations regarding systems theory and its application to career development.

The Fractal Nature of Systems

“Entities are parts, or fractals, of other entities. Each fractal has the entirety of the organism within its shape” (Bloch, 2005, p. 197). This suggests that a career development system is a fractal of the entire organization. In the career development system, one should expect to see patterns and dynamics of the organization. An organization that is steeped in hierarchy, for example, may lean toward an emphasis on succession planning in its career development system. As a result, incongruence could occur if the organization was to *say* that career development was for everyone, but then only focus on the small number of people who are being groomed for top positions. The consultant should look for and study the patterns of fractals within the organization. If nothing else, these patterns may help the consultant identify and prepare for roadblocks.

The Role of Attractors

Attractors will limit an entity’s movement and growth (Bloch, 2005, p. 198). For example, an entity shaped by a point attractor repeatedly returns to the same state; an entity shaped by a pendulum attractor moves back and forth between two identifiable states; and an entity shaped by a torus attractor will go around and around in a circular pattern (Bloch, 2005, p. 198). In an organization, the concept of attractors seems to explain what Kaye (1989) calls the plateaued performer (p. 60). For example, a torus attractor may result in the passively plateaued employee (the entity) who goes around and around and is stuck in inaction. The point attractor may result in the pleasantly plateaued employee who repeatedly returns to their comfortable, current state. And, the

pendulum attractor may be what causes the partially plateaued employee to move to and from a state of satisfaction when consumed with a pet project that ultimately is ignored by the organization.

Eventually, as an entity (or employee) moves through a transition, it can retain its life through a quality known as emergence; emergence results from the pull of a strange attractor (Bloch, 2005, p. 198). For the pleasantly plateaued employee, an introduction to the career development system could be the strange attractor—that which pulls the employee out of their comfort zone. Other strange attractors might include the development of a new interest or skill, a new career path, or even the addition of new responsibilities in the employee's current job. Whatever the strange attractor, it will disrupt the employee from his/her repetitive current state and throw him/her into a state of chaos. In reality, employees (or organizations, or consultants) need not fear chaos: "Only chaos creates the abyss in which we can recreate ourselves" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 119).

Ordered Chaos

According to Wheatley (1999), the disequilibrium caused by chaos will ultimately lead to stability—ordered chaos (p. 118). Eventually, the employee noted above will find order in his/her chaotic state. For example, as the employee continues to practice his/her new skill, he/she will become competent and, therefore, begin to experience an orderly state. Similarly, a company must be comfortable with the chaos that any new intervention—such as a career development system—will cause. In time, chaos will emerge as order: the intervention integrates into the "being" of the organization and its employees.

Conclusion

So, what *is* career development (and what have I gotten myself into)? Career development is a complex and potentially far reaching system designed to match the talents of the employees with the needs of the organization; it has many key components and characteristics. In comparing what I have learned in this research to what the internal and external consultants have planned for my field experience at Roche, I am confident that they have covered all of the key characteristics (including some not mentioned in this research); I have gotten myself into a carefully designed intervention that is poised for success.

How can I immediately add value at Roche, both as a student of the intervention and an experienced consultant (without messing things up)? My first assignment is to design a communications strategy for the career development system. Based on what I have learned, I will take care to include diverse audiences; in particular, I will use my new awareness of the multiple perspectives that employees, supervisors, mid-management, and top management bring to a career development intervention. The communications plan, which will include a variety of mediums, will be designed to help these various groups develop more similar viewpoints of career development, to keep employees abreast of success stories and new capabilities of the system, and to generally keep career development top of mind with all audiences.

Finally, what was all the discomfort I was feeling when faced with researching and writing about career development? I can only figure that a strange attractor was pulling me out of my comfort zone. I was feeling much the way a pleasantly plateaued employee must feel when he/she is somehow pulled into career development; I was experiencing a bit of my own career development by learning a new topic and preparing for a stretch assignment. I was on the border between order and chaos where life is unpredictable and even the smallest difference in the environment or conditions can yield wildly different results (Bloch, 2005, p. 198). Now with my new knowledge

and understanding of the key characteristics of career development, I am comfortable that I can add value — without messing things up.

In an example of the interconnectedness of systems, Wheatley (1999) writes about the butterfly effect — that the flap of a butterfly wing in Tokyo could affect a tornado in Texas (p. 121). For me, during my career development field experience — and in all other work, for that matter — I will continually evaluate my effect on the system by asking, “What long-range affect is my ‘flap’ having?”

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