

Health Care

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LOOKING TOWARDS THE HOSPITAL OF THE FUTURE

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**OHA
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Guide**

Future health managers depend on training NOW

by P.J. Houlihan

Who will be managing Canada's health care organizations in the year 2000? Will each manager of the future be the best possible person for that particular job? Or, will he/she be only the best of what is left?

In an attempt to plan for the future of the health care industry, we need to look not only at capital and consumable requirements, but also at the need for well-qualified, committed people to organize and indeed lead the industry into the 21st Century. For the industry to realize this goal, health care managers of the future will need and perhaps even demand assistance from employing agencies to develop their careers. Many individual managers do not seem to know what they want in or from a career and thus find themselves floundering in a sea of alternatives.

Examination of the process of career development and its application to the new breed of aspiring health care executives may assist in the development of a cadre of top administrators who not only have the appropriate skills, but also the

commitment necessary to the future of health care.

There are three main reasons why we cannot leave this to chance. The first reason is economic . . . we simply can no longer afford to waste money on the wrong people. The second reason (and this stems from the economic reason) is the possibility of fewer opportunities for advancement in the future. As Canada trains more and more top-level executives, and the opportunities for advancement become fewer and fewer, the best people will look for alternative employment outside the health care organizations for which they have been prepared. They will be lost to the industry forever. Finally, if we leave career development to chance, we may never have a committed group of professionals who will stay.

THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A career is a peculiar thing. Sometimes it does what we want it to do and sometimes it does not. It is because of this fact that deliberate and conscious career planning is a tool which cannot be overlooked by any of us because, whether we

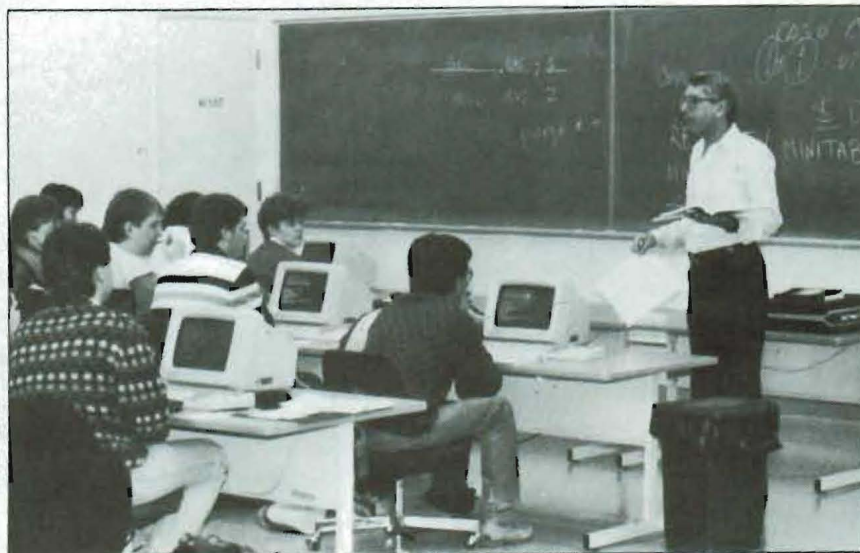
like it or not, our own careers as well as those of our staff members will develop either because of us or in spite of us.

A career means different things to different people. Most would agree, however, that from a time perspective a career develops over a long time, while a job is more here and now, merely a part of that career. A career which leads to goal-fulfillment and rewards (monetary and otherwise) makes an individual more goal-directed and future-oriented. Your job may be defined by the tasks that you do, but your career will be defined by your ability to select a progression of jobs that lead you to personal satisfaction and professional achievement. It is the attractiveness of these outcomes that will entice the best of the potential health care executives to stay in your organization.

Simply phrased, the purpose of career development is to match agency requirements with agency resources. *Figure 1* indicates the relationship between individual and agency goals and the overlap via the career development process. The key is finding the perfect overlap.

The first step in the process of career development is up to the individual. That is preparing oneself with the appropriate education and training that qualifies the individual to enter the profession. Although the employer does not usually have a direct influence on that training, it

Photos courtesy of Dalhousie University



Career development begins with a basic educational foundation and continues throughout the lifetime of the career.

Some have come via the business side of health care . . . others from the clinical side. They all have one thing in common . . . a desire to make their careers in health care at the highest level . . .

is very important for the agencies who will employ these graduates to be aware of the philosophies of the programs which prepare health service administrators so that the ongoing career development can build upon the basic preparation.

Dr. Peter Ruderman is currently the acting director of the School of Health Service Administration at Dalhousie University in Halifax. It is one of five such schools in Canada. According to Dr. Ruderman, who himself has had a distinguished career in health administration both in Canada and abroad, people entering the school of health administration are "surprisingly mature ones." Some have come via the business side of health care, for example, from finance. Others have come from the clinical side . . . nurses, physiotherapists, dietitians and a smattering of physicians. They all have one thing in common - a desire to make their careers in the health care system at its highest hierarchical level. For, philosophically, the professional program they have chosen has been designed to train executives.

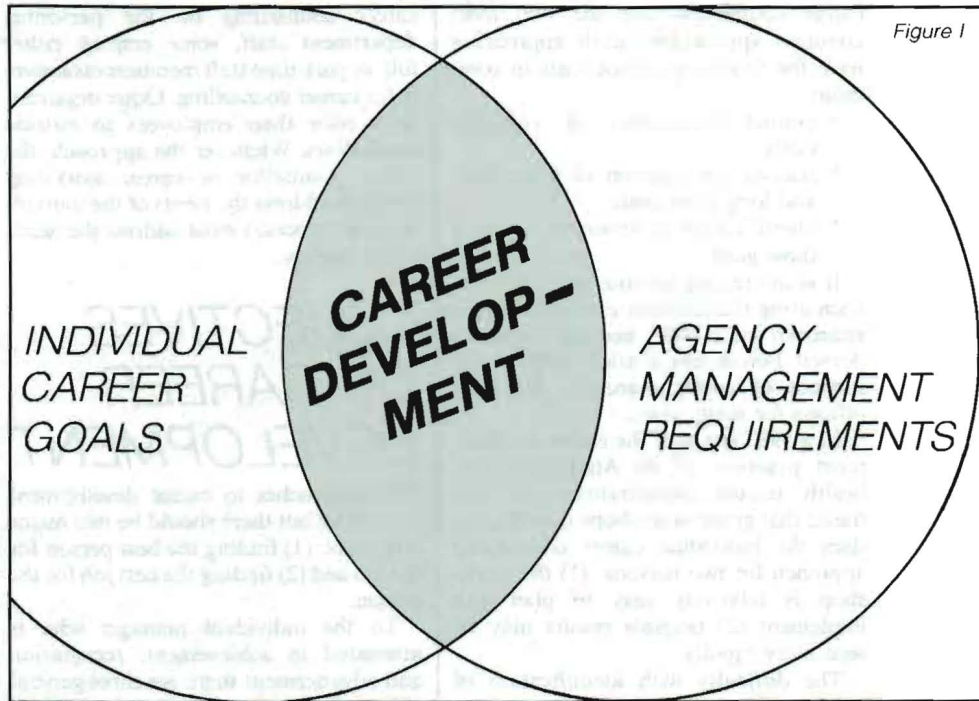


Figure 1

"Our goal is to turn out polyvalent administrators, which means whatever the job, whether in a hospital, a health department or an extended care facility, they can walk in and earn their pay from the first day," says Dr. Ruderman. "Most of our graduates expect to become the chief executive officer of a health care institution."

Career development is a process which begins with the basic educational foundation and continues throughout the life-

time of the career. Although career development is primarily the responsibility of the individual, now and in the future it will be in the best interests of the employing agency to assist in the process.

Many organizations outside of the health care industry report widespread use of career planning tools such as career workshops, career workbooks and career counselling/career discussion approaches.¹ Workshops planned on an ongoing basis and the employment of

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career counsellors are the two most common approaches. Both approaches have the following components in common:

- * guided assessment of personal skills
- * realistic formulation of both short and long term goals
- * identification of strategies to meet these goals

It is interesting to note that IBM has been using the manager career workshop approach since 1980², and the Canadian Armed Forces has availed itself of the services of career managers for their officers for many years.

In a 1983 study of the career development practices of 40 American, non-health related organizations³, it was found that group workshops rated higher than the individual career counselling approach for two reasons: (1) the workshop is relatively easy to plan and implement (2) tangible results may be seen more rapidly.

The difficulty with identification of results when the individual career counsellor is employed probably stems from the diversity of practices in this area. Some organizations place the burden of

career counselling on the personnel department staff, some employ either full- or part-time staff members exclusively for career counselling. Other organizations refer their employees to outside counsellors. Whatever the approach, the career counsellor or career workshop needs to address the needs of the individual and especially must address the needs of the agency.

OBJECTIVES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The approaches to career development may differ but there should be two major outcomes: (1) finding the best person for the job and (2) finding the best job for the person.

To the individual manager who is interested in achievement, recognition and advancement there are three general objectives in the pursuit of a career development program. These are to:

- (1) increase self-awareness and self-confidence

- (2) increase job satisfaction
- (3) increase the likelihood of achieving the long term goals

The employer has a broader interest in the career development programs which will lead ultimately to better utilization of personnel. The employer's objectives are to:

- (1) improve the quality of supervision by utilizing individual managers in positions for which they are best suited
- (2) retain valuable, experienced staff
- (3) improve individual and group morale
- (4) identify those individuals with particular skills for future progression

A close examination of those individuals currently beginning careers in health administration reveals a heterogeneous group of people with a common goal — making it to the top. However, not all of those individuals have what it takes in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, personality traits and perseverance to become a leader of the health care industry of the future. Current health administrators have the task of identifying and nurturing those who do indeed have the required traits.

Dr. Ruderman feels that there are three factors which will keep these potential top administrators in their positions:

- * challenge
- * promotion
- * money

"They need to be challenged," says Dr. Ruderman.

These are the kind of professionals who have been educated to solve problems and deal with a wide variety of administrative situations. Included in these challenges should be the opportunity to participate in policy decision-making.⁴

Challenge your managers then; identify those with the skills and enthusiasm to meet those challenges, and do not lose them. They will be running the health care institutions in our old age.

References

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