

Career Portals - Maximize Your ROI

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Introduction

When we begin to talk about “Career Portals”, most people think of a job search site – help find jobs, job placement, recruiting, etc. However, we define Career Portals differently - *an online resource built to facilitate the internal career development process for managers and employees.*

Five years and 200+ Career Portals later, we’re learning that a major benefit of Career Portals is to help organizations integrate many of their internal HR resources into one place – one system. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars, are invested yearly in building HR resources. These include: Performance Management Systems, Learning Management Systems, Job Posting Systems, Human Resource Information Systems, Talent Management Systems, leadership and competency development, performance management, career paths, career plans, position profiles, job posting, etc., to name a few. In this article, you’ll see four different cases of how these resources and investments can be leveraged, integrated and become more visible to managers and associates.

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Here are some of the main objectives:

- Communicate the importance that your organization places on people and career development;
- Clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of each of your key career development stakeholders – the organization, managers, employees;
- Give employees and managers the tools and resources to take ownership of their own career and professional development;
- Build a common framework and language for career conversations and career development;
- Showcase career opportunities and highlight multiple ways to look at career opportunities – lateral, enrichment, vertical, exploratory, realignment and relocation; and
- Highlight existing HR systems and practices that foster career development.

What Can a Career Portal Do For You?

1. Help Employees Find Important Development Resources

In a recent demonstration to a potential client, we asked the internal HR people in the meeting to find certain HR resources on their own organization website. The questions were:

If I were an employee in your organization, where would I go on the company intranet to learn more about careers? If I were a manager or supervisor, where would I point people to address their career development concerns?

Stop for a minute and go to your own organization intranet and answer the following questions. See how long it takes you.

Answer these Questions:

- ✓ Find 5 lateral moves you could take to develop mastery in your field.
 - ✓ Find the competencies and experiences required to be best in your field.
 - ✓ What are the key professions required for your organization to achieve its mission? Are you in a key profession?
 - ✓ You know you're not in the right niche, where on the website would you look for help?
 - ✓ You've learned everything you can in your current job, what other options are open to you?
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How did you do? What did you learn?

2. Present HR Resources through a Career Development Lens

Most organizations we consult with do not have a common language or framework for talking about career development, let alone, a way to organize HR resources on their company intranet. One thing we've learned over the years is that people need a roadmap for how to think about their careers. Most organizations have spent a lot of time and resources investing in technology solutions. However, most have not done an adequate job in organizing these resources and tools in a coherent framework. We often ask organizations to ask themselves, "What information and resources do we have here that support individuals in the following five career areas":

Person – What are my strengths? What are my career interests, values, skills, competencies, style, learning orientation, etc.? What resources and tools do we have to support me in understanding myself so that I can better position myself for the work that suits me best?

Performance – What are my capabilities? What assets do others see that I bring to the organization? What is my reputation? What am I known for? Does this fit with my aspirations? Who in my network can leverage my broader capabilities?

Place – What kind of talent does it take to run our organization? Where does it live? How is it organized? What are our strategies for the future? and what are the potential implications to the workforce and talent requirements over the next 12 to 24 months?

Possibilities – What are my career opportunities/options? This one is key and one of the most important levers for engaging and retaining talent. Can I only see the job openings through the job posting system or can I see all of the job families, job descriptions, job standards and accountabilities, etc. for all jobs within the organization – even if there are no open requisitions for them? Is it easier for your employees to search for and find information about jobs outside of your organization?

Plan – How can I build new skills and competencies, gain new knowledge and build experience through training, on-the-job development opportunities, etc.? How can I gain additional certifications for my field, access learning opportunities from my desktop, and or attend professional or industry association meetings or conferences so that I can stay current and relevant in my field?

Robust Career Portals help employees and managers address all of the above questions.

3. Create One Development Plan vs. Many

It's difficult enough to be successful at working one plan. What does one do with four? Yes, we see this all the time. The organization, managers, and employees don't clearly understand what to do, which plan to complete, discuss, act on, or monitor. Many of the HR technology systems have a built-in "development plan" as a key module or outcome, and different HR stakeholders are communicating the importance of their plan. The result – several plans, confusion and lack of use. One organization we recently worked with had several plans, all similar, but no clear communication of purpose and objective of each. The truth – they didn't know they had four plans until we searched their intranet and uncovered the confusion.

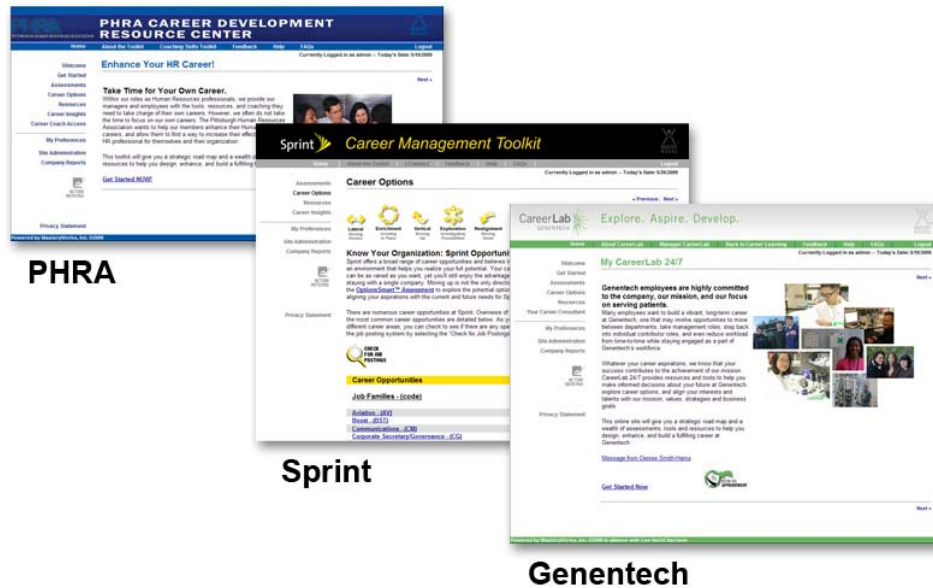
- 1) Performance Management System – Individual Development Plan
- 2) Learning Management System – Individual Development Plan
- 3) 360 Multi-rater Assessment for Leadership Competencies – Development Plan
- 4) Career Planning site - Career Development Plan

What's your approach? What's your learning strategy? What plan(s) are you communicating in your organization? Take a look through your intranet and see how many different "plans" you are requiring from your employees and managers. Why not have one plan?

4. Present and Integrate Career Path Information

Career path information is alive and well in many of your HR systems. Performance Management Systems often include job descriptions, standards, competency requirements, etc.; Job Posting systems include job/role information, job descriptions, accountabilities, competency requirements, etc.; many Learning Management Systems include job and/or role specific certification or learning requirements; and many of your functional stakeholders have built career path or career progression models. Wow – a lot of investment and a lot of good information to serve the purpose and systems for which they were built. Although the information is out there or in the process of being built, your employees don't see the information as it relates to their careers and future opportunities. Easier for an outsider to find this information oftentimes than an insider.

In many of our career portals, one of the first things we include is a career map of all of the job families or professions and key sub-disciplines. We then link all of the job titles and job descriptions to it. Yes – for the first time, employees can see what it takes to run the organization. They can see every job that currently exists and can explore ones of interest. If your employees can not find this basic information in your organization, their only option is to look someplace else. Making this information available to only five key players may well save you hundreds of thousands of dollars. In the case of key sales people, engineers or scientists, millions can be lost if they move elsewhere.



Summary

Designed and implemented correctly, Career Portals have proven to be a cost effective way to communicate organization support to employees to take charge of their own careers. With the decline in training and development budgets, HR and Talent Management leaders need a means to address the increasing feedback from their employees through employee engagement or satisfaction surveys that they want help in developing themselves and their careers within the organization. As we have explored here, a Career Portal can be a way to organize existing resources into a coherent map where employees can find all of the resources they need to be successful, and maximize the investment an organization has already made in their HR systems.

To learn more about our career portals view our demo:

http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/toolkits-portals/toolkits_overview.htm

About the Authors:

Caela Farren, Ph. D., is President and **Tom Karl** is Vice President of MasteryWorks, Inc. www.masteryworks.com, Career Development Experts for over 30 years. MasteryWorks builds integrated career systems that align talent with business needs; help leaders and managers engage, develop, and retain their people; and empower employees to take charge of their careers. MasteryWorks solutions (which include consulting, leader and employee training, web portals, and assessments) create the foundation for impactful "career conversations" centered around increased contribution and performance, alignment of talent, increased retention, engagement, and career fit.

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