

The Importance of Career Mapping

By Caela Farren, Ph.D., MasteryWorks, Inc.

Jobs come and go but people who are the “best at what they do” and who have achieved the highest recognition for their skills and knowledge in their profession are treasured forever. What are the critical professions and trades in your organization? Where can employees contribute and build knowledge and skill in these core professions? What professions and competencies are the most important for the growth of your organization? Which professions are mission-imperative?

Career Maps provide a key to these questions and others. Career Maps contain detailed information to facilitate choices, based on individual talent and organizational needs. Thus, they enable HR organizations and employees separately or together to choose development paths that build intersections between career aspirations and the needs of the business.

Like a GPS in your car, Career Maps display alternative routes to build mastery in the core professions. Mastery is being the “best you can be” and those who achieve mastery of their professions or trades are leaders, mentors and innovators. The knowledge, skills and ability that mastery requires is enduring and guides both simple day-to-day decisions as well as complex challenges. For example, we saw professional mastery in the air when Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger safely pancaked his aircraft in the Hudson River and when Captain Richard Phillips traded places at sea to save his ship and crew from Somali highjackers. Both men are examples of professionals who crafted career paths of personal and professional development. At the pinnacle of their professions and through love of their work, they possessed the inherent courage and confidence that accompanies mastery. For that reason, many owe their lives to their professional mastery – their knowledge, skills and abilities. They demonstrate the importance of working at something that you love, that you have passion for, and being the “best you can be.” In both cases, Captain “Sully” and Captain Phillips were masters in the core professions of their organizations.

In today’s tumultuous times, organizational needs have turned career management topsy-turvy. Business concerns have trampled career paths, leaving careers moving in fits and spurts, - or gone altogether. With millions of jobs lost last year, rigid notions about career management, with its ladders, lattices, linear and lateral career progression have been tossed out the window or put on the back burner. Contemporary times have produced chaotic change in human capital forcing many managers, leaders and employees to confront a jumble of jobs and hierarchies that complicate every phase of staffing, from recruitment to management to career development. In many cases, bottom-line numbers masked the discussion of core and secondary professions needed to achieve organization missions and strategies. People were tossed out independent of their wisdom and mastery.

What is Career Mapping?

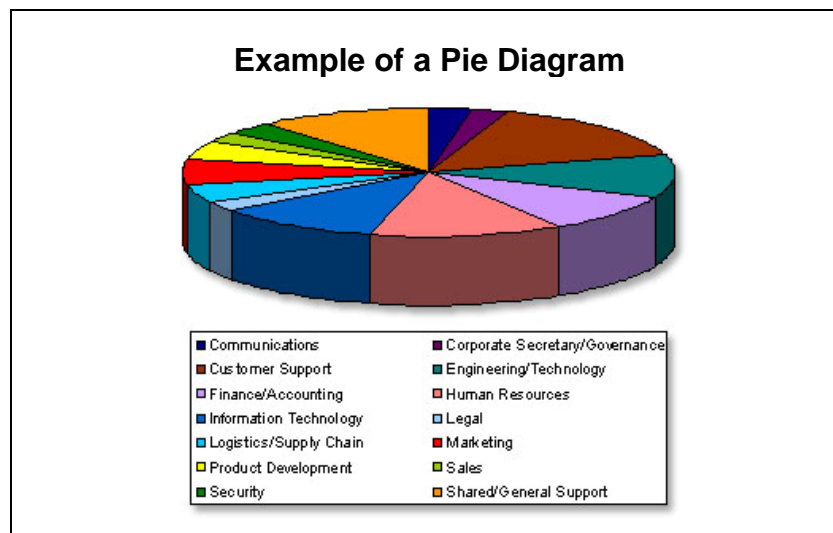
The bricks and mortar of a coherent learning and development structure are built on a foundation of knowledge and experience required for excellence in each core profession. Career Maps provide both organizations and employees with the tools for building and maintaining the wisdom and know-how to confront a complicated jumble of jobs. A Career Map is a visual, codified approach to career management. It is a masterful roadmap to excellence in a confused and radically changing workforce.

**"Take a job and
you'll work for
a day. Master a
profession or a
trade and you'll
work for a
lifetime"**

- Caela Farren, Ph.D.

Career Mapping begins with cataloguing the core professions of an organization. The most effective career mapping designs are based upon professions rather than centered on jobs and compensation schemes. Career Maps should identify key knowledge areas and the skills and abilities to master each of the core professions. Identifying the professions within an organization, organizing a list of core and secondary professions, and establishing the percentages of people comprising each profession is essential and one of the most difficult tasks in designing powerful Career Maps.

Where do you start? After identifying each of the professions in an organization, carefully label them. The next step is critical and difficult. Draw a pie diagram, illustrating the percentage of people in each of the core professions. Now you can see where there are the most and the least career options. You can create a common language and guidance system by clearly defining and applying (where possible) each of the nine elements described below to each of the professions. Gather the information through interviews, focus groups, meetings, and advice from "Subject Matter Experts."



Nine Elements of a Career Map

Career maps should take into account and include the following considerations:

1. the defining **purpose**, function, and utility of each profession in the organization
2. **behavioral strengths**, traits and personal characteristics required for success in a profession (detail-oriented, innovative, outgoing, etc.);
3. **profession-centered competencies**, consisting of clusters of knowledge and abilities required for excellence in a given profession or body of practice;
4. **business competencies** which include skill sets, knowledge and abilities required in order to work effectively in an organization (conflict management, cultural awareness, etc.);
5. **leadership competencies** which include skill sets, knowledge and abilities required in order to become leaders in an organization (mentoring skills, planning and organizing, etc.);
6. **functional accomplishments** that signal mastery in a profession as described and practiced by experts;
7. **career paths** that follow a series of positions or projects, normally graded by complexity, which are achieved through sequential development of competence;
8. **developmental experiences** that can help one craft a smart career path and on-the-job learning;
9. **formal education**.

Career Maps should define knowledge, skills and abilities within each of the professions in an organization. They will reflect a consensus of opinion regarding the application of all or any part of the nine elements to each profession.

Sharing Career Maps Throughout the Organization

Making career maps available and transparent to everyone in an organization is critical because manager and employees need to see all of the career options inside of and between professions. An organization can facilitate communicating the information contained in Career Maps through computer career portals, which are accessed easily at any time and from any place. The first step in understanding Career Maps can be exploratory by learning more about the other professions in an organization. Through computer portals, workers and managers alike have access to all the Career Maps within an organization in exquisite detail. They can assess the elements that are important for developing mastery in each profession. Ladders and lattices disappear. Searching the entire system and graphically demonstrating the route traveled by other people in an organization facilitates career exploration and encourages self-assessment and learning. Career Maps displayed through career portals provide HR organizations, managers and employees with powerful 21st century keys to success.

Example of a Career Map Financial Systems Profile

<p>Purpose: Work as a liaison between Finance, Business Operations and Information Technology</p> <p>Behavioral Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptable Business Sense Analytical Fast Learner Innovator Multi-Tasker Resourceful Service Oriented <p>Core Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Management/Business Rules Knowledge and Maintenance Business Systems Knowledge Contract Closeout Cost Accounting Customer Service Support Financial Reporting General Accounting Pricing/Costing Support Quality Assurance Software and Technical Knowledge Software Knowledge <p>Business Competencies</p> <p>Critical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Skills Conflict Management Continual Learning Financial Profitability/Management Planning and Organizing/Time Mgmt. Technical Credibility Technology Management <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration Business/Operations Awareness Cultural Awareness Human Resources Management <p>Leadership Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align Performance for Success Build Organizational Talent Communicate with Positive Impact Deliver Customer Value Demonstrate a Learning Orientation Develop Enduring Relationships Drive Execution Drive Innovation Exercise Business Acumen Lead Change Lead with Integrity Lead Through Vision and Values <p>Examples of Functional Accomplishments</p> <p>Early Career:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported program implementation and baseline using applications. Assisted with proposal work. Developed/Generated report for one or more programs. Set up/led user group meeting. Was active in related user groups, gained knowledge of business area processes. Had a rotation in Billing, Accounting, etc. <p>Mid Career:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported program implementation and baseline using applications. Performed testing of a new form/feature of a particular business or software process. Set up training budget for year, including tracking and maintenance of budget/schedule. Worked a new system integration and start-up. Supported an acquisition activity that included transition of financial and business records. Worked on a business system transition. <p>Senior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led a project (e.g., upgrade) or a new process implementation 	<p>Career Paths</p> <p>Where would individuals come from?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate degree Graduate degree Military Program Finance Cost Management Business Operations General Accounting Tax Accounting Human Resources Benefits IT Estimating <p>Where would individuals move to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Management System Engineering Project Management Private Industry Consultant IT Government Finance <p>Examples of Developmental Experiences</p> <p>Early Career:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform reconciliations. Work with vendors to implement improvements. Work in a program for a month, performing program duties in their seat/experience. Support certification of a new system or system modification. Support year-end processing cycle close activities for financial transaction. Assist in US Government or external audit. Present a status, program, or project out-briefing, to CFO and Senior Management level. Get Green or Black Bell certification. Develop and test a new report and query. Prepare and present at a Contract Status, Quarterly Financial, or President's Quarterly Review. Troubleshoot systematic data problem and make recommendations. Use complex Excel, macro applications. <p>Mid Career:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in internal or external audit. Attend vendor conferences and industry trade shows. Support Corporate audit or external audit activity. Create and/or present a business case to Senior Management on the need and requirement for a system/application acquisition or project. Design, modify, or maintain cash management systems. <p>Typical Education, Certificates, and Coursework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance, Accounting, or Business degree Computer Science or Engineering degree Certified Public Accountant (CPA) or Certified Management Accountant (CMA) Project Management Management Information Systems (MIS) degree Application training and certifications (SAP, etc) Systems Engineering process training
---	--

Sample Career Map - Finance (cont'd on back) Sample Career Map - Finance (cont'd)

(front) **(back)**

Individuals can build their own career paths – inside one or between several professions using these Career Maps. They can see the accomplishments and experiences through which subject matter experts have developed their own mastery. They can see the competencies required for entry into different professions and systematically build their own mastery paths – preparing themselves for new opportunities in the critical professions required by the organization mission and trends. Their concentration shifts from compensations driven to contribution driven goals. What professions and competencies are most important for the growth of the organization? Which professions are mission-imperative? Where can they contribute and build competencies in the core professions? Career Maps provide employees, managers and leaders answers to these issues while developing and building guidance systems for organizational mentors and managers.

About the Author:

Caela Farren, Ph. D., is President of MasteryWorks - a leading Career Development solution to large to mid-size companies, including Sprint, Lockheed-Martin, and Capitol One. MasteryWorks provides enterprise web portals, training, consulting, and an assessment framework for employees and managers. For more than 30 years, Caela has been a tireless advocate around complex issues redefining the workplace. She envisioned the current climate by more than a decade, when she published the book, "Who is Running Your Career: Creating Stable Work in Unstable Times" (Bard Press, 1997). Through MasteryWorks, she oversees solutions that create the foundation for impact-filled "career conversations" - centered on increased contribution, performance, and fit. Her strategic approach consistently delivers on employee engagement and retention goals for her clients.

Visit www.masteryworks.com or contact Tom Karl, Executive Vice President for more information - tkarl@masteryworks.com or (703) 256-5712.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. This article, or any parts thereof, may not be reproduced in ANY manner, including printing, photocopying, facsimile transmission, e-mail, CD, or use on the Internet without the written permission of MasteryWorks, Inc.