

## Possible titles

### Career Intelligence -How much do you have? (Nr 1 choice title)

#### Managing SELF the challenge of the new Millennium worker

The world of business has fundamentally changed. This statement will provoke different responses and insightful debate among people not only within industries but also countries around the world. The global economic meltdown, an aging workforce in most industrialized countries, scarce skills across different industries and employment equity realities are but to name a few factors impacting on business and employees.

People work increasingly with knowledge rather than with skill. A fundamental difference between the two is that skill changes very slowly whereas knowledge changes itself. It makes itself obsolete and this may happen very quickly. With knowledge at our fingertips, those who want to manage their careers successfully need to strategically consider the avenues and alternatives for personal growth and development.

Marshal Goldsmith rightfully speaks about how important it is that we take full responsibility for our own careers and the paths that we map out for ourselves. His book "What got you here won't get you there" is a stern reminder and wake-up call that we could all be vulnerable in an ever changing and demanding world. He also concedes that we become eligible for future promotions based on our current performance and therefore we may possibly be promoted to a point of incompetence. The best sales representatives often become the supervisor and eventually the sales manager or the Engineering supervisor becoming the Engineering manager. The reality is, that as we progress in our careers we become more vulnerable because of the challenges we face and the complexities of the work we do. As we progress on the corporate ladder we spend our time differently, we also face more fundamental leadership challenges and then need to provide answers on decisions that may have a huge impact on our own but also the lives of others.

Charles Handy noted in his book "The Empty Raincoat", that we are in fact "all mercenaries on sale to the highest bidder". He clearly differentiates between marketability and employability and challenges the reader to not only become **marketable** (how well I can sell myself) but that the true challenge would be to become **employable**. He defines this as more than a qualification and /or how well you can impress in an interview. His view is that employability is all about the track record that you accumulate in your field of expertise, the core competencies you have acquired and the unmistakable value you have added to your previous employer/s. "What is in your raincoat?" is therefore a powerful metaphor to consider your value as a potential employee to any business or institution. This becomes more than just your ability to impress in an interview or to qualify because of the fact that you are part of a designated group.

But what are the other qualities that would be needed to manage a career successfully during these turbulent times we find ourselves in? Consider the following 5 questions which may allow you to take specific action in managing your career more proactively or becoming more employable

## **1. WHAT VALUE AM I ADDING?**

Most of us are occupied with efforts rather than results. We are worried about what the organization and our bosses “owe” us or do for us. We are also preoccupied by our job titles and the authority that we should have. As a result we render ourselves ineffectual.

Start to think about your contribution! It is not about rank but about responsibility! This is the key to effectiveness: in your own work, its content, its levels and standards as well as the impact in relation to others, your colleagues, superiors and subordinates.

The question “What should I contribute?”, balances three elements. First the question, “What does the situation require?”. Then the question “How could I make the greatest contribution?” (considering my strengths), and then finally, “what results needs to be achieved to make a difference?”

Define results for your position that will make a difference and then strive for excellence. Peter Drucker held the following view, “Workmanship counts, not just because it makes a difference in the quality of the job done, but because it makes such a difference in the person doing the job!” Make an effort to understand what you are measured against. Gain insight and feedback on your current job performance.

### **Key Questions:**

**Can you define quality for your job?**

**What is necessary for you to improve your performance?**

**What feedback have you received that allows you to focus on specific, behavior actions, outcomes?**

## **2. DO I EAT ALONE?**

Keith Ferrazzi wrote an insightful book called “Never eat alone”. His latest book is called “Who’s got your back?” These profound books encourage the reader to pursue authentic relationships based on generosity of wisdom/experience, trust and support. It is all about who you have in your network of strategic relationships. Who is your sponsor, mentor, life coach? Who provides you with honest feedback, reviews important career choices or acts as a soundboard on tough business calls that need to be made? The right mentor may also provide insight on how to handle tough interpersonal relationship issues, how to navigate organizational politics and will also connect you to his/her professional network.

A trusted mentor will make a significant impact in your personal life. These relationships structured or informal may provide wonderful learning opportunities and most importantly could also contribute to your personal development plan. In business we are keen to measure Return on Investment. Well it is about time that we measure “Return on relationship”!

### **Key questions:**

**Do you have profitable relationships with selected people that could impact your career, your choices and development plan?**

**Do you have return on relationship/s ?**

**Who knows you well enough to help identify your strengths?**

### 3. WHAT IS MY BRAND?

What comes to mind when you think of Woolworths, Avis, FNB, MTN? Well these organizations are associated with a brand, some value proposition or a promise. It might be great quality, good service or even reliability. Now consider how important it is to cultivate and manage your own personal brand in business.

When individuals align their personal ambitions and brand e.g. **(being recognized as a high performer)** with specific behavior **(show that they are hungry to learn)** there could be much greater support for such aspirations **(senior staff will be interested to expose or accelerate their learning)** that are aligned to organizational values and goals.

This means that when mentees/coachees are recognized as high performers and show that they are hungry and willing to learn, or just eager to participate in organizational projects there will be a much greater willingness from senior staff to accelerate their development.

There is a great saying...“we teach more to those from who’m we expect more”. This is also true for business. If you are not taken seriously, have a poor performance track record or are normally noted with a negative attitude, then don’t expect people to make time to teach you or support your career aspirations

#### Key question

**“What do you want to be remembered for?”**

### 4. WHAT GOALS DO I HAVE FOR MY CAREER?

Imagine your direct manager, the General Manager of your business or even the CEO asks you to prepare your resume two years from now. Consider how much time and effort you will invest to make sure you do justice to the following questions...What would you include in this resume? Reflect on the formal training, the level of exposure, specific competencies you would like to become skilled at, experience gained and projects/assignments completed.

It is now important to hold yourself accountable and to take action by putting together a plan that includes the “what, where and when”. It would also be vital to ask who could open doors, provide exposure or connect you to the right people?

#### Key questions

**What exposure is vital for my personal growth and development?**

**What assignments am I prepared to take on next? What sacrifices need to be made?**

**What do I need to learn to keep abreast of the knowledge I am being paid to know?**

## **5. WHAT PORTABLE SKILLS DO I POSSESS?**

A portable skill would be skills that allow you to move from one industry/ job to another. These skills are normally high in demand, Engineering , Project management , Marketing, Financial/business and Leadership skills would be examples of the above. Peter Drucker argued that the new millennium worker will change jobs and careers and would need to acquire skills that will allow them to alternate between jobs, be redeployed and are expected to contribute or add value to the business the bottom-line

**How employable are you?**

**Is your value-add possibly beyond your current job or position?**

**What are the few things that your organization does superbly well? Have you learned how to do this?**

Answers to these questions may provide some context to your particular career challenges. I would like to encourage you to see these questions as a possible framework where you may want to focus on a specific area such as establishing a mentoring relationship or viewing all the questions holistically as part of your development initiative. A last question to possibly ask when reviewing these 5 areas is “Where do I hurt most?”

I realize more than ever that people have different needs, different abilities and different perspectives regarding their careers. If you talk of 40 years of working life, and this will be increasingly the norm, we will have to reinvent ourselves, display career intelligence and do something different out of yourself rather than just waiting around hoping to be discovered.