

SkillWorks Project Manager Training and Peer Exchange July 13, 2006

Topic: Re-design management of career coaching programs

Attendees: Yariela Kerr-Donovan, *John Hopkins Project R.E.A.C.H.*; Jenny Freeman, *SkillWorks consultant*; Martha Goldberg and Aviva Rothman-Shore, *Hotel Career Center*; Sandy Goodman, *Partners in Automotive Career Education*; Elisabeth Houston, *SkillWorks*; Rebecca Laschman, *Boston Private Industry Council*; Loh-Sze Leung, *SkillWorks*; Karen Shack, *Boston Private Industry Council*; Beverly Sobers, *Brigham and Women's Hospital, Workforce Development*; Harriet Tolpin, *Partners in Career and Workforce Development*; Weezy Waldstein, *Building Services Career Path Partnerships*; Roxanne Reddington Wilde, *ABCD Community Health Worker partnership*.

I. Introduction. Each participant was asked to share what key questions they have regarding their career coaching programs. Responses were as follows:

- How does one measure the outcomes and effectiveness of career coaching programs?
- Should program managers be held accountable for program evaluations?
- How does program staff gain the trust of clients?
- How does program staff create open, honest communication with clients that allows the staff to assist with deeper problems?
- How does program staff tackle more clients' entrenched problems?
- How does program help clients who are doing well?
- How does program staff encourage employers' contribution to be more long-lasting and deep-seeded?
- What expectations should program staff have of clients' advancement?
- How does program staff formulate a time-table for services?
- How do you create a model where the participant (ie. incumbent community health worker) has multiple options for where to go?
- How do you design a program that takes into account the motivation of the individual?
- When do you stop the career coaching?
- Should career coaching be expected to make up for the industry's lack of HR infrastructure, or should that be addressed internally by the employer?
- What is career coaching's relationship to case management?

II. Description of Models. Yariela Kerr-Donovan of Johns Hopkins Medical Center and Karen Shack each offered descriptions of the career coaching models they have developed.

A. Project R.E.A.C.H. (R.E.A.C.H, Resources and Education for the Advancement of Careers at Johns Hopkins), Yarliela Kerr-Donovan

- 18-month project, June 2004 to December 2005
- \$3 million of U.S. DoL funds, \$3.3 million of John Hopkins Hospital match
- Train incumbent workers for skill shortage positions
- Developed and implemented the program simultaneously

3 components of program

- 16 hours of paid salary release
- career coaching
- career assessments

5 main initiatives of grants

- accelerated GED program
- business skills training initiative (motivational push)
- initiative helped workers whose jobs were going to be phased out

- skill development for those who failed readiness-for-training test; one of the largest initiative
- career coaching for those who passed the test

Largest challenges

- trying to help and serve large group of people with varied skill levels – entry level employees to supervisors
- over 900 people in database; 4 career coaches
- 350 people referred to skills enhancement
- 400 engaged in some form of training
- remaining 100 in initial stages of career exploration
- each coach has about 100 participants each
- assessment staff is distinct from coaching staff

B. Boston Private Industry Council, Karen Shack

Karen described the career coaching component of a training program at VinFen, designed with the assistance of the PIC

Program Overview

- Bunker Hill Community College partner
- Works with BEST and VinFen, a human service provider in New England
- Helps people with mental health problems, behavioral health problems

Goals

- Provide career ladders for entry level employees
- Increase retention
- Help employees become better prepared for college level work
- Entry level workers were not academically prepared to get to more advanced professional level
- Bunker Hill developed remedial courses that could be offered as a step to be prepared for receiving higher level job

Role of the Career Coach

- Front line coaching staff and manager participated in development and implementation of program
- Coaches provided on-going case management services
- Acted as a liaison for other services and referral system
- Helped clients think strategically
- External career coach had access to resource and networks
- Helped things move more quickly, not weighed down by sensitive internal company dynamics
- External coaches had a lot to learn because they weren't familiar with the industry

Role of the Manager

- Engagement of employees' managers critical to the success of the program
- Lots of support from employer partner
- Participated in the development and implementation of the program from the beginning

III. Topics for Discussion

A. Establishing, Communicating, Focusing on Program Goals

Question: How do you develop and communicate the goals of your career coaching program (to employers, participants, coaches)?

REACH

- Focus of grant shaped the development and implement the program goals
- Coaches worked with participants and managers to establish goals

- JH used internal coaches, so they already understood community needs, had relationships with departments, helped organize trainings with the departments that were hiring
- All had advocacy in background, but also had skill sets of industry
- Survey to manager and coachee one month after the beginning of implementation for six months
- Keep coach and coachee assignments flexible so that changes can be made if chemistry isn't right

PIC

- You first have to ask: What are your overall goals for your workforce development initiative? How does the work of coaching support the goals of the program?
- Coaching helps achieve institutional goals because it meets capacity needs, but it is important to ask how does coaching help you achieve the workforce development goals that the program has set out
- Coaches advocate for relationship issues vs. career
- Career coaching should be integrated with HR and training staff; important questions to consider are how is information shared and the level of integration of those services
- Communication and information sharing with HR and career coaching
- There must be recognition and support of the career coach into HR services

REACH

- Self-sufficiency is a major goal of program; after program participants can maneuver through the system
- Setting the goals for coaching was made easier because the model was there before program, and before it expanded to 6 hospitals, 4 coaches
- Coachees cannot be in active discipline; coaches provide job performance help; sometimes the role of the coach is to prevent the coachee from being in active discipline
- 16 hours of salary release makes it easier for participants to be in training and not feel that training infringes upon work performance
- Institutions have to put training in their budget

Questions asked by participants: how sustainable is this budget? How can you ask for career coaching when people work two jobs?

Karen: creative ways to integrate coaching; possible to sustain relationship with phone and e-mail contact

Questions: How can career coaches be active in advancement opportunities, retention, etc. with employer partner if it's only phone contact?

How invested are the supervisors?

How successful can the training be if it isn't institutional career paths and institutional investment?

Aviva described HCC:

- combined instructor and career coaches
- knew employees in context of class, but also helped with career issues
- instructor communicated with manager
- managers will not give feedback
- instructors at hotel everyday 3 days a week, almost like a staff; viewed almost as an adjunct employee
- face-to-face time is integral to establishing strong relationships with employer partners
- needs vary (some people are working on ESL, others career advancement)

Yariela notes that not everyone needs the same level of coaching; the majority of participants in REACH weren't yet ready to advance to career coaching because many still had skill needs to be addressed

B. Maximize Efficiency and Effectiveness

Question: How do you meet the varying needs of your clients?

PIC:

- In order to make decisions about program, must have goals
- Ask yourself: Why does this program exist and how does coaching help the program meet its objectives?
- Ask: Who is your target group?
- Can't determine how long someone will need career coaching without assessment
- Individual goals vs. organizational goals
- Are the objectives to meet staffing needs or to identify entry-level staff or mix of both?
- What are some of the smaller goals that individual participants can reach?

REACH:

- Coaches must be flexible enough to keep helping individuals along
- Construct a model by type of service needed, needs change at different time
- Part of predicament is capturing outcomes when coachees no longer want to be associated with career coach
- Presumably case loads evolve (with early coaches needing less assistance and new ones coming on) - if they don't, program can't grow
- Must be clear and upfront about the nature of the relationship to the coaches; must explain that there will be information sharing, ie. tuition assistance
- Coaches should say, "We'll be looking at personal information. We care about you, we're going to be checking in on what's going on your life."

Question: How should frequency of communication evolve between the coach and coachee? What the value is for the coachee?

Weezy comments that, very diffuse interactions allow for people to have progress in their lives -- qualitative progress versus quantitative

Rebeckah described PIC:

- Mandatory group work; but there is flexibility 6 out of 10 meetings
- Students receive scholarship
- Hear from students that talk about other students' success; from this, they know that the program is effective
- Ways for employees to connect with each other outside of group activities; supports for building connectivity outside of the program

Harriet says that mentorship should be part of career coaching; although she would never see that be institutionalized in an employer setting

Weezy asks if training programs are remediation to bad situation? Career coaching needs depend on setting?

- Part of career coaching work is to counsel people who work in hostile environment
- At Partners, the managers were unreceptive and rude to the workers who were working on English skills
- The coach should be the first person to hear that kind of situation

Supporting Career Coaches

Question: What does the program manager do to assist career coaches?

REACH:

- structure role to keep them focused on participant
- don't want the coach to hear about policy and environmental issues

- don't want to compromise the position of the career coach with partnerships or there will be no way to assist coachee
- career coaching support group, meets once a month; workshop topics that all of the coaches from all of the hospitals discuss; discuss current literature, other training programs
- facilitated support group; across hospitals, amongst peers
- boundary setting for career coaches is important
- time away for self-development because job is so draining; REACH organizes retreats
- coaches need to know what their role is first and for whom they are working

PIC

- manager of coaches can bring a lot of issues to the table
- important to allow coaches to share their expertise with one another
- career development focused work vs. managing other needs
- balance between how much coach owns and how they will set goals with coachees so that needs are met
- bringing in clinical training (employees in emotional crisis) if the coaches not train

REACH

- grant focused on outcomes, but the program wanted to assist everyone in whatever way possible
- wants to make coachees feel like the institution is investing in them as human beings
- Assessment tools used were Career Scope, Tabe and Casas, Quiz Revealed, Bessie
- Instituted a School at Work at the hospitals through Catalyst working, skill development
- Allowed for more flexible means of services; lending library
- PLATO – computer based high-school curriculum online; GED, college placement tests; self-directed
- Total assessment time is 3-4 hours
- Set up several sessions for students in order conform with students' schedules (some couldn't get off work, etc)
- orientation program for students
- software package called ETO, tool used to quantify for the higher ups

Questions for Future Exploration:

- Should coaches use data to measure their own progress?
- Does anyone have a mechanism to check whether your career coaching is effective?
- Sandy asks if anyone has a handbook on career coaching? Partners website – provides a great job description of career coaches
- There is a desire to have more of a conversation on what works and what doesn't
- Managers – how to have a career conversation?
- Is there a centralized repository for the various SkillWorks programs? The website contains some resources.