Bulletin Board: Course reveals hidden passions for career paths

by Amy_Winter

Crystal-Barkley Corp.'s Life/Work Design courses allow individuals to plot a personalized yet realistic life plan for work, learning and leisure. Formed 20 years ago through the partnership of Nella Barkley and John Crystal, the company enables clients to develop a management plan in order to use the full range of their potential.

The program begins by helping clients discover their hidden or overlooked skills and talents, according to Barkley. Through exercises and reflection on past experiences, they gain the information needed for their next career decision.

"'Lifework' is what is inside you and what you want to accomplish," said Barkley.

Chad Riedel, a participant in the Life/Work Design process, enrolled when he stood at a crossroad in his working career. He declined the opportunity to climb the career ladder in his company in order to keep his family from moving to a new town.

After several friends reported positive results from the program, Riedel decided to give it a try.

He said the program contained three important lessons: Writing on influential episodes from his life helped him to articulate what made him successful in those situations. Completing 20 to 30 exercises enabled him to learn more about his skills and passions; his true interests started to bubble up. Surveying and searching for new jobs (with the help of coaches) allowed him to turn the tables on the resume/interview process.

"I analyzed the situations to discover what skills I used," said Riedel. "By the end, I was pretty clear about what I was interested in doing."

Through the exercises and coaching, Riedel gained more confidence in order to present himself in a more positive way. At interviews, he can now say, "This is why you need me at your organization."

Even if he doesn't find a new job immediately, Riedel feels the course taught him an important life lesson: He is no longer afraid to pursue his passions. He will now live out his hobbies and interests instead of putting them on hold.

"I would not have had the courage with three young children to try something new," said Riedel. "I would still be numb to some things I wanted to accomplish and would be working in the same industry."

For more information, visit www.careerlife.com.

TALK TO THE BOSS

Employees may be on their own when it comes to discussing career development with their bosses. Sixty-nine percent of workers said they only meet with their bosses once a year to talk about their careers, according to MRINetwork's survey of 2,100 workers. Only 15 percent had conversations every three months, while 16 percent participated in discussions every six months.

"Businesses used to partner with employees to carry out career planning and development," said Michael Jalbert, president of MRINetwork, a recruitment organization. "But in this regard, times have changed. Increasingly both businesses and employees have come to view career development primarily as the employee's responsibility."

Jalbert believes ongoing communication between bosses and employees is important to guarantee employee satisfaction as well as maximum performance. These discussions should be separate from performance and salary reviews.

"Career development is a significant factor in employee retention," he said. "Top employees need to know where they are headed and that they have the support of management to get there. Clearly a once-a-year cursory discussion of career plans during the course of a review is not sufficient."

Employees need to approach their bosses if they want feedback or support.

"Employees should always be on top of their own career development plans," said Jalbert. "If they feel that they are not getting good feedback, they need to take the initiative and seek out opportunities to meet with their bosses.

"Often the pressures of work simply cause these occasions to be postponed, but they need to be a priority."

For more information, visit www.mrinetwork.com.

E-mail Amy Winter at P.O. Box 120190, San Diego, CA 92112.

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