

# What “good” career management looks like

[charityvillage.com/what\\_good\\_career\\_management\\_looks\\_like](http://charityvillage.com/what_good_career_management_looks_like)

February 27, 2019



*This article is an excerpt from [Retain and Gain: Career Management for Non-Profits and Charities](#), a free publication from CERIC. [Click here to download your copy.](#)*

Executive directors shared with us their concerns about setting goals and having career conversations with staff.

Some worried that they would not be able to offer good suggestions to challenging situations. Others misinterpreted career management for performance management and resisted having to have hard discussions about shortcomings and consequences. Still others worried that encouraging broader career discussions would only accelerate key employees deciding to leave to pursue opportunities in larger organizations or outside the sector.

Good career management requires that managers and employees understand certain fundamentals about their careers. [CERIC](#) has developed its *8 Guiding Principles of Career Development* to help clarify and define the scope of career-related work. (Recall that we are using the terms *career management* and *career development* synonymously for this Playbook). These principles can help ensure you have good career-focused conversations, resources (like those listed at the end of this Playbook) and programs in place with your staff.

Career Development:

1. Is a lifelong process of blending and managing paid and unpaid activities: learning (education), work (employment, entrepreneurship), volunteerism and leisure time.
2. Entails determining interests, beliefs, values, skills and competencies – and connecting those with market needs.
3. Involves understanding options, navigating with purpose and making informed choices.
4. Should be self-directed; an individual is responsible for his or her own career, but is not alone – we all influence and are influenced by our environment.
5. Is often supported and shaped by educators, family, peers, managers and the greater community.
6. Means making the most of talent and potential, however you define growth and success – not necessarily linear advancement.
7. Can be complex and complicated, so context is key – there may be both internal constraints (financial, cultural, health) or external constraints (labour market, technology).
8. Is dynamic, evolving and requires continuous adaptation and resilience through multiple transitions.

Career management principles, theories and tools are not necessarily included in fundraising or voluntary sector leadership programs and, while there are many HR-focused resources for nonprofits and charities such as those available at [hrcouncil.ca](http://hrcouncil.ca) and [CharityVillage's HR Knowledge Centre](http://CharityVillage.org), most have a heavy emphasis on recruitment, payroll and legislative compliance.

In contrast, career management provides decades of wisdom and results to help leaders and employees navigate today's changing employment structures.

Career management is not a solitary pursuit. Managers play a key role alongside individual employees. This relationship has been described in Chapter 16 of the text *Career Development Practice in Canada: Perspectives, Principles, and Professionalism*, by **Sandra Boyd** and **Kim Spurgeon**, as a career partnership in which:

“Managers, by providing learning opportunities and supporting career goals, help to empower their employees and further their career development. The organization, for its part, has a duty to help develop employees' career-management skills through human resources programs, mentoring, and networking. Lastly, the employees themselves must be accountable for their own development through self-assessment, skills updating, and setting career goals. When these three work together, employees become more engaged and retention improves.”

Indeed, good career management is led by the individual, can take many different forms and is not necessarily focused on promotion or mobility. Instead, it is rooted in the understanding that career development occurs when employees have increasing access to unique experiences.

## **Top 10 misconceptions about career management**

---

Based on our interviews, we heard the following misconceptions about career management. They are all false and prevent organizations from establishing good career practices. How many are at play in your organization?

1. Small organizations can offer jobs. Careers are only possible inside large organizations.
2. Career management and training are the same thing, as are career development and advancement.
3. Employers are in control of the career paths of their employees.
4. Staff know how to manage their own careers.
5. Managers know how to help staff with their careers.
6. Millennials are more interested in lifestyle and worklife balance than a traditional career.
7. Older employees don't need to worry about their career as they are unlikely to make a significant change after age 50.
8. Career management is costly and doesn't deliver an immediate return on investment to the organization.
9. Career management is only for professionals or knowledge workers.
10. There isn't hard data, proven practices and solid research available to help Executive Directors and managers with tough career-related situations.

*Lisa Taylor is founder and President of Challenge Factory and the Centre for Career Innovation. Her career and workforce perspectives have been featured in media outlets across North America including the Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post, CBC and The Globe and Mail. Taylor regularly speaks on the Future of Work, the intergenerational workforce and the changing nature of careers in today's economy.*