



# ANNUAL CAREER CHECKUPS

## Reviewing career direction vital to success

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Many people have annual physical checkup, but have you ever thought about an annual career checkup?

In a time when artificial intelligence is making its mark and new job titles like ‘data ransom hostage negotiator’ are emerging, doing so would allow you find out helpful information, like if demand for your skillset remains strong or is about to explode or decline in your geographic area, explains Lisa Taylor, president of Challenge Factory, a research agency and consultancy.

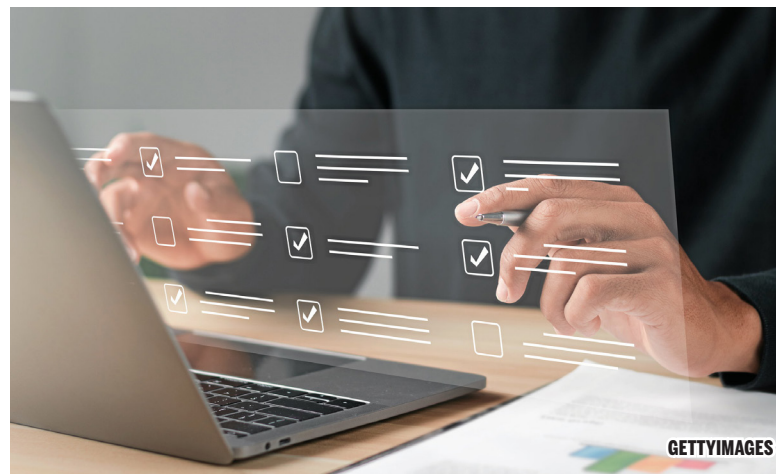
Annual career checkups are among numerous recommendations in *Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent: Mapping Canada’s Career Development* on the challengefactory.ca website. The report was created by Challenge Factory in partnership with CERIC, a charitable organization focused on career development education and research, and the Canadian Career Development Foundation.

“The study responds to the fact that most people are going to be changing careers by choice or by circumstance many times over the next couple of decades,” Taylor says. An annual checkup would allow you to freshen up your resumé, discover ways to update your skills, and do the best work you can so you stay ahead of trends and take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves, she adds.

### ‘FAIL-FIRST MODEL’

The fact that career checkups aren’t common is “a very fundamental example of how Canada has a fail-first model of career development,” Taylor says.

The emphasis on providing publicly-funded career services to people experiencing “career disrupt-



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tions” – sometimes the result of a workplace injury – creates a “misperception” among working Canadians that they don’t need career services, she maintains.

Canada’s lower career services usage rate relative to other developed countries offers a significant opportunity because career development is most effective when it comes before experiencing a disruption, according to the report. Despite the billions of dollars invested by the federal government to address skills and employment challenges, it finds no province or territory has a model that would enable a culture of basic, widespread career support.

A national career strategy, the report argues, would strengthen local and national workforces, labour markets and employment transitions. The report maps out the career development sector, which Taylor says is “hiding in plain sight.”

Some employee benefits plans would cover those kinds of services. In addition to finding out what opportunities are available in your local labour market, it should inform you about how your career is shifting so your skills remain relevant as you navigate your way through a lifetime of careers, she adds.

### ROLE OF MANAGERS

Many Canadians get career information and navigation support from their managers, but the report asks how managers are increasing their own career literacy.

“Just because you’ve become a manager doesn’t mean you have the latest information on current and upcoming skills trends, training opportunities, how people identify with work and career over the course of their life stage, the psychological component of work, the identity component of work,” Taylor says.

“Now we can ask the question about how career professionals can provide better support to managers so that every manager can be providing better career conversations to their staff.”

When Taylor authored *Retain and Gain: Career Management for Small Business Playbook*, another CERIC-funded publication, she learned that “a good quality, future-focused career conversation with your manager is one of the least expensive, highest return things that can be done to retain staff.”

Engagement scores increased among staff who received feedback from their direct manager that there’s a future for them in their career. “It doesn’t even have to be a lifetime promise that you’re going to stay working at that company, but just someone showing interest in the employee’s future,” Taylor says.

Those conversations also had a positive impact on an employee’s commitment to their job “because they feel like someone cares that what they’re doing now will help them succeed in the future – not just help the company succeed. They can see how



Lisa Taylor, of the Challenge Factory

## What makes a good career checkup?

An annual career checkup should answer this question: How do I know if my career is on track or at risk? It should bring into focus elements that satisfy the following four questions, says Lisa Taylor of Challenge Factory:

■ **Needs.** How does your current work satisfy your work and life needs? Which of your needs have changed in the past year?

■ **Talents.** What natural talents are you using in your work without even knowing it? What skills should you focus on developing?

■ **Passion.** What brings you satisfaction? How does your work enable those passion pursuits?

■ **Impact.** How’s the market changing? What problems are emerging that you’d like to be part of solving?

“It allows you to explore potential while remaining grounded in your personal needs and market realities and leads to a specific plan with indicators you can use when having to make career decisions between checkups,” she says.

their success and the company’s success are tied. Career conversations inside of an organization and increasing manager career literacy is a phenomenal way for employers to engage, retain and attract talent that doesn’t have to cost a ton of money.”

## Hammer Heads partnership

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Hammer Heads and Hazelview Investments, an owner, developer and manager of global real estate investments, are teaming up to train and place under-resourced and Indigenous youth into registered apprenticeships in the Greater Toronto Area.

“This partnership with Hazelview will provide Hammer Head graduates a place to learn their trade and obtain a rewarding full-time career in construction with a fair wage, benefits and pension,” says Hammer Heads director James St. John.

Hammer Heads is helping the unionized construction industry develop a more diverse workforce. With 90 per cent of graduates representing non-traditional demographics, it provides meaningful skilled trades employment to those who otherwise might not have access it.

## AI sparks worries

More American employees want to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the workplace, but younger workers are more apprehensive about its potential impact.

According to global learning technology company D2L, 60 per cent of employees want to use AI tools more frequently at work over the next year. Forty-nine per cent use AI tools at least once a week at work but 37 per cent never do.

Forty-three per cent of all generations worry another employee with better AI skills could replace them in their role in the next year. Fifty-two per cent of Gen Z workers, 45 per cent of millennials and a third of Gen Xers share those worries. Fifty-six per cent of all workers agree an employee who uses generative AI tools to do their work more effectively should receive a higher salary.