

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Everyone who participates in the world of work – including both paid and volunteer work – has a career path. In its simplest form, a career path is the sequence of work positions or roles that a person holds over the span of a lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Career paths can take as many different forms as there are people. They can be planned or unplanned. They can include a small number of positions or many positions. They can include upward, lateral, and downward moves (as defined by pay or status). They can be within a single organization (which is increasingly uncommon) or they can span several different organizations. They can be within a single industry or career field or they can span several related or unrelated industries or career fields.

Over the past three decades, career paths have become more varied and emergent as people make career decisions within an increasingly dynamic organizational, societal, and global economic environment. While individuals' career paths have always evolved over the course of their careers, the specific job movements of individuals have become more difficult to anticipate as the work environment has become increasingly complex and dynamic. This has led some to the conclusion that examining or specifying career paths is a futile exercise in today's world. This conclusion is dead wrong. In today's dynamic and complex economy, it is critical for the employees of your organization to have flexible career plans, to understand the factors – including the portfolios of skills – that will impact whether they achieve their career goals, and to pursue career development

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opportunities within your organization to make their dreams a reality. And, in the face of increasing global competition and increasing competition for top talent, it is more important than ever for your organization to understand and influence the increasingly complex and dynamic patterns of movement of people within and across organizations.

While most organizations focus a lot of attention on placing people into jobs to maximize organizational effectiveness (through employee selection, promotion, etc.), until very recently they tended to focus on the career paths of only a small number of “high potential” employees. (Fortunately, this situation is starting to change and recently we have seen a substantial increase in interest among leading organizations in the construction of career paths and their implementation as part of talent management systems.) A lack of focus on career paths is a serious mistake that results in significant missed opportunities for organizations and employees. In today’s highly competitive world, organizations must focus on career paths if they are to succeed.

Consider the following questions:

1. I am a software engineer with 11 years’ experience. I have Bachelors and Masters degrees in engineering. Will an M.B.A. benefit me at age 37?
2. The top candidates we recruit for our technical jobs keep asking what they can expect their career trajectory to be like five or ten years out. I know the outlook is bright, but I can’t predict the specifics ten weeks out, let alone ten years out. What can we tell them?
3. Our company seems to be losing about 20% of our sales force just as they hit the two-year tenure mark. What is going on?

Examining career paths will provide valuable information useful in answering these and many other questions that have important and direct implications for the success of your organization.

### **What Are Career Paths?**

As noted earlier, in their simplest form career paths are the sequence of work positions or roles that a person holds over the span of a

### Why Is It Important to Focus on Career Paths?

1. There is intense global competition in nearly every industry, mergers and acquisitions have become increasingly common, and outsourcing and off-shoring are becoming more and more prevalent. As a result, the nature of the implicit employment contract has changed. Employees can no longer assume that their employer will have a place for them for many years, and organizations likewise cannot rely on a sense of loyalty to retain employees. Consequently, employees must assume increasing levels of responsibility for managing their careers, and organizations must offer meaningful career paths to retain talented employees.
2. With the changes in the economy, in organizations, and in the implicit employment contract, it has become increasingly important from individual, organizational, industry, and societal perspectives to have an agile, flexible, and mobile workforce that can thrive in a variety of situations, and that can be deployed to meet a variety of organizational needs. Thus, it is important to attend more closely to the movement – and potential movement – of individuals within and among organizations and to the factors that make individuals suitable for jobs in diverse settings.
3. Societal and cultural changes have resulted in more complex and varied career patterns. These changes include, for example, an increase in the number of families in which both adults work outside the home, an increase in the number of single-parent households, and an increase in the number of retirement-eligible persons who remain in the workforce in some capacity. To retain valued employees, organizations must understand the needs of employees and how jobs and job options can be shaped such that those needs are filled. Organizations must offer flexible and alternative work arrangements, and must make alternative career paths available to employees that work for them in the context of their life situations.
4. Increasingly, employees and organizations focus on the portfolio of skills that suit individuals for specific roles within an organization, and less on the “job” as traditionally defined. Effective organizations understand the portfolios of skills and other capabilities that drive their success, and how people possessing those portfolios of capabilities should be deployed at any given time to reap maximum benefits for the organization. These organizations also accurately anticipate which capabilities will be needed in the future, and where those capabilities will be needed. It has become more and more important for organizations to understand the capabilities of employees so that they can be optimally deployed, and to actively work with individuals to build their capabilities in a manner that maximizes value to the organization through a series of positions or roles.

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lifetime. However, a fully developed career path should include much more than a list of positions or roles, and when building career paths you should consider much more than which positions to include and in what order. While the specific content should be driven by the objectives of the organization (business, government agency, industry association, educational institution) for which they are being developed, career paths typically include five fundamental components:

1. A sequential list of positions or roles. These are typically displayed in a diagram, making it easy to visualize each position or role as a node in a path. Frequently, the sequence of positions is shown in a “boxes and arrows” format, but a variety of visual formats can be used. Typically, a brief description of each position or role is also provided.
2. Qualifications (education, training, experience, licensure, and certification requirements) required or recommended at each node or each career stage.
3. Critical developmental experiences associated with each node or each career stage along the path. These may include, for example, formal training courses or specific stretch assignments that prepare a person for the next node, and on-the-job experiences.
4. Information about the competencies that are accrued, strengthened, or required at each node, at each career stage, or through each critical developmental experience (CDE). Different competencies are important at different career stages, and different levels of the same competency are required at different career stages.
5. Information about the sponsoring organization’s perspective on, and management of, career success factors that are viewed as being of key importance. This may include, for example, the importance of depth versus breadth of expertise to career success, the importance of international assignments, the level of mobility that is desirable for the individual in a specific career and for the organization, and the type and patterns of movement that tend to lead to long-term career success (e.g., whether horizontal moves tend to lead to more promotion opportunities in the long run). This information – in terms of both content and presentation – is highly variable across organizations. While it is desirable to address it explicitly, it is frequently implicit in the paths that are constructed.

### Fundamental Components of Career Paths

1. Sequential list of positions or roles
2. Qualifications
3. Critical developmental experiences
4. Competencies that are accrued, strengthened, or required
5. Important career success factors

In addition to these five components, other information about the roles or positions comprising the paths is typically provided as part of a description of career paths. The nature of this information varies based on the purpose of the effort. For example, in cases in which career paths are being designed for use across organizations (e.g., for use by persons considering career options in an industry), information about salaries and anticipated growth rates in relevant occupations is typically provided.

Each of the five components described above is an integral part of a career path. However, what holds these components together and what makes the study of career paths different from any other aspect of human capital management is a focus on the movement of individuals over a significant period of time. The potential and promise of career paths lies in this movement, the dynamic aspect of careers and talent management.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the defining characteristic of career paths and of their use in organizations is an explicit focus on the movement of individuals over time. This focus on movement permeates all aspects of career paths and their use.

### Defining Characteristic of Career Paths

The defining characteristic of career paths and their use in organizations is an explicit focus on the movement of individuals over time.

What are we really talking about here? Let's consider a hypothetical company – we'll call it Electronic Products Corporation, Incorporated (EPC, Inc.). In the pages that follow, we provide a sample career path guide for EPC, Inc. showing one of many possible ways to portray career path information. The guide shows potential sales, marketing, and products career paths in EPC, Inc. As you can see,

Sample Career Path Guide:  
Sales, Marketing, and Products  
*Electronic Products Corporation, Inc.*

**Introduction**

This Guide describes suggested Sales, Marketing, and Products career paths within Electronic Products Corporation, Inc. (EPC, Inc.). You can use these career paths and the information associated with them as resources in planning your career. They provide a “roadmap for success” that will help you to achieve your career goals.

The career paths, and the information associated with them, were developed by job experts – people in these positions – and executives from EPC, Inc. and reflect their recommendations. The information in this Guide will help you and our company succeed in the challenging, rewarding, and rapidly evolving marketplace. Use this information in conjunction with job descriptions and documented job requirements as you make decisions about positions, assignments, and developmental opportunities to pursue. You also should rely on your manager and/or mentor to help guide you along these paths.

*What’s in This Career Path Guide?*

- A diagram showing potential Sales, Marketing, and Products career paths in EPC, Inc.
- A brief discussion of the qualifications needed at each level along the paths. Qualifications include education/certifications and required experience.
- Recommended developmental experiences associated with each level in the career paths that will prepare you for the next step in your career.
- Descriptions of key competencies that should be accrued or strengthened at each level along the paths.
- A brief discussion of Career Success Factors identified through discussions with EPC, Inc. executives that will ensure that you – and the Corporation – are set up for success in light of our strategic direction and our rapidly changing business climate.

There are several important points that you should keep in mind as you review this Guide.

- While the career paths described are recommended by experts from the Corporation, these are not the only ways to succeed. There are many avenues to success in EPC, Inc. Regardless of the specific path that your career follows, you should constantly strive to strengthen the competencies that are relevant to your career goals.
- The critical developmental experiences described are not the only ones that contribute to career success. These experiences were identified specifically by job experts as being important at certain levels and therefore are represented as recommendations at the previous level to help you prepare for future roles. These recommendations are specified as requirements for success at the next level where appropriate. There

are many other experiences that also will help you to gain the skills and competencies needed to be successful within EPC, Inc.

- There is no guarantee that following a given path will lead to advancement to a specific level. Many factors beyond the control of individual employees impact promotions. However, pay attention to the qualifications, critical developmental experiences, and the related competencies that are presented with the career paths. Obtaining these qualifications, engaging in these experiences, and building these competencies will increase your chances of achieving your career aspirations.

### *Understanding the Career Paths*

The career paths outline typical avenues for moving among and across positions in ways that facilitate growth and career advancement. The positions are shown in boxes. The arrows linking the boxes indicate the recommended moves among the positions.

### *Understanding the Qualifications*

The qualifications associated with each level are the recommended types/levels of education, training, and/or experience that, in general, are needed for successful performance at a given level. These are general qualifications recommendations or requirements (as indicated) – they do not represent the specific requirements for any given position. Qualifications requirements are established for specific positions and are highlighted in job announcements and position descriptions.

In general, the qualifications listed are cumulative. For example, a Bachelor's degree is listed as a typical requirement for Sales Coordinator positions. This qualification is not repeated at higher levels; a similar education requirement can be assumed for most subsequent positions unless a different educational requirement is specified.

### *Understanding the Critical Developmental Experiences*

The critical developmental experiences are experiences that employees should acquire as they move through the career paths. The critical developmental experiences that are described in this document are those that job experts identified as required or particularly important to gain in preparing for career advancement. Each experience provides the opportunity to develop competencies that are important for success in EPC, Inc.

The critical developmental experiences are associated with a level in the organization, rather than with a specific position. These experiences, for the most part, are relevant across positions at a given level.

The experiences listed in this document are either recommended or required for advancement to the next level. Before you engage in a particular developmental experience, you should discuss the experience with your manager or mentor.

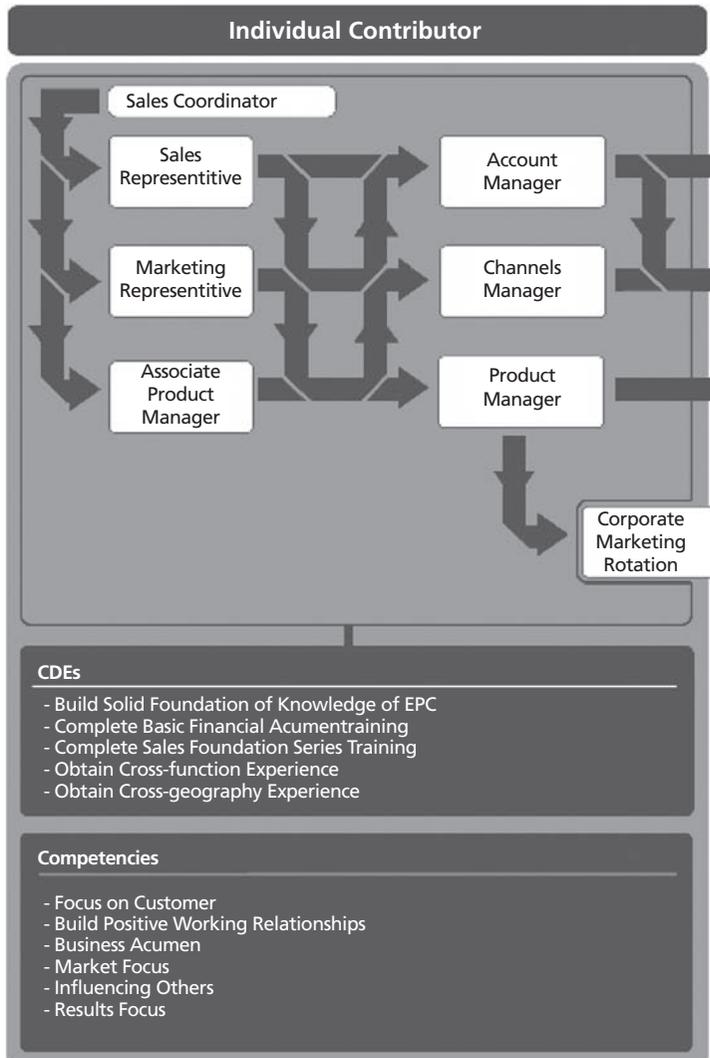
### *Understanding the Competencies*

The Competencies sections highlight key capabilities that should be accrued or strengthened at each level along the paths. While many competencies are important for success in each job, we've chosen to highlight

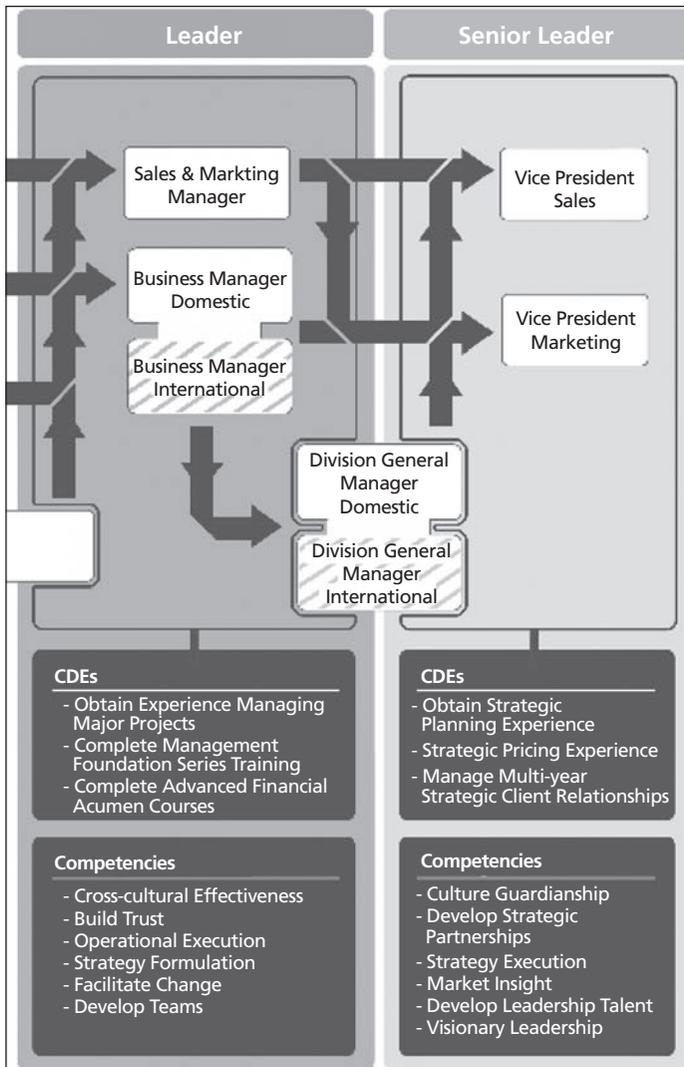
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only a few of those that are very important to develop at each level both to succeed and that level and to prepare you for success at subsequent levels in the organization. These highlighted competencies are most relevant across roles *within* each level and increase your likelihood of success



across roles at the *next* level. The EPC, Inc. Individual Development Planning Guide contains comprehensive lists of important competencies for each position. Use that Guide, in conjunction with this document, as you think through your specific development needs and priorities.



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### **Individual Contributor**

Featured Titles – Sales Coordinator, Sales Representative, Marketing Representative, Associate Product Manager, Account Manager, Channels Manager, Product Manager

#### *Qualifications*

Most sales coordinator positions at this level require a Bachelor's degree and at least one year of relevant experience in a sales or marketing role, an administrative coordination role, or a sales coordination role. Preferably, the degree will be in a related field (e.g., Marketing, Business and Finance). Most other individual contributor positions require a Bachelor's degree and two to four years of experience in the preceding position, or in an equivalent position in another organization. For example, most sales representative positions require two to four years experience as a Sales Coordinator, or equivalent experience (as a Sales Coordinator or Sales Representative) in another organization.

#### *Critical Developmental Experiences (Including Training)*

*Build solid foundation of knowledge of EPC, Inc. and its competitive position in the market*

An understanding of our business and our competitive position in the marketplace is a key to success for all of our employees. The sooner this understanding is gained, the better. This experience involves engaging in any of a number of potential activities to build this understanding. These activities include, for example, taking the self-paced web course entitled "EPC 101," reading the company's annual report, and reviewing information about the company (including our organizational chart, and our annual Goals and Strategy document) available on the intranet.

*Complete basic financial acumen training*

- Company-wide, two-day training session (required for Leader candidacy)
- Function-specific training, if offered (recommended)

*Complete sales foundation series training*

- "EPC-Sell!" two-day course focused on EPC products' features and benefits (required for Leader candidacy)
- "Why EPC?" three-day, competitive differentiation session focused on market, customer segments, and key competitors (recommended)

*Obtain cross-function experience*

- Work as part of a cross-functional project team or task force with a market, not internal, focus (required for Leader candidacy)
- Work in a role in another function at EPC (recommended)

*Obtain cross-geography experience (all recommended)*

- Ideal – live outside home geography for at least six months
- Helpful – work in a role with significant focus beyond home/current geography
- Key factor is to gain experience and exposure to cross-geography sales, marketing, and/or product areas

**Competencies***Interpersonal*

- Focus on the customer – make customers a primary focus of one's actions; meet customer needs; interact with customers in a fashion that can lead to a longer-term relationship
- Build positive working relationships – work effectively with others to support ongoing, productive relationships that facilitate accomplishment of goals

*Business*

- Business acumen – understand and apply financial and trend data to decisions and action planning
- Market focus – proactively seek market and industry data to inform decisions, action planning, and other efforts

*Leadership (strongly recommended for Leader-level candidacy)*

- Influencing others – use, and modify as needed, interaction style to gain agreement from others; create 'win-win' situations in dealings with others
- Results focus – set and pursue challenging, attainable goals for self and others; maintain and encourage a goal/outcome focus

**Leader**

Featured Titles – Corporate Marketing Rotation (Transitional Role),  
Sales and Marketing Manager, Business Manager

**Qualifications**

Most positions at this level require a strong cross-functional foundation. Leaders must have knowledge and experience across sales, marketing, and products. Leader candidates need not have held formal positions in each

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of the three functional areas but must have had some direct experience in each one (e.g., as part of a cross-functional team or initiative). Completing the Corporate Marketing Rotation is considered equivalent to having held an entry-level marketing position. Sales/Marketing and Business Manager positions require at least three years of experience in an Account, Channels, or Product Manager role at EPC. External candidates are considered for these roles but must complete foundational EPC training and development programs.

### *Critical Developmental Experiences (including training)*

#### *Obtain experience managing major projects*

- Act as the lead project manager for two to three large projects with direct customer/market implications (required for Senior Leader candidacy)

#### *Complete Management Foundation Series training*

- Complete all MFS courses within specific timeframes (required for Senior Leader candidacy)
- Complete additional courses as approved by managing vice president (recommended)

#### *Complete advanced financial acumen courses*

- Complete one or more courses from advanced EPC curriculum – Global Finance, Anticipating the Economy, Managing Direct vs. Indirect Revenue Channels, Advanced Profitability Targets (recommended)

### *Competencies*

#### *Interpersonal*

- Cross-cultural effectiveness – consider mores, norms and other factors when communicating and dealing with individuals from alternative cultural backgrounds
- Build trust – manage interactions with others in a way that shows respect and support and builds confidence in one's integrity

#### *Business*

- Operational execution – implement operational plans that support the attainment of goals within a broader strategy
- Strategy formulation – develop feasible, longer-term plans and courses of action to support strategic goals and the EPC mission

#### *Leadership (strongly recommended for Senior Leader candidacy)*

- Facilitate change – help individuals and groups understand and embrace change; minimize change resistance and focus on the "new state"
- Develop teams – apply appropriate leadership styles to build cohesive teams with clear goals, team charter and performance objectives

## Senior Leader

Featured Titles – Division General Manager, Vice President of Sales,  
Vice President of Marketing

### *Qualifications*

Division General Managers are required to have accrued substantial experience across the Sales, Marketing, and Product functions. Additionally, GM candidates must have completed all foundational and advanced financial acumen training. Cross-cultural experience is highly preferred for this role. Vice Presidents must have completed all foundational *and* advanced/elective training within their area of specialty (i.e., Sales or Marketing). VP positions differ in their experience requirements according to geography. All positions require a strong background across functional areas. VPs must have held a leadership role within EPC for at least six years. Typical EPC minimum tenure for a new VP is eight years.

### *Critical Developmental Experiences (all recommended for continued advancement)*

#### *Obtain strategic planning experience*

- Lead the planning of one or more strategic initiatives, including marketing, sales, product, and/or customer-focused programs
- Assume a significant role in EPC annual strategic business planning and priority setting

#### *Strategic pricing experience*

- Develop and implement pricing for strategic market segments such as Channels, Enterprise, and Global segments

#### *Manage multi-year strategic client relationships*

- Manage at least two large, multi-year engagements with strategic clients, assuming accountability for overall success of the engagement

### *Competencies*

#### *Interpersonal*

- Culture guardianship – consistently behave in a manner consistent with EPC's culture and values; encourage others to behave in a similar manner
- Develop strategic partnerships – use appropriate style and influence strategies to build and maintain relationships that facilitate the accomplishment of business goals

#### *Business*

- Strategy execution – translate strategic plans and initiatives into operational plans that can be executed across the organization

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- Market insight – continually increase knowledge of market and business drivers; apply knowledge to create new opportunities

### *Leadership*

- Develop leadership talent – identify and directly support individuals with potential to become future EPC leaders
- Visionary leadership – create and communicate a clear and compelling picture of the future for the organization; lead others in pursuit of the future state

### **International Leader and International Senior Leader**

Featured Titles – Business Manager (International), Division General Manager (International)

### *Qualifications*

International Leader and International Senior Leader roles include net new positions at EPC, Inc. Although we have similar positions in Canada and Mexico, those positions are part of North American Operations with job requirements that are very similar to leader roles in the United States. These new International roles also will have similar requirements initially but they will shift over time as our new international locations reach operating status.

At this time, the specified qualifications generally are the same as for their domestic counterparts; some geographies will have specific language proficiency requirements. One difference for these roles (including positions in these roles in Canada and Mexico) is that cross-cultural experience is required, rather than preferred, for these roles. Prior experience does not need to have taken the form of an expatriate assignment but does require experience focused on a culture other than one's own. Candidates must also have completed the EPC cross-cultural awareness program. The CDEs differ for international roles, as noted below.

### *Critical Developmental Experiences (includes training)*

(Note: Owing to space constraints, CDEs and competencies for International Leader/International Senior Leader roles are not shown on the career path diagram.)

#### *Develop cross-cultural knowledge and awareness*

- Complete cross-cultural awareness program (required of new International Leaders)
- Complete international rotation (recommended)
  - Initially within North America
  - Future opportunities in International Operations

*Complete expatriate education program*

- Combines individual and family-focused immersion orientation and education (required of new International leaders)

*Obtain global markets experience*

- Gain direct exposure to markets outside one's own country through job rotation, project experience or cross-functional role (recommended)

*Competencies*

Competencies for International leader roles are equivalent to parallel roles in North America, with the following additions:

*Interpersonal*

- Adaptability – manage one's style and approach to maintain effectiveness across varied business situations and interactions with others
- Persuasiveness – adapt communication and interaction style to influence the actions of others

*Business*

- Global acumen – understand and integrate varied sources of cultural, economic, market, industry and political data when setting strategic direction
- Resource allocation – effectively align and deploy resources to meet organizational goals

*Leadership*

- Influence – use influence strategies to communicate a position or desired outcomes to others in a manner that gains their support
- Impact – demonstrate a style consistent with the organizational culture and conveying confidence and leadership

the paths described in this guide include the five components described above and listed in the box “Fundamental Components of Career Paths.” In addition, the guide provides basic information about how to interpret and use the career paths. We will refer to this sample career path guide throughout the book.

The box below presents an EPC, Inc. overview and history. The overview briefly summarizes the history of the company, its current structure, market offerings, and culture/values, providing a context for understanding the implications of both external market factors and internal factors (e.g., company values, historical milestones) for

## Career Success Factors

At EPC, Inc., we understand that the success of our employees and the success of our company are one and the same – the Corporation cannot thrive unless our employees thrive. We offer rewarding, long-term careers with substantial potential for career growth, personal growth, and financial rewards.

Our executives have consistently stressed that passion, drive, and an ability to understand our customer's perspective are the most important factors leading to success at EPC, Inc. Those characteristics are important across the entire corporation. In addition to those factors, as part of the process of developing career paths, we looked at the applicability of three career success factors specific to the Sales, Marketing, and Products functions – breadth of knowledge and expertise, cross-geography experience, and the optimal length of time, on average, to stay in a position. These factors are discussed briefly below.

### *Breadth of knowledge and expertise*

Broad knowledge of EPC, Inc. and its products and services, coupled with deep skills in one's core function (Sales, Marketing, Products) tends to characterize persons who make it to the Senior Leader level in the sales, marketing, and products functions. To achieve this breadth, we encourage gaining cross-functions experience, cross-geography experience, cross-market knowledge and expertise, and cross-channels knowledge and expertise at the Individual Contributor level. As shown on the career path diagram, we also encourage employees transitioning into leadership roles to pursue a corporate marketing rotation.

### *Cross-geography experience*

EPC operates across many geographic regions in the United States. We also currently have operations in Canada and Mexico. Over the next five years we will become a truly global company with operations throughout the world. It always has been important for employees in the Sales, Marketing, and Products functions to gain cross-geography experience. This experience is becoming even more important as we expand our global reach. We encourage all employees to begin to gain this experience – by actively pursuing assignments and positions in different geographic regions within the United States and/or internationally – at the Individual Contributor level.

### *Optimal length of time in a position*

Analyses of human resources data and executive opinions indicate that the optimal time to stay in a given position within the Sales, Marketing, and Products functions is, on average, three to four years. Most employees make lateral moves at both the Individual Contributor and Leader levels. This movement helps to ensure breadth of experience and skills, and continued professional development. However, there is no one "right" length of time to stay in a position – your specific individual circumstances and those of your business unit drive the optimal length of time for you to stay in a given position.

career paths in EPC. The overview also summarizes current challenges and opportunities EPC is facing, and the decisions the senior leadership team has made to address these challenges and seize opportunities. As is the case with many organizations today, EPC has concluded that a significant focus on talent is needed to support its growth plans and overall strategic direction, including the development of career paths.

## EPC, Inc. Company Overview and History

*Electronic Products Corporation Incorporated*

### *EPC Overview*

- EPC, Inc. is a North American company that develops, manufactures, markets, and distributes mid-market consumer electronics.
- EPC consists of several primary product areas, including:
  - televisions and digital video players/recorders
  - home and car audio equipment
  - cameras and camcorders
  - home office equipment
  - computer processor components
  - PC-based computer games.
- Products are organized across three primary functions – Home, Office, and Entertainment.
- Each Product function is responsible for its respective Research and Development, Manufacturing, Distribution, and Customer Service.
- Marketing and Sales are currently centralized functions that operate across Products functions.
- EPC's culture has three core values:
  1. Share the IDEA – inspire and encourage innovation and collaboration
  2. WOW the customer – retain customers through quality products and superior service
  3. Grow the RIGHT business – balance growth focus with high integrity practices

### *EPC History*

#### *Early years (1986–1992)*

- Founded in 1986 by two entrepreneurs with electronics and engineering backgrounds – John Exeter and William Yosz
- Established operations with a single assembly facility in the Midwest

*Continued*

- Began with a regional focus only, quickly growing to prominence in the U.S. “heartland” and establishing distribution through Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club in addition to its own channels
- Found early market success through quality products offered at a highly competitive price and supported with strong customer service
- Structured and managed like a more traditional, hierarchical organization with John as the conservative president of the organization and William as the dynamic driver of the sales and marketing functions

*Growth years (1993–2002)*

- Expanded across the entire United States including expansion of assembly capacity to meet rising production demands
  - opened seven new production facilities in the United States and one in Canada in 1998
- Consolidated position as one of the leaders in lower-cost consumer electronics products
- Competition and market pressure increased as foreign competitors increased their U.S.-based production and distribution, reducing their costs and holding prices relatively steady
- John passed away suddenly and William assumed control of the entire organization, revitalizing the entrepreneurial spirit of the company
- Industry competition spurred investment into new markets; rapid expansion of Sales and Marketing division under William’s leadership
- EPC shifted to a matrix organization structure and operating model

*Recent years (2003–present)*

- Market share begins a slow but steady decline in the United States as the market becomes increasingly crowded and competitive
- Decision made to expand into Mexico in 2003 is enormously successful with innovative marketing campaign in Latin cultures
- Marketing function becomes much more influential
- Sales function expands greatly
- Product function continues to diversify with increased number of specializations
- U.S. Operations and North American Operations continue to emerge as parallel but increasingly distinct structures
- EPC entered the PC gaming market in 2003

*Current Challenges and Opportunities*

In September 2007, William Yosz convened his senior leadership team for a pivotal three-day meeting (referred to as “The Summit”) to conduct a detailed review of EPC’s strategic priorities and determine changes needed to regain the high growth trajectory of EPC. The following key challenges and opportunities were identified:

- Leadership bench is very thin with little internal talent ready to ascend to higher levels

- Significant internal challenges resulting from the emergence of political infighting and power struggles, turf wars, and unfocused strategies
- International competitors dramatically impacting market share and exponential growth needed to maintain market share
- EPC is having difficulty retaining young professionals – losing talent to new high-tech start-ups
- Product development and marketing coordination problematic at times
- Market trends and financial analyses confirm that emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, and India represent greater growth opportunities than the North American market can provide

### *Future Outlook*

As a result of The Summit, EPC made several strategic and operational decisions, most notably to rapidly and aggressively expand its international presence. International Operations has been formed as a parallel to the existing North American Operations. Both Operations comprise the global EPC, Inc.

The company plans to open twelve new operating locations outside North America within the next three years. Each of these locations will support EPC's full operational model – assembly, packaging, distribution, and service. Marketing, Sales, and Products functions also will be represented at each location. This planned expansion will affect every function and operation within the organization and draw heavily on the strong culture to ensure success.

Key execution points resulting from the decision include a focus on talent. EPC wants to address its growing leadership gap as quickly as possible. In addition to auditing existing talent to identify potential new leaders, the company also is revising its talent development strategies to support its new strategic direction.

## **The Goal of This Book**

In this book, we demonstrate that career paths are the centerpiece of effective talent management systems, and highly useful mechanisms for realizing organizations' strategic human capital visions. We illustrate how career paths can be used to bring together individual career development, education and training, recruitment, hiring, retention, workforce planning, and succession management in a manner that ensures that individual and organizational needs and goals are met, and that enhances the potential of individuals and their effectiveness within organizations.



Figure 1.1 Career Paths: The Centerpiece of Effective Talent Management Systems

The purpose of this book is to provide practical advice to business leaders, human resource professionals, industry representatives, educators, and training and development professionals about how to construct career paths, and how to use them to maximize individual and organizational potential. Our description of procedures for constructing career paths in Chapter 3 assumes that you are, or will be, conducting a project to develop career paths. However, even if your career path development efforts do not involve a formal project, it will still be useful to follow the basic steps outlined in this book. The approach offered here is both research-based and informed by career path development and implementation projects in many organizations. It focuses not only on the design and construction of career paths, but also on how you can use career paths integrate a variety of human capital systems and processes to achieve valued business outcomes.

This book has three goals:

1. Show you how to construct career paths.
2. Demonstrate how career paths can be used by to maximize individual and organizational potential.
3. Provide practical advice about how to use career paths to achieve important business outcomes by integrating them into a variety of human capital processes and systems.

## Overview

The purpose of this book is to show you how your organization can design and use career paths. Chapters 2 and 3 provide conceptual and practical toolkits for constructing career paths. The conceptual toolkit presented in Chapter 2 includes a model showing facets of career paths and how they are used for a variety of purposes and at a variety of points across the span of a career (including organizational recruitment/entry, ongoing training and development, leader identification and development, strategic workforce planning, organizational retention and exit). The practical toolkit presented in Chapter 3 discusses information sources and methods for designing career paths, provides a step-by-step guide for you to use in constructing career paths that include the five career path components shown in the box “Fundamental Components of Career Paths,” and includes implementation tips that will ensure that the career paths you develop are useful – and used. It shows how you can use information about past career patterns, the present reality, and an organization’s vision for the future to develop career paths, and describes how the purpose of the career path development effort drives the relative emphasis on past patterns, present reality, and future vision.

The next two chapters provide information about the practical uses of career paths for organizations, and include tools and tips for building comprehensive talent management systems with career paths as their centerpiece. Chapter 4 provides information about how career paths can be used by organizations for recruitment, selection, and promotion, how to improve employee retention using career paths, and how to integrate career paths into employee training and development systems. Chapter 5 describes how you can use career

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paths to enhance strategic workforce planning, the early identification and development of talent for the future, and succession management.

In Chapter 6 we look at career paths from a different angle, and describe the uses of career paths from the industry and economic development perspectives. Chapter 6 describes how you can use career paths to attract candidates to promising careers in industries and to align the efforts of partners from industry, government, and education to maximize the return on investment in regional education and economic development initiatives. In Chapter 6 we also discuss how analyses of occupational requirements can be used to build career paths that include multiple occupations.

The final chapter of the book, entitled “Looking to the Future,” discusses the impact of four sets of trends on the career paths of the future. These include demographics, technology, globalization and changing organizational structures, and changing definitions of career success.