



Finding *or* Falling *into a* Career

How We Shape Our Own Futures

By Deedee Myers

An Easy Recruit

Rising early this morning to write about recruitment and retention I had a flash back to seeing my eldest son the day he came home to tell me he was “recruited” to join the U.S. Army. Walking down the hall to turn on the coffee pot my memory of him those eight years ago is as vivid as if it was just yesterday. His large brown eyes were alive with excitement; he couldn’t even come close to stop smiling in the weeks before departing for boot camp. His body was ready to go, go, go and there was no turning back. Michael knew what he wanted and was ready to show up “big” for his new employer.

Mike was an easy recruit for the armed services. As a young boy he always knew what he wanted and he practiced for that until the day came he could start living it.

Many of us start out in the world with careers that just “find us” or that we “fall into”, or we needed a job and years later here we are doing what we do. In some ways, the career defines who we are and how we move in the world at home,



work and in the community.

Recruitment and retention is the expression of the same activity: finding and sustaining unique talents to serve others. Organizations identify how they will make a difference through strategic plans, and the most important aspect of fulfilling those commitments is recruiting the right people to get “on the bus”. Matching those talents to the organization’s commitments creates sustainability; employees who can express their gifts in service want to stay put.

Are We the Same Person at Home?

Some believe in the need to segment work from home in that we have different behaviors, values and emotional responses from one environment to the other. When I hear

others speak like this it generates concern in me for who we believe we can be as human beings and how we step into those lives. Fundamentally, what are we teaching our children and the younger work generation? Are we advocating that we need to be two different people in one body? What stress does this create in us and what is the impact on leadership?

Somehow, over the years we shape ourselves to the environment and slowly leave behind bits and pieces of our authenticity. Does our employer hire the real **you** or just the part they want for a specific role? Where do we put the part of us that we leave behind everyday? In our car in the parking lot? Or, outside the door as we walk in every morning? At home in the driveway to greet us as we return home? Years later, we wonder why we are tired, what happened to the passion, or what died in us.

The culture of the organization shapes the performance of the employees. The culture is defined through the values and behavior of the executive leadership. This is vastly different than the words written in a mission statement or how we articulate in writing our core values. How

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employees respond to issues, manage breakdowns, vision the future and move strategically directly stems from the observable behavior of the executive team starting with the CEO. The CEOs' commitment to authenticity impacts how employees consciously or unconsciously decide to show up.

What would the world be like if we all showed up at work everyday and believed we could be who we really are, to live in our full potential? How would we better serve our members if we brought forth our full self in values, beliefs and calling within the work place?

Dictionary.com defines “recruitment” as to “strengthen, to engage, to enroll, to renew or restore the health, vitality or intensity of...”

As I write these words my curiosity flashes to our own executive recruitment service for financial institutions and the challenge of ensuring that every placement adds value to both the candidate and organization; that every new hire is a form of renewal for both the employee and employer. This aspect of recruitment is the most difficult and the longest sustaining; if the hire is wrong it generates an outcome where multitudes of people are impacted and it takes, on average, up to two years to recover from a bad hire.

What Wants to Happen?

Recruitment and retention in their ultimate forms are key success factors for organizations that live and embody their strategic plans. Discussions and dialogues, around recruitment and retention, focus on what wants to happen, what needs to happen in the organization in order to best serve members while remaining safe and sound. This strategy is different than hiring a “resume” as it encourages the evaluation and assessment of what the role needs in expertise, values, behavior, personal mastery and emotional intelligence. For example, if the job could talk what would it say?

Here is a structure for dialogue among stakeholders to articulate what the role needs for both recruitment and

retention. For the sake of this example, the role is a Vice President of Branch Operations. Here is a starter set of questions:

1. How will this role add value to the organization today?
In three years?
2. Who will be served by this role both internal and external to the organization?
Be sure that your stakeholders extend possibilities in their response to this question. Rather than respond with a generic “All employees will be served”, be more specific and rigorous.
Segment the internal populations as each employee group has unique requirements. There is a distinction in language and what it produces. Branch Managers, Marketing, Call Centers, Human Resources, Member Services, Employee Development and Training have their individual needs that may or may not be the same as the entire employee population. External population groups served may be facility vendors, maintenance providers, security and the community.
3. What competencies are required to serve in this role?
Education, expertise, leadership, emotional intelligence, preferred behavior patterns and other attributes of personal mastery such as Conflict Management, Coaching, Flexibility, Problem Solving and others. There are good tools available to assess what competencies are required for the role and which ones are mastered by employees or candidates.
4. How will performance be assessed? What will feedback look like? How will the employee know she/he is successful? Who is accountable for helping the candidate or incumbent succeed?

Generative Feedback

Dynamic and generative feedback is a powerful way to increase retention. As human beings it is meaningful for us to know that we are adding value and showing up in a way that is needed and expected. Annual performance reviews are not the ideal structure or timeframe to communicate observable and measurable behavior. We need to know

more than once a year that we are meaningfully adding to the value of the organization, that we can be authentic, and how we can most effectively put our talents in service.

Teams that give and receive assessments, both positive and critical, embody a greater desire to fulfill on commitments. If assessments are primarily and frequently negative our core strengths will be minimized which is counterproductive. As managers we should spend a few minutes each month sharing what we saw that was critical to success and to do a “check-in” with our employee. This check in might sound like this: “Matt, I see that you have been diligently working to complete the system conversion. Let’s do a check in. How is it going for you?” Your purpose, at this point is to listen actively.

Leadership or Career Development Plans are a powerful way to engage employees in their own path to success. They are initially written in coordination with strategic planning with emphasis on required competencies for success. Quarterly check-ins, updates and modifications are influencing factors for retention. Ongoing development is accomplished through commitment and purpose; it is not accidental. Leadership starts from within; if we can lead ourselves then we will be successful in leadership of others. This level of leadership will have greater success in an organization with a CEO dedicated to authenticity.

As I complete this writing I am reminded of the tours my son, Michael, had in Bosnia, Korea and Iraq. The smile and passion are still very much a part of his life story, but he is a different person than the one who left for boot camp eight years ago. He has a greater understanding of leadership and how important it is to be self-generative. ♦

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