Value-able Portfolios: Wedding Individual and Organizational Career Development

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Introduction

This article will outline the Value-able Portfolio, which combines economic value with organizational values to benefit individuals and organizations. The portfolio is developed with the assistance of monthly career coaching. The current portfolio was designed for supervisors and managers at Seagram’s Gimli plant.

Background

Three factors lead to the development of the current Value-able Portfolio.

Career literature

The career literature of the 1990s has outlined the changing workplace and the need to combine career and organizational development. The Value-able Portfolio is a practical application that addresses many of the issues and developments outlined in this literature. Drucker (1999) argued how important it is to determine our strengths and manage our careers. From a slightly different perspective, Riddle (1998) also outlined the importance of managing our own career rather than having our career managed by external events. Copithorne (1999) made a convincing case for the place of career development in organizations. Bernes and Magnusson (1999) outlined the need for career development to meet the needs of both individuals and organizations. The Value-able Portfolio is a practical tool that enables these career concepts to come alive and assists individuals in their own career development within their organization.

Portfolio presentations

The author’s three elementary-school-age children present their learning portfolios twice a year. They are responsible for their own learning, demonstrating their learning, and evaluating their learning. This is a powerful model in education, yet it is a model with which many adults are unfamiliar. The Value-able Portfolio addresses the gap in many adults’ ways of working and helps them to take more control of their own careers. The Value-able Portfolio effectively empowers employees to be responsible for their own careers and ensures that their career development is also beneficial to their organizations.

Employee-assistance counselling model

The author has offered independent employee-assistance counselling at Seagram for the past 17 years. He is not an employee of this organization. This same model of employee assistance seemed to have application to career development
coaching. The relationship is confidential, individuals feel free to talk about all elements of their career, and any dual roles between coach and manager are eliminated.

**Portfolio benefits**

The portfolio benefits individuals and organizations.

**Individual benefits of the portfolio include:**

1. Intensive reflective and proactive career development
2. Focused efforts on contributing to organizational values
3. Increased facility with financial concepts of the organization
4. Increased control over performance evaluations and reviews
5. Biweekly monitoring and recording of work contributions and career development
6. Readiness for opportunities and change

**Organizational benefits of the portfolio include:**

1. A comprehensive method to help individuals determine their fit within the organization
2. Expert career coaching of individuals, relieving busy managers of the task
3. An employee benefit that can assist in recruitment and retention
4. A method to ensure that organization value is achieved through organizational values
5. Individuals highly focused on adding value to their organization
6. Biweekly monitoring, measuring, and planning of individual work efforts

**Portfolio format**

The portfolio can be represented in two formats. The first, is a three-ring binder to keep paper records of all work and career development. The second format uses documents created with Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Participants are encouraged to keep records of their work in both formats to prevent loss of data.

**Portfolio structure**

The portfolio structure includes four sections.

**Presentation papers**

The first section is the concise presentation, containing documents to be left with a manager after a portfolio presentation. They may also be used in job search or career advancement. The first part of the presentation section is a one-
page executive summary of the portfolio. The second part is a six- to ten-minute PowerPoint presentation of the portfolio. The third part is an outline and assessment of individual, process, project, team, and/or department economic value contributions. The fourth part is an overview of the individual contributions to organizational values.

Biweekly career journal
The second section of the portfolio is a two-page biweekly career journal. Participants use the journal to assess performance on organizational and individual values. Seagram has articulated six organizational values: consumer and customer focus, respect, integrity, teamwork, innovation, and quality. Participants rate themselves on each of the values and record anecdotal documentation for each rating. They are also encouraged to identify two of their personal values and monitor their performance on these values.

The next part of the journal focuses on performance contributions. Participants assess current and proposed contributions. In addition they examine the potential and actual economic value of these contributions. For example, they may evaluate a training course they are planning to take by weighing the total costs of the course against the estimated economic benefits.

Working papers
The third section of the journal is composed of working papers, which range from organizational mission and value statements to job descriptions and an organizational chart. Participants may use spreadsheets or databases to track projects or calculate financial elements of their work.

Additional career resources
The last section contains additional career resources, which include a current résumé. Participants may store copies of articles and other information relevant to career and career development in this section. For example, participants are encouraged to read relevant career articles. One source of career articles that has been used extensively is from the Fast Company Online Archives (www.fastcompany.com).

Coaching process
There are five steps in the portfolio coaching process
1. Potential participants attend a workshop on the changing workplace and the benefits of using a portfolio to manage their career. Participants may engage in a case study to examine how a fictitious individual manages a work-related career crisis. At the end of the session attendees are invited to commit to a one-year period of portfolio development and career coaching.

2. After the workshop, willing participants receive one-on-one coaching. These sessions occur about once a month. In addition, individuals are encouraged to contact their coach at any time if they have concerns or questions. The first few sessions are used to develop the initial components of the portfolio and to determine how the portfolio can be individualized to best meet the needs of each participant.

3. The second series of sessions begin with a general discussion of the previous month. The individual and the coach review the biweekly career journals and examine the value and values contributions. Additional goals are set for the coming month. Assigned career reading is discussed, with emphasis on practical application of the concepts to the person’s own career. Later, new reading material is suggested or distributed, and the session ends with a general evaluation of the coaching and the portfolio.

4. Final sessions before the end of the year prepare the individual for the portfolio presentation. An appointment is made to present the portfolio to the participant’s manager.

5. At the end of the year and after the portfolio presentation, participant and coach determine what additional work may be needed. By now most participants are able to work on the portfolio with very little coaching. Some participants may wish to maintain the coaching relationship, while others opt to seek coaching only if needed or to contact the coach occasionally by phone or email.

**Discussion**

This article has sketched a process used by the author to foster career development for individuals and organizations. The process continues to be modified and refined. The portfolio requires a lot of work, and some individuals may not be willing
to commit to this level of work on their own career. It is important that managers and supervisors be invited to participate in the process and can choose not to be involved.

Because of the depth and breadth of the work required by an individual, the author has found that the portfolio works best when it is combined with coaching. The coach keeps participants focused and helps them manage difficulties experienced during the year. Coaching also helps individuals sort out issues that may arise related to career development, such as contemplating a career change or value conflicts.

**Future directions**

The Value-able portfolio is now moving to its next phase. It is being offered to all managers and supervisors at the Seagram plant in Gimli. A simpler version of the portfolio is being developed for all employees. The author is also working at offering the portfolio to other organizations and developing a course at the University of Manitoba focused on coaching, counselling, and the Value-able Portfolio. With extensive use of the Internet, a new format based on individual Web pages may supplant or supplement the current portfolio formats.

**Conclusion**

This article has outlined one method of using career development to wed the individual and the organization. We need to weave career development into the fabric of daily working to ensure that individuals know their true value and real values. This can help individuals stay prepared for any career change initiated by their workplace, the global economy, or themselves.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


