INDUSTRY | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Select the best distributors and reduce attrition by Assessment & Career Planning

What can we in the network marketing industry learn from one of the top career assessment leaders who has developed the system IBM adopted…? Read on.

by **Frank J. Minor, Ph.D**

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The Problem Area: Selection and Attrition of Down-Line Distributors

Attrition is a serious problem in the field of Network Marketing. According to David A. Nelson, (*The Theory of Network Marketing*, TheNetworkMarketingMagazine.com, May 2006), the attrition rate of distributors runs between 80 and 90 percent.

> ***It's critical for your business success that you choose your down-line distributors carefully in order to reduce the numbers of short tenure business partners.***

Attrition is costly to your company because of the investment of your time and resources required to train and support your distributors during the first 6 or so months of their tenure. It also translates to a loss of potential income and creates a poor image of the business thereby discouraging talented candidates from entering the field. Your objective as a company leader is to select those down-line distributors from your pool of candidates who show the greatest promise to succeed, which in turn will reduce your attrition rate and enhance your company's productivity.

A Solution: Career Assessment & Career Planning Tools for New Recruits

There is a proven way to select the best candidates for a job and to reduce attrition that has been used for many years in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM). It's easier than testing, because it's built right into the recruitment process and places the initial responsibility for the "accept or reject the offer" decision on the candidate. Many organizations and HRM consultants have adopted this concept of candidate "self-selection" during the early stages of recruitment, assessment and selection through the use of computer-assisted career assessment and planning systems.

> ***These systems enable the recruits to self-assess their personal qualities and automatically compare their assessment results with the requirements and demands of network marketing.***

This process helps you screen out candidates who are most likely to be poor performers and early quitters in 2 ways. First, those candidates who perceive a mismatch, and do not find your program attractive will correctly reject the opportunity to join your organization. Secondly, for those candidates who elect to proceed with the evaluation of your offer, you have the advantage of reviewing the results of their assessments and accepting those whose profiles are most compatible with the demands and work methods of Network Marketing.

It is proposed that your Network Marketing Company adopt the use of a computer-assisted career assessment and career planning system for the recruitment and selection of new persons for your business. This process really works and will increase the probability that you get the very best distributors. Additionally, it will demonstrate to the public that you are using high quality human resource management practices to bring new people into the Network Marketing field which will contribute to a positive image for your company.

The best designed systems use a comprehensive approach to career decision making. While Self- Assessment is the starting point for career decision making, it is also the basis for the self-management of one's career and adapting to changes in one's personal life or changes in one's job. For that reason, it is important to you as a company leader to have a good understanding of the overall process of career planning and how it fits into the grand scheme of a person's life style and life plan. A description of the overall process of computer-assisted career assessment and career development planning is described below.

The Computer Assisted Career Assessment & Planning Process

The accepted approach and model used in the field of career development planning and the self-management of one's career is well documented and has been universally implemented by career services centers operated by the US Department of Labor, Human Resources Management specialists, colleges, and high schools throughout the USA. The computer-based systems described in this article use the very same career planning model that can be described as follows:

1. Self-Assessment: Understanding yourself is the most critical aspect of exploring options and making decisions about your field of work and your personal growth and development. Your level of success and achievement, job satisfaction and sense of fulfillment are dependent upon the degree of compatibility between your personal attributes and the qualities demanded by the occupation.

The first step is the Self-Assessment of your personal attributes. The self-assessment factors that have been adopted in these systems include:

- *Interests:* Activities you most enjoy. These are a reflection of your abilities since you tend to enjoy what you can best do.
- *Values:* What's important to you in life, e g., Prestige, Earnings, Helping Others, Creativity, etc.
- *Personality Type:* How you react to certain situations, how you make decisions, how you go about solving problems, and how you organize information and facts.
- *Skills & Abilities:* Specific tasks that you are able to perform proficiently

- *Leisure Time interests*: Activities that you enjoy doing during your free time.
- *Education Level & Study Areas*: Earned degrees or certificates and the subject areas you have mastered

2. Matching your Self-Assessment Results with Occupation Profiles
The system next enables you to automatically compare your self-assessment results with the occupational requirements for every meaningful occupation that has been identified by the US Department of Labor including all marketing/sales/entrepreneurial jobs found in Network Marketing.

3. Exploration of career fields and occupations: Once you have identified which occupations and career paths best match your self-assessment results, you next survey the options and learn about the nature of the work performed in those occupations. This exploratory process helps you broaden your career horizons and recognize that you are multi-potential and have personal attributes that enable you to consider a wide range of career fields and occupations. It gives you an objective opportunity to learn about the occupation.

4. Crystallization: This step involves the narrowing down of your options and making a decision of whether or not to accept or reject an occupation. This is done by making comparisons of the occupations under consideration that in terms of the nature of the work, the employment setting, the earnings, the opportunities for advancement, the qualifications needed the training and skills requirements, and the types of companies that offer job opportunities in this field.

5. Decision Making: Once you have decided to focus on a specific occupation and career path its time to create a course of action to achieve your goals. If Network Marketing is the choice, it's important to identify companies that have the best potential to meet your needs and preferences. This includes a consideration of the type of products to be marketed, the work methods, the training and support you need, work hours, etc.

6. Search for self-improvement opportunities that will satisfy your long term personal development goals. Such searches would include continuing education programs, professional conferences, internships, financial aid, scholarships, certification and licensing opportunities.

Computer-Based Systems your Company can use for Career Assessment & Planning

There are several systems available that companies and individuals can use to guide a person through the career assessment and planning process. Several examples of on-line, internet based systems are listed below that can be used on any PC or MAC anywhere, any time. Simply login and try out one of these systems that have been developed, researched and supported by the Career Dimensions Company.

- ***"My Golden Career"*** designed for use by adults considering a career change, moms returning to the work place, and persons planning a retirement avocation. My Golden Career is used by a wide range of Human Resource Management consulting firms and private career-life coaches and is available on the internet at www.mygoldencareer.com

- ***The FOCUS Career & Education Planning System*** designed for use by either college students who have not yet decided upon a career path and a major area of study or for use by adults in career transition. FOCUS is in use by over 800 organizations and colleges across the USA and is available on the internet at www.focuscareer.com

- ***"My Career Profile System (MCP)*** designed for use by high school students in grades 7 through 12. The system provides students with self-assessments, career and education exploration and planning and a college search function enabling them to find colleges and training institutes that offer the training programs needed to support their goals and their personal preferences. The MCP system is used by high schools, private college and career advisors, and community career services centers. MCP is available on the internet at www.careerdimension.com

Well known organizations that have used these systems include the IBM Corporation, Bayer Pharmaceutical Company, US Army, Air Force Exchange Service, State of Michigan Civil Services as well as a wide range of Human Resource Management consulting firms, Life-Career coaches, and government agencies

Is There Any Evidence That These Systems Are Helpful?

Published research studies (*Field evaluation of a computer-based career planning system. Journal of Career Development, 18, 1991 pg 111-122 by F. J. Minor)*. evaluating the effectiveness of the systems described above show that the workers in career transition who use the system enjoy the following advantages:

- Have a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of their career relevant personal qualities.
- Set more realistic career, education and training objectives.
- Make wiser choices of jobs, internships, assignments that better match their personal qualities
- Become more "adaptable" and able to make adjustments in response to changes in their personal life or work situation.

Are These Systems Reputable?

National surveys of career counselors conducted and reported by the University of Michigan, the National Association of Colleges & Employers, and the American Psychological Association, show that Career Dimensions has the "most preferred system, easiest to use, most liked by users, and most affordable". These systems are certified as meeting the highest level of standards of the Association for Computer-Based Career Information Systems (ACSCI) and comply with standards established by the National Career Development Association and the U.S Department of Labor.

Who Developed These Systems?

All three above described systems are derivatives of the *IBM Corporation's Employee Development Planning System (EDPS*), designed for use by adults in career transition and the *IBM Education & Career Exploration System (ECES*) designed for use by students. These systems were designed under the guidance of nationally prominent career development educators from *Columbia University and Harvard University.* The initial launch of the IBM systems was sponsored by *The Charles Stuart Mott Foundation (General Motors Corporation)*

Conclusions

You company can significantly increase it's productivity, earnings and image by adopting the use of computer-assisted career assessment and career planning systems for the recruitment and selection of your down-

line distributors. These systems are inexpensive to use and can be implemented without adding any new administrate or clerical tasks to your workload. Your use of a career assessment and planning system will actually attract more of the kind of distributors you want for your business because they recognize you are objectively helping them make sound and valid decisions about their career and life style

How you can use the Career Assessment & Planning System named *"My Golden Career"*

1. Persons who wish to use "*My Golden Career*" on the Internet can Login at www.mygoldencareer.com
2. Any person referred to *My Golden Career* through the Network Marketing Magazine is entitled to a 20% discount off the usage fee by registering with the Discount Code as follows: networkmag
3. Summary Results reports for anyone who uses *My Golden Career System* are available to that person and also to the appropriate company leader who sponsored the person.

A Final Note of Advice You Can Give To Your Distributor Candidates

It's wise to plan your career based on the big picture, that is, your ***life plan***. You must ask yourself, what kind of life do I want to lead? As you can imagine, your career decisions will dramatically impact your lifestyle in terms of *where you live, your income, how much time you spend at home, your work hours, your travels, job security, your choice of work associates and friends, and how you spend your leisure time.*

Questions You Need To Ask Yourself About Your Life Plan:
What principles am I committed to as a person... family, security, accomplishments, etc.?

What kind of rewards do I seek from my work... high earnings, status, power, prestige?

What kinds of experiences do I want in my life? adventure, cultural, learning.... etc.?

What personal talents do I want to develop? ....fine arts, knowledge, able to teach others.., etc.?

How do you like to spend your leisure time? .... family events, travel, community services, recreation, sports, etc.

Self- manage your career throughout your life-----Be Adaptable
Periodically dust off your career plans, take stock of yourself and what's happening in your life, and then make adjustments in your career as needed. Such adjustments are natural due to changes in your job demands, or changes in your interests, or in your social or family life. It takes a certain amount of adaptability to make career adjustments in such a way that you are not simply reacting to some crisis, but are being proactive or forward-looking. We know from experience that people make adjustments in their career as a result of shifts in their responsibilities as they progress through their life- stages and their roles as a wage earner, homemaker, parent, community citizen, and recreationist. In summary, be adaptable so that when appropriate, you can find a balance between your career and shifts in your responsibilities and lifestyle.

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Dr. Minor held the position of IBM Corporation Senior Psychologist and Director of Systems Development for Career Planning and Education. While in that IBM position, Frank originated and developed the computer-based IBM Employee Development Planning system (EDPS) for use by workers in career transition and the IBM Education and Career Exploration System (ECES) for use by high school students in cooperation with prominent educators and theorists from Columbia University and Harvard University. Frank is the founder and CEO of Career Dimensions Inc. which develops on-line interactive career and education planning systems for use by workers in career transition and for high school and college students. Dr Minor is Professor Emeritus of Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire and was Adjunct Professor at Columbia University Teachers College Graduate Studies and at Pace University Graduate School. He authored and co-authored numerous professional journal articles and textbook chapters in the field of career and education development planning and counseling.

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