



## Outsourced Career Assessment and Planning Center Results in ROI of 400 Percent

Most successful companies implement a career development process to identify, attract, develop and retain top talent in our competitive environment. Usually these programs are organization centered, focusing on the developmental needs and assignments the organization determines are best for those identified as high potentials. Often overlooked are the aspirations, preferences, and job satisfaction of the individuals themselves. Frequently organizations invest heavily in the development of individuals, only to lose them to other organizations because these high potential employees are dissatisfied with their current jobs or what they perceive as their career options. It is much more effective to make sure that the organization's and the individual's goals are aligned.

In 2002, Lockheed Martin – Missiles and Fire Control (LMMFC) in Dallas, faced with a competitive labor market, decided to implement a Career Assessment and Planning Center (CAP Center) to help attract and retain high potential talent. The two primary goals of building a career center within Lockheed Martin were to help high potential employees develop their careers and to retain high potential employees and technical staff who were not satisfied and/or were looking elsewhere for employment.

Within career development lie several factors, none less critical than creating a dedicated career center to optimize

job satisfaction and increase engagement for the high potential employee while also serving as a “perk” to attract new talent. Employees want to know they are important and a career center makes a strong statement that the company is invested in providing them with career management tools.

Many career centers spend money developing people in areas where they really do not want to be, using a different approach the focus of this center was on individuals by helping them decide what they wanted to do by assessing their preferences, leadership strengths and development needs. The coaches provided feedback from an objective perspective and provided coaching and an action plan, empowering employees with the ability to get where they wanted to be. The second objective, retaining high potentials and technical staff that were at risk of leaving the company was achieved by giving the employees a safe outlet to discuss their concerns and providing coaching to help them see their options within the company.

The Lockheed Martin Career Assessment & Planning Center engaged 132 clients (Lockheed Martin employees) during its first year and realized an increased productivity in all areas. Eleven of those employees were at high risk for leaving the organization, but were saved as a result of the program.

### CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE

#### CONCEPT:

Design and outsource a comprehensive career and assessment center to assist in the career development and professional growth of high potential leaders and to help retain high potential employees & technical staff.

#### OBJECTIVE:

- Design a comprehensive career and assessment center
- Staff with leadership development consultants and an administrative assistant
- Establish a performance measure for return-on-investment analysis
- Include a virtual career and assessment center portal.
- Create a roll-out plan for the high potentials and the greater organization

#### RESULTS:

The Career and Assessment Center was a great success with a fully booked schedule from the first day. It has seen success for the entire 6 years that it has been open. Return-on-Investment initiative proved a minimum of 5 times (400%) within the first 12 months. The company has now opened the career and assessment center to all employees.

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The following is a sampling of the employees saved during the first year.

**Promotion to Director**

- Employee had lost enthusiasm, suffered from burn out and apathy
- Questioned whether they were in the right field
- Employee engaged and made a decision to accept a director level position

**Manager Level**

- Thinking of leaving the company and was actively pursuing positions in other companies
- Employee engaged and decided to concentrate his future efforts on Lockheed Martin

“Before visiting the career center my perception of career development was the creation of a wish list of lofty, idealistic goals that, although admirable, were unobtainable. My career coach changed my perspective. As a result of working my action plan, exciting opportunities that previously seemed remote have materialized. Thanks to the career center, I was prepared to meet these new challenges.”

*HR Director*

**Program Manager**

- Frustrated and angry over reorganization fallout and looking externally for other positions.
- Employee worked through emotions
- Found new excitement for possibilities within Lockheed Martin.
- Decided to stay and actively sought promotion

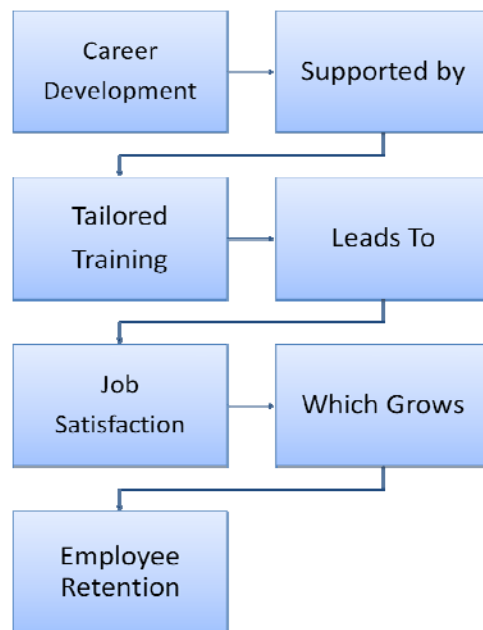
**Engineer**

- Employee felt stuck and thinking it necessary to change career paths
- Employee reached a new level of self-awareness and made the decision to stay at Lockheed

**Why Use an External Vendor**

Additional values of an outsourced Career & Assessment center:

1. External consultants often have more credibility. EDA provides Master’s and Ph.D. level **Professional Career Coaches** with backgrounds in psychology and experience in organizational development.
2. Provides the clients with an **objective external**



**perspective.** External consultants can share with them what they have seen with other people in similar positions and how others grew professionally. They also share the benefits of working for the company and help them understand that the “grass is greener where it is watered, not on the other side of the fence.”

3. Outsourced CAP Center employees are able to **focus solely on the job at hand** and are not tied up with internal meetings and administration because they have no other internal commitments except to help the CAP Center clients.
4. **Complete confidentiality**, where even the Managers and Directors who come through the CAP Center feel safe in their ability to share their issues and know that consultants are not influenced by internal politics.
5. Offers a **neutral voice** when clients are angry or frustrated.
6. Show clients that early promotions based on functional and technical knowledge often do not continue once they hit the management ranks. The **skills at this level are different** and must be learned and groomed. The CAP Center helps them find the gaps between where they are and where they want to be.
7. The Center encourages people to apply for internal positions and shows them how to do it.
8. Reduces potential legal actions by helping clients work through anger and pursue **non-legal** resolutions to the following:
  - Sexual harassment, EEOC issues, and Wrongful termination

### Career Center Design Process:

- Meet with key stakeholders to determine criteria for success
- Assist in the layout of the physical space where the CAP Center located
- Design a best practice model for assessment and development of the high potentials
- Research, source, and tailor a technology portal to serve as the virtual career and assessment center
- Design a return-on-investment survey to be provided on a test – retest basis with each candidate at the beginning and end of the set of six to eight sessions
- Staff the center with high level consultants and an administrative assistant
- Roll out with a company President ribbon-cutting session to show stakeholder support

Lockheed Martin's key stakeholders made a conscientious effort to focus on optimizing their employee's opportunities for professional advancement when they decided to outsource a career assessment and planning center. By taking the lead and offering comprehensive support in the career development arena, they not only helped to maximize their staff's effectiveness, job satisfaction, and long-term success, but also boosted retention and encouraged organizational commitment and job loyalty.

Career development is a powerful employee motivator and retention tool, not to mention a competitive strength when it comes to attracting new talent -- all of which can have a profound impact on your company's bottom line.

Workers are more productive and more likely to stick around when they believe they are valued by their employers. Discerning candidates are more attracted to organizations with a reputation for encouraging employees' professional development.

Lockheed Martin was able to boost workplace morale by honing employees' skill sets to improve performance in their current positions and prepare them for their next move within the company. It also provided an opportunity for the company to strengthen skills that supported its key business objectives.



*“external consultant can manage to affect...the power structure in a way that most internal agents cannot.” Since experts from outside are less subject to the politics and motivations found within the organization, they can be more effective in facilitating significant and meaningful changes. –Bennis, W., Organization Development: Its nature, origin and prospects. Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA 1969, p*



### About Executive Development Associates:

Since 1982 **Executive Development Associates** has been a leader in creating custom-designed leader development and talent management strategies, systems and programs that help organizations build the capabilities needed to achieve their strategic objectives. EDA pioneered the use of executive development to help organizations successfully address their marketplace challenges and accelerate the execution of their business strategy.

We work in partnership with our clients to create measurable improvements in both individual performance and business outcomes. EDA has worked with many of the world's most recognizable organizations around the world.

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