CHAPTER 3

CAREER STRATEGIES
WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T?

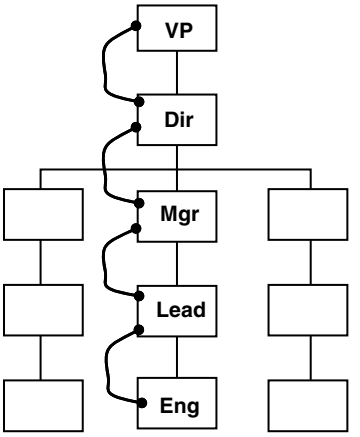
In this chapter, you will begin to map out a career strategy to obtain the goals identified in the previous chapter. There are many career strategies discussed in this chapter. Your challenge is to identify which career strategy you are going to use for achieving your career advancement. All of these strategies work and have been utilized by engineers to achieve their career goals. These strategies only work when combined with hard work and excellent performance. The strategies fall apart when the engineer does not fill the basic requirement of excellent performance on the job. Even though you may have an excellent strategic career plan, it is no guarantee for advancement. Good career plans can sometimes lead to failure; in this chapter we also discuss what doesn't work, so you can avoid these costly mistakes.

One of the first things to consider in developing your career strategy is your overall philosophy on your employment. Your options are to develop a career strategy based on the philosophy to work for the same company for your entire career versus a philosophy of moving from company to company to attain career advancement. The career option of remaining with the same company, in the same department for your entire career is what I refer to as the "One Department for Your Career Strategy."

DEVOTED TO ONE DEPARTMENT FOR YOUR CAREER STRATEGY

This career strategy is shown in Figure 3-1. As you grow and mature and are promoted, you always remain in the same group or department of the same company. This is becoming a very rare event lately due to all the company buyouts, workforce reductions, and short product life cycles. However, I have also witnessed this career strategy work successfully. I have

The Engineer's Career Guide. By John A. Hoschette



- **Remain in the same company and group for your entire career**
- **Becoming a very rare event**
- **Best retirement benefits**
- **Requires patience and ability to handle ups and downs of product and technology cycles**
- **Depends upon group attrition for advancement**
- **Requires one to constantly outperform outsiders**

FIGURE 3-1 Remain in one department for career strategy.

met people who have been with the same group and product area for over 30 years; they are forever loyal to their group and usually enjoy their work greatly.

From a retirement benefit point of view and vacation accrual, this is the best strategy. Your retirement benefits are best since most companies offer higher retirement benefits in exchange for longer years of service. In addition, many companies in the defense industry offer the 85 points plan that allows early retirement. This benefit is simply that you can retire early when you have reached 85 points. You receive one point for each year of service and one point for each year of age.

This means that if you started with a company when you graduated from college at age 22 and worked for the same company your whole career, you will have 85 points when you become 54 years old in this example. In this example, engineers who have stayed with the same defense company their entire career often elect to retire early at 55 when they have their 85 points. However, this benefit has become pretty much obsolete by many companies due to financial reasons with the elimination of pensions.

Another great benefit of the forever loyal strategy is that you accrue the maximum allowed vacation which, in most companies, can be as many as 6–8 weeks per year. This means you work only 10.5 months out of the year and even less when you consider all the paid holidays. You often reach this level after 20+ years of service. Thus for a 35-year career, you only work 10–11 months of the year for the last 10 years of your career.

Many engineers capitalize on this large amount of vacation when it comes to retirement. In the last few years before retirement, engineers only use a portion of their vacation each year and bank their unused vacation. They do this since most companies allow you to carry over any unused vacation from year to year. After several years of banking unused vacation, the engineer can retire with 8–10 months of vacation in reserve. The company

pays the engineer for all the unused vacation at retirement, which is like getting a bonus of 8–10 months salary on the day of retirement.

There are special challenges to being successful with the forever loyal strategy. One of the special challenges is being able to handle the up and down cycles of the group. The group will go through periods of growth and decay as well as products will come and go. The engineer must adjust and be open to these changes to remain in a viable and productive career.

As the old products phase out, new ones will be introduced and the engineer must have the skills and training for the new products. Contracts will also come and go. There will be periods when virtually no work exists and the company must carry the salary of the engineer. The decision to continue to pay the engineers even though work is scarce requires the backing of upper management. Few companies do this since the emphasis is so great on the bottom line. So if you plan to stay with the same group, you should explore what will happen during downturns and loss of contracts. Make sure your management is committed to paying your salary and will support you during these times.

The next challenge for the engineer in the "Forever Loyal to One Group Career Strategy" is that their career advancement be tied to attrition in the group. The engineer's only opportunity for advancement comes when someone above them leaves the group and an opening becomes available.

The engineer should monitor how often or how long before the people in the group above them leave? If the average turnover rate for people in the group is 30% in 3 years, then according to the mathematics, the engineer should be the senior person in the group within 9–12 years, based on the assumption that they move up every time someone leaves. This is a great career growth rate.

If, however, the employee turnover rate is very low for your group then chances of advancement seriously diminish. How does one find out the turnover rate? Simply ask around how long each person in the group has been in the group and what happened to the people who left and the reasons for leaving. If most of the staff have been in the group 5 years or less, you are in a very high turnover rate. If most have been there 10–15 years, you are in a very low turnover rate group.

There may be other career barriers within a group. The following chapters will discuss typical career barriers within a group and methods to get over them.

What if the group is new and there is no history? You need to observe the group's operation over time. Relax and monitor the products, technology, and turnover rate of staff. If senior workers start bailing out, this could be good or bad. If the products and technology are solid, then remaining in the group is a good career move. If the products are becoming obsolete and customer demand for the products is diminishing, then maybe you should consider moving to other groups. However, people who are loyal will stay until the last opportunity is gone or help turn the situation around. For their loyalty, and choosing to stay, they are often rewarded with senior level positions.

However, as I have found, simply staying is not a guarantee that things will automatically turn around. I tried staying to the end believing the market and economy would turn around, but it did not and found myself laid off. It was the early 1990s and my division had over 700 employees laid off. The decision to stay or bail is strictly an individual one based on specific circumstances. There is no guaranteed right or wrong decision, it is your call on whether to stay or move. I learned the hard way. Be extremely aware of your company's profitability and future business plans.

▶ ***Career Tip.*** The best career move is to continuously gather all the data you can about the company, the group, its people, the customers, and future business outlook.

Another special challenge to consider, if you choose the forever loyal career strategy, is how are you going to keep up with product and technology changes? You will need to do technology updating and have the ability to introduce new, successful products to replace the older obsolete ones. In fact, being the engineer assigned to introduce a new technology to the group is a great career move. Once you have obtained the necessary training for the new technology, you become the group's senior person, recognized expert, in this area. These engineers are the ones that often get promoted to lead positions. Just make sure the new technology is going to significantly enhance the product performance. If the new technology fails, then you are in a poor career advancement position.

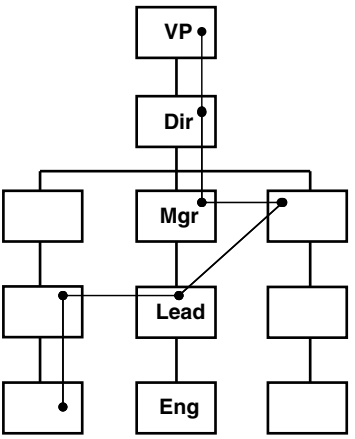
To remain on top of the same group over an extended number of years, you will need to constantly prove your worth and outperform others in the group. Remaining loyal does not mean you get to sit back and rest. You must continue to improve and expand your horizons. You must be the one introducing new methods and technologies into your group.

MOVE DEPARTMENTS, BUT STAY IN THE SAME COMPANY

The next strategy and more common, but still rare these days, is the "Move Departments, but Stay in the Same Company" career strategy. This strategy is shown in Figure 3-2.

For this strategy, the engineer remains in the same company, but moves from department to department following the best contracts and jobs to obtain promotions. This type of career path is very typical for most people staying in the same company their entire career.

The engineer may start in one department, get a promotion then move to another department and another job to get the next promotion. For this strategy, the engineer must constantly be monitoring all the other groups in the company and determining the next move. This is a great career strategy



- **Remain in the same company and follow the best program, contracts, and jobs**
- **Typical career of people remaining in the same company**
- **Working for the same company entire career is becoming rare event**
- **Best retirement and vacation benefits**
- **Requires ability to move within the company (special skill)**
- **Isolates your career from dependence on one product**
- **Looked upon favorably by upper management since engineer has experience across many product lines**
- **May require moving to other divisions in other states or countries**

FIGURE 3-2 Move between departments, but stay in the same company.

when you are up against department barriers and getting a promotion in your present department is highly unlikely. It also makes you a more valuable employee since you can work in multiple groups.

This career strategy has excellent vacation and retirement benefits since the engineer stays with the same company and accrues the maximum benefits. Another great aspect to this career strategy is that it isolates your career from dependence on a single department or product to be successful. When one product or department has a downturn, you simply shift over to another department or product line hopefully without losing seniority or pay. Most often if you coordinate well enough in advance, the new group may offer you a promotion to make the transition.

This career strategy may or may not have some negatives depending on if you want the opportunity to live in and see different parts of the world. With some companies, moving departments may require a move to another state or even another country. Many large corporations have operations in foreign countries and require their upper level managers to work in these foreign countries to gain the experience necessary to direct the division one day. Accepting a position in another division may mean moving away from family and friends. Are you prepared to do this?

PICKING MAINSTREAM JOBS AND DEPARTMENTS

If you select to stay with the same company, your next strategic career planning exercise is to map out the career path flow within the company. A typical large company pyramid structure is shown in Figure 3-3. At the bottom of the pyramid are the engineers. Moving up the chain are the lead

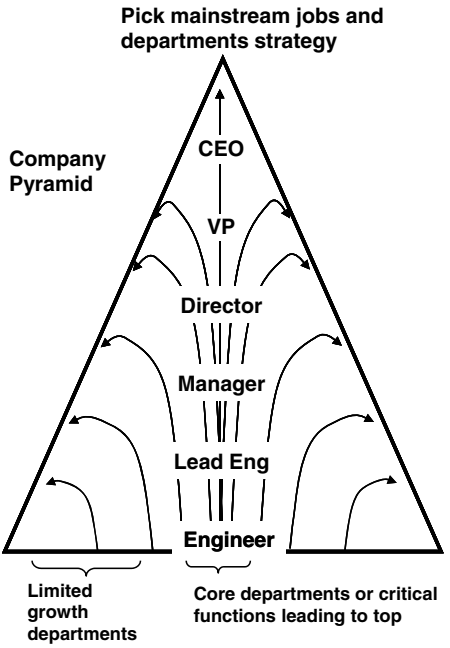


FIGURE 3-3 Core department career strategy.

engineers, managers, directors, VPs, and CEO at the top. Career paths are represented by the arrows.

In all companies, there are mainstream career paths leading to the upper levels. These mainstream or core departments or critical functions become the supply chain for the upper levels in the company. As shown in Figure 3-3, up the center of the pyramid are the core departments that feed the leadership of the company. The centerline departments perform the critical functions that become the backbone of the company. Without their successful operation, the company would not survive.

The career strategy here is to always work for a core or critical department. This career path leads to highest levels in the company. A good example of this might be in a chemical company, where you are a chemical engineer working on the most successful product and you control the key processes to make the product.

To either side are the noncore departments that support the organization but their career paths often stop short of the top. The engineers work in departments that help support the company and are critical to its success. A good example of this might be a software network engineer working in the information services (IS) department of a chemical company. The engineer supports the network but it is not a critical department that generates revenues for the company. In fact, this department is just the opposite and considered an expense that most upper level executives want to minimize when expenditures are high. It is highly unlikely that the manager of

the IS department is going to be promoted to VP or CEO of the chemical company.

How do you map out the career path flow in your company? Easy, just ask around the senior level people which departments they have worked in during their rise up the corporate ladder. If you can, find out what departments the previous four or five CEOs worked in prior to becoming the CEO. Once you do this, you will quickly learn what the feeder departments are for the upper levels.

▶ ***Career Tip.*** Before moving into new departments check to see if they are a core business department.

The condition of career peaking is represented by the arrows moving outward and eventually peaking and turning downward. I have shown the arrows peaking and turning downward since this is what research shows happens to most engineers' careers. The engineer's career reaches a peak. If they are capable, they will remain at that level until the end of their career. However, if the engineer is not successful at the peak, they are often replaced and must accept a lower level position at which they are capable of being successful.

Another career phenomenon is that people are promoted on the basis of their skills and at some point they reach a level where the next level up requires more skills than they possess. However, this is not found out until they are promoted to a level they are not capable of performing. This is often called the "Peters Principle" of management after it was recognized by Tom Peters in his book *Thriving on Chaos*. Sometimes people refer to a manager and ask, how did he or she get that job, they are totally incapable of performing at that level? And the answer usually comes back, "You have heard of the Peters Principle: haven't you?"

As the engineer approaches retirement, one career move is to accept a lower level position to reduce the responsibility and stress in their life. It is also part of the replacement plan in which you step aside and train your successor. Your career strategy should include a growth and development strategy as well as what is referred to as an exit or transition to retirement strategy.

LEVERAGING THE RESEARCH GROUP

Another career strategy when working for the same company includes leveraging the research group. This strategy is shown in Figure 3-4. The leveraging research group strategy is basically one of working in the company research group or advance development group, then transitioning to an upper level position in the division following the natural product development flow into the division. This career path is shown by the dotted lines.

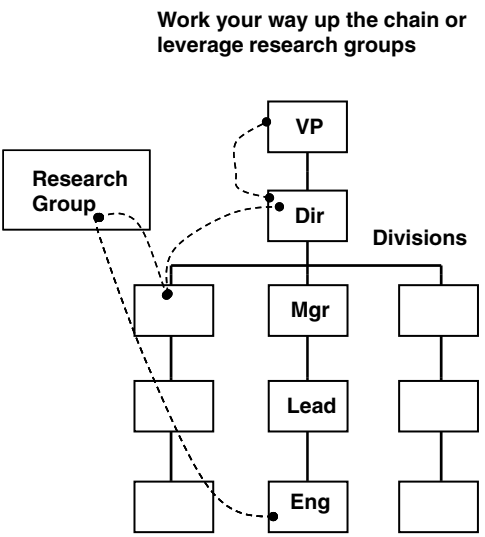


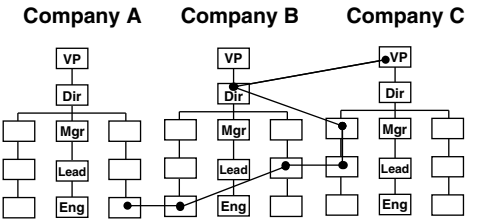
FIGURE 3-4 Leverage the research group career strategy.

Most corporations have a research or advance development group that is responsible for developing new products and getting them into production. Engineers who work in these groups are naturally the most knowledgeable about the product and would make the best manager when the product is transitioned to production. Therefore, a good career strategy is to leverage an assignment into the research group that later leads to a leadership position in the division. Your career path lies along getting an assignment in the research group, developing a new successful product, and then following it into production as the leader.

Having a successful career and remaining with the same company your entire career requires you to understand the career paths within the company. Learning about these career paths, will require you to do research about the company's product development flow and engineering structures your company utilizes to create and sell products.

FOLLOWING HOT COMPANIES AND PRODUCTS

The next and most common among engineers' career strategy is what is called "Following Hot Companies and Products." This career strategy is shown in Figure 3-5. For this career strategy, the engineer moves between several companies and departments to gain promotions. For example, as shown in Figure 3-5, the engineer realizes that in his present company the opportunities for advancement do not exist, so he or she makes a lateral career change from company A to company B that has more opportunities. Once in company B he switches departments and gains a promotion to lead engineer. The next move again involves a lateral move to a new company C. However, once in



Requires many secondary skills:

1. **Networking**
2. **People skills**
3. **Resume writing and interviewing**
4. **Selling your capabilities**
5. **Acquiring new capabilities and skills**
6. **Constant training**
7. **Adaptive to constant change**
8. **Ability to pick up and move**

- **Change companies to follow the best program, contracts, and jobs**
- **Becoming most common (two to three company changes is very common)**
- **Reduced retirement and vacation benefits**
- **Isolates your career from dependence on one product and one company**
- **Looked upon favorably by upper management since engineer has experience across many product lines and companies**
- **Constantly learning new products, technologies, and industries**
- **May require moving to other companies in other states or countries**
- **Too many changes and becomes liability**

FIGURE 3-5 Follow hot companies and products strategy.

company C he gets promoted to the manager level. Then the engineer returns to company B to receive a promotion to the director level. Finally, the engineer returns back to company C for a vice president level position. In this example, the engineer is changing departments and companies to follow the best programs, contracts, and jobs.

This type of career is becoming the most common due to the rapidly changing technologies, products, and companies. It is becoming the norm for engineers to have worked at several different companies in their lifetime. This career strategy isolates your career advancement from being dependent on one product or company.

I have personally changed companies twice without changing location, job, or even desk. The old company was acquired by a new company and everything remained the same except for the name of the company.

Changing companies is often looked upon favorably by upper level managers since the engineer has been exposed to the best practices of several companies. Hiring managers look favorably on the company changes since the engineer brings along all this experience to the job when they are hired. To survive and advance using this career strategy, the engineer must know how to handle and adapt to change.

The engineers who have followed this career path have said they enjoy the change since they are constantly learning new techniques, new technologies, and developing new products. They say they would stagnate if they had to work on the same product their entire career.

How do you find the hot companies and products? Simple. You network with people at conferences, conventions, or engineering society meetings. Ask people if their company is hiring and hand out your business cards.

Another way is to search the web for companies hiring. Have you attended a job fair recently? These are usually the hottest companies since they are often willing to extend second interviews or even make job offers on the spot.

▶ ***Career Tip.*** Networking with people at conferences, conventions, and engineering society meetings is great for your career!

There are also some disadvantages to this career strategy and the most obvious one is having to move your family to new cities, states, and even countries. If they are unwilling, this strategy has the pitfall of losing your family for your job. Also, if the engineer changes jobs too often, employers might interpret the large number of moves as an indication that the engineer is a problem employee and is the reason behind the engineer's changing jobs so often. To get around this image make sure your resume clearly indicates that you moved because of a better opportunity.

Additionally, regions in the United States have totally different attitudes regarding whether or not staying with the company or moving is good or bad. For example, many employers in the Midwest portion of the United States view changing your job every 5–7 years as an indication that you are a problem employee. These Midwest companies also look at employees who have stayed 10–15 years at a company as very desirable employees since they are not going to jump ship any time soon.

However, for companies in the large cities on either coast, moving every 5–7 years makes you a more valuable employee since you are probably working on the hot contracts and exposed to the latest methods of multiple companies. These companies view the engineer who has remained at the same job for long periods of time as stuck in their old ways and stagnant. They view the engineer who has only worked at one company as undesirable rather than a valuable asset. You must be able to explain your decision to remain at one company and the benefits you have for doing this.

Another negative aspect of this career strategy is the lack of, or reduced, retirement benefits, and vacation benefits. Changing your employer every few years results in rebooting or starting over on your retirement benefits and vacation accrued unless you negotiate this to your advantage when moving. Nonetheless, the engineer should make sure they get the maximum possible increase in salary each time they move.

I have done this analysis several times in my career at which time I have evaluated the career options on whether I should move or not. And I keep coming up with the same answer. For a move to another company to be profitable and a real improvement, the company must be offering 10% or more than your present employer is offering. That is a 3% raise to stay at your present job and employer is equivalent to a 10% raise from a potentially new company where you have to move your family. The reason for this is all the hidden costs with making a career change involving changing your residence.

When you start to add up hidden costs you incur when moving, real estate fees, moving costs, buying a new home, obtaining new licenses, permits, and so on, you quickly find moving to a new company may not be in your best interest. Perhaps you may even have to consider the spouses' loss of employment and income. When you consider all these hidden factors, staying with your present employer and accepting the 3% raise is not so bad after all. If you decide to make the move, try to negotiate that all of these hidden costs be covered and get help in obtaining employment for your spouse. But you must also be prepared for the event where the new company does not support reimbursement of all your hidden costs.

"Following the Hot Products and Contracts" career strategy requires the engineer to acquire some new career skills as listed in Figure 3-5. The engineer must have excellent networking and people skills to learn about these new opportunities. In addition, the engineer must be able to obtain interview offers as well as have excellent resume writing and interviewing skills. Constant change and moving becomes a way of life and the key to survival is being adaptive to change. Finally, the engineer must consider the impact on the family and obtain support from the family members for each move.

Our family has found that with each move it took about one year before things returned to what might be considered "normal" again. My wife and I made new friends, the kids accepted their new schools.

When I lived in Los Angles, Boston, and San Jose, fellow engineers would tell me to take a map of the city and mark the locations of all the potential companies that I might work for. Then draw a line from one to another and where all the lines intersected would be the best place to purchase a home. Purchasing a home close to the intersection point would minimize the chances of having to change your residence if you should happen to change your employer.

UP AND DOWN THE SUPPLY CHAIN CAREER MOVES

This career strategy is very common and utilized by most engineers at some point in their career if they move from company to company. The basic strategy is shown in Figure 3-6. Movement up and down the supply chain makes good career sense when considering a company change for your career move. As shown in Figure 3-6, the top of the product supply chain is what is referred to as the prime contractor. The prime contractor usually supplies a product to the customer made up of lower level products integrated together to form the final product sold to the customer. Good examples of a prime contractor might be a car, aircraft, or PC manufacturer.

The first level below the prime contractor is what is referred to as first level tier suppliers who provide major assemblies to the prime contract. Good examples of these types of products might be engines, radios, or monitors. The next level down is referred to as the second level tier suppliers and these

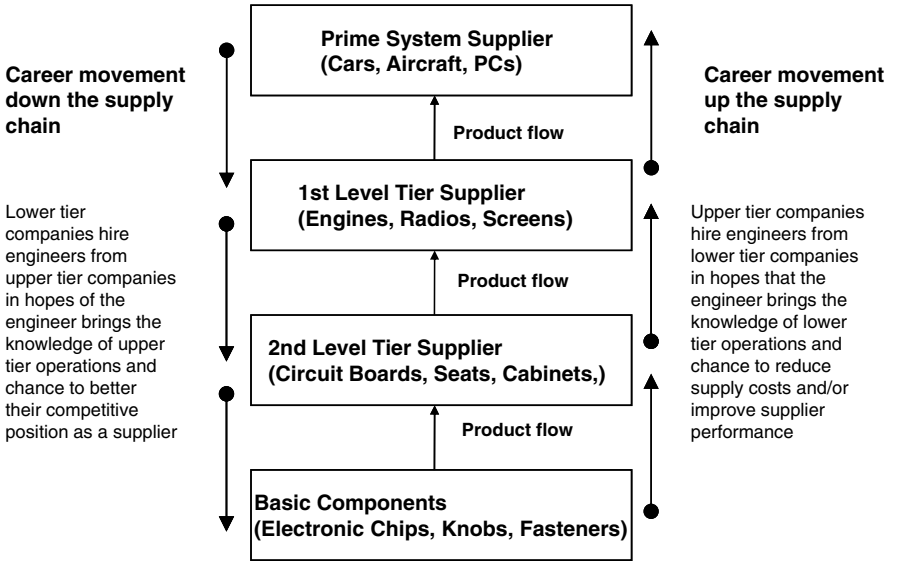


FIGURE 3-6 Career moves up and down the supply chain.

suppliers provide basic subsystems to the above level. Examples of these products might be circuit boards, seats, and cabinets. Finally, at the lowest level is the component supplier who may supply such things as electronic chips, knobs, and fasteners.

Career movement up and down the supply chain is a good career option and used quite often in the industry. Movement either way, up or down the supply chain, can be beneficial to your career.

Career movement down the supply chain can be beneficial for several reasons. Companies down chain like to hire engineers from up the chain in hopes that the engineer will bring valuable insight into their customer operations. Hopefully, the engineer brings valuable insight that can be translated into better performing products that the customer will purchase more of. The engineer coming from up chain has the opportunity to see the products in use as well as their defects. He or she will bring a wealth of technical knowledge about the use of the product down chain. The engineer is in a good technical leadership position. The supplier also hopes that by hiring engineers from up chain, hopefully they will have a better competitive advantage with the customer. The engineer is hired in hopes that they had a great personal relationship with the customer and these relationships can be capitalized upon for the benefit of the company.

Career movement down the chain is not a good career move when you leave the upper level on a bad note and go to one of the suppliers. The upper level company may in fact look at the move as bad and it may harm the lower level suppliers' relationship. It could ultimately lead to loss of business and ruining your career. Correspondingly, moving up the supply chain and

leaving the lower level supplier under bad circumstances may also turn out to be a bad career move. If for some reason the supplier loses business with the upper level customer, it could be blamed on you and potentially lead to lawsuits.

Career movement up the supply chain can also be a very beneficial career strategy. Customers often hire engineers from the suppliers down chain to help with technical issues and problems encountered in the products they buy from suppliers. These engineers are considered a valuable asset in dealing with suppliers. They understand the technical issues of the product best since they came from the supplier.

The down side of moving up the supply chain is the engineer no longer does the same type of product development. He is responsible for procuring the product and not developing. The engineer is typically put in a broader assignment involving integration of multiple products.

The key for good career movement up and down the supply chain is to leave the company under good conditions. Go through the effort to make sure you leave the company on a good note; make sure they understand this is a good opportunity for your career.

SELECTING THE BEST CAREER MOVE FOR YOU

Selecting the best career move for you is not a simple task. It will take considerable thought and analysis every time you decide to make a career change or move. To aid you in the process and help you determine what the best career move is for you, the simple principles of systems engineering can be applied.

Shown in Table 3-1 is what is referred to as trade study matrix. Down the left column of the matrix is a list of the key factors you want to compare for the various career moves you are contemplating. Across the top row of the matrix are the options you have identified.

This is an example to help you construct your career options matrix. For the example shown, some key factors are identified when considering a career move. These include chances for promotion, better job assignments, office and lab facilities, impact to family, supervisor, interesting work, expanding and growing workforce, and long-range impacts. The second column lists the weighting of factor in scoring the final decision. Each factor is allocated a percentage of importance in the total. All the factors weight add up to 100%.

For this example the highest weight factor is chance for promotion weighted at 25. This is the most important factor for the engineer and carries the heaviest weight. When constructing your matrix assign the highest weights to the factors you consider the most important and lower weights to the ones you consider the least important. For this example, the lab facilities and long-range impacts were rated the lowest.

TABLE 3-1 Career Options Rating Matrix

Factors in Consideration	% of Total Importance	Option 1, Stay in Job	Option 2, Change Departments	Option 3, Leave Company
Chances for promotion	25	5	20, job postings in HR 1 grade level up	10
Better job assignments	15	2, same old assignment	15, new and more challenging	10
Office and facilities	5	5	4	3
Impact on family	15	15	15	10, move to new town
Supervisor	10	2, disliked supervisor	10	6
Interesting work	10	2	8	4
Expanding and growing workforce	15	5	12, new contract in other departments	6
Long-range impacts	5	5	5	1 (unknown)
Total score	100	41	89	50

The next three columns to the right are the options available to the engineer. They have identified three options, stay in the job, change departments, or leave the company. The next step for the engineer is to assign a score to each of the factors for the various options. We can see from this example, the engineer has scored all three options. Staying in the present position (option 1) had a total score of 41 which was lower than changing departments (option 2) score of 89, and leaving the company (option 3) score of 50. The engineer ranked his best career move would be to change the departments. Note the reasons for the various rankings entered into the cells.

Using an options matrix with weighted factors is a very powerful technique that allows the engineer to see the sum of all the factors being considered at once. It is highly recommended that you use this technique when considering career moves. It has helped me make some very difficult career decisions during my career.

My family was faced with a very difficult decision when I lost my job. We had to decide whether we should move out of state and follow the jobs or should we stay in state and I change careers to something other than engineering. To help the family make this decision I utilized the option-rating matrix. I called the family together and we discussed and listed key factors. After the key factors were identified and agreed upon we all put in weighting factors. Then each of us ranked the factors for each option. All things considered, our best option was to move out of the state and the choice was more readily accepted by the family.

COMPANY HIGH TALENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Most major corporations have realized that they need to be constantly training their future leaders. To this end, they develop with the help of their managers and Human Resources department what is referred to as the "High Talent List." Are you aware of this list at your company? If not, ask your supervisor if a list like this exists. If it does, ask if you are on it. If the answer comes back yes, you are on the list, then you are in great career shape. Why? Because the people on this list are usually the star performers and recognized future leaders of the company.

▶ ***Career Tip.*** Investigate to see if your company has a leadership development program for engineers and if so join!

Another great career move is going to your Human Resources department and asking if the company has any leadership development programs. These are specially designed programs to provide training to high talent junior engineers who show a potential for becoming future leader of the company.

The programs are often structured to provide career guidance and opportunities to engineers. The programs may call for the engineer to return to school to obtain an advanced degree. Other programs have the engineers in a job rotational assignment. The engineer rotates jobs throughout the company every 6–12 months. Now this is the way for career advancement, having the Human Resources department sponsor you and get you highly desirable job assignments every few years.

It is recommended that you look into your company's high talent or leadership development programs. If you are not in a leadership development program, then find out the criteria to become part of the program and work as hard as you can to meet these criteria and join. This is what is referred to as a career accelerator! Or for you Star Trek followers "Moving at Warp Speed!"

SUCCESSION PLANNING—YOUR KEY TO MOVING UP

One of the key activities every manager has to perform is succession planning. This is simply identifying a potential replacement for key individuals in the group including themselves. If you are a junior engineer, are you on the succession list for the lead engineer spot? If you are a lead engineer, are you on the succession list for the manager spot? One good career move is to explore with your supervisor if you are a succession candidate. If you are considered a succession candidate, keep performing and be patient for when the next opportunity arises you may be the leading candidate.

SUMMARY

All successful career strategies are based on hard work and excellent performance on the job. There are many career strategies you can follow that span the spectrum from staying in a single company for your entire career to continually changing companies to advance. All these strategies work and your task is to select the career strategy you are most comfortable with. Most engineers employ a combination of these strategies to advance and you may find that you need to use different strategies throughout your career in order to advance.

Changing companies and jobs is not a simple decision and involves many factors like future promotions, salary, job assignments, impacts on the family, and impacts on your long-term benefits. When you are considering a job change, give consideration to more than just the salary increase. Other companies may offer you a larger salary but it may not cover all the expenses you are going to incur to make the move. Keeping your present job with a smaller raise may be the best when all the other factors are considered. Finally, take advantage of programs your company have which offer special advanced training or leadership training; taking advantage of these types of programs are always excellent career strategies.

Have you identified any career actions you want to take as a result of reading this chapter? If so, please make sure to capture these ideas before you forget by recording them in the notes section at the back of the book.

ASSIGNMENTS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Discussion topic, "Is it better to stay with one company or move from company to company to obtain career advancement?"
2. How can you find out about the career paths in another company before you make the decision to leave your present company and go to a new one?
3. What are the core departments in your company which lead to executive management?
4. How do you leave a company on a good note?
5. The final homework assignment is to determine what your career strategy is? Is this good for all time? How often should you review your decision?