

There is a need to assist clients meet the costs of Career Development Practitioners. Career development services can play an important role in helping governments to improve labour supply, address skill shortages, raise the level of human capital and improve the quality of human capital. The Australian Government has as its priority addressing the National Skills Shortages. It has developed a range of innovative and regional strategies to address industry and regional skill shortages. To do this, people need assistance in moving from those jobs that are over-supplied to those that are under-supplied. A career development practitioner providing counselling and coaching could be of enormous benefit in this regard.

The Australian Government is also keen to enlist community support to help young Australians investigate and embrace training and career opportunities that suit their talents and that will lead them into satisfying and productive careers. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that the new national reform agenda should be based on an overarching theme of enhancing productivity and participation, with human capital as a key component with the priority areas of reform in the human capital component of the new reform agenda being health, education and training, and work incentives. The key National Reform principle suggests improvements in workforce productivity and participation require continuing skills development from the early childhood years, through school and working life, to retirement.

The COAG National Reform agenda Human Capital Stream is worthy of our support and has obvious implications for career development practitioners.

Career development is essential to human capital development in supporting the career development of young people prior to entering the labour market, supporting the career development of employed workers and supporting the career development of adults in and out of the labour market, and between jobs in different enterprises. If career development is to support human capital, high-quality career development services need to be available to all people throughout their active lives, from primary school through to the old age. Organisations, as diverse as business, government, education providers and community organisations, need to work together in partnership to help all people make successful transitions. The Australian Government has made a major commitment to improving pathways, particularly for young people but they need to establish effective mechanisms for collaboration across government departments and agencies, and also for working closely with employers, with career development practitioners, and with a wide range of community partners and with broader target client groups.

The challenges for employers associated with the ageing workforce are creeping up on them and unfortunately very few employers are prepared. For those not ready to react and embrace flexible human resource practices to motivate older workers to stay on longer, the consequences will be grim. There will be substantial number of people over 55 years of age, a significant number of employees in there 70s, 80s, and 90s. The leading edge of this trend is already evident. In a tight labour market where skill shortages are acute, the knowledge gained through human capital measurement provides organisations with vital information, which helps them, develop innovative people strategies to improve employee loyalty, performance and satisfaction. Unfortunately many organisations do not see human capital measurement as a priority for their business.

In order to assist employees I have proposed a number of possible recommendations for consideration:

- Change to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) tax ruling TR 98/92 to allow, “career check-up” to be a tax deduction. At present if a client sees a career development practitioner to better his existing position then it is an “allowable allowance” but if a client sees a practitioners to assist them get a new job, to assist them change employment or help clients with manage their career, it is not an allowable tax deduction.

1 1 TR 98/9 - Income tax: deductibility of self-education expenses

Reference: <http://law.ato.gov.au/atolaw/view.htm?locid='TXR/TR989/NAT/ATO'>

- Medicare refund for employees seeking advice from a qualified career development practitioner (a Professional member of a CICA member Association). This might include career counselling and coaching.

- Centrelink could provide unemployed clients a means tested allowance (eg \$1,000 per year) to seek career development help from “registered providers” (qualified career development practitioners).

- Health Fund providers could allow members to claim against the “living well program” allowance. At present health funds provide up to \$200 a year (some \$500) for “living well programs”. Members could be allowed to seek career development advice and include visits to a qualified career development practitioner as a claim on their health fund.

Employers should also understand the role they play in helping achieve a talented workforce. Parallel to this, the employers need to develop a model to value and benchmark the change in human capital.

People continue to work for their personal values and a desire to be productive.

There is more to the picture than this. A growing number of older people enjoy working and making a difference and being with other people. They have opportunities to serve as coaches, mentors, and role models, which would be very satisfying for them. Many other older workers will be very happy to continue to work one or two days a week with the condition that a greater degree of flexibility in working arrangements from employers can be negotiated. Furthermore, other third age workers will continue to report for duty because they need the security that their employer’s provide. The emphasis here will be on health insurance, an important support that is often unaffordable for many retirees. While government programmes such as Medicare help, the level is described as barely survival by seniors who need extended employment.

Other benefits are important, too, but are over-shadowed by the vital need for medical and prescription drug coverage. This circumstance, under which a number of employees will work because they have to not because they want to, will create a level of irritation and feeling of lack of control. Neither of these attitudes is healthy for the employer or the employee. Employers will need to build their sensitivity to these attitudes for a portion of their older workforce. Wise employers who can benefit from the wisdom, experience, and maturity of older workers will maintain a consciously supportive insurance program for employees. Employers should work in collaboration with Career Development Practitioners in assisting employees. Coverage that includes

people who work part-time, flexitime, or job-sharing schedules will enable employers to attract more stable, dependable, and high performing seasoned employees. Some of these workers will be in a financial position to need only partial assistance; others will need a full support package. Designing flexibility into benefits design and administration will make a big difference in the competition for top talent.

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