

**To Improve Employee Career Success through Organizational Development
Intervention: An Action Research of AIA Co., LTD. Changzhou Branch**

Dong Lin

Lecturer, International Office
Changzhou University, China

Seongdok Kim

Lecturer, Graduate School of Business
Assumption University, Thailand

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Abstract

This study was aimed at the research of the organization development interventions on the employee career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to improve the employee career success in AIA Changzhou Branch, China. These three variables were regarded as employee career success behaviours and closely related to the development of the focal organization in current study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized. The research methods were the questionnaire, semi-structured interview and participatory observation. Quantitative data was collected to examine the change in level of career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy and qualitative data was collected to obtain in-deep understanding on the result of organization development interventions on the employees. The paired sample t-test was utilized in this study as a statistical tool to prove hypotheses. The collected data confirmed that there was an improvement of the career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy after the organization development interventions. The research findings supported the research objectives and approved the hypotheses. This research responded to the organization's needs of sustained developing and solved the company's existing problems. The results ODI of this research could be the useful tool to manage young employees and was adapted to the unpredictable and uncertain business environment. Meanwhile, the researcher designed an improvement framework to help individuals improve their career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy and to achieve career success and better career development in an uncertain borderless career period.

Keywords: career success, organizational development intervention, career competency, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy

Introduction

Potential Challenge for Change

With the innovation and the development in science and technology, globalization has grown to be an irresistible trend. Most economic and social activities are being driven by globalization and technological advancement, which has increased the economic, political and cultural connections and flow (Vielmetter & Sell, 2014). This megatrend brings about opportunities and prospects for enterprises as well as modern careers, which are being unpredictable to both employees and employers. In order to deal with these uncertainties and challenges, organizations have placed more emphasis on the individual as the most fundamental resources within organizations, and that also requires them to take responsibility for their career development (Francis-Smythe et al.2013). Therefore, career success is not only the expectation of individuals but also provides the base for career management theory to exert a positive function.

The sweeping career changes produced within the context of modern organizations (e.g., innovation, flexibility, and efficiency), which increased workforce diversity, decreased in work security and benefits, expanding the use of outsourcing services, short-term and temporary employment (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). With the traditional career pattern as a permanent job with one employer has been phased out by the time, the individual development has become a serious topic of concern within organizations (Burke, 1995; Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer & Meyer, 2003). In this context, individuals should adapt more to unknown conditions to achieve individual success and development, and career success gains a new meaning to the emphasis on the self-management of employability demands to develop their career. In addition to the unpredictable and uncertain business environment, the new generation of employees has gradually become the leading force in the workplace, their attitudes and behaviors in response to career success are changing (McLagan, 1997).

Research Objectives

1. To assess and diagnose the current situation of the company in terms of employee career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy.

2. To design and implement an appropriate Organization Development Intervention (ODI) to improve the employee career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy.
3. To investigate the differences between the pre-ODIs and the post-ODIs of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and employee career competency.

Research Questions

1. What is the current situation in the company, especially with respect to employee career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy?
2. What are the appropriate intervention methods to improve the employee career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy?
3. What are the differences between Pre ODI and Post ODI in employee career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy?

Research Hypotheses

H₀1. There is no significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in employee career competency.

H_a1. There is a significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in employee career competency.

H₀2. There is no significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in emotional intelligence.

H_a2. There is a significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in emotional intelligence.

H₀3. There is no significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in self-efficacy.

H_a3. There is a significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in self-efficacy.

Literature Review

Organization Change and Development

From the purpose of organizational change, the organization can operate more effectively, achieve balanced growth, and gain more flexible environmental adaptability in the process of change (Morgan, 1997). Heller (2002) defined the organizational change is the process of adjusting and innovating diverse elements to

adapt to the environment and achieve organizational goals. Drucker (1995) argued that organizational change was the organizational adjustment when the organization has the internal problems and cannot be adapted to changes in the environment. Necessary adjustments and improvements must be made to the organizational structure, at internal levels, in work processes, communication methods and corporate culture, and at the same time, the attitudes and behavior of leaders and employees must be promptly changed in order to assist the development of the organization. Furthermore, organizational change is an essential tool for organizational developments and growth. Through the process of change, an organization can make the organization more efficient in operation and balanced in growth (Morgan, 1997).

Organizational Development Intervention

The main tool used in organizational development is an organizational development intervention (ODI). French (2005) indicated that an intervention is a set of sequences, and planned activities in which certain organizational components (groups or individuals), are intended for fulfilling the organizational effectiveness or personal development. As the main task of organizational development, an organization needs to implement the OD interventions successfully to achieve the goal. ODI is different from an organizational change; it is intended for making long-term changes in the organizational culture, rather than simple changes (Champoux, 2010). Anchored into humane values, ODI could enhance the organizational performance, employee engagement and satisfaction (Jamieson and Worley, 2008; Manapajon, Chungviwatanant, & Tayko, 2017; Phakdeesattayaphong and Chungviwatanan, 2014) Cumming and Worley (2009) defined that the organizational development interventions should be made at three levels: individual level, team level and the organizational level.

Career Success

Arthur (1989) defined the career as an “evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time.” The accumulation of achievements (real or perceived) arising from these work experiences is career success (Judge et al., 1999). Seibert and Liden, R. C. (2001) refer to career success as positive psychological feelings are accumulated and acquired by individuals in their work experience and achievements from their work. The career success gained the attention of both individuals and

organizations, and individual success can eventually contribute to organizational success (Judge et al., 1999). Meanwhile, as described by Feldman and Ng (2007), several factors such as economic globalization, downsizing and outsourcing policies within firms, socio-cultural changes, and new information and communication technologies have accelerated the individual career mobility. Thus, the traditional career model, such as a permanent job with one employer, does not flexible enough to be adapted to the changing labor market (Meijers, 2002). In addition to these environmental changes, individuals are also changing their attitudes and behaviors in response to many factors, including changing in family structure and personal interests, the rise of individualism, growing number of individuals seeking to fulfill needs for personal success, development, and growth (Hall, 2004). All these factors determine individuals being more motivated by their own desires and wishes to pursue self-directed careers to fulfill personal needs (Tharenou, 2009).

Career Competency

McClelland (1973) defined competency as inherent and profound characteristics to distinguish from the ordinary people in a particular work; it can be motivation, traits, self-image, attitudes or values, knowledge, cognitive or behavioral skills. These characteristics can be reliably measured and counted. Arthur and Defillipi (1995) defined career competency as an individual's ability to adapt to changes in the working environment and achieve personal career development. Previous research described the career competency can not only bring benefits to career development results to employees, such as reducing occupational insecurity, improving job satisfaction and market competitiveness (Eby, 2003; Kuijpers, 2006; Colakoglu, 2011), and it can bring positive employee behavior to the organization, such as improving the employee's job satisfaction and work input in the organization (Suutari & Makela, 2007; Kong, 2013; Akkermans et al., 2013). Previous studies have indicated that career competency can bring positive career outcomes to employees, such as reducing career insecurity, improving job satisfaction and personal competitiveness (Eby, 2003; Kuijpers, 2006; Colakoglu, 2011).It can bring positive employee behavior to the organization, such as improving job satisfaction and work input of the employee (Suutari & Makela, 2007; Kong, 2013; Akkermans, 2013).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence played a more critical role than cognitive intelligence, and it was a critical variable to career success in career-related actions (Goleman, 2013). Salovey and Mayer (1997) redefined the emotional intelligence, which describes the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, accurately assess and express the emotions, using this information to guide people's thinking and actions and adjust the spot. Based on the previous research of Salovey and Mayer, Goleman (1995) analyzed the competency models of 181 jobs in 121 companies and organizations around the world and found that 67% of the competency was related to emotional intelligence. High emotional intelligence closely related to outstanding performance in the workplace, and it is more important than intelligence quotient, which is one of the predictors of success. Bar-On (1997) indicated that emotional intelligence is an association of emotional, personality and interpersonal skills to adapt to the environment and pressure. The empirical evidence supports that individuals with high emotional intelligence may gain a better understanding of their emotions and others' emotions. It enables individuals to maintain their proper physical and mental state, to maintain a harmonious relationship with others, and to gain the trust of others and teams to have a robust social adaptability and to achieve greater success in their study, work and life (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2000; Brown, George-Curran & Smith, 2003; Wong & Law, 2002).

Self-efficacy

Bandura (1997) has first identified self-efficacy as the expectations in one's capabilities to execute the behaviors necessary to achieve desired outcomes. Anderson & Gerbing (1988) described these expectations as the ability to influence people's thinking, motivation, and behavior directly. Thus, employees with high self-efficacy have a stronger sense of self-confidence, which encourages employees to try challenging jobs, set goals at higher levels, and demonstrate the stronger commitment to goals, thereby improving job performance and being able to achieve career success (Appelbaum & Hare, 1996). By contrast, employees with low self-efficacy have a fragile sense of self-confidence, doubt of the career success, and fear of difficulties and challenges. With negative attitudes and without outstanding performance, it will be difficult to achieve positive career outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy for the improvement and development of career-relevant competencies and skills is the belief

by employees that he/she is capable of improving and developing his/her skills (Maurer, 2001). Niles and Sowa (1992) indicated the self-efficacy and career planning have positive relations. High self-efficacy employees gain more confidence and beliefs that facilitate career development. High self-efficacy employees are full of confidence in their career development process, which has a positive effect on self-realization, self-introspection and social network of individual career competency (Patton, Bartrum & Creed, 2004).

Conceptual Framework

Previous researchers expressed the correlation of career success, which means through the improving of career competency emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, employee career success can be promoted. In this research, AIA, Changzhou Branch is centered with sales agents, the personal career development and success are closely related to company performance and development. Under the increasingly competitive environment, the responsibility of the employees' career success is transferred from organization to individual, and the employees need to improve their own career competency, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to achieve career success and development. In the conceptual framework, the researcher explores the career competency, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy is dependent variables, and Organization Development Intervention is the independent variable.

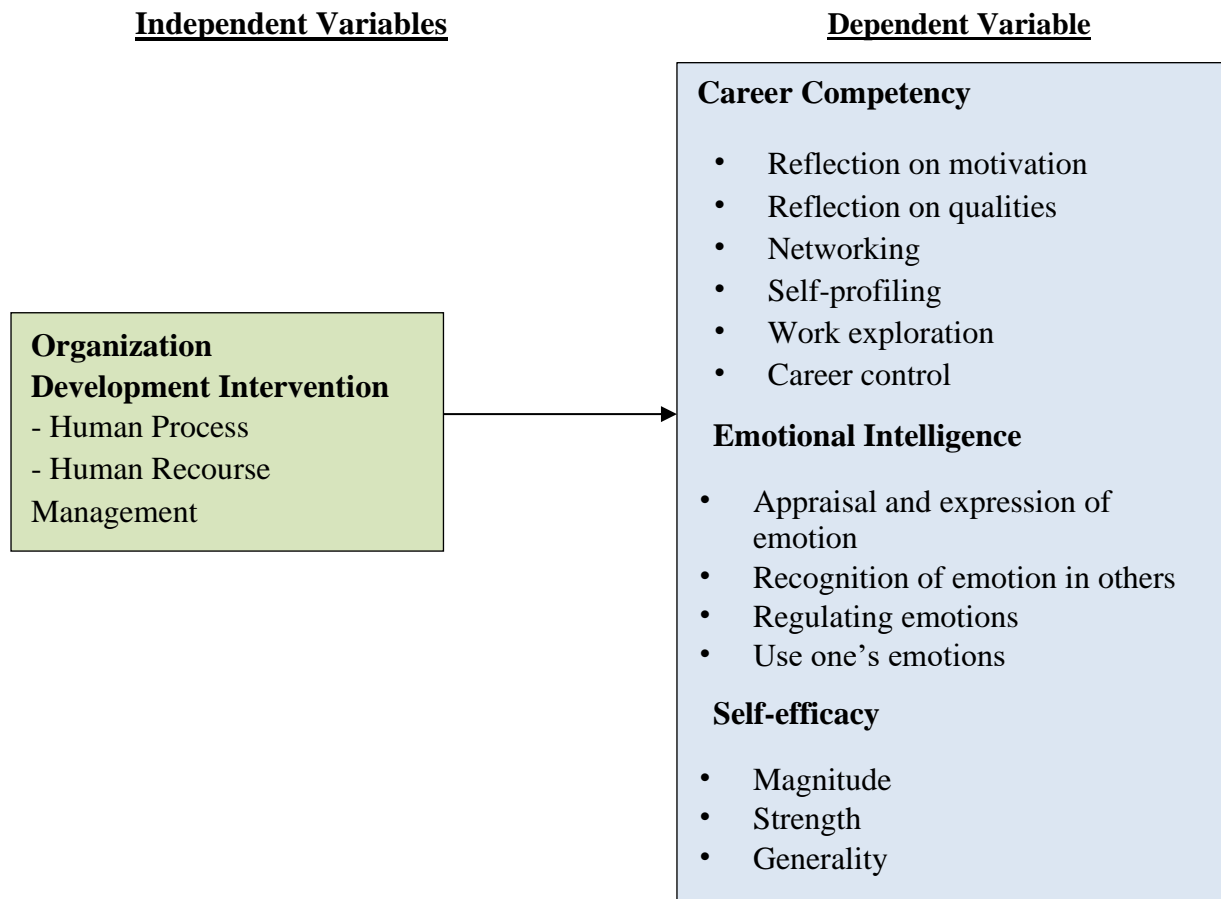


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework (Developed by the researcher, 2019)

Research Methodology

With the permission of the Deputy Manager of the company the researcher conducted the ODI in the Life Insurance Department, which was the largest department of the company. The questionnaire was distributed to 50 respondents of experimental group (N=50). Questionnaire instruments used closed-ended questions from previous studies on the Likert scale, which included Career Competencies Questionnaire, Wong and Law Emotional Intelligences Scale, and General Self-Efficacy Scale. The Career Competencies Questionnaire (CCQ) measured the employee career competencies in terms of six dimensions (included Reflection on motivation, Reflection on qualities, Networking, Self-profiling, Work exploration, and Career control), which were created by Akkermans and Blonk (2013). The emotional intelligence was measured by the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligences Scale (WLEIS) which were created by Wong and Law (2002) and it had three dimensions (included Appraisal and expression of emotion, Recognition of emotion in others,

Regulating emotions, and Use one's emotions). The self-efficacy utilized the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), which was created by Schwarzer, Bäßler, Kwiatek, Schröder, and Zhang (1997) and it had three dimensions (included Magnitude, Strength, and Generality).

The researcher conducted participant observations (5 participants) in experimental group in an open-plan office to obtain the detailed and authentic information of the company as well. Before the observation, the researcher established an observation checklist based on desired research aspects. Regarding the observation checklist, the checklist has been designed to observe behaviors linked to the employees' activities. Besides, the interview guidelines were designed open-ended questions to conduct the semi-structured interview with two managers and four sales agents (6 participants).

Development of OD Interventions

As a sales agent based company, AIA, Changzhou Branch realized that the employees were the essence and power of the company. Personal development closely related to the growth and expansion of the company. Therefore, the interventions of human resource management and human process were consistent with the company's management approaches and future goals, the company leaders were willing to accept and support them as well. The duration of intervention was six months, and the consultants for intervention consisted of three members: the researcher, Prof. Jiang Guogang (Vice-Dean of Business School, Changzhou University), Mr. Bai Xuesong (Deputy Manager of the Life Insurance Department and Director of Sales Business).

This research aimed to improve employee career success by improving employee career competency, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy through ODI. The ODI tentatively designed based on the preliminary assessment of the company current challenges and situations. The initial organization assessment revealed the weaknesses of the company, which included: high physical and mental stress, low emotion control and interpersonal communication, insufficient self-motivation and self-confidence, lack of long-term career development plan. Also, the threats to the company included: fierce competition, the rise in millennial employees, talent loss, and brain drain rates. These factors identified as development areas for the OD

interventions in experimental group. The specific intervention process for the experimental group was as follows:

Table 1:

The Process of ODI

Organizational Assessments	Intervention	Purpose	Tool & Executor	Target Variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low interpersonal communication skills • Mutual distrust and unfriendly atmosphere 	<p>Process Consultation (24 Hours)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reveal and understand authentic themselves • Solve interpersonal relationship and communication issues • Create a friendly and trusting atmosphere 	<p>Johari Window (Lin & Bai)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on qualities • Recognition of emotion in others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive interpersonal relationship • Insufficient self-reflection 	<p>Team Building (38 Hours)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easing interpersonal relationships • Better understand own real characteristic and emotions 	<p>360 Degree Feedback (Lin & Bai)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking • Self-profiling • Appraisal expression of emotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of initiative • Great ambition but little talent • Insufficient confidence 	<p>Coaching Mentoring (24 Hours)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance adapt ability • Improve initiative and optimize attitude • Establish self-confidence 	<p>Lecture Seminar(Lin & Bai & Jiang)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnitude • Strength • Generality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of long-term career plan • Negative career motivation • High turnover rate 	<p>Career Planning and Development (45 Hours)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the productive workforce • Better long-term career development plan • Create positive career motivation 	<p>Individual Career Plan (Lin & Bai & Jiang)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on motivation • Career control • Work exploration

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain useful work skills 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High physical and mental stress Working burnout Pessimistic working attitude 	Employee Stress and Wellness Intervention (45 Hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimistic work attitude Enhance physical and mental health Gain positive emotion 	Employee Assistance Program (Lin & Bai & Jiang)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use one's emotions Regulating emotions

Source: Created by the researcher

Research Results

This part comprised of quantitative data analysing and qualitative data interpreting of the research. Data comprised of 50 respondents for quantitative and 6 interviewees for qualitative data.

Comparison of Pre and Post-ODI Process

1. Qualitative Results

After the intervention, in terms of work attitude, motivation, self-awareness, and interpersonal relationships, 83.3% of respondents thought that they were better than before. Almost all respondents believed that their confidence to achieve career success was higher than before through intervention. Additionally, 66.7% of the respondents thought the career plan was more precise and achievable before interventions. Also, 50% of the respondents thought there were many definitions of career success. Except for the traditional career success, good personal development and comfortable feelings were also another meaning of success. Almost all respondents believed that the interventions of emotions were all useful. In terms of emotional control, emotional perception, emotional use and stress management, 83.3% of respondents believed that they were better than before. Almost all respondents believed that confidence to overcome setbacks and difficulties were greater than before through intervention. Moreover, the company's internal reports shown, after the ODI, the turnover rate in the first half of 2019 was lower than in 2017 and 2018, and the turnover rate was reduced to 18%. In the mid-2019 personal performance evaluation, 92% of the respondents in the experimental group completed the task on time, 54% of them over fulfilled the task, four respondents were awarded

by Jiangsu General Company, and one respondent won the member qualification of Million Round Table, AIA. Meanwhile, the absenteeism rate at morning meeting was 56% lower than in 2018, and customer complaints rate was also reduced.

2. Quantitative Results

The inferential data was used to find the differences of dimensions between pre-ODI and post-ODI in experimental group. The result of the hypotheses was tested by a paired sample t-test to identify the difference between the means of pre-ODI and post-ODI in experimental group. For post-ODI assessment, the findings found that the experimental group had the significant difference.

Table 2:

Difference of Experimental Group between Pre and Post-ODI

Dimensions	ODI Stage	M	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Career Competency	PRE	3.80	0.63	7.009	0.000
	POST	4.13	0.36		
Emotional Intelligences	PRE	3.76	0.41	5.359	0.000
	POST	4.09	0.49		
Self-Efficacy	PRE	3.70	0.51	12.593	0.000
	POST	4.16	0.31		

* $p < 0.05$,

In Table 2, all the differences of the experimental group are significant at a 0.000 level with a 95% confidence interval. The hypotheses in the quantitative analysis included:

H₀₁. There is no significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in employee career competency.

H_{a1}. There is a significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in employee career competency.

H₀₂. There is no significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in emotional intelligence.

H_{a2}. There is a significant difference between pre-ODI and post-ODI in emotional intelligence.

H₀₃. There is no significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in self-efficacy.

H_{a3}. There is a significant difference between Pre ODI and Post ODI in self-efficacy.

From the analyses, Hypothesis 1₀, 2₀, and 3₀ were rejected, and alternative Hypothesis 1_a, 2_a, and 3_a were accepted. Therefore, the result demonstrated a significant improvement of career competency, emotional intelligences, and self-efficacy in experimental group after the ODI phase.

Conclusions

The empirical evidence provided the organization development interventions (include process consultation, team building, coaching and mentoring, career planning, and development, employee stress and wellness intervention) can be used to develop the employee career competency, emotional intelligences, and self-efficacy . This leads to the improvement of employee career success. The findings also confirmed that the employee career competency, emotional intelligences, and self-efficacy were enhanced after ODI. According to the objectives for this action research, the development of employee career competency, emotional intelligences, and self-efficacy were achieved in this study. In view of the researcher, the more development of employee career competency, emotional intelligences, and self-efficacy, the more employee career success to achieve in AIA, Changzhou Branch.

Recommendations

Globalization and new technology promote the transformation and changes of modern organizations, which increasingly leads to an unpredictable and dynamic career development context in which changes occur more frequently than ever. Most notably, individuals rather than organizations will be responsible for more career planning and management. All these factors determined individuals should adapt more to unknown conditions to achieve individual success and development, and

career success gains a new meaning to the emphasis on self-management of employability demands to develop their career.

From this research, the researcher has revealed the mechanism of career success improvement by improving the employee career competency, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy through organizational development intervention. Also, it will help the individual to open the new idea of career success and development.

(1) Recommendations for the focal company

The research findings reveal that employee career competency, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy have a significant improvement through ODI. The recommendations also integrated with the management' comments after ODI; the researcher makes the following recommendations for future plans of the company.

1. Develop the employee career competency. Performance upgrading and market expansion of the company depend on the joint efforts of employees; meanwhile, the personal career development and career success of employees also need the support of the company. For realizing this goal and vision, the company should fully exert everyone's role in the work and establish the corresponding development mechanism of employee career competency. The improvement of employee career competency will increase the possibility of career success, and the company can also achieve higher performances to make the win-win situation of both sides.

2. Enhance emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. As a sales agent-oriented company, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are the positive strengths for improving the interpersonal relationship and communication issues, physical and mental health, and initiative and optimize attitude. The improvement of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy will increase the possibility of career success, and the company can also achieve higher performances to gain a friendly and trusting working environment.

3. Design long-term career development plan and establish positive career motivation. In a highly mobile and turbulent insurance market, a career development plan could give employees more career development opportunities and targeted long-term vocational training. The employees could gain the abilities to transform different positions, functions and roles successfully, which make the employees feel valued and satisfied with the company. Moreover, a career development plan could assist the

millennial employees in gaining a better sense of belonging, subjective well-being, and organizational identification.

(2) Recommendations for individuals

Individuals should take more responsibly for the career success and development rather than organizations. In this circumstance, employee career competency, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy play the crucial role in maintaining the employee’s value to the organization this becomes a critical path to achieve individual success and development.

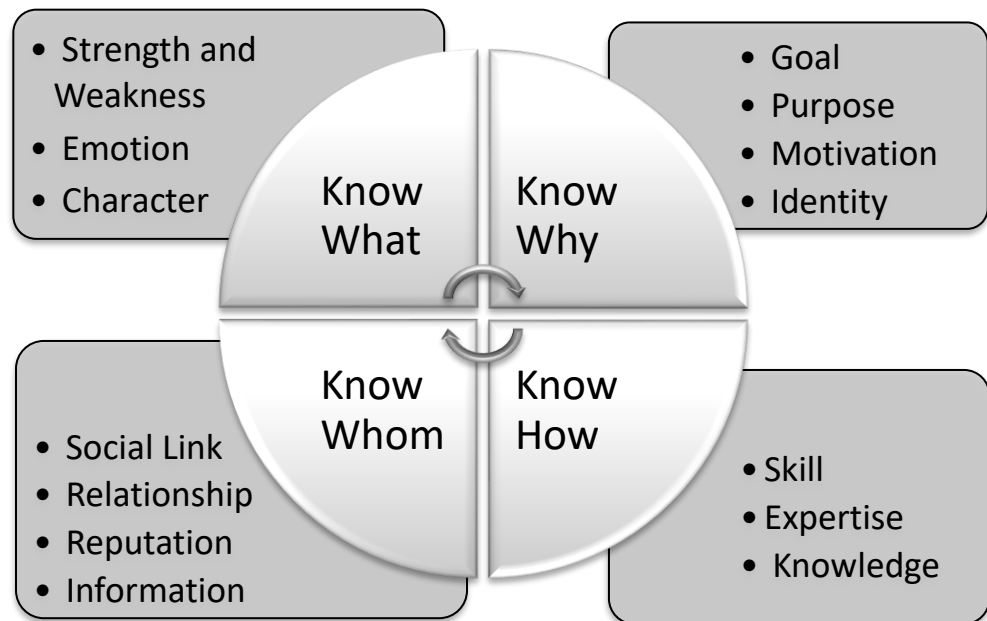


Figure 2 Improvement Framework of Employee Career Success (Developed by the researcher, 2019)

1. Know What. “Know what” reflects the answer to “What characters do I have?” Individuals should have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, emotions, and characteristics at work. In an uncertain working environment, continuous career success and development are establishing the self-concept and self-awareness.

2. Know Why. “Know why” reflects the answer to “Why do I continue this work?” Individuals should have a reflection of the goal, purpose, motivation, and identity in the work. In the borderless career period, continuous career success and development are relying on the positive motivation, identity, and enthusiasm of the work.

3. Know How. “Know how” reflects the answer to “How do I do this work?” Individuals should have the qualified skills, professional talents, and knowledge relevant to the work. In a fierce competition environment, qualified skills, expertise, and knowledge would help individuals not only gain the employability and adaptability of the work, but they also can enhance self-confidence and positive emotions.

4. Know Whom. “Know whom” reflects the answer of “Whom do I establish the working links?” In the pursuit of career development, social relations and links established inside and outside the company can not only promote the personal social network but also promote the working information exchanging and personal reputation establishment, which is conducive to create individual competitive advantage and access to career opportunities in relationship structure.

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