



editorial



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Behavior, experience, skill, and training (BEST): a four- pillar framework for career development in science

Strategic career planning

A background in science provides the foundation to support an array of career paths, from academia to industry and across multiple disciplines and therapeutic areas. Traditional career ladders outline linear growth opportunities based on increasing skill,

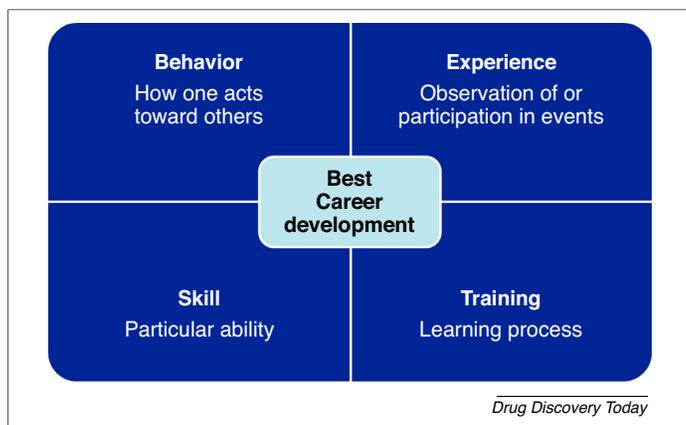
responsibility, authority, and compensation. The concept of the corporate lattice has emerged to describe careers that can move in all directions, with multiple pathways for learning and growth [1]. The importance of behavior to career development is now becoming clearer, as is the value to an organization from a colleague's ability to influence, generate insight from, and interact with an expert network [2,3]. With so many opportunities, how then can a colleague determine their optimal career map? The chief medical officer of a major pharmaceutical organization offered guidance on how to develop a strategic career plan 'Start by determining what this pinnacle role may be and then understand the skills, experiences and behavior needed for you to get there and succeed.' [4]. Here, I build on this foundation and showcase a career development framework that includes four crucial, interrelated, and nonhierarchical pillars of career development: behavior, experience, skill, and training (BEST; Fig. 1). This framework takes into account career management best practices, as well as environmental shifts that emphasize effective interactions within a network to support innovation and organizational growth.

BEST career development framework defined

The BEST framework includes four pillars (behavior, experience, skill, and training) that, as an integrated cohort, represent a foundation for professional development. An individual does not engage with these pillars in a silo, but through interactions with their personal and professional networks.

Behavior

From new recruit to senior leader, an individual's behavior within and outside the workplace is recognized as a core and differentiating pillar. One ideal for the pillar is the golden rule to treat others as one would wish to be treated. Through the BEST career development lens, this pillar focuses on an understanding that behavior should align to, and advance, enterprise and culture-based goals. Does a colleague's behavior motivate and inspire others through modeling? Does the behavior support effective interactions with numerous and diverse individuals, teams, and disciplines? Although task achievement can represent a measure of a colleague's professional capability, how the task is achieved is the reflection of behavior. This pillar is arguably one of the most challenging to

**FIGURE 1**

The behavior, experience, skills, training (BEST) career development framework.

address, particularly when trends towards increasing digital or virtual interactions can alter how it is perceived and demonstrated. Nonetheless, a focus on behavior becomes more discerning as colleagues progress in their careers. The importance of behavior to career development is further underscored by the broad-based use of behavioral-based interviews in role selection.

Experience

The pillar of experience represents an individual's observation of, or participation in, events. Organizations place value on a colleague's experience for the perspectives, learnings, or networking derived and its goals, whether they are personal, professional, or community based. Individuals often attribute career advances to unexpected experiences that, only in hindsight, led to significant impacts. Experience can be aligned, or not, to a current career tract. For example, scientific experience can progress commercial objectives; conversely, commercial experience can offer new ideas or approaches to scientific arenas. Diversity of experience and diversity within an experience are also highly regarded. The use of storytelling as a powerful communication tool is another demonstration of the value of this pillar. Although experience as a pillar supports career growth, the skill of identifying and translating how the experience will serve the colleague and organization must be developed in parallel.

Skill

Skill as a career development pillar reflects a particular ability or competency. The concept of skill within the BEST framework goes beyond technical know-how to encompass the understanding that skill leads to task achievement, value, quality, and impact on others. Public speaking as an illustrative skill showcases this distinction. Although sometimes feared, many individuals can learn to speak in public. The unique ability to communicate in public in an informative and persuasive manner to educate or influence others highlights the trajectory of the skill. Public speaking also demonstrates the relationships among pillars in the BEST framework. Individuals might have an inherent skill level, but it might be strengthened through training or experience. How a colleague

deploys the skill through their behavior is also a key aspect of career growth.

Training

Training is an organized activity to impart information to improve an individual's performance (www.businessdictionary.com/definition/training.html). From undergraduate and graduate programs to certifications or other coursework, individuals should make it a priority to understand what training is necessary for career entry and progression. Training requirements might be dependent on the career and career level. In some scientific disciplines, advanced technical degrees are required, whereas, in others, a multidisciplinary undergraduate training might suffice. Aligned or nonaligned trainings in particular topics might also prove helpful. For example, colleagues interested in global opportunities might find training in a foreign language most useful. There is a shift among organizations to favor on-the-job experience over training for career development. However, training continues to represent a key lever to optimize a particular competency or, as necessary, drive a career pivot. Given the significant time and cost investment associated with training, awareness of its value for career growth is important.

Tool implementation

The BEST career development framework can be leveraged as a tool to support role development and longer-term career planning. First, a colleague characterizes the strengths or opportunities of their behavior, experience, skill, and training in light of current and future role ideals or requirements. Next, actions to advance strengths or address opportunities are identified. In a third step, the colleague prioritizes identified actions and lays them out over time to create an action plan. Given that career needs can evolve over time or be impacted by environmental trends, the BEST framework should be implemented regularly. In addition, whereas an individual might use the framework independently, collaborating with a manager, mentor, or sponsor might be more effective, particularly to support ultimate action plan execution.

Concluding remarks

A career in science can be compared to the action of a drug in the body: although there are general principles that guide its impact, its ultimate effect is dependent on the unique characteristics of the individual and environment. The BEST framework, despite its acronym, is not intended to outline a single superior career pathway. Rather, it is intended to showcase key interwoven pillars that support a colleague's contribution to an organization. If who we are in life is a reflection of our experiences, who we are at work is often a reflection of our behavior, experience, skill, and training. The BEST framework serves as a meaningful mechanism to reflect on professional performance and career development

Declaration of conflict

The author is employed by Pfizer. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or positions of her associated institution.

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