

A CAREER IN COUNSELING COULD BE RIGHT FOR YOU

Summary: Learn more about a job as a career counselor and whether it is something you should pursue.



Question: What is career counseling and how is it done, specifically in the context of human resources departments? What type of educational training is required?

Answer: Career counseling, as the name suggests, is a specialty within the counseling profession that focuses on individuals and their work. The counselor's role is to facilitate a process in which an individual can explore, identify, select and secure a career that will be a good match. Depending on the needs of the client, the process usually involves self-assessment (analyzing skills, interests and values) occupational exploration (researching, informational interviewing and gaining direct experience), decision making, development planning and self-marketing (resume writing, job-search strategizing and interviewing).

A more recent development has been for a career counseling-related component to become part of progressive employers' agendas. As organizations have flattened and career paths have become blurred, the employer-employee contract has been redefined. To respond to employees' interest in their own development, to retain key talent, and to foster a "best fit, best work" environment, some companies have launched career development initiatives within the work site. These programs are generally housed within or contracted out through the human resources department.

Training has traditionally consisted of a master's degree in counseling, although the advent of career coaching has led to a variety of training and certification alternatives. A valuable resource on career counseling by two gurus in the field, Richard Bolles and Howard Figler, is *The Career Counselor's Handbook* (Ten Speed Press, 2007). In addition, Peggy Simonsen's *Promoting a Development Culture: Using Career Development as a Change Agent* (Davies-Black, 1997) will shed light on the organizational perspective.