

Career Analysis: Adult Learning & Development

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Already being in the Adult Learning & Development field with my position, this assignment appeared to be a moot point. Currently, I am employed as a PLM (Product Life Management) Coordinator at Ridge Tool Company, in Elyria, Ohio. As part of my position, I have job duties required of the position, working with the data management and processing of documentation in the manufacturing process of the products we make and sell. With that being said, this position also has the task of training new employees. I am training all of the individuals in the technology systems used in the manufacturing process. In just the first seven months of this position, I took this position to be 50% of the work day developing and teaching a new curriculum. Even though we are Ohio-based, the company is a global company. The company has gifted me with tuition reimbursement to earn this degree, and as part of my contract with the company, I am required to stay employed with the company two years past the last semester reimbursement has been completed. This assignment of researching careers in Adult Learning, again, seemed unnecessary at the time. However, I am seeing the positive nature of this assignment.

With my extensive employment career, I have had the opportunity to work in adult learning and/or develop and teach adult learning since 1996. At the time, I was employed with Ernst & Young, assisting with development of new hire technology training for consulting professionals. I spent three years, not only assisting with the development, but traveling to support the technology required to run the programs from remote hotels and conferences, to being the technology trainer on-site and instructing from a small group up to over 100 participants. Every company I have been employed, from Ernst & Young to Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) and now with Ridge Tool Company, I always maintained a

component of my regular jobs as an adult learning and development professional. At Tri-C, I was employed as an Executive Secretary in the Nursing Education Office with the express desire that I was hired because of my technology skills. Even though the college had professional development classes for the employees, the nursing faculty had little time to devote to outside classes. Outside classes meant where they had to schedule a class and become a student, however, while in the office, they had the time to sit with me where they were taught one-on-one in topics for Microsoft Office, Word specifically.

At the time of all this employment and training, my educational level was that of an Associate of Arts in Communications. In 2012, I left Cuyahoga Community College after a conflict of interest with the dean. Upon trying to apply and return to the working world, it became evident that, even though I had been a Technical Writer, I didn't have the bachelor's degree to help me land my next position. At the time, I hadn't realized I was an adult learning and development professional. I considered myself a Technical Writer who also taught adults. Returning to school, I earned my Bachelor of Arts Degree in English with a Professional Writing Certificate from Cleveland State University. The economy fell. With a rather large student loan bill, I had to find a position somewhere. That's where Ridge Tool Company hired me as a Marketing Assistant, part-time. After three and a half years, I was able to interview and move into a full-time position, my current position, as a PLM Coordinator.

I have realized that earning my Master's Degree in Education will help me going forward should I choose to move into other areas of the Education Industry, but for now, I am happy where I am and the tasks required with this position. So, with this paper, I completed a Career Path Self Analysis. What other positions would I be interested in pursuing and what other skills must I obtain should I be interested in applying for such positions?

Career Path Self Analysis

For the position descriptions listed below, an analysis was completed to determine the capability of the position to my skills. Questions that I needed to use to determine if the position is a good fit include: a. What Skills/Knowledge/Attitudes (SKA) do I currently possess based on my current resume; and b. What SKA will I need to acquire as I move up in my career? There were also other questions to consider when picking the career paths chosen below to determine if they would fit in with my career/education development. They included:

1. Based on my analysis, are these positions still a career option that I would like to pursue?
2. As I progress through the Adult Learning and Development program, what SKA, especially knowledge, do I need to focus on developing so that I can pursue my career and take it to the next level?
3. What are the three most important things that I learned from this assignment?

Instructional Designer

In the past, I have held roles in Instructional Design, specifically at Ernst & Young. At the time, I was employed in other roles, and assisting with technology training development. Within the education department, we developed adult learning programs for the company's professionals. They had specific guidelines for program development that I followed. Currently, at Ridge Tool Company, the curriculum development that I complete can be considered Instructional Design as well.

At the same time, I researched other companies where my interests lie with the company and where instructional designers are needed. These companies included Amazon. For Amazon, they are looking for a Senior Instructional Designer who can develop and evaluate new hire training programs. These programs are web-based. With my past experience developing

eLearning and virtual programs, my skills currently match what they are looking for in a new candidate. Within my current education program, I believe more experience developing and initiating evaluation tools will help take my career to the next level and make me a better candidate for a position such as this. Other tools that I would need to learn that would be outside of the scope of the Master's program, but required for a position such as this would include learning new technologies. They are looking for an individual with at least eight years of experience in an instructional design role. Even though my positions since 1996 have been named other roles, I have completed instructional design work as well.

I would definitely consider this position in a job search if location wasn't an issue.

Corporate Trainer

The next position I researched was for a corporate trainer. Like the instructional designer position, this position also develops eLearning. Instructional design is also a main component of this position. The company that interested me in this search was Toyota. They are located just south of Cincinnati in Kentucky. The position requires someone with engineering-related experiences. With my current experience in the Product Engineering Department and working with engineers, my skills would help me in winning a position such as this. The technology/software platforms that they currently use are all technology that I am an experienced user. The company is searching for someone with Lotus Notes skills. In past employment, I developed applications in this software. With my Bachelor's Degree in English, I also have the ability to not only develop and write the training materials, but I also have the experience to edit and proofread those materials.

The only area for improvement would be my ability to become effective within their culture in a quick timeframe. Each company has a different way of completing daily tasks. What

I have learned in other companies may not apply to the new company. At the same time, this company would benefit from the past employment experiences that I have had.

I would definitely consider a position such as this at this company. They require 50% travel of the new candidate, with occasional travel to Latin and South America. I've never traveled outside of the United States, except to Canada in high school. I would enjoy the ability to travel internationally for my position and learn about new cultures.

Technology Trainer

I have been employed in the past in the educational setting at Tri-C. This next position's description comes from the University of Houston-Downtown. Even though the position is at a university, the position's main tasks involve teaching the employees in technology. Like the instructional design position, this position also requires evaluating the curriculum being developed. As a candidate, program evaluations will need to be learned and developed more; more practice. Again, this position deals with developing online training courses. The position also deals with evaluating outside vendor training programs for viability. This position requires a minimum of two years technology training experiences. Again, the bulk of the adult learning I have engaged deals with the training of technology systems in different industries.

Because I have always been focused on technology training, I would consider this position. I have only been to Houston through Intercontinental Airport. A move to Texas would definitely be a different pace from Ohio or New Jersey where I grew up.

Learning and Development Manager

This position is with the company, Cabela's. Unlike the other positions written about earlier in this paper, this position is more of a management position. With that said, the job duties are similar or the same with all of the other positions. This position develops instructor-led

training, self-study, and eLearning. This position also evaluates the training courses being developed for viability. The only area of concern for a new hire candidate would be learning the company's competency model and the ability to become an active employee quickly. My current skill set, even without the Master's Degree would enable me to apply and be hired for this position.

Relocating to the corporate headquarters in Nebraska would interest me if the compensation was worth the move for my family.

PLM Coordinator

This last position in the list of career paths is my current position. As part of my current, everyday tasks, I am known as the Data Czar. This means, as part of the manufacturing process, I receive all of the engineering requests to create or modify parts and/or products in the manufacturing process. I review every engineering change for accuracy, making edits where required, but also reviewing the errors for training opportunities. I receive every request three times in the process. The second time is where the product engineers have completed the data maintenance work that needs to be entered into our AS-400 system. Finally, I receive the request back, review all of the work that has been completed by all departments in the process. If the request has not been completed correctly or completely, I contact the individual or individual departments, making them aware of the errors that need to be fixed. Once the changes have been fixed, the request is approved for production of the product.

I have currently been in this position since January, 2012. Even though this position is newer for me with this company, I have been completing these types of activities within the technology system of manufacturing almost five years. As part of my job responsibilities as a Marketing Assistant, I was to be a writer of these engineering requests and track them through

the system. Now I am the gatekeeper, determining that others have completed the work that I might have started.

Since becoming part of this company, the manufacturing focus has been Elyria-centric or even US-centric, depending on the product being developed. Over the past year or two, the company has started investing more time and money into our international manufacturing locations, including Romania, India, China, Belgium, Mexico, Germany, Switzerland, etc. With these changes in manufacturing also require the additional development of training materials on a global scale. We are currently working through processes that will allow us to truly become a global company, with developing products globally. This concept brings up all sorts of issues ranging from time zone differences to culture. How does a culture that is predominantly male-oriented react when the trainer is a woman? Will they listen to me as a knowledgeable person?

Not only are there location issues, but also departmental issues. The departments who require training range from Product and Manufacturing Engineering, Marketing, Sales, Cost Accounting, Production Control, Planning, Quality Assurance, Technical Support. With each of these departments, each individual, group of individuals become part of the overall system in developing a new product for production and sale. The ultimate goal is to develop a product to sell. When anything adds a wrench in the system and the product doesn't launch on time, the problem becomes loss of sales.

There are certainly knowledge and skills that I need to continue to learn as I continue with this position. As stated in the introduction of the paper, I am required to be employed by this company two years past the last semester reimbursement is made to me for classes attended. Among the skills that I continue to learn is what each department does in their tasks to complete for the overall process. Then, specifically with computer aided design (CAD), how does an

engineer use the CAD software to build the models, and how does that system work seamlessly with the data management software? I will continue to gather the knowledge I need as I continue my position.

Conclusion: What Did I Learn From This Project?

In the end, I enjoy my position the most. I have been given a number of nicknames over the past few years. Because I have to babysit the system, I have often called myself “The Sheriff.” When I started the PLM Coordinator position, the phrase “There’s a New Sheriff in Town” ran rampant. Now, because I force individuals to do their jobs, I am “The Enforcer” (said with an Arnold Schwarzenegger voice. I did learn from this project that there will be plenty of other positions available in almost all industries that I choose. I know the majority of my classmates are pursuing this degree to get into counseling. I have trained adults since 1996, and will always be in a position to train adults. Other factors come into play when deciding a position and where that position is located for future employment. My spouse and I currently own a home in Elyria, Ohio. To consider employment in any other location nationally or internationally would require moving my family, selling our home, etc. This would definitely cause me to become realistic in my pursuit of a new career.

Each of the other positions that I have researched all requires the same tasks for the openings. The only differences in the positions it appears is what each company uses for technology. Technology has never scared me; learning new technologies is always an adventure. Each position that I researched may have a different job title, but the job duties are similar in nature and have the same duties in some cases.