

# Avoiding the Career Plateauing Trap

Patrick Auth, PhD, PA-C

Drexel University

Session T229

# Avoiding the Career Plateauing Trap

## **Instructional Objectives:**

After participating in this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Define career plateauing
2. Discuss a model for career development
3. Analyze the major types of career plateauing
4. Discuss the sources of career plateauing
5. Discuss strategies to cope with career plateauing

# Avoiding the Career Plateauing Trap

*“Career plateauing refers to feeling of frustration and psychological feebleness that individuals tend to experience following a temporary or permanent halt in advancement of their careers.”*

Lemire, Saba, and Gagon

# A MODEL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

	Exploration stage	Establishment stage	Maintenance stage	Disengagement stage
Developmental tasks	Identify interests, skills, fit between self and work	Advancement, growth, security, develop life style	Hold on to accomplishments, update skills	Retirement planning, change balance between work and non-work
Activities	Helping Learning Following directions	Making independent contributions	Training Sponsoring Policy making	Phasing out of work
Relationships to other employees	Apprentice	Colleague	Mentor	Sponsor
Typical age	Less than 30	30 – 45	45 – 60	61+
Years on job	Less than 2 years	2 – 10 years	More than 10 years	More than 10 years



# Types of Career Plateauing

Structural  
Plateau

Content  
Plateau

Life  
Plateau

Contribut  
ion  
Plateau

# Sources of Career Plateauing



# Sources of Career Plateauing

Individual Skills and Abilities



# Sources of Career Plateauing

Individual Needs and Values

# Sources of Career Plateauing

Lack of Intrinsic Motivation

# Sources of Career Plateauing

Lack of Extrinsic Rewards

# Sources of Career Plateauing

Stress and Burnout

# Sources of Career Plateauing

Sluggish Organizational Growth

# Signs of Career Plateauing

You have stopped growing

You no longer enjoy the work

Continuous improvement is not part of the mantra

Greener pastures truly are greener

The organization's ethics and values are inconsistent with your own

# Getting Off the Career Plateau



# Strategies to Cope with Career Plateauing

Defense



# Strategies to Cope with Career Plateauing

Revaluation

# Strategies to Cope with Career Plateauing

Transition

# Possible Benefits to a Career Plateau

Spend time at base camp

Time to learn new skills

Time to self-evaluate

Achieve work-life balance

# Let us Continue the Conversation



# References

1. Lemire, L., T. Saba, and Y. Gagnon. 1999. "Managing Career Plateauing in the Quebec Public Sector" *Public Personnel Management*, 28:375-391.
2. Appelbaum, S. H., & Finestone, D. (1994). Revisiting career plateauing: Same old problems - avante-garde solutions. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 9 Iss: 5, pp. 12-21
3. Appelbaum, S. H., Serena, M., & Shapiro, B.T. (2005). Generation X and the Boomers: An analysis of realities and myths. *Management Research News*, 28 (1), 1-33
4. Dawson, C. M. (1983). Will career plateauing become a bigger problem? *Personnel Journal*, 62-78
5. Elsass, P.M., & Ralston, D.A. (1989). Individual responses to the stress of career plateauing. *Journal of Management*, 15 (1), 35 - 47
6. Vickerstaff, S (2006). Entering the retirement zone: How much choice do individuals have? *Social Policy and Society*, 5, 507-517