

career opportunities

Investment in career planning, skill development and opportunities for career progression

Regardless of generational cohort or tenure, career opportunity within an organisation has a significant impact on employee engagement and bottom line results. One of the primary reasons why people leave companies is lack of personal growth, job challenges and opportunity for career progression.

suggested actions

- **competency framework** Provide a clear competency profile that allows all employees to identify their position within the organisation, identify current development opportunities and potential pathways for career progression (both upwards and outwards). Competencies should include the required skills, knowledge and behaviours for each level, role and job family.
- **developmental assessment** Give your staff the opportunity to participate in developmental assessments to determine current competencies and enable the identification of gaps between current and future planned positions. A self-assessment skills audit tool may be created and made readily available to allow staff to regularly monitor progress in closing competency gaps. Development assessments can also be used as a tool for identifying and fast-tracking a pool of high potential employees.
- **career planning** Talk with staff about their career goals. Career coaching can be integrated into the performance appraisal process, with managers assisting in the development of personal career interests, goals and the formulation of realistic career pathways in line with employees' abilities and the long-range plans of the organisation.
- **tailored learning & development** Offer support and guidance for the development of an action plan in which development needs are formally identified and prioritised and relevant development and training options are tailored to learning style and career objectives.
- **strategic career development options** Get creative about developing future oriented options that are focused on the development of competencies to meet career objectives. Options can include job enlargement or rotation, lateral movement, cross-organisation task forces or even secondments in partner organisations to develop a breadth of organisational exposure, an understanding of different functional areas, peer learning, new skills acquisition and a new network of contacts. More specific development of professional skills can be facilitated through formal mentoring, development centres or formal education and training.

case study

Over a number of years, Cancer Council Queensland has improved its career planning and development capability with measurable results. The Council's first Voice Climate survey results revealed some staff believed that there was a lack of career opportunities and effort spent on career development. Management and HR took a number of steps in response.

Firstly, career planning was incorporated into the performance review cycle. Employees were given the option of discussing their career aspirations with their manager. The intention was to have an open and honest conversation about their real career intentions without impacting their perceived HR record. As such, managers were also trained and equipped to have these conversations. There was a positive response to this initiative with a 75% uptake of the career discussion option.

Secondly, processes were put into place to ensure that all jobs were advertised internally first before looking for external applicants. Staff can now easily access current job vacancies.

Finally, the organisation was restructured into a smaller number of divisions to improve the cross-department cooperation and manage the growth of the organisation. This action enhanced the awareness of job opportunities across the organisation.

Three years after implementing the changes, the percentage of employees rating career opportunities favourably had improved 20%, demonstrating a significant transformation in perceptions of career development. Cherie Everett, the Executive Manager, HR, believes that this combined with other HR and management initiatives has contributed to measurable improvement in performance and a reduction in staff turnover from 25% to 6%.

useful resources

- Organisational Psychology in Australia and New Zealand. Chapter 6: **Career Development and Change**. O'Driscoll, M., Taylor, P., & Kalliath, T. (2006). Oxford: New York.
- Employee Training and Development. Chapter 11: **Careers and Career Management**. Noe, R. A. (2008). 4th Ed: McGraw Hill Australia.
- Human Resources Management in Australia 2E: Strategy People Performance. Chapter 12: **Employee Development and Career Management**. By: De Cieri, H., Kramar, R., Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J., Gerhart, B., & Wright, P. (2005). 2nd Ed: McGraw Hill Australia.
- **Using knowledge, skill and ability (KSA) data to identify career pathing opportunities: an application of job analysis to internal manpower planning**. Wooten, W. Public Personnel Management 22.n4 (Winter 1993): pp 551(13).
- Grow Your Own Leaders Acceleration Pools: A New Method of Succession Management. Chapters 9-13: **Strategies for Accelerating Development**. Byham, W. C., Smith A. B., & Pease, M.J. DDI Press.
- **A Practical Guide to Competencies: How to enhance individual and organisational performance**. Whiddett, S., & Hollyforde, S. (2003). 2nd Ed: CIPD.