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What are the Top Considerations and Benefits of Internal Career Coaching?

Abstract

As your organization considers an internal career coaching program, you'll need to identify its primary objective. A major concern for employers today is attracting and retaining talent. A principal cause of employee turnover is the lack of attention to career opportunities. This leads to turnover by way of decreased engagement and motivation among employees. Demotivated staff can be costly, and avoiding the issue can lead to further problems later on, such as employees with little loyalty to the company or declining interest in their job.

An internal career coaching program can address this issue directly by providing more attention to individual employees' career paths. This can enhance performance, build commitment, promote equity within the organization, capture qualified talent, and ultimately decrease turnover.

This internal career coaching program will need to include customized career paths since there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer to an individual's career journey. Both the individual employee and the organization have important roles in this process. In particular, managers will have a much more expanded role in coaching their employees – this may mean an additional layer of a career counselor to support both individual employees and managers in career development.

Keywords

coaching, mentoring, mentor, internal career coaching, career coach, benefits, coaching program, sponsorship, HR, human resources

Comments

Suggested Citation

Avery, A. (2016). *What are the top considerations and benefits of internal career coaching?* Retrieved [insert date] from Cornell University, ILR School site: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/student/105>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAIN ISSUES

- What are the top considerations and benefits of internal career coaching?
- How can an organization best structure an internal career coaching program?

INTRODUCTION

As your organization considers an internal career coaching program, you'll need to identify its primary objective. A major concern for employers today is attracting and retaining talent. A principal cause of employee turnover is the lack of attention to career opportunities.¹ This leads to turnover by way of decreased engagement and motivation among employees. Demotivated staff can be costly, and avoiding the issue can lead to further problems later on, such as employees with little loyalty to the company or declining interest in their job.²

An internal career coaching program can address this issue directly by providing more attention to individual employees' career paths. This can enhance performance, build commitment, promote equity within the organization, capture qualified talent, and ultimately decrease turnover.³

This internal career coaching program will need to include customized career paths since there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer to an individual's career journey. Both the individual employee and the organization have important roles in this process. In particular, managers will have a much more expanded role in coaching their employees – this may mean an additional layer of a career counselor to support both individual employees and managers in career development.

CAREER PATH CUSTOMIZATION

Most employee's self-concepts revolve around eight categories reflecting basic values, motives, and needs.⁴ Throughout an individual's career journey, he or she will become more aware of one or more of these **Career Anchors** that will guide career decisions. This process has been applied and studied in several organizations and ultimately shows that there is a variety of primary anchors which will motivate and engage an individual.

Using these anchors allows for the benefit of individual attention. "Employees should discuss their needs, values, and career orientations with their bosses on an ongoing basis so that realistic assessment is made and meaningful career goals are established. This also places the boss in the role of 'career developer' and act more as a mentor and less like a boss."⁵ This also allows managers to create appropriate individualized incentives and increase organizational commitment.

ROLES OF THE INDIVIDUAL & ORGANIZATION

The onus of career exploration and development lies with the individual in analyzing his or her own career.⁴ At the same time, leaders need to be better at analyzing and designing work for their employees to facilitate this process within their organization.

Individuals can fill their role by following a four step pattern.⁶

First, consider the end goal. This links directly to understanding your Career Anchor as you see a specific outcome for your career path (promotion, salary goal, relocation, etc.).

Second, break it down. Each goal will have multiple steps of reaching the final target. Actionable activities can get you there (training programs, project involvement, etc.).

Third, set deadlines. Attaching these activities and goals to a time frame will make you more likely to succeed. Also, consider scheduling blocks of time for this on your calendar.

Fourth, keep it visible. Keep these deadlines and action items in front of you. Celebrate accomplishments and continue toward the end goal.

Organizations can develop a model of how employees can progress through the company's internal structure. MasterCard has recently developed its own career path design.⁷ They outlined several areas benefitted by their framework (see Appendix A), but more importantly, they described career path guide components that outline job related information and guidance to provide to its employees. The organization has a key role in developing employees through their next role in the organization. MasterCard also outlined skill types and proficiency levels needed for each role as they seek to put employees in new roles to develop new skillsets.

Additionally, the CEB Corporate Leadership Council has developed a set of tools for organizations to enable successful career pathing. These tools focus on providing support (like training and communication) for employees and managers and gives relevant example tactics (see Appendix B).⁸

EXPANDED MANAGER/COUNSELOR ROLE

This puts a lot of responsibility on managers to develop their people. Your organization may find it useful to separate career development into a mentor or career counselor role to aid in customizing employee career paths.

These three factors help make the case for an expanded internal coach role:²

- 1) **Ability:** Selecting the right individuals with the right skills will realize the benefits of internal career coaching. A Career Counselor may be one with stronger or more developed coaching skills.
- 2) **Trust:** Ensure trust and confidentiality since what is discussed will have a heavy impact on pay and promotion outcomes. A separate Career Counselor can offer an extra layer of confidence.
- 3) **Direction:** Help those being coached come up with their own answers and solutions instead of just giving direction. A Career Counselor may be more able to encourage individual responsibility.

If your organization relies on managers to fill this internal career coach role, you'll need to find ways to develop their skillsets. One approach includes encouraging managers to develop internal social networks, have frequent short career goal conversations, and draw input from employees.⁹ The skills managers need for coaching their employees fall into five categories: building the relationship, providing assessment, challenging thinking and assumptions, supporting and encouraging, and driving results.¹⁰ Using these frameworks can help build manager capability as career counselors and coaches.

In one case study, Mueller Water Products used an IT system that collected all the information regarding current and past positions along with skills and competencies.¹¹ But even then, their company leaders needed to go through the exercise of articulating requirements of positions and the skills and experience desired for each job. This means that whether you use managers, Career Counselors, or even an IT system, leaders must be dedicated to the career coaching program.

CONCLUSION

A successful internal career coaching program will alleviate turnover pressures by engaging and motivating employees at all levels of the organization. In order for this program to be successful, it must be aligned with the organization's overall talent strategy. Career pathing can play an integral role in supporting the Talent Management Cycle (see Appendix C). Organizations can consider a separate Career Counselor role or take measures to improve the capability of its managers.

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APPENDIX A: Areas Benefitted by a Career Pathing Framework⁷



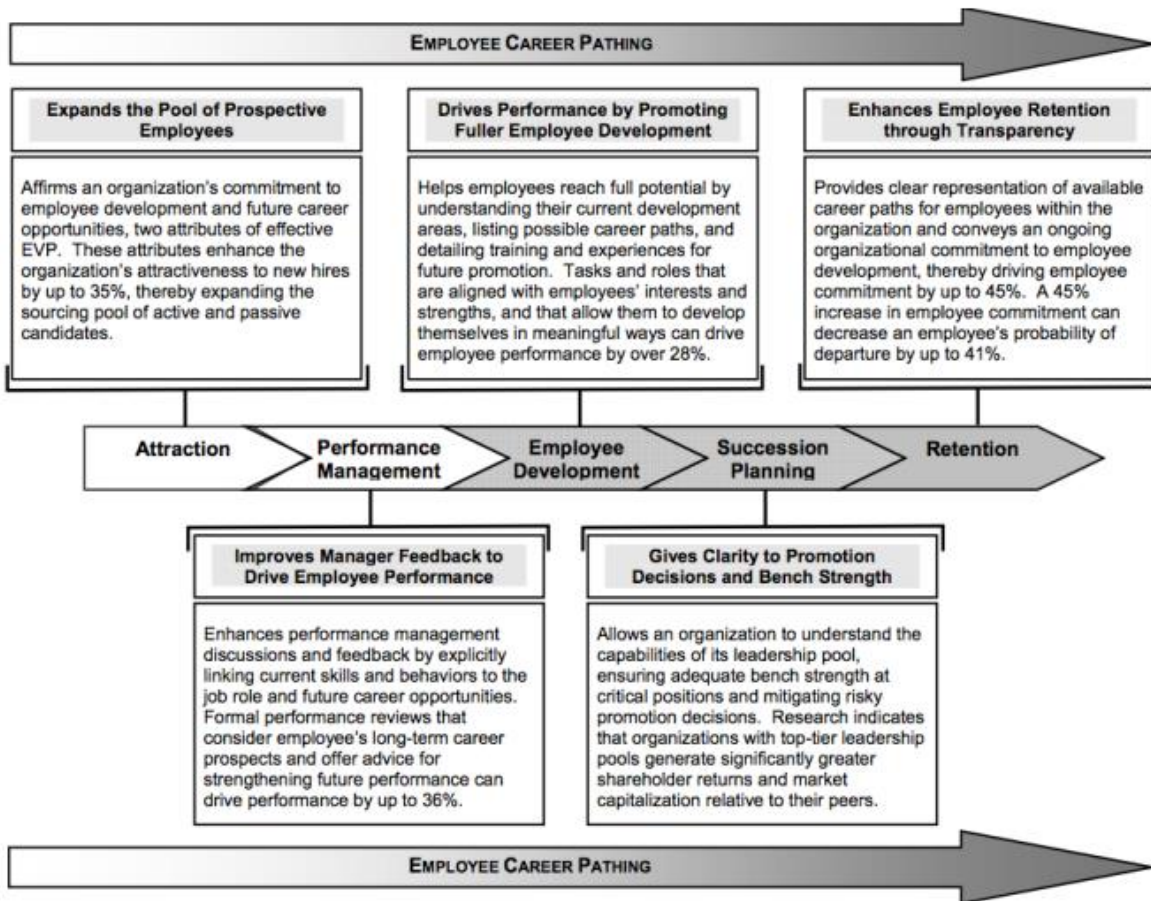
Orgera & Leone, 2014

APPENDIX B: Providing Support to Enable Successful Career Pathing⁸

Support for Employees		Support for Managers		External Support	
Roadmaps for Success	Discussion Frameworks	Manager Incentives	Individual Development Plans (IDPs)	Communication and Marketing	Career Advisors
Organizations should provide employees with tools to help them complete training and development and meet identified objectives in their career path.	Organizations should offer training or provide templates for employees to facilitate effective career discussions with their managers.	Organizations should reinforce career pathing activities within yearly goals or performance appraisals of managers.	Organizations should provide tips for managers to customize employee IDPs to reflect meaningful, realistic development opportunities.	Organizations should market and communicate the career pathing tool to create top-of-mind awareness for employees.	Organizations often enroll career advisors or mentors (often employees within HR) that assist employees with career management questions.
Examples of Relevant Tactics at Profiled Organizations					
Company D created an employee "Roadmap for Results," a template that details timelines, rationale, and steps for completing career and performance measures.	Company B provides a career discussion template to help employees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize their thoughts • Frame the career conversation • Solicit actionable feedback 	Company A requires all managers to meet specific employee mobility goals, such as moving a certain percentage of employees within their department or into other roles.	Company C's toolkit outlines the following tips for IDP creation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate goals and expectations • Identify tools and resources to achieve goals • Provide growth to meet required development. 	Company D promotes the career pathing tool during employee orientation and communicates its effectiveness and advantages to managers during performance management communications.	Company A embeds career advisors within business units to provide feedback and leverage social networks to enable individual development and peer support.

Reference: Career Pathing Processes and Tools

APPENDIX C: Career Pathing Supports Talent Management Cycle⁸



Reference: Career Pathing Processes and Tools