**Growth and Development – Career Advancement**

#### What to Know:

Employees definitely won’t achieve their career goals unless 1) employees know what their goals are, and 2) managers are aware of employees’ goals. Everyone wants something different — some want to climb the ladder, some are focused on learning, some want stability, others are relationship-focused – it’s a matter of knowing an individual, creating the right environment and opportunities, and empowering them to do the hard work to progress.

#### Mythbusters:

Employees don’t always draw connections between learning or growth opportunities and career progression. Career advancement is not only via formal promotions, pay increases, or title changes, but also by gaining new skills, taking on larger responsibilities, and collaborating with different functions. You may need to help employees see how experiences like these are critical for their career progression and achieving personal career goals.

**Questions to Ask:**

* Are there clear career progressions? Are they understood? Do you know what it takes to advance in your role?
* How are decisions about promotions currently made? What should we start, stop, continue doing in regard to this process?
* In addition to promotion, what are other ways that you could develop professionally? Ask the team to consider options like training opportunities, cross-training, increased responsibility, the opportunities to lead a team or a project.
* Think of a time when you were provided with a meaningful development opportunity. How did the opportunity come about? What made it a positive experience? How did it benefit the organization? How could this help us be more effective at meeting our priority?
* What can we do within this group to provide each other with more development opportunities (consider cross-training, mentoring, peer feedback, etc.)?
* What could your supervisor do differently to be more supportive in accomplishing your career goals?

**Best Practices:**

* Identify and communicate clear career paths and open positions.
* Establish clear and consistent promotion policies and procedures including when internal jobs will be posted and when they will not be posted.
* Meet with employees one on one to discuss career goals/interests, developmental opportunities, and opportunities for growth within the organization.
* Be proactive in providing learning opportunities, especially for high potential employees.
* Look for less formal opportunities for career growth, like expanding responsibilities, increasing variety in one’s work, or having the opportunity to teach others.

#### What Managers Can Do:

Identify and communicate clear career paths and open positions.

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Look for less formal opportunities for career growth, like expanding responsibilities, increasing variety in one’s work, or having the opportunity to teach others.

#### What Employees Can Do:

Do some self-reflection — do you know what your career goals are? Once you identify a few short-term and longer-term goals, strategize ways to work towards them with your manager.

It can be scary to talk about career goals, for fear of conveying disinterest in your current role. Even so, it’s best to be honest with your manager. Express commitment to your current role, while also emphasizing that you want to grow in ways that fit your and the organization’s needs.

We don’t always know where we want to go. Rather than position, promotion, or compensation goals, think of your career more broadly. Develop some goals based on new experiences, mastering skills, utilizing strengths, or pursuing interests.

Work on building your network both within the organization and via professional organizations. Having strong relationships can ensure that people think of you when opportunities arise.

Dedicate a week to reflecting on the work you do. Write down the things that you love about your work and things you don’t like. Look for trends and patterns to help crystallize the things that you enjoy the most and consider how you can do more of those things as you develop in your career.

#### What Leadership Can Do:

Spread a mindset that career goals aren’t just about promotions and pay increases. Share your own goals to learn, develop new skills, form new relationships, or expand your understanding of particular areas of the business.

Support training and professional development initiatives. Opportunities to grow knowledge, master new technologies, or explore new processes/systems allow employees to simultaneously improve their effectiveness and build personal capabilities.

Successful leadership succession doesn’t just happen, it requires purposeful effort. Evaluate the methods for succession planning in your organization, including at lower levels. Without a qualified person to fill their shoes, you cannot promote someone into an executive position. Prioritize career planning throughout the organization.

**Watch:**

* [Three Questions to unlock your authentic career: Ashley Stahl at TEDxBerkeley](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMiSf7LpFQE)

**Read:**

* [*3 Tips for Helping Employees Achieve Their Career Growth Goals*](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/3-tips-for-helping-employees-achieve-their-career-growth_us_58b70a0ce4b0ddf65424627e)
* [*Why Employees’ Big Dreams Should be Your Company’s Top Priority*](https://www.fastcompany.com/3002197/why-employees-big-dreams-should-be-your-companys-top-priority)
* [*Harvard Business Review: Making Sure Your Employees Succeed*](https://hbr.org/2011/02/making-sure-your-employees-suc)
* *Building Tomorrow’s Talent: A Practitioner’s Guide to Talent Management and Succession Planning by Doris Sims, Matthew Gay, Chris Morris*
* *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within, Edition 5 By William J. Rothwell*
* *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership Powered Company by Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter, James Noel*

**King County Resources:**

* [King County Learning and Development](https://www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/learning-development.aspx)