
Introducing career development: toolkit

If you want to lift engagement and retention, increase performance, use talent more effectively or build a future workforce, it's a good time to think about introducing employee career development into your business.

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Career development in your business

The goal of career development is to harness the full potential of employees for the growth and success of your business and to raise employees' satisfaction.

Career development strategies bring employers and employees together to explore how the interests and potential of employees aligns with the needs and strategy of the business. They:

- convey an interest in your employees and their future
- help your employees to see their future direction more clearly, and
- help you get 'the right person in the right seat on the bus'.

Some of the myths

« If I ask my employees about their career they'll think I want them to leave. »

Like all people strategies you need to plan your approach first.

- Communicate the business case for career development to your employees.
- Fully integrate career development in the other systems in your workplace.
- Develop employees' understanding and skills in career development as you go.

« If I develop my employees' career potential they will leave. »

When you invest in your employees they are more likely to feel loyal and motivated, and stay.

- Seeing workmates grow lifts staff morale and commitment.
- You are likely to enhance your reputation as an employer of choice.
- If you do nothing, they'll probably leave anyway and be less engaged until they do.

« My business is too small to need it or afford it. »

Career development helps keep staff in any size business engaged and productive.

- You don't need to be able to offer promotion or upward movement.
- You get the benefit of more empowered and competent employees.
- It doesn't need to cost a lot.

« My employees don't have careers, they have jobs. »

Whatever word you choose, work is a big part of life for most of us.

- Most employees need a sense of achievement to stay happy and productive at work.
- Career development helps you grow the skills you need for the future of your business.
- Engaged and skilled employees can increase your business opportunities.

The benefits to a workplace

The outcomes below show what you can gain from using career development strategies in your business. Which of these are important for your business right now?

Immediate outcomes

employer

- › reduced absences
- › reduced staff turnover
- › improved person-job match
- › improved productivity
- › a valued reward strategy
- › ability to do more in-house

employee

- › improved morale and commitment
- › understands options and opportunities
- › more responsive to change
- › greater self-insight
- › skills to manage own career

Workplace outcomes

- › positive work environment
- › intelligent use of skills and talents
- › retain knowledge of business
- › higher skilled team
- › more flexible workforce
- › smoother job succession
- › larger talent bank for special tasks
- › more innovative environment
- › improved communication
- › attract good people

Business outcomes

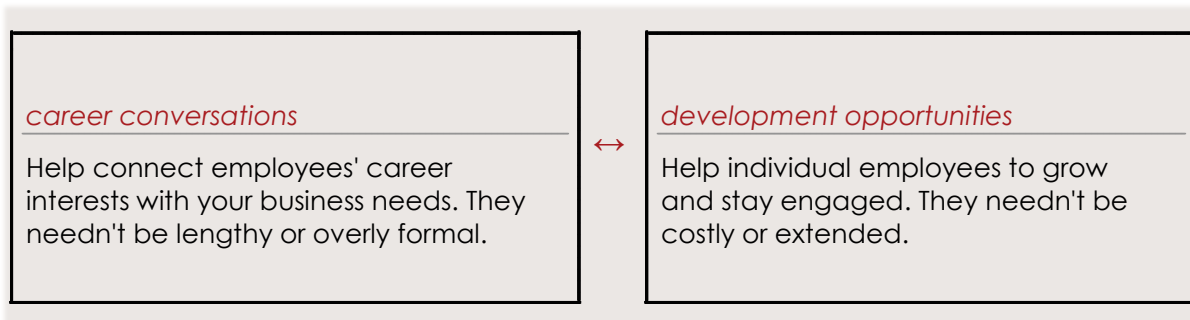
- › better company image and reputation
- › better customer relationship and experience
- › greater potential to adapt, change and develop

Building on what you have

You are unlikely to be starting from scratch. For example, you may already be:

- giving your employees regular feedback on their skills and personal qualities
- taking into account your employee's interests and commitment to learning when deciding who to train.

Introducing career development means building on what you are doing by supporting employees to engage in discussions about their growth and the needs of the business. We call these discussions career conversations.



Career conversations

A career conversation is time spent with another person to explore where they might want to head and how they might get there. It's a way to balance individual hopes with the needs and opportunities in your business

- › Our Career conversations toolkit has guides for managers and employees on how to prepare for and have career conversations. You can find this toolkit on the Engage and retain employees page of www.careers.govt.nz.

Career conversations are for anyone and everyone.

- All levels of employee can benefit from conversations about them and their direction.
- Everyone can develop the skills to have these conversations with others.
- Everyone can benefit from developing the skills to manage their own careers.

If you want to start small, you may want to choose specific individuals or groups, for example:

- people you don't want to lose
- people with unrealised potential
- people who were previously engaged and productive but now seem less motivated
- people approaching retirement who want to share their skills and knowledge with others or to re-organise their working lives
- people who appear to need a lot of individual support
- people who have little experience of a New Zealand workplace
- people who are facing changes to their jobs.

Development opportunities

Employees find job satisfaction and career success through a wide range of opportunities. Not everyone is looking for progression upwards. They might be looking for new activities, greater challenges, more balance or flexibility.

The table below shows four ways a person can progress their career inside a business.

<p><i>Enrichment: growing in place</i></p> <hr/> <p>Opportunities to increase the challenge and meaningfulness of a job.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Allow employees to add to their skills and experience. › May involve adding new tasks, deleting some activities or improving some processes. 	<p><i>Lateral: moving across</i></p> <hr/> <p>Opportunities to broaden skills and learn about other areas of the business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Allow employees to develop new talents and demonstrate versatility. › Can help prepare for future progression. › Involve a change in function and responsibility.
<p><i>Vertical: moving up</i></p> <hr/> <p>Opportunities to gain increased responsibility and status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Allow employees to take on new challenges and control in an area they know well. 	<p><i>Realignment: moving down</i></p> <hr/> <p>Opportunities to move away from tasks or responsibilities they no longer want.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Allow employees to use their skills in ways that fit with their needs at a point in time.

An employee may be interested in one or more of these options. Most will see enrichment as a way to make progress on any of the others.

- Use the development opportunities checklist on the next page to think about what your business offers now and what you could offer in the future.

Development opportunities checklist

Use this checklist to think through what you can offer in your workplace.

Practices	Option? Y/N	Comments, eg, who? when?
External skill or knowledge development courses		
External personal development courses		
Courses leading to qualifications		
Membership of professional associations		
Industry or network events		
Watch others work		
Temporary assignments		
Project work		
Job rotation		
Regular performance discussions		
Internal coaching		
Professional supervision		
Mentoring		
Internal vacancy notification		
Job redesign		
Secondments		
Promotions		
Trainee or cadetships		
More autonomy		
Flexible work		
Voluntary work		

Getting started

The following steps and questions can help you to plan what you will do and how. Choose those that are appropriate for the size and situation of your business.

review current activity	<p><i>What are we doing now? Can it work better?</i></p> <p><i>What do employees see?</i></p> <p><i>What do they need or want?</i></p>
set goals	<p><i>What do we want to achieve?</i></p> <p><i>What would success look like?</i></p> <p><i>What's our timeframe?</i></p>
decide what you could offer	<p><i>Where could we begin?</i></p> <p><i>What opportunities can we offer? Now? Later?</i></p> <p><i>What would this cost?</i></p>
decide on a process	<p><i>Who do we need to involve in this decision?</i></p> <p><i>What needs to happen?</i></p> <p><i>How will we know what's working?</i></p>
communicate and educate	<p><i>How do we talk to employees about this?</i></p> <p><i>What will they need to get involved?</i></p>
implement	<p><i>What resources are available to help us?</i></p> <p><i>How will we get feedback on the process?</i></p>

Tips

- Communicate the rationale for career development to all employees.
- Role model the process yourself with senior employees.
- Encourage informal conversations and coaching.
- Make it OK for staff to approach colleagues they sense might be able to help them.
- Ensure career conversations are regular and ongoing.
- Explicitly raise employees' development for the future as well as for current jobs.
- Let employees know how they can get relevant information and advice from outside your business when they need it, eg, websites, industry organisation and networks.
- Ensure managers have the authority to offer and action development opportunities.