



5 Strategic Questions to Design a Career Path Framework

Designing a sustainable career path framework for employee growth requires a coordinated effort from a team of committed and engaged individuals. Such a task should not be undertaken lightly, but, instead, should involve considerable thought and input from those individuals who are certain to contribute in a positive manner. The end result—a path to success for talented employees—is also a key step in ensuring company success and long-term growth. The following critical questions can help your organisation create and operate a sustainable career path framework.

Question 1. How do you know if your career framework strategy is sustainable?

Any sustainable and successful strategy demands a focused concentration on in-depth research, thoughtful planning, and effective implementation. Proactive leadership recognises the wisdom of these steps to avoid unnecessary expenditure of time and money. That waste is certain to happen if the strategy you design for employee career paths is not sustainable. What good is a

programme that no longer meets the needs of its employees when market demands, demographics, and other factors change? Short-term success is a missed opportunity, a band-aid, a quick fix.

The key to creating a sustainable strategy is understanding what makes your career path framework viable and responsive to the changing needs of your workforce. And only leadership—in conjunction with representatives from different segments of the employee population—can determine that answer.

To boost the success and long-lasting effects of your organisational strategy, you must do your homework. Know what makes a programme work, plan the design elements with careful insight, test it, send it out, and monitor its effectiveness as the environment changes. But only you can determine whether the strategy is indeed sustainable.

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Question 2. How can you objectively identify the future skill requirements for your organisation?

Markets change, as do the skills and talents of the workforce you need to sustain your organisational growth. This constant evolution of the external environment demands monitoring by leadership in order to efficiently and effectively provide the products and services desired by clients. Without the right talent, the company cannot satisfy customer needs. Although the workforce, lacking the appropriate skills, may somehow be able to supply the products and services, the end result may not be reliable, high-quality, or without mistakes.

Lack of skills inevitably leads to dissatisfied clients, which heads straight down the road to long-term trouble and a gloomy forecast for the company's survival. If you don't know your employees—their skills and talents, along with their desired skills and talent—you will not be able to transform the company as demands change. Is the HR function sufficiently versed in what the company needs in terms of talent and skills? Is there value to obtaining input from external experts through interviews of key leaders/managers, thereby providing an independent source of objectivity? Consultants can ensure the inclusion of

external perspectives, to avoid the risk that organisational thoughts and decision-making are isolated and one-dimensional.

To know the future, you must understand the present. Objective research on what the workforce is, what it needs to be, and how it needs to get there are essential steps toward company growth. Objectivity, without judgment, paves the way to uncover workforce requirements that will satisfy leadership goals while developing talented employees.

Question 3. Which stakeholders should you involve in the framework design?

Successful organisations represent a blend of knowledge, expertise, and talent. Individuals operating in different functions work together to resolve difficulties and initiate new ideas. Career path frameworks form a foundation upon which all of this effort succeeds. To create the appropriate framework for your organisation, consider different stakeholders—leadership, managers, employees, outside parties. Each one has the potential to offer diverse perspectives on the task at hand. But which ones would provide the perspectives that are most relevant to your



organisation's needs?

These perspectives should not be one-sided. Effective strategies demand that the right stakeholders should also possess knowledge of the company's mission, market demands, competitors, operations, and other key factors. So, who can contribute positively to the framework design in the most efficient and insightful manner?

To create the task force that will design the most feasible framework, you must know your people. You must possess intimate knowledge of those individuals who have the ability to contribute the wisest, most practical, and best-suited ideas. Choosing the right team can determine success, failure, or mediocrity.

Question 4. How do you gain leadership support?

Without leadership support in any such endeavour, HR and other managers are only spinning their wheels and wasting time. The desire to accomplish an important objective, such as designing a career path framework for employee development, is only that—a wish—if leadership turns a deaf ear.

Leadership buy-in is critical for any undertaking that requires efficient use of time and money, effective communication, ongoing training, and long-term sustainability. Whom do you contact within leadership? Which manager best understands what you are trying to accomplish? What individual has the time, patience, and enthusiasm to support what you are trying to accomplish?

To convince leadership, you must first know what it is that you are trying to achieve. You should also understand how the leadership in your organisation operates in order to best determine how to win their support.

Question 5. What are the best ways to communicate career path frameworks to employees?

Communication is key. That is common sense for any HR programme to succeed. Completing the design of a sustainable career path framework, while commendable, is useless without providing clarity about the framework to the very people who are going to benefit from it. All that time and effort in designing the programme is wasted effort if you don't grasp that different segments of the population



may view the programme differently—even negatively—if they don't understand what it's all about. Indeed, they may also require different means to access the programme due to work schedules, skills and abilities, and other factors.

In general, communication of any HR or organisational programme requires a well-thought-out strategy. In some organisations, town halls, emails, newsletters, and any number of other communication vehicles might be necessary. It all depends on the workforce.

To inform your employees, you must know how they think and what they need. Consider other communication efforts. What worked? What didn't work? Ask employees what they need and what works for them. And then go out and do it.

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