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Beyond Promotions: Rethinking Career Growth Conversations

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Companies that invest in employee development are twice as likely to retain their employee talent (1). Investing in the wellbeing and development of employees allows people to feel valued with opportunities to learn and grow.

Frequently, in our PartnerWell workforce culture surveys, we see career growth and learning and development opportunities as top requests from employees.

Often, employees' requests for career growth are interpreted as requests for a promotion, title change, or compensation increase. While these are certainly ways that high-achieving employees can and should be recognized for their efforts, there are more ways an organization can support an employee's personal and professional development.

Employees are also looking for:

- Learning opportunities & Mentorship opportunities
- Advancement and alignment of skills and strengths
- More frequent check-ins and career growth conversations

Prioritizing and investing in employee development helps employees to stay engaged and is one actionable way employers can combat the rise in “quiet quitting” and disengagement (2). Showing genuine interest and care in employees as individuals, while demonstrating an investment in their growth, makes them feel valued and recognized.

Leaders are constantly facing difficult choices and constraints, so how can we justify further investment of time and resources on this topic? Given its significant impacts, research shows that employers cannot afford NOT to.

- Organizations that strategically invest in employee development report 11% greater profitability (1).
- A lack of career advancement, development, or opportunities is one of the top reasons why employees leave their jobs (3).
- Without support, encouragement, and opportunities to grow, employees can become disengaged, resulting in significant drops in productivity, work quality, and higher rates of turnover (4).

Managers are one of the most influential components of an employee development plan, but we recognize they already have a lot on their plates. How can managers effectively serve as champions for employee development, given their limited time and resources? We suggest addressing employee development as an ongoing action item. Create space for smaller, more frequent, or casual touchpoints with employees, rather than letting this topic fester or build up to “big lifts” once a year.

Where we can start:

- Get to know your employees. Learn about their interests, their strengths, their communication styles, their goals, and how they want to grow.
- Encourage skills training. This is not just about role-based skills, but also about strengthening **essential skills**, which can be equally useful.
- Utilize regular check-ins. Employee development conversations that occur only once a year are insufficient. This does not have to always be a long, formal dialogue. Instead, simply be curious and grant the employee space for reflection and feedback. Here are some examples of questions:
 - Are there any skills you’re currently working on or would like to develop?
 - What does “career growth” mean to you personally?
 - What do you need more of (or less of) from me to help you succeed?
- Establish mentorship. If your organization provides a mentorship program, encourage your team members to participate. If not, consider connecting employees with leaders for an informational interview from whom they could learn.

Be open to expanding our definition of what career growth or development looks like. Everyone’s path and aspirations are different. Being an encouraging and active listener is a good place to start, as it allows you to hear the needs of employees and understand what you can do to help.

Interested in learning how to expand employee career growth and development efforts? Reach out to [Hayley and Katie](#).



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Citations:

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