

THE CASE FOR CAREER PROGRESSION PROGRAMS

Many workers lack the skills needed to succeed in the modern workplace, but continuing education is cost-prohibitive; others are prone to the boredom of a stagnant career and always wanting to move forward. Some employers are stepping in to fill the gap by offering a career progression or skills training program. Often, the result is longer tenure, improved productivity, and a decrease in turnover and open positions.

EMPLOYEES WANT TO LEARN

Over the past nine months, we've asked over 40,000 job seekers to rate the importance of seven factors when assessing a new job opportunity. One interesting thing we've learned is that—across the nation and in almost every locale—the opportunity to learn new skills is more important than the essential job functions of the position. In some areas (like the states of Texas and California), the opportunity to learn new skills even outranks things like shift schedule and work environment—factors that are rated higher in almost every other place in the country. (See Figure 1.)

Furthermore, Gallup's most recent study of work and life habits reveals similar preferences. Nearly 60% of millennials, 44% of Generation X, and 41% of baby boomers say evaluating career development opportunities with a future employer is an *extremely* important part of a job search; and 87% of millennials and 69% of non-millennials say the availability of career development opportunities is an *extremely* important part of the way they evaluate their current job.¹

EMPLOYERS ARE OFFERING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

This past spring, we surveyed hundreds of employers across the nation about the wages and benefits they offer to new, entry-level employees within the first year of employment. One question on our survey asks about career progression programs. Nearly 50% of our survey's respondents say they offer one or more types of career progression benefits, but the most popular programs differ by job classification. Of the companies that offer these benefits, most are fond of offering tuition reimbursement to administrative workers and enrollment in a certification program to production personnel. (See Figure 2.)

We know providing tuition reimbursements and/or paying for certifications can be too expensive; we also know workers have a plethora of employers to choose from if they're looking for these benefits. Because of this, we think providing internal cross-training or up-training programs is something every employer should consider since there's a hole in the market. These programs have three advantages over external education: 1) You can tailor the curriculum to fit your specific business demands; 2) You have the flexibility to start, stop, speed up, or slow down "classes" based on business needs and the participants; and

Figure 1:
JOB APPLICANT CAREABOUTS, NATIONWIDE
on a scale of 7

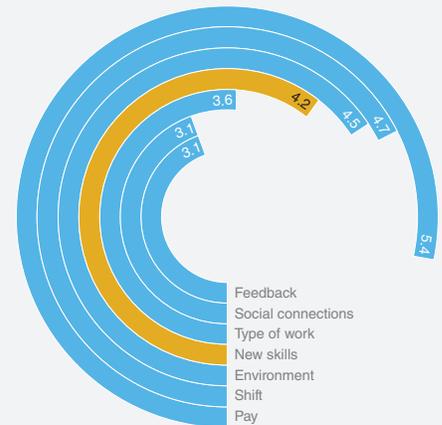
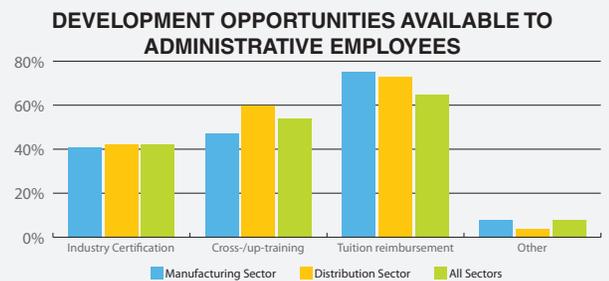
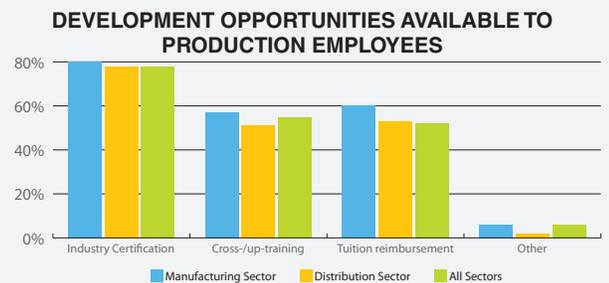


Figure 2: Of those that offer development opportunities ...



1. "Why Your Best Millennials Will Leave, and How to Keep Them." Gallup.com, 27 Oct. 2017.

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3) You have a better shot at keeping your best employees because they have a clear vision of internal career opportunities and a defined path to follow.

EVERYBODY WINS

The opportunity to learn new skills is a critical piece of the employment search process and a key factor in retention. Employers have a better shot of attracting talent if they can promise skills training; and employees have a greater shot at finding long-term career happiness if they seek out employers with progression opportunities and pursue opportunities offered to them.

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