



# 10 TIPS FOR EMBEDDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES TO MAXIMIZE CAREER ENGAGEMENT

- 1. Understand Career Engagement.** Career Engagement comprises two key components – challenge and capacity. To remain in the zone of engagement, challenge and capacity must be in balance. Too little capacity for the amount of challenge results in feeling overwhelmed. Conversely, too little challenge for the available capacity, results in feeling underutilized.
- 2. Define scope of career development.** Identify what career development “looks like” in your organization. This may include career laddering/pathing information, having 2-3 employees ready to step-in to any position, supporting training and development, or formal, comprehensive career development programs.
- 3. Look for synergies.** Every organization will likely have existing programs/initiatives that can be “tweaked” to enhance career development. To begin, review employee development/training policies, recruitment/retention programs, health/wellness initiatives, and other initiatives that may support employee career development.
- 4. Set specific goals.** Identify potential career development programs/services, starting small (e.g., comprehensive suite of resources in employee lunch room) and growing over time (e.g., onsite career development centre). Set targets you can track (e.g., workshop attendance, number of career conversations).
- 5. Establish a baseline.** To measure how (or if) career development is impacting Career Engagement, it is important to understand current engagement levels. Use existing employee survey data, do an initial survey of employee Career Engagement, or draw from existing metrics (e.g., retention/attrition rates). Remember that metrics matter! Only through careful monitoring can you begin to assess the return on investment.
- 6. Equip supervisors to have career conversations.** Ensure supervisors understand the importance of supporting employees’ career development goals and the crucial role they play in maximizing Career Engagement. Provide the tools, resources, and training supervisors need to serve as effective career coaches.
- 7. Recognize limits to capacity.** At both the individual and organizational levels, capacity is dynamic and constantly changing. It can be impacted by changing life roles, priorities, and health/wellness as well as the organization’s emerging priorities, needs, and available resources. Career Engagement depends on the right mix of challenge and capacity.
- 8. Look for “challenge” opportunities.** Very few organizations can offer promotions to every employee who needs a new challenge. Instead, work with supervisors, managers, and the HR team to identify special projects, secondments, training, team leadership roles, cross-functional teams, mentorship responsibilities, and other opportunities that can offer appropriate levels of challenge “in place.”
- 9. Watch for disengagement.** Individuals who are already disengaged, either through being overwhelmed or underutilized, likely won’t benefit from a quick fix. Offer more targeted interventions when needed and support the gracious exits of employees who no longer fit.
- 10. Communicate the benefits of Career Engagement.** Make a compelling business case by clearly linking desired changes within the organization (e.g., reduced turnover, increased productivity, developing a learning culture) to the impact of career services and programs. Use a broad definition of “career” to facilitate a more holistic approach to work and life engagement. Reach every employee as well as organizational leaders and decision-makers – help individuals at all levels understand why career engagement matters!

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