

WORKPLACE MATTERS

Map out career pathways and manufacture better employees

Faced with difficulties in recruiting workers with the right mix of skills, businesses increasingly are investing in training their employees.

Many companies develop career pathway or career progression programs that support the movement and growth of entry- and midlevel workers. With most businesses also facing an aging work force, these programs can dovetail nicely with succession planning to support the develop-



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ment and upward mobility of current employees.

VersaLogic, the Eugene-based embedded computer manufacturer, is an example of a company that has faced challenges in finding candidates with technical skills and experience in their specialized area. It has developed clearly defined career paths and regularly chooses to invest in training its current employees to fill critical vacancies.

Golden Temple, a Eugene-based foods maker, also values growing its own work force. It has promoted 73 people from within in the past year.

Peace Harbor Hospital in Florence began a career pathways initiative in 2002, when it faced a crisis in finding skilled medical personnel in the area. With the help of the Lane Workforce Partnership, career maps showing how employees can advance were developed for the hospital.

These maps were replicated later for the larger PeaceHealth hospital in Eugene. Cathleen Coontz, human resources supervisor for PeaceHealth, says developing and supporting a career pathway model has been vital to the growth of its employees, its organization and its patient care model.

“By making information on career progression readily available through our internal online system, as well as in face-to-face career advising, we are able to better invest in our staff, and in turn, they have become more engaged in the organization.”

PeaceHealth’s career mapping experience inspired other local health care organizations to join it in creating a larger, integrated career pathway map.

One of the first steps in identifying your organization’s career pathways is to map out step-by-step skill progressions in a job category or classification. Each step should note the core competencies of the particular position, and a listing of the necessary skills, education and experience.

The Microsoft Flow Chart program Visio is a good tool to use for this exercise. A low-tech alternative would be to use Post-it notes on a white board. Being able to move around job titles will give you flexibility.

Career maps are works in progress. You can start by mapping one pathway and gradually incorporate all the careers within your organization. Remember that movement can occur laterally as well as vertically.

Once you have created a graphic representation of the flow of positions in your organization, this visual tool can be used to:

- ◆ Increase awareness among employees about your internal career pathways. Post the chart in the break room or human resources office.

- ◆ Improve retention and create performance incentive. Visual career maps help employees see opportunities for fresh challenges and career advancement.

- ◆ Aid in employee recruitment. The map educates potential candidates about your company’s structure and opportunities.

- ◆ Assist in compensation analysis.

- ◆ Identify missing rungs on a career ladder. Are there wide skill gaps between positions, making it difficult to move up a particular pathway? Can a training position be added to improve the upward flow?

- ◆ Increase focus among managers and supervisors on retaining and promoting entry- and midlevel employees to higher level positions.

- ◆ Inform trainers and educators about your skill development needs.

- ◆ Ensure that company-sponsored training or tuition reimbursement is supporting skill development in areas of need or potential shortage.

Job quality and supportive training are essential complements to career maps. Career pathway programs foster systemic change within the workplace and make career ladders a permanent part of a firm’s operations.

For more information on developing career maps for your organization, contact Robin Onaclea, business service coordinator at Lane Workforce Partnership, at robino@laneworkforce.org.