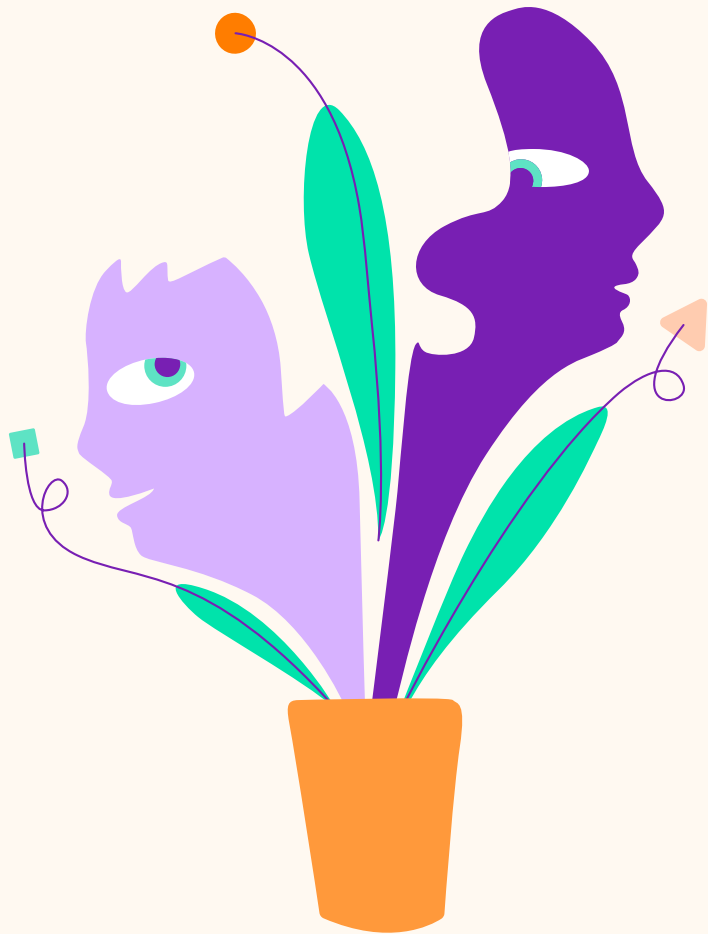




SeekOut Grow

Keep your best talent: 7 strategies to drive internal mobility

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Introduction

To thrive in economic uncertainty, organizations need to be nimble. Rather than reacting to the market with layoffs, businesses can develop a proactive approach to move and train their talent to tackle the most critical priorities, keep employees engaged, and develop resiliency. Internal mobility is key to unleashing the potential of the talent you already have, but it takes thoughtful design and a strong commitment to cultural transformation. There will be challenges for employees, HR, and especially managers—but understanding common pitfalls can help you develop a deliberate and successful approach. Follow these strategies to better prepare your organization for internal mobility that helps your business and employees grow together.

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Economic uncertainty demands a holistic talent strategy

Many organizations are laying off large numbers of employees as quick measures to weather the storm of a continuously evolving economic landscape. Some leaders believe that as the market rebounds, they can simply “turn on the pipelines” and let the talent flow back in. But that’s neither a simple nor a cost-effective solution in the long run.

It can take months or even years to build back. There are financial costs of attrition and backfilling; project delays and productivity losses for tenured employees and ramp-up times for new hires; and increased competition for top talent in a recovering economy.

The answer to navigating a changing economy is already within your company. A better way to stay nimble and emerge from a downturn stronger is to move and train your best people to tackle the most critical challenges. This means aligning your talent strategy to your business strategy so you remain flexible and adaptable—and internal mobility is a key piece of the puzzle.

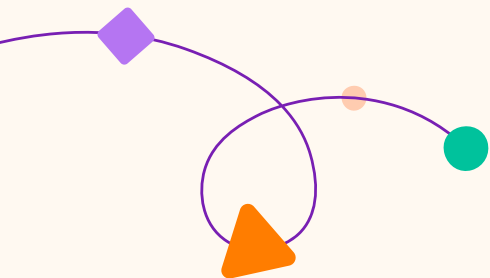
“Many organizations don’t know what talent they have, what talent they need, or where their talent is going—so they’re in a perpetually reactive state.”

— **Andrew White**, Global Program Manager of Internal Hiring, Microsoft

“Many organizations don’t know what talent they have, what talent they need, or where their talent is going—so they’re in a perpetually reactive state,” shares Andrew White, Global Program Manager of Internal Hiring at Microsoft. “The business strategy is often defined, but without a clear understanding of what skills and capabilities are needed to get there, and what you already have, it’s practically impossible to develop an effective, efficient, and cohesive talent strategy to meet these needs.”

Often, the “build” and “buy” aspects of a talent strategy are developed, executed, and owned by separate teams, which can result in an unbalanced and fragmented approach to talent that keeps the organization in a perpetually reactive state. During economic uncertainty, this may mean you’re chasing behind the pendulum swing of the talent market as it shifts between being candidate driven and employer driven.

When your organization deeply understands its people, you can recognize the skills and capabilities you already have, understand where they’re transferable, and then identify and fill many of the critical gaps. This offers a more integrated, proactive, and nimble approach to your overall talent strategy, balancing internal development and mobility (“build”) and external recruiting (“buy”).



Internal mobility is a win-win for your business

There are many benefits to creating a culture of internal mobility. For one, it helps retain top talent by giving employees opportunities to grow and develop within your company. This is especially important for millennial and Gen Z workers, who make up more than 60% of today's workforce and place a high value on professional development opportunities. Additionally, an internal career change can help boost morale and engagement by giving employees a sense of ownership over their careers. It can save your business money in the long run by reducing turnover and the associated costs of recruiting and training new hires.

In September 2022, Microsoft [published a study](#) that shed some light on the impact of internal mobility on employees' decision to stay or leave the company. According to a survey with 20,000 people across 11 countries, more than two-thirds (68%) said they would stay at their company or organization for a longer period of time if changing jobs internally was made easier, with this number higher among millennials (73%) than Gen Zers (65%).

According to a Gartner Candidate Panel Survey of 3,000 people, seven in ten (71%) said they had faced barriers to internal mobility. Only a third of candidates began their job search internally, while four in ten (41%) looked outside the organization.

Source: Talent Pulse: Candidates Seek the Human Factor and New Career Paths, Gartner, August 2021

The message is very clear. Employees want better support for internal mobility and development inside their company. Many businesses are looking to a Talent Marketplace as a solution to enable internal mobility. However, technology alone is not going to solve the problem. Truly enabling internal mobility requires fundamental policy, process, and culture changes. Otherwise, it'll be lip service that's not going to have a true impact and will leave a bad taste in the mouth for everyone.



Understanding common talent mobility pitfalls

To understand the barriers and challenges, it's important to do a pre-mortem exercise. This will help you prepare for things that can and will go wrong when you roll out an internal mobility program.

Managers

The biggest skeptics will be managers. They are the hardest to get on board with the pre-mortem exercise because they may see negative consequences overpowering the positive potential.

- **Disruption in business continuity:** Managers' primary responsibility is to lead the team to deliver on business goals. If employees are free to explore other job opportunities inside the company at any time, it increases the uncertainty of employee retention on the team and could put reaching the business goals at risk. It also puts an emotional toll on managers when they learn a direct report is leaving for another team. All the investments the manager made for the employee might feel like they are going down the drain.
- **Harder to give tough feedback:** Managers may be afraid of giving tough performance feedback when it's due because there is a fear of triggering the employees to look around for other jobs internally.
- **Overwhelming internal interests:** When managers have a job opening, they may be overwhelmed by internal interests. Unlike external candidates where recruiters will do the vetting and initial phone screening, for internal candidates, it's typically expected that managers take the initial call. This could create a heavy calendar burden for managers. How do you say no to those who are obviously not a good fit?

Employees

Employees, on the other hand, should welcome internal mobility as new avenues for career growth. However, they are unlikely to jump in immediately with enthusiasm. Why?

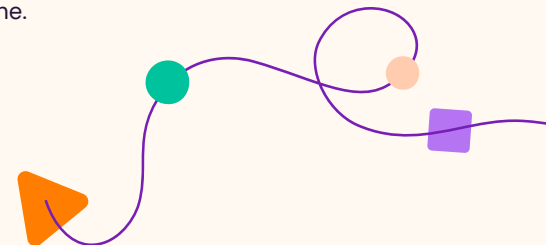
- **Manager perceptions:** Employees are afraid that exploring an internal opportunity will jeopardize their relationship with the manager. They don't want to be viewed as disloyal or even penalized in future promotion and growth opportunities on the team. If the company requires disclosure to or approval from the manager, it makes internal exploration much less palatable than external exploration.

- **Financial incentive:** It's a common practice for companies to only allow for lateral moves for internal transfers. If an employee moves to a higher-paying function (e.g. from Support to Product), they may be asked to accept a lower-level title in order to maintain the same pay. This is counter to an external job change, where there is typically financial upside.
- **Other organizational barriers:** Many employees lack visibility into what roles are available internally, or struggle to understand which opportunities align to their skills and strengths. Others may be deterred by biased processes—for example, if a role is publicized but a particular internal candidate is already favored to get the job.

HR

Internal mobility also creates challenges for talent teams in HR, specifically talent acquisition and talent management teams.

- **Employee turnover as a result of internal mobility:** While we believe internal mobility should reduce employee turnover, it can backfire if it's not handled thoughtfully. As soon as an employee starts exploring jobs internally, it could trigger an external exploration simultaneously. If the person doesn't land the desired internal job, they may immediately lean toward external opportunities. How should the talent teams support employees to better navigate internal opportunities if one fails to pan out?
- **Disconnect between external and internal talent pipeline:** Typically, recruiters track the external candidate pipeline in an Applicant Tracking System. Internal candidates might reach out to the hiring manager outside of any system. When there are very promising internal candidates, this information may not be visible to the recruiter, which could cause wasted effort trying to source externally and move external candidates through the pipeline.



Seven strategies to make internal mobility successful

To help organizations overcome these common barriers and challenges, we offer seven strategies for a successful internal mobility program.

1. Get leadership buy-in and support

Programs that support internal career moves require wholehearted support from your C-suite to take root. Like many cultural shifts in an organization, it should start at the top. If a lack of career growth is driving attrition in your organization, use the data from engagement surveys, exit surveys, and published research to get your leaders on board. Having the C-suite set good examples and recognize the right behaviors will be instrumental in your program's success. You can also identify a championing leader and do a pilot with that organization first to create momentum and success stories.

2. Start with internal mobility for gigs

Gigs refer to internal projects that are short term in nature. Hackathons, tiger teams, stretch assignments, and volunteer projects can bring together diverse talent to deliver something that is meaningful and impactful. Given the short-term nature, these opportunities put less weight on managers and talent teams while still building valuable new skills and connections. This makes gigs a great stepping stone to a more robust talent mobility program.

3. Design your policy to level the playing field

A source of frustration for employees is that it's easier to switch jobs externally than internally. Often, internal policies are speedbumps in the way. The barriers to external roles have lowered in recent years, and your employees are getting pinged frequently by external recruiters. To level the playing field, you can remove roadblocks in your internal policy. For example: forgo notifying managers if employees want to explore internal opportunities; allow employees to apply for jobs above their current level, adjusting pay if they qualify at the new level; and set reasonable transition times to help everybody navigate the change with clear expectations.

4. Layer in the right incentives

Internal mobility may feel counter to the traditional goals for managers, which are to build a high-performing team and deliver business results. But the right incentive goes a long way in changing the "talent hoarding" behavior. One way you may do this is by providing a direct incentive to managers who acted as coaches to help employees make a successful internal move. Another is to explicitly create "career sponsors"—experienced people leaders who can help employees navigate career moves internally as a dedicated part of their role. This introduces a counterbalance to the typical goals and incentives of managers. Microsoft is piloting this approach internally.

5. Drive meaningful career conversations, not job conversations

Since talent mobility is a means to employee growth and development, you should strive for more than just enabling people to find their next job internally. Focus on cultural and process change to drive meaningful career conversations. Do managers have career conversations to understand peoples' aspirations? Do managers and employees follow up with actions to support their goals? Do you have the right tools to facilitate these conversations? When you shift your culture and create new habits, you'll transform managers into advisors and allies of employee growth.



6. Get your talent teams ready

Your talent team has a big role to play in ensuring success. Designate specific HR roles for internal sourcing and internal mobility. Provide them with tools that can help them understand the skills and talent within the organization as well as outside the organization. When they source talent internally, it's very useful to know which employees are qualified and likely to move based on their transferrable skills and expertise. A great talent marketplace tool should be able to give that signal.

For the internal sourcing and talent mobility roles, they need to have manager and employee experience as part of their success metrics. That'll drive the right behaviors. For example, when they want to tap an employee for a role, they can't blindside the manager of that employee. And if an employee is repeatedly rejected for internal roles, HR and managers should help guide them toward a right fit.

7. Choose a people-first technology platform

There is a lot of hype around using AI to automate the process of talent mobility. However, it's important to recognize that career decisions are complex, human decisions. When choosing a technology platform for internal mobility, AI should assist and elevate people—not make decisions for them.

The technology platform should support human-driven exploration, while assisting with AI-enabled data and insights. For example, AI can surface jobs that may match up with someone's skills and career interests, but for the person to explore these jobs, they may need to talk to those who are currently working on the team or connect with someone who has made a similar career transition. Does the technology platform make human-driven exploration easier, rather than solely matching skills with open roles?

Another important factor to consider is how much the technology platform relies on employees' data entry to have good AI recommendations. Many companies who have tried to push employees to enter their skills profile ended up with low participation and lacking results. A great technology platform takes that burden off employees and uses AI to collate data and generate insights based on a variety of external and internal data sources. A focus on human connection, combined with lower manual lift, leads to faster and broader adoption. People will embrace a tool that truly benefits them, rather than just HR.



Move key talent to your most critical business priorities

Technology can play a crucial part in helping align your talent strategy with your business strategy. The key is understanding who your people are, where they should be placed in the organization for success, what skills they need, and where the gaps are you need to fill. However, this is challenging because people data is fragmented across different internal and external systems.

Without actionable insights into employees' backgrounds, skills, and experiences, talent teams and leaders turn to workarounds that are manual, time-consuming, reactive, and ineffective. Meanwhile, employees feel unsupported, struggle to discover and navigate relevant growth opportunities within company. It's time for a new internal talent management solution.

Say hello to SeekOut Grow

SeekOut Grow is an intelligence and experience layer that brings together data from all your siloed HR systems as well as external data sources into cohesive insights that talent management teams, managers, and every employee can easily act on. SeekOut Grow builds comprehensive profiles of each employee from day one, with no manual entry required.

Unlike other solutions, SeekOut Grow continuously builds a deep understanding of each employee based on their full career experiences and skills as well as their career goals. SeekOut uses AI-driven matching to identify the best career development and advancement opportunities, enabling everyone to reach their potential.

CUSTOMERS ARE SEEING THE BENEFITS FIRSTHAND:

One telecommunications supplier with over 7,000 employees increased internal mobility by 30% within the first few months of implementation.

With SeekOut Grow, you get immediate, comprehensive, actionable insights into your workforce and the labor market that surrounds you, so you can make decisions confidently to grow the talent you have, find the talent you need.

- Understand your organization's capabilities with Internal Talent. With powerful talent intelligence, HR leaders and business leaders are enabled to build data-driven talent management strategies for people development, project staffing, internal mobility, succession planning, and more.
- Empower your employees to realize their career goals with Career Compass. With a self-service tool, employees get more visibility into what's possible for them within the organization, including full-time roles, short-term projects, learning and development opportunities, career paths, and connections with peers and potential mentors.

Plus, easily integrate with your existing systems and get more value from your HR technology investments. And SeekOut Grow is enterprise ready with industry-leading security and privacy, organization policy support, role-based access control, and reporting built in.



Ready to get started?

Find out how [SeekOut Grow](#) can help you build a successful talent mobility program by [requesting a demo](#) today.