PROGRESSION IN EMPLOYMENT

AN EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

contents

About Institute for Employment Studies (IES)

IES is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in public employment policy and HR management.

It works closely with employers in all sectors, government departments, agencies, professional bodies and associations.

IES is a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets, and HR planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation.

Find out more at www.employment-studies.co.uk

About J.P. Morgan

At J.P. Morgan, we are combining the best of our business and philanthropic resources — as well as our expertise, partnerships and data — to drive inclusive growth in communities around the world. Corporate responsibility is integral to how we conduct our business.

Across 37 countries, J.P. Morgan has a mission to enable more people to contribute to and share in the rewards of a growing economy.

New Skills at Work, a five-year, $350 million global initiative, focuses on accelerating demand-driven skills training, creating more opportunities for workers to obtain well-paying jobs, and strengthening workforce systems to better serve jobseekers and employers.

About the Progression in Employment Project

The Progression in Employment project is designed to capture evidence and insights on developing and implementing upskilling pathways for workers on low incomes.

The project aims to identify effective employer practice in supporting the in-work progression of low-skilled adults, and to share the learning from this practice with employers through the creation of an employer toolkit and a range of dissemination activities including a conference for employers and policymakers.

The project has collected evidence across three sectors (retail, hospitality, health and social care) and six countries (UK, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Germany).

About this toolkit

While this report has been supported by the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the contents and opinions in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, J.P. Morgan, JPMorgan Chase & Co., or any of its affiliates.

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Foreword

Globalisation, technological innovation and changes in employment patterns are transforming the world of work. The workforce of the future will increasingly require foundational, digital and industry-specific skills not only to access and retain quality employment, but also to transition and progress in the labour market. The future of work is creating and will continue to create new prospects for individuals who are getting into work, as well as those who are already in employment.

Not everyone has been able to benefit from the better jobs that have emerged, and many are stuck in precarious work with low pay and limited or no access to social protection and lifelong learning. Currently, 9.4% of all EU-28 workers live in households that are at risk of poverty, an alarming 20.5 million people. In countries like Spain this figure is higher (13%) as well as in certain categories of the population (e.g.: youth and low-skilled workers). Against this background, the topic of career mobility and progression of workers, especially the less skilled ones, is becoming a key interest and concern for policy makers, employers and workers alike.

This is what motivated the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and J.P. Morgan to start the Progression in Employment research project, which aims to identify effective employer

practice that enables people facing barriers in the labour market to achieve career progression. It is part of J.P. Morgan's global New Skills at Work initiative, to promote economic opportunities and career mobility for underserved individuals.

This toolkit is a key product of the broader research project, led by IES. Informed by data and research in the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden, the toolkit aims to provide a practical framework for employers to support lifelong learning pathways to help career progression for underrepresented segments of workers and minimise the adverse impact of automation and structural change.

We would like to thank our European partners Oxford Research, IRshare, Ikei, Wilke-Maack and Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale as well as all the employers who have collaborated in this research in six countries, across sectors for their insightful contributions.

We hope that these resources will serve to illustrate the benefits of offering progression to both companies and workers, and provide practical insight to shape better career progression pathways for your workers facing the impacts of globalisation and technological disruption.

Introduction

For many employees in low-paid and low-skilled work, the prospect of progression in work can too often be an unfulfilled aspiration. This can mean that employees can remain trapped in work with few opportunities for advancement and - at the same time - employers miss out on opportunities to tap into a pool of talent and potential.

Based on extensive research conducted by HR and employment policy experts at the Institute for Employment Studies and on in-depth work with large and small employers, this toolkit has been designed:

- To stimulate awareness amongst employers of the steps that they can take to support the progression of workers on low incomes.

- To support HR professionals, senior managers and line managers with practical tools to support progression.

The toolkit is structured as follows:

The issue
This section outlines the current picture with respect to workers in low paid, low-skilled work.
(Page 5)

Why does progression in work matter?
This section outlines the benefits that progression in work can have for individuals, employers, the wider economy and society.
(Page 6)

What does progression mean in practice?
This section outlines the different ways in which progression can happen, moving away from a purely hierarchical view of progression, and recognising issues such as improved job quality.
(Page 7)

Supporting progression at work
Based on rigorous evidence, this section provides a model and supporting index that employers can use to reflect on and self-assess their current practice with respect to supporting progression. It also describes selected HR practices and case studies of employer practice.
(Pages 8 - 21)

Getting started with a progression programme
This section, informed by learning from successful employers, explains how to successfully implement new approaches to progression in the workplace.
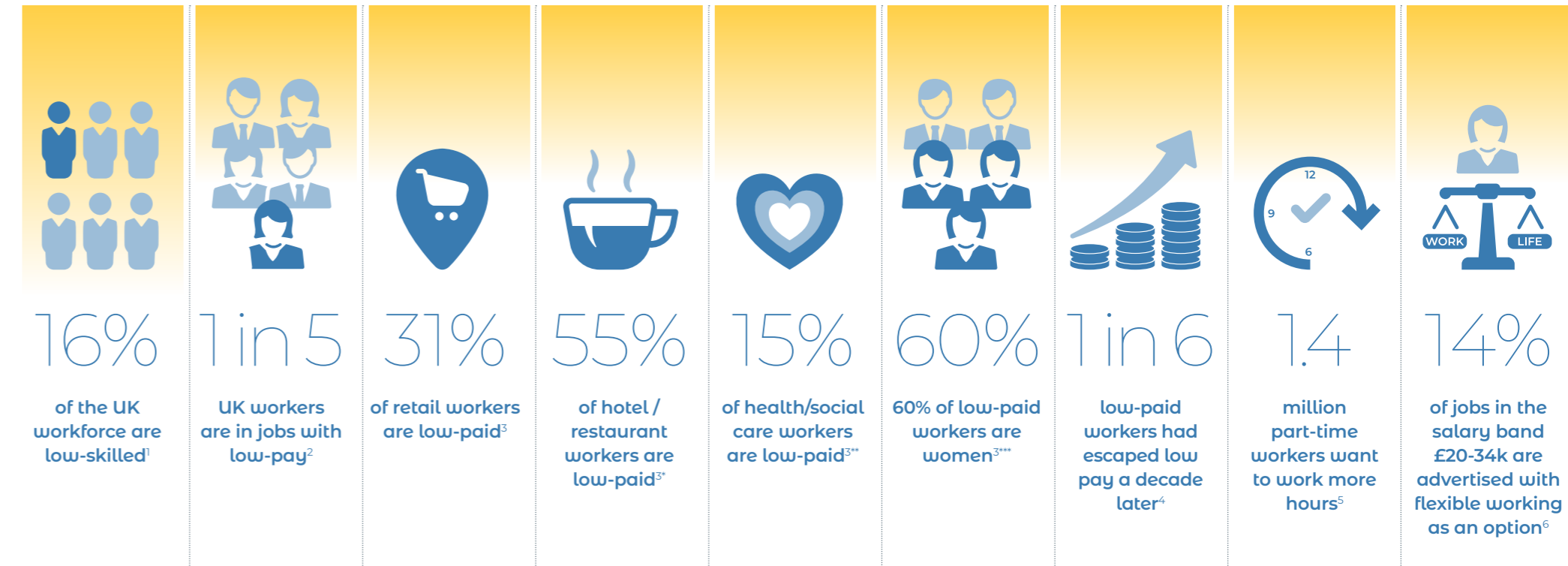(Page 22 - 23)

Resources
Selected resources that employers can access to support their efforts to develop their approach to progressing low-skilled workers.
(Page 23)

The issue

16% of the UK workforce are low-skilled[1]

1 in 5 UK workers are in jobs with low-pay[2]

31% of retail workers are low-paid[3]

55% of hotel / restaurant workers are low-paid[3*]

15% of health/social care workers are low-paid[3**]

60% of low-paid workers are women[3***]

1 in 6 low-paid workers had escaped low pay a decade later[4]

1.4 million part-time workers want to work more hours[5]

14% of jobs in the salary band £20-34k are advertised with flexible working as an option[6]

1.   Eurostat (2019) Employment by educational attainment level - annual data. Table: lfsi_educ_a. Low-skilled is defined as ISCED Levels 0-2
2.   OECD (2019), Wage levels (indicator). doi: 10.1787/0a1c27bc-en (Accessed on 11 November 2019)
3.   (3*,**,***) Cominetti N, Henehan K, Clarke S (2019) Low Pay Britain 2019. Resolution Foundation.
4.   D'Arcy C and Finch D (2017) The Great Escape? Low pay and progression in the UK's labour market. Social Mobility Commission.
5.   Eurostat (2019) Supplementary indicators to unemployment - annual data. Table: lfs_sup_a
6.   Timewise Flexible Jobs Index (2019)

Why does progression in work matter?

Individuals
Progression enables higher incomes, improves well-being and can help lift people out of poverty.

Businesses
Progression of employees can lead to higher productivity and better return on capital investment. It can also lead to higher retention and reduced recruitment costs. There are also potential reputational benefits from being seen as a 'good employer'.

Society and the economy
Progression can raise productivity and ultimately GDP. Raising productivity can lead to higher pay levels.

Reducing the share of low-skilled workers in the EU from 14.7% to 7.4% by 2025 could boost long-term annual GDP by £480 billion by 2050

('Investing in skills pays off: The economic and social costs of low-skilled adults in the EU' Cedefop, 2017)

The business case for employers

The potential for increased payroll costs and inflating employee expectations, that may be difficult to meet, can deter employers from focussing on progression at work. Equally, employers also face constraints in what they can do – not everyone can be promoted for example, particularly in smaller organisations with limited vertical opportunities to progress up a hierarchy. Employers also have to grapple with the reality that not everyone is suitable for such vertical progression even if opportunities are available.

Despite these very real challenges, investing in progression can offset higher costs through increased productivity, and work to benefit both the individual employee and the business.

Benefits for employers of investing in progression

- Addressing recruitment and retention challenges.
- Enhancing employee engagement and productivity.
- Improved quality and continuity of customer service.
- Enhanced employer reputation and brand.
- Improving skills development and use, unleashing the latent potential of the workforce.

What does progression mean in practice?

Progression in work can mean a variety of things:

Increased pay and earnings
As a result of better job security, increased and more stable hours, or moving into a higher skilled or more complex role.
(See page 8 HR Practice in Focus: Using skills-based pay).

Vertical progression
Moving up from frontline roles into increasingly senior (management) roles associated with greater responsibilities and pay. Making more senior roles available on a flexible basis can help employees, especially those with caring responsibilities, transition into such roles.

Horizontal progression
A sideways step can help employees access jobs that match their skills, better career prospects or pathways, enhance skills and improve job quality.

Improved job quality
Enhancements in work quality, job security, job satisfaction, wellbeing at work, work-life balance as well as pay.

CIPD's 7 dimensions of job quality:

- Pay and benefits – pay, employer pension contributions and other benefits.
- Employment contracts – contract type and job security.
- Job design and the nature of work – skills, workload, empowerment and meaning.
- Work-life balance – access to flexible working, overwork and commuting.
- Relationships at work – good quality relationship with colleagues and effective management support; feeling safe to speak up.
- Voice and representation – opportunities to have a voice at work.
- Health and well-being – supportive of good physical and mental health.

The CIPD has provided some useful recommendations on improving job quality:

- Offer clear pathways for progression (e.g. apprenticeships and mentoring schemes to ensure all workers have the opportunity to develop).
- Focus more on the design of jobs and work to ensure best use of skills and clearer progression paths.
- Ensure that all employees have a meaningful voice in the organisation through both individual and collective channels, and via formal and informal mechanisms.
- Increase the provision of flexible working practices across workplace.

- Monitor workloads and deadlines to ensure people aren't feeling under excessive pressure at work.
- Conduct a stress audit and direct resources to reduce or eliminate the sources of stress at work.
- Signpost support services to all staff and consider offering an employer-funded support programme.
- Adopt a clear approach to remote working and out-of-hours working and create a wider enabling culture where senior managers feel trusted and empowered to take ownership of their work.

CIPD(2019) UK Working Lives 2019 Survey: Summary Report. Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/trends/uk-working-lives accessed on 13th November 2019
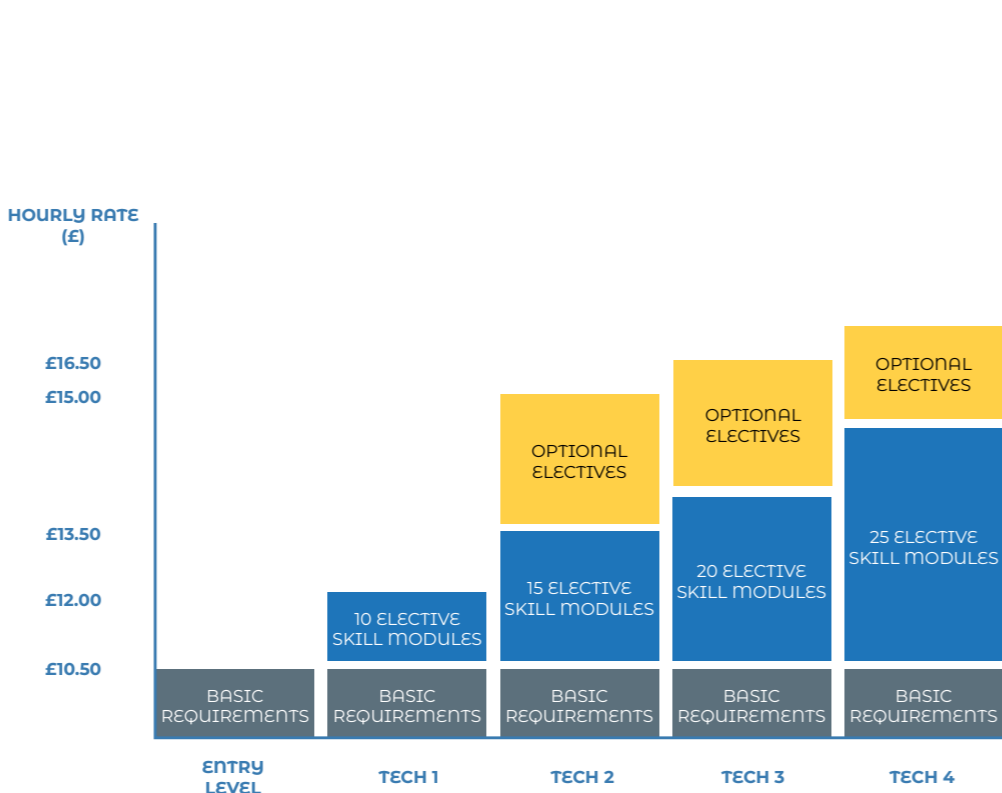
HR practice in focus:
Using skills-based pay

Employers are understandably concerned to avoid losing control of their 'pay bill' if they allow progression opportunities to grow among employees. One way that some businesses manage this is to use a skill-based pay framework to:

- Get a close alignment between the acquisition of additional, job-relevant, skills and knowledge and the extra pay which these skill modules will attract. In the illustrated example, Level 1 Technical employees can earn extra pay when they have been accredited with 10 elective skill modules (for example, a module on maintaining a specific piece of equipment).

- Demonstrate to employees that the value they add to the business by becoming incrementally more skilled will be transparently reflected in their hourly pay.

- Flexibly adjust the payment of skill modules which are no longer required in an employees' role by withholding a payment for an obsolete skill module.

With optional elective modules, employees can request access to training in specific, higher level skills which are focused on preparing the employee for progression from – for example – a Level 2 to a Level 3 Technical role. Access to these optional electives may be restricted according to what the organisation believes its future skill demand might be.

These skill-based pay schemes are most common in (but not restricted to) manufacturing, technical and administrative environments. They require some analysis of the skill and competency requirements of posts and the development of a skills framework that organises them into a hierarchy, which gives a clear picture of the pathways to advancement and progression.

HOURLY RATE (£)

| | BASIC REQUIREMENTS | 10 ELECTIVE SKILL MODULES | 15 ELECTIVE SKILL MODULES / OPTIONAL ELECTIVES | 20 ELECTIVE SKILL MODULES / OPTIONAL ELECTIVES | 25 ELECTIVE SKILL MODULES / OPTIONAL ELECTIVES |

£16.50
£15.00
£13.50
£12.00
£10.50

ENTRY LEVEL · TECH 1 · TECH 2 · TECH 3 · TECH 4

Progression readiness model

The progression readiness model is an evidence-based model that provides a holistic view of what organisations can do to support progression at work.
The model is comprised of eight dimensions and is supported by a progression readiness index (PRI). The PRI provides a means for organisations to self-assess the extent to which their current practice supports and enables progression at work, as well as to pinpoint areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

HR philosophy

How often does your organisation fill vacancies from within?

How does/can your organisation use the skills and capabilities of its staff to differentiate itself in the marketplace?

Are there examples of senior staff who have risen through the ranks of the organisation?

Pay and financial well-being

Are steps taken to ensure that staff and managers are knowledgeable about how much employees can earn without impacting welfare benefits?

Does your organisation provide its staff with contracted minimum hours?

Are there ways in which staff can earn more through developing new skills or taking on additional responsibilities?

Are the ways in which employees can progress and increase their pay equally open to all?

Fair contract & predictable work hours

How effective is your organisation at moving staff onto secure contracts?

How proactive is your organisation at offering staff additional hours to those who want them?

Pathways to progression

How well are career paths articulated in your organisation?

Can employees easily see career development routes and what skills, experiences and capabilities they need to develop and progress into different roles?

Are there senior role models in your organisation that demonstrate progression is a realistic expectation?

How (widely) available are progression opportunities in your organisation?

Opportunities to develop

What formal and informal opportunities are available to staff to support their development in your organisation?

How effective/supportive are managers in enabling low-skilled staff to take advantage of these opportunities?

How good is your organisation at spotting/ nurturing those employees who have potential for progression?

Are development opportunities open to all employees?

Designing jobs for meaning and purpose

Are there ways in which current jobs and work could be redesigned to enable greater meaning and purpose?

Are staff given the right training to be able to deliver the best service?

Can tasks be recombined to create new roles that would provide greater opportunities to learn and progress?

Supportive line managment

How effective are line managers in your organisation at coaching and mentoring their direct reports?

Are line managers in your organisation given sufficient training in supporting and developing employees?

How effective are line managers in your organisation at managing the career and progression expectations of their direct reports?

How aware are line managers in your organisation of ways that they can support the development of their direct reports?

How proactive are line managers in your organisation at facilitating development opportunities for their direct reports?

Flexibility as a default

Are higher-level jobs made available on a part-time basis?

How effective is your organisation at removing barriers to progression for part-time staff or staff who work flexibly?

How successful is your organisation at enabling the progression of women?

Is training and development arranged so that it is accessible to part-time staff and those who need to work flexibly?

The progression readiness model:
The eight dimensions

01 **HR philosophy** – this dimension represents the extent to which an organisation seeks to promote staff from within, operates an open and fair internal labour market, and views the skills and capabilities of its staff as a differentiator in the marketplace.

02 **Pay and financial well-being** – this aspect of the model describes the extent to which an organisation pays a decent living wage, is aware of the potential impact of unpredictable hours on staff (financial) well-being, and the interaction with welfare benefits. The dimension also includes the availability of ways in which 'employees' can increase their pay and which are open to all.

03 **Fair contract and predictable work hours** – this dimension recognises employees' desire for security and stability in their employment contract and working hours.

04 **Pathways to progression** – employers concerned with progression make efforts to articulate and communicate clearly the different career pathways that are available to staff, how they may move from one role to another and the type of skills, qualifications and experiences required. They also take steps to ensure that progression opportunities are open to everyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or disability.
(See page 13: HR Practice in focus: career development).

05 **Opportunities to develop** – employers supportive of progression provide both formal and informal development opportunities. They also enable progression through the provision of wider support such as mentoring, and are effective at identifying and developing staff with potential to progress. They also ensure that development opportunities are available to all.
(See page 17: HR practice in focus: common ways of developing staff; and page 15: HR practice in focus: acting-up as a platform for progression, and page 18: HR practice in focus: working in partnership)

06 **Designing jobs for meaning and purpose** – this dimension reflects the extent to which work and jobs are designed in such a way as to enhance the quality of work, enabling employees to do the best work they can and to use valued skills and abilities.
(See page 16: HR practice in focus: job re-design and learning new skills)

07 **Supportive line management** – employers who are supportive of progression recognise the critical role played by line managers and invest in their capability to engage in regular conversations with those they manage about their careers and development opportunities. They also support line managers in their ability to conduct effective conversations with staff about their performance and manage their expectations around career development.
(See page 14: HR practice in focus: features of effective performance and development conversations, See page 19: HR practice in focus: what makes for effective line management).

08 **Flexibility as a default** – this dimension reflects the extent to which organisations take steps to ensure part-time and flexible working is not a barrier to progression.
(See page 20: HR practice in focus: flexible working that meets both employee and employer needs.

Progression readiness index
(PRI) scale

For each dimension of the index, there are a set of statements against which employers can rate their current practice.

Each of the statements is answered on a scale running from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Answers can be converted into a numeric score, and an overall PRI score calculated.

For positive statements (+ in brackets), an answer of 'strongly agree' is converted into 5 points, and a 'strongly disagree' into 1 point.

For negatively worded statements (- in brackets), the scoring approach is reversed (i.e 'strongly agree' gives a score of 1, and 'strongly disagree' a score of 5). An employer's score can be plotted to provide a self-comparison over time, or compared against a 'best practice' benchmark.

Whilst not an absolute science, and recognising that all companies are very different, we have provided our view of what a 'best practice' score could look like for each of the eight dimensions (in brackets).

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
POSITIVE STATEMENTS (+)	1	2	3	4	5
NEGATIVE STATEMENTS (-)	5	4	3	2	1

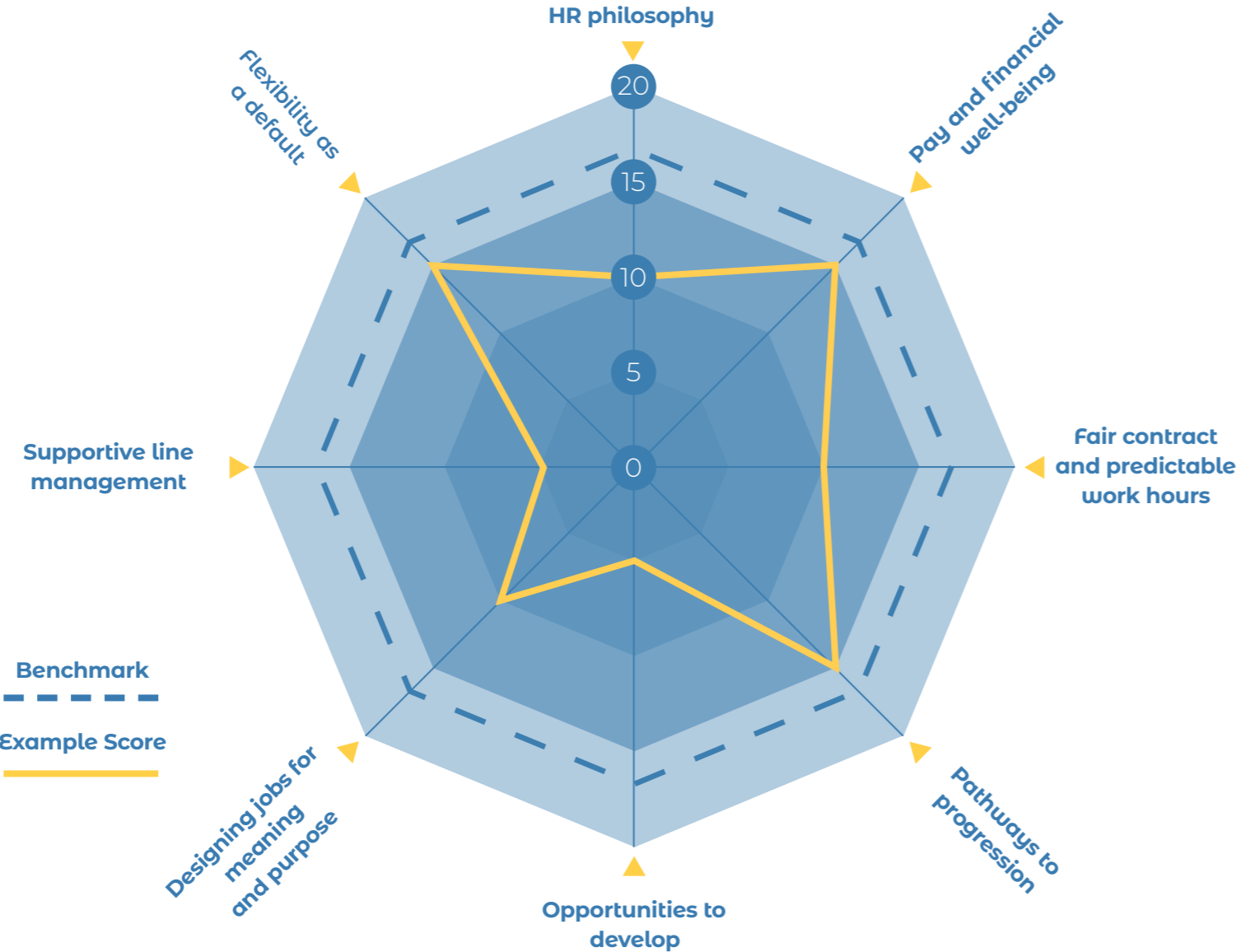| DIMENSION NAME	INDEX QUESTION	SCORE
HR philosophy (16)	• Securing a supply of future skills is essential to the success of our organisation • The skills and capabilities of our people differentiate us from other employers • We try our hardest to fill vacancies from within the organisation • There are no high profile examples of senior staff who have risen through the ranks (-)	
Pay and financial well-being (16)	• Employees are aware of how much they can earn without impacting their welfare benefits • Employees are clear about the ways in which they can increase their pay within the organisation • We provide employees with contracted minimum hours to provide stability in their pay • We pay our staff a 'living wage'	
Fair contract and predictable work hours (16)	• We frequently find it hard to provide extra hours to those employees who want them (-) • Offering more employees permanent contracts would put our organisation at risk (-) • We have a good record of moving employees onto more secure contracts as soon as practical • Our employment contracts provide staff with predictable hours	
Pathways to progression (16)	• The career paths which can be followed here are clear to all of our employees • Every employee is clear what they need to do to get on in this organisation • Progression opportunities are very limited in this organisation (-) • Opportunities for progression are open to all regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, race or disability	
Opportunities to develop (16)	• All of our managers are very accomplished at guiding employees towards career development opportunities • We are very good at spotting & nurturing those employees who have exceptional potential for progression • We frequently use existing staff to 'act up' for maternity cover or to cover long-term sickness • We provide a range of formal and informal development opportunities for staff	
Designing jobs for meaning and purpose (16)	• All of our staff get the training they need to do the best work they can • Most of our jobs can only be done one way and have limited scope for flexibility (-) • We have often craft jobs around the skills & talents of an employee to help them deliver exceptional performance • Jobs are designed in ways that enable staff to experience different types of work and develop new skills	
Supportive line management (16)	• Career development and staff progression are key responsibilities of all of our managers • Most of our managers struggle to manage employee expectations of progression and career development (-) • All of our managers are excellent at coaching and mentoring their direct reports • Managers are trained in how to conduct effective performance and development conversations	
Flexibility as a default (16)	• Part time or flexible working is no barrier to progression in this organisation • We can demonstrate that women in this organisation have equal progression opportunities to men • Training & development opportunities are accessible to staff who need to work flexibly • Managers are comfortable discussing flexible working options with staff	
	TOTAL	

Progression readiness index (PRI) – example

On the right is a visual representation of how one fictitious organisation has scored relative to our best practice score for each of the eight dimensions of the PRI.
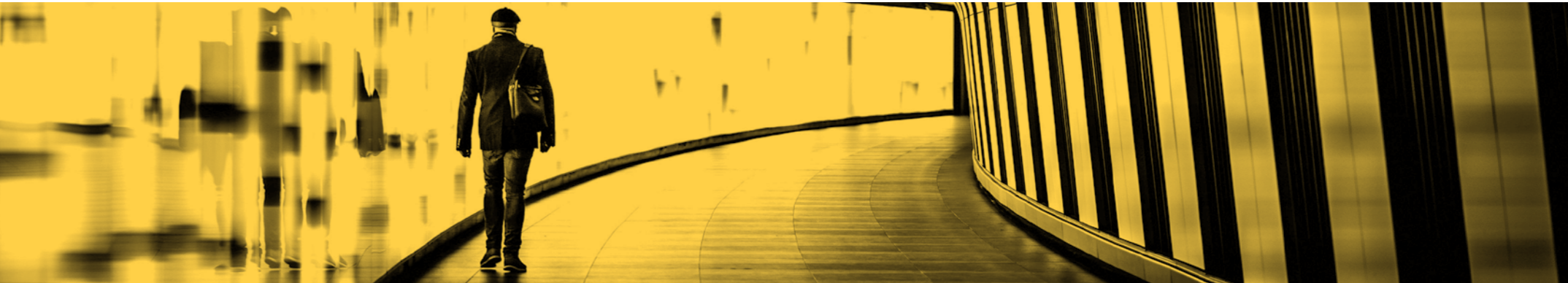
The diagram illustrates, for example, that this particular organisation has taken positive steps to make career progression routes clear in the organisation but development opportunities are limited.

Potential remedies might include informal development opportunities such as mentoring or providing and facilitating access to more formal development opportunities such as training.

The diagram can be used as an aid by senior managers and HR professionals to reflect on their organisations' strengths and areas for development in supporting the progression of workers in low-paid, low-skilled jobs.

Radar chart dimensions: HR philosophy; Pay and financial well-being; Fair contract and predictable work hours; Pathways to progression; Opportunities to develop; Designing jobs for meaning and purpose; Supportive line management; Flexibility as a default. Scale: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20.

Legend: Benchmark; Example Score

HR practice in focus: career development

Career development can be difficult for organisations to embrace, given the possibility of raising employee expectations beyond a level that the organisation can reasonably satisfy. It can also lead valued employees to consider whether they are in the right role, job or organisation and to consider leaving. That said, focussing on career development helps organisations to:

- Grow critical skills that may not be available on the open labour market.
- Improve the deployment of people in jobs where their talents will be well/ better used.
- Improve their ability to attract and retain valued staff.
- Enhance the flexibility of the workforce and the ability to respond to business change.
- Motivate staff.

Career development is enabled by a wide range of both formal and informal processes, including those that may not immediately be thought of as career interventions. For example: the way in which jobs are designed to either enable progression within a particular role or between roles; the job-filling process also plays a role in terms of how 'open' opportunities are, how candidates are selected, and whether managers are open to those who may not have done the job before; the existence and nature of a performance management or appraisal process also influences career development. In addition, access to training and self-managed learning can provide access to qualifications which can open up career pathways for staff. There are perhaps six key areas that organisations may usefully focus on:

- Understanding the positive business outcomes of career development, and developing a career strategy for all types of staff.
- Using core HR/people policies to support the development of employees over time and not just in their current job.
- Encouraging employees to have informal as well as formal career discussions with a range of people who can help them.
- Skilling managers to support the development of those they manage.
- Providing individuals with the skills to manage their careers.
- Enabling access to varied forms of career support.

Reference: Hirsh W (2007) 'Career Development in Employing Organisations: Practices and Challenges from a UK Perspective'

HR practice in focus:
Features of effective performance and development conversations

Effective leaders spend considerable time and effort understanding and supporting the career aspirations and interests of the people working for them. They appreciate the motivational power of providing personalised career support. Effective performance and development conversations fulfil several purposes.

They:

- Help the employee understand what is expected of them, how their work aligns with broader team and organisational priorities, and set goals which can motivate the individual to deliver high levels of performance.

- Provide constructive feedback, giving praise for what the employee is doing well as well as identifying what the individual can do to improve and achieve their career aspirations.

- Identify skill and/or career development actions, including acquiring new skills as well as applying existing skills and behaviours to current situations. The conversation can also help identify developmental work experiences.

- Provide a vehicle through which individuals can feel listened and attended to. How a conversation is conducted is as important as what is covered, and must focus on the particular needs of the individual at that time.

Five key features of effective performance and development conversations are:

Relevant – to business priorities, job and situation of the individual and/or team.

Shared – ownership of the agenda, goals, insights and action.

Timely – at the appropriate time to reflect and act.

Insight – insights and understanding gained by both parties.

Action – agreed and followed up.

Hirsh W (2018) Effective performance, development and career conversations at work. IES HR Network Paper 138.

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY

MDRS

The 'Maison de retraite publique intercommunal de la Durance' is a residential home of dependent elderly patients.

The home also has an Alzheimer's unit. The home is based over two sites and has 100 beds available for the elderly.

Recognising that the profile of patients needing care was changing and that there was a shortage of employees wanting to work in the sector, the company wanted to upskill existing staff, reducing recruitment costs and improving the internal talent pool for filling vacant positions.

The company launched the 'Paths to Qualifications' programme to help low-skilled workers gain the skills and qualifications they need for a career in the care industry. Employees have the opportunity to train for initial level qualifications as well as the chance to specialise through further training.

Informal coaching and work shadowing are also provided so that more junior staff gain from the experience and know-how of more experienced staff.

By investing in the development of its employees, the company believes this has made retaining staff much easier in a profession where recruitment and retention is challenging.

HR practice in focus:
'acting up' as a platform for progression

In most organisations there is an occasional need for employees to 'act up' or even receive a temporary promotion to help manage a time-limited resourcing problem. For example, the work of an employee who is away on long-term sick leave or on a career break will need to be covered and this creates an opportunity for more junior staff to step into more responsible roles while under supervision, and as a chance to try out new skills and to perform in a more challenging context.

The advantage for the organisation is that it can use employees who understand the business and require only minimal induction. For the employee, there is an opportunity to gain skills and experiences which are likely to prepare them well for a future step up in the organisation. Overall, and while these temporary promotions still need to be managed well, this strategy is a relatively low risk approach which tells the organisation quite a lot about who is ready for progression when future opportunities arise.

Some organisations will automatically fill these temporary job gaps by using an agency or a maternity cover appointment, and sometimes there may be good reasons for doing this. However, if managers can more routinely consider the appointment of internal candidates for 'acting up' or temporary promotions, they will keep agency costs down and send a positive message to employees that they will get opportunities to try out more senior jobs as part of the overall approach to managing careers and progression.

HR practice in focus:
Job re-design and learning new skills

Encouraging employees to understand - and even work across the boundaries between job roles can improve operational effectiveness and increase skills and understanding. Also, if employees in one department have a practical appreciation of the work in other teams then communication and cooperation can be improved.

In hospitality businesses, for example in hotels, junior roles in the meeting and events team may spend much of their time setting up (and 'tearing down') rooms for conferences, corporate meetings and large catering events. Broadening the scope of these jobs to include occasional joint working with other teams can improve the motivation needed to deliver high standards of customer service and provide learning opportunities.

For example, observing the way suppliers are contracted and managed can expose staff to the way commercial conversations with florists or professional photographers are held. Working internally with the hotel catering team can help improve understanding of the way large events are planned and prepared for. Working with teams of technicians to see how lighting or sound systems are set up and taken down may be an additional opportunity to extend someone's skills and help them see other career and progression routes which might be open to them in the future.

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY

HOTEL WYNDHAM GARDEN

The Hotel Wyndham Garden is located in Wismar, a small city in North-Eastern Germany. The hotel employs a staff of around 45 and is part of the larger GCH Hotel Group.

The hotel was experiencing recruitment difficulties and had a number of open posts when its managing director decided to adopt a new approach to recruiting and developing its employees. The new approach involved recruiting based on aptitude and motivation rather than professional qualifications, and widening the talent pool to proactively reach out to career changers, older workers, those without a professional degree, migrants and refugees. The hotel intensified its focus on on-the-job training, expanding opportunities for employees to develop new skills and experience a greater variety of tasks at work.

In addition, the hotel provided enhanced workplace-related supervision and coaching, as well as offering non-financial incentives and support with non-work issues (e.g. apartment search, financial issues, and work-life balance). The hotel has addressed many of its recruitment challenges through the approach it has adopted, as well as building a diverse, multi-generational, multi-cultural workforce.

HR practice in focus:
Common ways of developing staff

There are many ways in which employers can support the development of employees.

They include:
- Working alongside or shadowing more experienced staff members.
- Managers delegating more challenging tasks.
- Temporary moves to different parts of the organisation to learn new skills.
- Provision of a mentor or buddy.
- Arranging external or online training courses.
- Supporting membership of career-relevant associations or institutes.
- Help with study for higher level management and other qualifications.
- Arranging coaching sessions.

Reference: https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6612

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY

CORBIN & KING

Corbin and King is a restaurant and hotel company spread across seven locations (six in London and one in Bicester). The company has a strong belief that people are their biggest asset and aims to provide the best working environment for its employees.

The company invests in the development of its staff not only out of a belief that it is the right thing to do, but also to respond effectively to skills shortages and to differentiate itself in the labour market.

Corbin and King have a number of practices in place to support the progression of its staff including:

- A 'training journey' being mapped out for every position in the business, outlining the career trajectory, the roles and skills it involves, and the training needed to progress at each stage.

- An induction programme enabling new hires to get a sense of the wider business and opportunities available.

- Access to online training 24 hours a day, something which has been found to be very useful for those working unsociable hours.

- Encouraging staff to attend management and supervisory training, regardless of their current role, to get a sense of where their career may lead.

- The development of specific programmes to encourage and support women to enter management positions.

As a result of its efforts, Corbin and King have a management stability index of 86 per cent and lower levels of turnover than is standard in the industry. Their success in recruiting and retaining staff has enabled the company to increase its profitability and aid expansion. Staff that have progressed within the company highlight two critical factors in their success: the support of line managers and the overall culture within the company of investing in staff; and the articulation of clear career pathways and the provision of development opportunities.

HR practice in focus:
Working in partnership

Employers can usefully work with third parties to support the development of their employees. When faced with the need to restructure its distribution network in 2006, Boots UK worked with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) to invest in learning. Whilst prompted by the need to restructure including the redundancy of some workers, the joint initiative had a number of benefits for both individuals and the business.

For individuals, the initiative saw:
- Two-thirds of staff across the country becoming involved in learning.
- Over 50 per cent of staff achieving or working towards a vocational qualification or nationally recognised qualification in English or Maths.
- Increased ability to search and prepare for new job opportunities.

For the company, the initiative helped it:
- Manage change, with better than expected levels of staff morale, absenteeism and sickness at a difficult time for the company.
- Improved business performance according to key metrics such as the accuracy of orders to stores.
- Increased staff flexibility and retention, with reduced agency costs.

Reference: 'Learning for Change: How USDAW and Boots UK helped staff prepare for change'. http://www.usdaw.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=9edbd39f-0f17-434e-b985-d90552b5624c

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY

HOBBS LONDON

The Living Wage Foundation worked with major retailers as part of its 'good jobs in retail' project to develop a set of workplace innovations to raise pay, increase job security for staff and improve the bottom line. Working with Hobbs, the women's clothes retailer, underemployment was identified as a challenge with many sales staff leaving to find full-time work. The shorter the contract, the higher the likelihood staff would leave. Staff turnover was leading to higher spending on recruitment as well as reduced productivity as new recruits take time to get up to speed. Scheduling staff around consumer traffic also made it hard to build in time for training and restricted the ability of managers to deploy staff flexibly. The project involved Hobbs trialling an increase in contracted hours and weekly paid training hours to improve productivity, customer service and enable staff to work more flexibly across back-office and customer-facing tasks, leading to higher rates of pay.

*The Living Wage Foundation's 'good jobs in retail' project (July 2016) https://www.livingwage.org.uk/sites/default/files/Hobbs%20EE%20-%20Toolkit.pdf accessed on 8th November 2019

EE

The Living Wage Foundation also worked with EE, part of the BT group and operating 550 retail stores. In this highly competitive market, the company has sought to invest in staff skills, retention and engagement to differentiate itself. At the start of the project, EE had realised that the use of short-term contracts was a major driver of high staff turnover. Staff turnover had a range of negative impacts including increased recruitment costs, loss of knowledge and skills and understaffing. EE also realised that high turnover was impacting productivity. EE implemented a number of changes including a new contract minimum of 25 hours for new retail employees and offering all retail staff an increase in their basic working hours. The company found that the turnover rate for those employees who chose to increase their hours was lower than that for the remainder of the retail workforce.

HR practice in focus:
What makes for effective line management?

Managers who effectively engage their staff:
- Communicate regularly and make clear what's expected.
- Show a keen interest in others and listen actively.
- Value and show appreciation for the efforts of their staff, and involve them in important decisions.
- Show empathy and are supportive.
- Have a clear strategic direction, understand and communicate how an individual's work contributes to the business as a whole.
- See developing their staff as core to their role.

Line managers who are effective in developing their staff:
- Set clear expectations and developmental work goals.
- Find ways to provide developmental work opportunities within their organisation, including broadening experience and expertise through cross-departmental work opportunities, increasing responsibility through delegating work, and involving staff in high-profile projects.
- Look for (external) training programmes and courses where relevant.
- Maintain regular contact and provide frequent, constructive feedback on performance.
- Provide (access to) effective coaching and mentoring.
- Recognise and praise work well done.
- Provide a 'safe' environment in which staff can express their ideas, try new things, stretch themselves and be supported.

Reference: Robinson D, Hayday S (2009) 'The Engaging Manager'. IES Report 470; Marvell D, Robinson D, Hirsh W (2014) 'The Engaging Manager in Development Mode'. IES Report 492

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY

Uvesco GRUPO

Uvesco Group is a leader in food distribution in Spain, headquartered in the Basque country. A central part of its philosophy is to provide a high-quality customer service.

Most employees are 'salespersons' (cashiers, butchers, fishmongers) working in front-line positions dealing directly with customers.

One of the guiding principles informing the company's HR policy and practice is that of 'excellent work', recognising the importance of its workers' knowledge and skills. The company operates an open, internal labour market and maps job roles at all levels to make progression pathways transparent.

Paid-for accredited training is provided to enable employees to qualify as a butcher or fishmonger, enabling staff to develop within the company but also facilitating their progression in the wider labour market.

The company also proactively identifies staff currently in non-management roles who have the potential to move into management, and invests in their development through the 'Cantera Plan'. Uvesco reports positive outcomes from their approach including low turnover, increases in employee confidence and skills, and high levels of customer service. .

HR practice in focus:
Flexibility that meets employer and employee needs

Flexible working refers to any type of working arrangement that offers some degree of flexibility over how long, when and where employees work. Flexible working can take many forms from part-time work, through annualised hours to remote working. Flexible working can help meet the needs of customers, employers and employees. Employers can nonetheless often be wary of flexible working for several reasons including difficulties scheduling work with a variety of arrangements in place, the resistance of managers, additional pressure placed on workers who do not work flexibly, potential reduction in worker flexibility and additional costs. If managed well, and both employer and employee interests are taken into account, adopting flexibility at work can have substantial benefits including:

- Enhanced employee motivation and engagement.
- Reduced levels of absence.
- Improved productivity and efficiency.
- Better customer service.
- Improved employee retention.
- Enhanced ability to attract talent.

Not all forms of flexible working will be suitable in all situations. Working collaboratively with employees and their representatives, and skilling managers with the confidence to discuss and address the needs of employees, provides perhaps the most productive way of designing flexibility into work such that it benefits employees, customers and the employing organisation.

Reference: 'Flexible working and work-life balance' (2015) ACAS

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY

pets at home
Group plc

Pets at Home is the UK's largest pets retailer, employing over 8,000 staff in its stores. The company worked with the Timewise Foundation to understand why the ratio of men moving from shop floor into assistant manager roles was double that of women.

Pets at Home identified that a lack of flexibility in management roles was a major factor. Workshops with HR and operational teams identified jobshare and part-time working as the options that met both business and individual needs.

The company provided guidance and training to managers around flexibility, and advertised management roles with flexible options and role models highlighted through internal communications.

As a result, the company has successfully progressed the careers of women who need to work flexibly in its business.

HR practice in focus:
Using inclusion nudges

Inclusion nudges are a set of interventions informed by behavioural economics that can be used to support progression in work. Inclusion nudges use the psychology of how people make decisions, and applies these insights to encourage individuals towards a particular behaviour.

Inclusion nudges can help address stereotyping and unconscious bias that can disadvantage underrepresented groups of workers.

For example, some employees may be deterred by the language used to advertise work opportunities, which may be read as designed to attract a particular gender, age or ethnicity.

Stating all the demographics that the opportunity should apply to, clearly in the text or title of the opportunity, can encourage a more diverse pool of applicants to apply.

For instance, in a job advert detailing that 'we are looking for a female or male motivated talent' rather than 'we are looking for a motivated talent' can encourage more women to apply and shift stereotypes attached to some roles.

As another example, research has shown that bias is more likely to be present when a candidate is evaluated individually compared to when they are evaluated alongside other candidates. When they are evaluated against others, interviewers are more likely to focus on applicants' past performance and competencies, rather than individual characteristics.

Employers can change their recruitment process to make group evaluation more common, and make it procedurally difficult for interviewers to assess one candidate at a time .

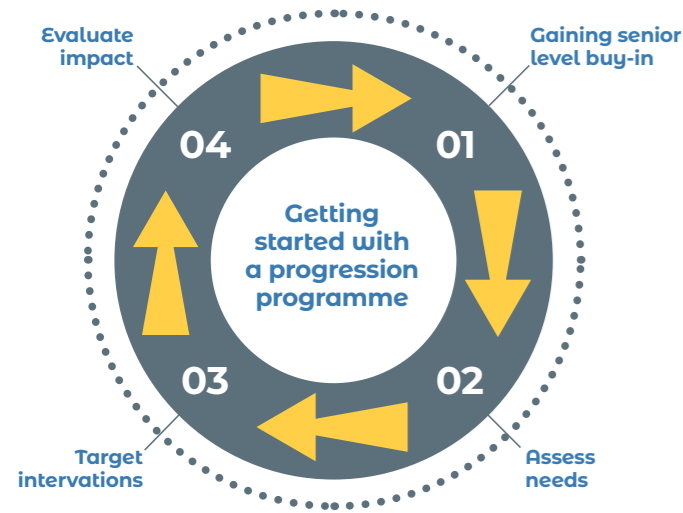## EMPLOYER CASE STUDY

HANTVERKET
MAT & BAR

Hantverket, a restaurant in Stockholm, prides itself on its approach to sustainability, both in its food and in the way it supports employees to learn and develop.

The company's staffing policy includes clear work schedules and sustainable working hours. The company has developed a collegiate culture where staff can learn from each other, as well as developing through opportunities to job shadow, visit other organisations in the sector and receiving regular talks and seminars from external speakers working in the sector.

Employees participate in yearly performance reviews and are supported in understanding the types of jobs and careers available in the company, the skills needed for different roles, and how those skills may be developed. Staff are empowered to make decisions and given choice in how they exercise their responsibilities whilst being supported by clear standards. The company has won awards for its approach and has high levels of staff retention, operating with the same staff it had when it opened two years ago.

Getting started with a progression programme

Figure 1

Reduced turnover

Improved productivity

Increased ability of staff to respond to change

Improved staff availability/ reduced absence

Address and prevent skills shortages

Better quality and continuity of customer service

Step 1 – Gaining senior level buy-in

Clearly articulating the business benefits of supporting the progression of low-skilled workers is a key first step in initiating a programme of work in this area. Articulating the business benefits can not only be critical in garnering the support and influence of senior stakeholders in the organisation, but also in beginning to make clear the key success criteria against which any initiatives may be measured.

A useful question to start is ' To what business problems might the progression of low-skilled workers be a potential solution?'

Figure 1 presents a selection of possible answers to this question to help get you started.

Step 2 – Assess needs

Once agreement to trial, pilot or adopt one or more initiatives to support the progression of low-skilled workers has been reached, a critical first step is understanding the barriers and potential enablers of progression in your own organisation. Completing the progression readiness index (PRI) can give you an idea of where your organisations' strengths and areas for improvement may be with regards to progression, but it is also critical to understand the views of employees, particularly those in lower-skilled roles, their experiences, what they see as barriers and what help they may need.

This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- Employee opinion surveys.
- Group discussions with staff.
- Analysis of progression patterns in your organisation.
- Engagement of independent research and HR experts.

Assessing patterns of progression in your organisation, and having a deeper understanding of barriers and enablers, can help you pinpoint which interventions to invest in, for which groups of staff, to help ensure the greatest impact for the investments made.

Step 3 – Target interventions

After assessing needs, you will have greater confidence in what interventions to invest in for which groups of employees, and as a result have a clearer idea of what changes you would hope to see. For example, by investing in a skills-based pay approach, you may hope to be able to enhance employee motivation and at the same time ensure continuity of service by developing a more flexible workforce. Alternatively, you may wish to address skills shortages and increase the diversity of your management population by making management roles available on a part-time basis.

Planning, design and execution of any initiatives and programmes should involve a wide range of stakeholders including, where appropriate:

- HR professionals.
- Line managers.
- Employees and/or their representatives e.g. union representatives.
- Senior managers.

Involvement of these stakeholders can ensure that any initiatives are joined-up and have the best chance of success, as well as aligning interventions with business-critical systems and processes.

Step 4 – Evaluating impact

Steps 1 and 2 will have provided you with a clearer sense of the key success criteria for your initiatives in support of progression, and the types of measure and data you will need to monitor success.

Establishing key kerformance indicators (KPIs) to monitor on a regular basis can provide you with information to assess whether your initiatives are working.

There are different types of measures that can be used depending on the nature of your intervention.

For example, a programme to support front-line workers to move into supervisory positions can be assessed short-term on participation rates as well as satisfaction with the programme.

More meaningful and medium-term measures include the percentage of supervisory positions filled by internal candidates who have been supported by the programme.

Resources

There are lots of freely available resources for employers to help and assist with the work of facilitating the progression of low-skilled staff. A selection of relevant organisations, websites and guidance materials are provided below. The list is not exhaustive but will hopefully be of use in starting your journey in supporting career progression for low-skilled workers.

Timewise Foundation
(https://timewise.co.uk/about-us/)
- leading UK organisation enabling high quality jobs on a flexible basis.

National Institute for Career Education and Counselling
(http://www.nicec.org/about-us)
- a non profit company that operates as a learning network of career education and guidance researchers, practitioners and academics

ACAS
(https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1461)
 - the UK's Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service provides a range of helpful guides on employment practice that supports progression in work.

CIPD
(https://www.cipd.co.uk/)
– the professional body for Human Resources and People Development has a wide range of relevant research and practical resources to draw on.

Working Families
(https://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)
– a leading charity focussed on flexible work, the charity produces an annual benchmarking report assessing employers' family-friendly policies. Employers are invited to participate.

UnionLearn
(https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/)
– established in 2006 by the Trades Union Congress (TUC), UnionLearn assists unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members.

Institute for Employment Studies
(https://www.employment-studies.co.uk)
- leading, evidence-based institute focussed on employment policy and HR practice.

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