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Using Competency Management to Offer Flexible Career Paths

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At first blush, flexible career pathing may seem like a potential nightmare, with employees randomly changing career tracks on a whim. Fortunately, it's an entirely different picture when flexible career paths are part of a company-wide strategy. A strategy to engage and develop employees to serve in a variety of roles over time. Is flexible career pathing a winning strategy for employees? For businesses? How can competency management bring a flexible career path to life? Here, we'll answer these questions.



Why Employees Like a Flexible Career Path

The majority of today's workforce is made up of Millennials, who fully expect to change employers – and careers – multiple times in their work lives. In their report, [Millennial Careers: 2020 Vision](#), ManpowerGroup points out that Millennials see their careers as ultra marathons, with many branching routes, changes of pace, and regular breaks. They have an appetite for new opportunities and welcome learning as a way to develop skills to stay competitive at work.

Brandon Hall, in its [2018 Brandon Hall Career Development Study](#), found that: “More employees look for new and varied experiences in the workplace rather than just moving up the corporate ladder.”

So, employees expect multiple career changes; they seek out new opportunities and the training and development programs to get them there, and they don't all want to be managers. A flexible career path, where employees can change their career focus or level in response to personal or professional priorities, can be tremendously appealing for workers.

The Value of Flexible Career Pathing for Employees

What's in it for employers? Presumably, flexible organizations that accommodate the wishes of valued employees by offering them different roles will improve employee retention. But, of course, retaining employees simply for retention's sake is not a wise business strategy.

According to the [Brandon Hall study](#), employers with a clear career development framework that allows employees to change career direction — horizontally, vertically or into an entirely different career stream or level — have a competitive advantage. They are **four times** more likely to see increased employee retention. And **twice** as likely to see increased employee engagement compared with organizations without clear career paths. Customer satisfaction and customer engagement are also higher.

The federal government is just one example of an organization that's testing a break from the “one-size-fits-all” approach to careers. [Multiple agencies are conducting pilots](#) to engage federal employees at all levels in new IT career opportunities. They are doing this as a way to tackle the technology talent crunch with people



who already know a lot about the needs of their employer.

Once we start to think of career advancement as encompassing lateral moves with new opportunities that better fit an employee's life stage and the company priorities, everything starts to make sense. Flexible career pathing is a win-win for employees and employers to navigate the changing world of work. However, this requires that employees and employers be aligned on priorities.

How Competency Management Supports Career Flexibility

Alignment is where competency management shines. Competencies provide a framework to map career paths to the skills, knowledge, and experience that employees need to succeed. Likewise, most competencies can be mapped to multiple career paths.

Someone who is an excellent presenter, for example, could excel in a career as an instructor, sales manager, negotiator, or director of research and development. Each of those career paths require other competencies, but the overlap makes a move from one to another incredibly achievable. With a competency management program, the new career path would then illuminate the skills and competencies needed to succeed as well as shape the development goals to close skills gaps.

On one level, it's just that simple. Use a competency management program across the organization to define the competencies for each existing and future job description. Then, assess and develop individual employee competencies to map specific employees' skills to the agreed-upon career path(s).

To make it work, you'll need a robust competency management system, like [WebMentorSkills™](#), that can keep up with the data. The right technology can simplify the complexities of managing a flexible career

pathing initiative at scale. In fact, the Brandon Hall study found that companies that support career development and competencies with technology **are more than twice as likely** as other organizations to have employees with clear, well-communicated career advancement plans.

Are you ready to get started? Jump onboard!

Flexible career pathing is a timely, enticing option for engaging employees in the careers that are most important to your organization. Using competency management as the backbone of your program, you and your employees will be well-positioned for whatever the future brings.

Are you interested in exploring how competency management can bring your flexible career pathing initiative to life? [Contact us](#) to learn how our [WebMentorSkills™](#) competency management system can support your next steps.

About Avilar

Avilar – The Competency Company™ is a leader in web-based competency management and learning solutions for corporations, government, and non-profit organizations. Formed in 1997, Avilar was a pioneer with its award-winning WebMentor™ product line and has built itself on the basis of superior customer service and highly adaptable product design.

Avilar consultants are recognized as industry thought leaders and have decades of experience in implementation and analysis. Let Avilar help you transform your organization from ordinary to extraordinary.

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