



## **Career Coaching: Your Competitive Edge For Employee Engagement**

*Managers today are faced with new challenges and a shifting employee mindset. Liane Taylor and Ranya El-Farnawani of Career Partners International share their perspective on the importance, value, and how-to of managers having career conversations.*

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Picture this familiar scene. You are conducting your teams' annual reviews and one of your star employees sits down across from you. Their performance this year has been phenomenal. All goals achieved, if not exceeded. The structure of your reviews leaves time for discussion of the future. Are they content? *Mostly*. Could they be doing more? *Sure*. Are they looking for a promotion? *Of course*. But, truth be told, unless you're vacating your seat, there isn't much upward mobility in the division. You two end the meeting with a handshake and a smile, the plan for next year looking much like it did this past year. You're left with an uneasy feeling. They seemed disappointed. You wonder if there is more you could be doing to keep them engaged.

While this example might feel like an exaggeration, it happens every day. It is important to acknowledge the paradox that exists in today's world of work. You want your employees to continue performing well and to feel valued, yet careers have become harder to navigate than ever. Rapid changes, flatter organizations, less opportunity for upward movement, the changing needs of the workforce, and a strong recruiting market make your missed coaching opportunity your competitor's open door.

Many organizations have shifted the burden of career planning to the employee, but it is important to recognize the critical role management plays in their development. Although many managers desire to be of service, they feel discomfort engaging in career conversations. They fear they don't have the right answers, upward opportunities are limited, and time is scarce.

### **So, why bother?**

- Engagement is a key driver of business performance and yet over 85% of employees report being not being engaged.
- Employees are 3x more likely to be engaged when they have regular and meaningful conversations with their managers. More engaged teams deliver key bottom line metrics in the areas of customer satisfaction, profitability, productivity, and absenteeism.
- The current market is highly competitive with a fierce war for talent. If top talent is not receiving support in their career development, they likely won't stay long.
- Employees crave it! They long for the opportunity to explore how they can grow and develop and where they can be of most value in the organization.
- It's expected. Millennials, who currently represent the largest portion of the workforce, expect career development conversations with their manager.
- Empowering employees with a more agile and entrepreneurial mindset enables organizations to achieve a competitive advantage.

That said, supporting your team members' career development is not as straight-forward as it used to be. Understanding what career planning looks like today and strengthening skills in career coaching can help to increase your confidence engaging in career conversations.



### What does Career Planning mean today?

- **Focus on the Experience, Not the Title:** Due to the rapid speed in which organizations and job descriptions are changing, focus more on the type of work experiences your employees want to explore and the kinds of problems they want to solve rather than their next job title.
- **Continuous Enrichment:** Focusing on job enrichment, growth, and learning in their existing role allows your employees to not only find value in their work, but it also better prepares them for lateral and vertical moves. It helps to convey the importance of continuous improvement and enrichment regardless of role change.
- **Navigate the Networked Organization:** 84% of organizations are considered networked or matrix structures. This means that your employees need to develop their brand and nurture relationships in order to access information and build their profile for key projects and opportunities.
- **Hone Value Propositions:** Paying attention to what problems need solving and how one is uniquely positioned to solve them helps employees consider where they can make a difference, even in their existing work. It also helps them position themselves for future roles that are yet to emerge.

### How to make a difference as a Leader?

- **Be Quick:** Career coaching isn't about long, drawn-out, planned conversations. While some meetings may be formal, there are many opportunities to quickly check-in and find out what is exciting to your team members and what they want to be doing more of.
- **Be Present:** Coaching isn't just about asking questions, it is about investing in someone else and taking the time to share insights.
- **Be Humble:** While you may have deep experience and the war wounds to prove it, it is important to check your biases and assumptions at the door. Your team member may have a new idea or perspective that you haven't thought of.
- **Be a Conduit:** You likely know more about the organizational landscape than your team has exposure to. Sharing what you know can help to inspire ideas.
- **Be a Connector:** Helping your employees identify potential mentors and ways in which they can grow their network helps to further embed them in the organization and enhance their ability to grow with the business.

Take the time to reflect on where you can offer the most value as a developer of talent. Investing in coaching your team helps to drive engagement and trust, which will no doubt influence your team's ability to step up when needed and help you navigate the complex environment you are in. Enhance your skills as a career coach; your team will thank you.

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About Career Partners International LLC.

Career Partners International was founded in 1987 and is one of the largest consultancies in the world. With over 350 offices in over 50 countries, Career Partners International is a leading provider of outplacement, career management, executive coaching, and leadership development services to clients and their employees worldwide.