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How To Support Career Progression in the Age of Remote Work



Are remote workers at a disadvantage in terms of promotions and career growth? They seem to think so.

According to a recent poll by talent operating system provider Beamery, about half of U.S. and U.K. respondents (48%) said working remotely and not having enough face time translates to fewer promotions and interrupts their ability to learn on the job.

And data suggests some merit to this sentiment. In one study, researchers ran a travel agency with one group of participants working remotely four days a week and the other group working in office. The remote workers had a 50% lower promotion rate than those who worked in the office.

Remote work is here to stay

Remote work is becoming increasingly popular, with both employers and employees favoring the continuation of remote and hybrid arrangements into the future.

- Stanford researchers surveyed 30,000 individuals and found that post-pandemic, 20% of full workdays will be remote, a 15% increase over pre-pandemic data.
- A recent study by the accounting consultancy PwC also shows that most organizations and their employees have found success with remote work arrangements. In fact, its January 2021 survey revealed a 10% increase in the number of employers expressing positive attitudes toward remote work over the previous year.
- Gallup also reports that 45% of the full-time employees it polled were working remotely all or part of the time in September 2021. And nine out of 10 of those employees expressed their desire to stay remote at least part of the time.

With so many workers being remote, it's likely the fear of missing out (FOMO) trend will continue. But there are some steps organizations can take now to provide all employees with opportunities for advancement, whether in office or remote.

Consider a hybrid arrangement

The first step is to acknowledge that FOMO is real and consider that having employees in the office part time may be the ideal balance. Regular in-person work experiences can help foster spontaneity, bonding and innovation.

According to the CNBC/Survey Monkey Workforce Happiness Index, 31% of employees believe those who work part of the time in the office and the rest of the time from home will have equal career opportunities.

And research by Gallup shows that employees might actually crave hybrid work arrangements over being fully remote. A majority of employees working remotely at least part time (54%) said they wanted to split their time between home and office. This is a far greater percentage than those who said they wanted to return to the office full time (9%), and slightly more than those who said they wanted to work from home exclusively (37%).

If you are considering a hybrid model, it's best to take a coordinated and uniform approach to in-office work time. Rather than letting employees select when they'll be in the office, make a centralized decision on when team members will report to work. This helps ensure overlap, giving employees the chance to interact and providing employers with valuable insight into who's shining in their role and primed for promotion.

Other strategies for countering FOMO

If hybrid work arrangements aren't right for you, there are still many ways to help remote workers advance.

But be aware this likely means embracing a major culture shift. Gone are the days of the traditional Monday-through-Friday grind, which gives organizations the chance to shape the future workplace with valuable input from employees. Here are a few strategies for soliciting buy-in from employees and helping them carve out their career trajectories in a favorable way.

Talk regularly with employees about their performance. The periodic performance reviews of yesterday may not provide the right amount of insight for real progress. In fact, a poll by the cloud platform provider Reflective showed that more than 60% of employees believe performance reviews are incomplete and only measure performance at a "surface level."

To counter this perception, put employees in the driver's seat. Encourage them to self-identify their strengths and get involved in projects that play to those attributes. Then, set up regular (weekly or biweekly) meetings with them to review their progress and address any challenges they may be facing.

Soliciting feedback like this helps employees get a better sense of what's going well and where they can improve. It's also a way for employees to impress upon managers that they're hard working and committed to their roles.

Provide opportunities to cross train. By getting remote employees out of siloed workflows, you'll be in a better position to foster connections among coworkers and evaluate whether employees excel or flounder when put into new situations. This may also help identify who the future leaders are.

Make online learning more accessible. There are many online learning platforms that can help employees hone their skills for their current roles and develop new skills for future roles. These include edX, LinkedIn Learning and Udemy, to name a few.

Prioritize training and career guidance. More than 25% of the employees Beamery polled ranked these as important considerations. With the Great Resignation in full swing, organizations that don't step up could risk losing talent. In fact, 53% of workers say they plan on leaving their jobs in the next year if their employers don't recognize that training and career guidance matter.

Create opportunities for employees to shine

While the onus is always on the employee to demonstrate their commitment to the organization, giving them opportunities to be more self-directed will generally put the employer in a better position to identify and promote top talent.

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