

Career progression for employees — make it work for you too!

Fact Sheet #



Career progression: What is it?

- *Career Progression* is not the same as *Career Development*—which is the term most people are accustomed to using.
- A person's *Career Development* pathway is likely to be much more broad than just the time spent working in the Australian Meat Industry. It will involve a range of individual choices in managing work, learning and lifestyle activities.
- *Career Progression* is more occupation-focused. It's about advancement within a job, within an organisation, or within an industry. As an employer in the Australian Meat Industry, you have an interest in facilitating Career Progression for the people who work for you.

Facilitating career progression: Why would you do it?

- People are often attracted to a particular industry, company or job by opportunities for career development through learning and training to match life goals.
- People are more likely to stay in their jobs when the work is challenging, interesting, meaningful—and when they have opportunities to upgrade their skills in the work.
- People are more likely to stay with a particular company when there is opportunity for career progression—and they know what they need to do, to make that happen.
- People are more likely to stay in a particular industry when they can take pride in the work that they do and the place that they work.
- When people:
 - are attracted to you
 - stay with you
 - upgrade their skills and qualifications

there are immediate benefits for your business in terms of availability and capability—and long term benefits through effective workforce planning!



How to do it: Communicate opportunities

- Employees' career pathway planning and your succession planning can work hand-in-hand for mutual benefit—if they are aware of your plans.
- Do you promote within the workplace what your future needs will be? For example, do people know that your 3 year & 5 year growth plans mean you will need more trained Supervisors?
- Has your workforce planning analysis exposed a particular area of your plant or a specific field of work that is destined for shortages as people retire?
- Do you take steps to ensure these issues are communicated—not just during inductions, but at regular intervals (capturing those people whose life goals and needs have changed)?
- Do you regularly promote on-the-job training opportunities?
- Are people aware they have opportunities to upgrade their skills, even if they don't want to move out of their current job?

- People need to know where and how they can be promoted to other levels in the company.
- They need to be clear about the competencies and behaviours that are required for specific jobs and to feel that there are opportunities for them to learn and develop new skills.
- One way to do this is to have clear written Position Descriptions and Person Specifications available for each job family.
- These documents will be useful to employees when setting goals for jobs and work levels they'd like to work toward. They will gain a better understanding of the work they *think* they'd like to do—and this reduces the risk of people starting down a pathway which really doesn't suit them.
- A written record of the skills, attitudes and behaviours already required in their current job also helps people to gain confidence in what they really have to offer.
- When people find 'a match' between much of what they're already doing and what they'd need to do in a new job, it appears much more achievable for them—they're more likely to try something they had thought was 'out of reach'.

How to do it: Motivate employee interest in career progression

- The key reason people leave a job is because it has failed to meet one or more of their expectations—yet they often don't communicate their dissatisfaction until it's too late.
- Even if the employees began with false expectations, it can benefit you to discover and address the perceived failings.
- Sometimes, employees themselves don't recognise the reason for their dissatisfaction. They may say they're happy in the job they have—yet research shows people who stay too long doing the same thing often leave.
- Generating interest in growth—whether that's within their job or away from it—is in the best interests of your employees and your company!

- Do you actively seek to learn whether employees' expectations are being met within your company or the industry?
- Do you have processes in place to test job satisfaction and identify retraining opportunities for those frustrated in their current roles?
- Are there opportunities to extend the activities and tasks of people who say they are happy at their current level?
- Do you display material at your site that promotes Vocational Qualifications and encourages people to take part?
- Do they know you'll help them do that?

How to do it: Help employees to 'try-before-they-buy'

- The most common reason employees fail at career progression is that they have chosen a pathway which is not appropriate for them.
- We also know that the retention risk for employees is reduced if you are able to accommodate their need for change.
- If you don't already have one, can you introduce a job rotation process so people can experience other work activities?
- This not only allows people to try different roles before committing to a career pathway, it can help you cover planned and unplanned absences such as sick leave; annual leave; or resignations.
- Job rotations also foster a cross-fertilisation of skills, behaviours and attitudes between the newcomer and existing work team.
- Working in different sections gives employees a broader understanding of your company and the industry—and reinforces the impacts on others of actions in a specific job.
- Being able to 'try-before-they-buy' is likely to raise self-esteem in employees who are reluctant to take a risk on making a change.

- A little creative thought can create opportunities for employees to explore career progression interests—and even generate interest where it is absent.
- Can you rotate representatives on your OH&S committee to broaden exposure to issues surrounding management of Human Resources? (This will also increase exposure to OH&S principles.)
- What opportunities do you have to release staff to attend workshops and seminars in the region?
- Are you able to arrange opportunities for employees to 'shadow' another employee for a short time in a specific task or project?
- Is there any opportunity to develop an exchange program with another business that has openings in work you can't offer as yet?
- Could you arrange opportunities in your community for employees to volunteer support in a particular field of interest? This not only gives them some experience in the type of work they'd like to do, it helps your image as a good corporate citizen.

How to do it: Soften any losses attached to lateral moves

- Do you have an incentive scheme for people who upgrade their skills and/or qualifications when it doesn't mean a change of position for them?
- Can you soften any sacrifices that need to be made in lateral moves? If the job move will mean a loss in pay, can you reduce the difference?
- Loss of status is a significant issue for some employees and if they need to change fields, they will often leave a company rather than 'lose face' within it.
- How can you recognise the change is still a transfer of key skills and competencies?

- Employees who have proactively engaged in planning for career progression may discover they need to make a lateral (or even backward) move to get on the appropriate pathway.
- Sometimes, dependent on their current life roles, the sacrifices (in terms of money or seniority) will seem too great for them to proceed.
- Sharing the burden of those costs will not only give you the benefit of employees actively engaged in career progression, but make a positive contribution to the image of the meat industry and your company within the industry—which will assist your later recruitment programs.
- Any costs incurred are an investment in your company's future!

Where you can find help to make it happen

- Employees need to know where they are now; plan where they want to go; work out the best way for them to get there—and have help to make it happen.
 - Keep a good supply of current career guides on site—particularly Australian Meat Industry resources.
 - The FTH Skills Council and MLA have worked together to produce a booklet especially designed to motivate employees toward career progression and to help their planning processes. 'Career Pathways in the Australian Meat Industry' is supported by a fold-out poster which you can display in appropriate locations.
 - MINTRAC also has comprehensive information about careers in the Australian meat industry; training; traineeships; apprenticeships; and scholarships. Check their website at www.mintrac.com.au
 - Encourage educational institutions or registered training organisations to visit your site to promote relevant programs to employees.
- It's important that your workplace culture is such that employees will make management or Human Resources personnel the first port of call when planning to progress their careers.
 - Not only are you best placed to help them in terms of future prospects, it gives you an insight into the employee's goals that may previously have been unrecognised.
 - This not only helps your succession planning, but allows you to highlight opportunities where you know you're going to suffer future shortages.
 - Familiarise yourself with career guide websites such as:
 - www.myfuture.edu.au
 - www.jobguide.dest.gov.au
- so you can help your employees make best use of these resources. If possible, work through these sites with an employee interested in career progression—or arrange for someone else who is familiar with the technology to guide unconfident employees through the various sections.
- Investing time and effort now will pay dividends for your company and the meat industry in the future.

Want to know more?

For further information about workforce development resources for the SA Meat Industry, please contact:

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