





Internal Mobility in the Age of AI

Best practices and insights from the global authority on workplace culture

Great Place To Work.

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Hatmill, No.1 UK's Best Workplace for Development (Medium)



Savers Health and Beauty, No. 8 UK's Best Workplace for Development (Super Large)

Great Place To Work® is on a mission to make every company a great workplace for all. Every year, we get direct feedback from over 10 million workers around the world telling us how they *really* feel about their employer. Our survey is completely confidential and anonymous, so people can feel comfortable to be honest about their workplace, and companies can gain detailed insights into how they can better serve their people.

Opportunities for learning and development are a crucial element of this success, which is why we're so thrilled to be recognising this year, for the second time, the UK's Best Workplaces for Development.

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Why does internal mobility matter?

And how can AI help?

Internal mobility refers to the movement of employees within an organisation. This can be vertically – such as moving to a more senior position within the same department – or laterally – for example, moving to a role with the same level of seniority in a different department.

For businesses, internal mobility saves time and money on external hiring, boosts employee retention, engagement and productivity, and can offer greater innovation in the workplace. And, it's fast becoming a primary concern for employees. In fact,

31% of 25 to 34 year-olds in the UK list career progression as the job attribute most important to them.[1]

Employees want to feel fulfilled in their work, to have a sense of purpose and to know what their next career move is. As nonlinear career paths become more common, it's the organisations who equip all their employees with the skills and support needed to align their job role with their personal and professional goals who will truly see the benefits.

For internal mobility to become a reality, organisations must rejig the traditional notion of the corporate ladder. They do this by understanding individual skills and desires of their employees and how these could align to the needs and goals of the business.

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A culture of openness and support around career development is crucial. By allowing employees to be involved in creating their own development path, you empower your people to design a career in which they feel engaged and proud. When employees' job roles align with their skills and interests, it also makes for a more fun work environment – which is significant, as we've found fun to be a key driver of both engagement and wellbeing. Ultimately, employees want to stay longer at organisations that offer them these opportunities – in fact, 94% of employees would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career,[2] and

67% of workers would consider quitting if internal mobility was not possible.[3]

Creating chances for internal growth and mobility also allows businesses to fill skills gaps within their organisation. Upskilling current employees can fulfil organisational needs with talent who already understand and fit in with the business. When this aligns with employees' personal and professional development, it allows both the organisation and its people to thrive.

With an estimated 7 million UK employees requiring upskilling by 2030,[4] filling the skills gap remains a major priority for employers. One area that requires particular focus is artificial intelligence.

As the use of AI rapidly becomes more common practice, employers must equip their people with the skills needed to keep up and take advantage of this new technology. At the same time, the potential for AI to revolutionise learning and development, and provide a much needed solution for skills gaps, is enormous.

But diving headfirst into implementing AI, without considering how to utilise this technology in such a way that it benefits both employees and the organisation, is a recipe for disaster.

Top-performing companies don't ignore AI, nor do they abuse it. Their use of AI technology is governed by systems based on their values as an organisation. They replace unfulfilling and unprofitable work to create opportunities for both employees and businesses to succeed. They train every employee to use AI because every job will be affected. They leverage AI to mitigate bias and connect employees with more opportunities to grow and develop.

Here's what Great Place To Work has found after studying workplace culture for 30 years: **Trust is everything**. If employees don't trust leaders, if they don't feel like their company is invested in them, or if their company is not training them for the jobs of the future, they resist change. When companies build trust, employees rise to their full potential, and profits soar.

Sources:
1. ADP, People at Work: A Global Workforce View, 2024
2. LinkedIn, Developing Employees and Improving Performance
3. Lever, The State of Internal Mobility and Employee Retention Report
4. Edge Foundation, Skills Shortages in the UK Economy

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Coloplast, No.49 UK's Best Workplace for Development (Large)



Keon Homes, No. 2 UK's Best Workplace for Development (Medium)

Using AI to build internal mobility

Supporting your employees to grow and develop within your organisation.

5 tips for making internal mobility a reality with the help of AI

1. Discard what you think career growth 'should' look like

Not everyone can become the CEO of the company. But everyone can find a role that aligns with their goals, skills and passions, as well as to the company's goals and strategy. There is no one size-fits-all when it comes to professional development. The traditional ladder structure will work for some, but for others may be too prescriptive. Accepting that your employees will all develop in different ways, and communicating that they are encouraged to follow their own path, is the first step to creating internal mobility for all. As AI technology develops, the potential journeys your employees could take multiply. Helping employees to understand what their path could look like in the new world of work is integral.

AI platforms could be utilised here to analyse employee skills, experiences, and aspirations to uncover non-obvious career pathways. Employees can receive tailored suggestions that align with their strengths, interests, and departmental needs, making growth paths clearer and more actionable.

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2. Encourage interdepartmental learning

In departments working in silos, employees have a very limited view of what opportunities are available within the company. However, when different areas of the business are open to sharing what they're working on, and teaching other departments about what they do, people can see where in the business their next role might be. This could take the form of all-staff meetings, Q&As, or 'day in the life' features on internal communication channels. If an employee shares a specific interest in another department, mentoring and job shadowing could be the next step. AI technology can help make cross-departmental collaboration smoother by automating admin tasks such as scheduling meetings, helping to explain what different departments are working on, or identifying employees for short-term projects in other teams.

3. Work with employees to create their own individualised career plan

Opening up a wider conversation around career development is just the beginning. Employees may have an idea of where they want to go, but helping them figure out how to get there is part of championing internal mobility. Managers should be equipped to have discussions around development – including an understanding of how AI could help, or the potential AI skills needed – and help plan out the path to employees' goals.

This means focusing on individual employees' skills and interests, and helping them to understand what they need to work on to progress to the next step in their career. Scheduling in these discussions on an annual, bi-annual, or even more frequent basis, helps make sure they happen – and that employees, managers and the wider business are all on the same page.

AI technology can also help curate tailored learning paths – including micro-courses, certifications, or mentorship programs – to bridge skills gaps based on individual goals and organisational needs

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4. Upskill employees to use AI effectively and ethically

When employees feel involved in decisions affecting their work, they are more likely to be enthusiastic about using AI (43% vs. 21%).[5]

But organisations must also ensure employees are equipped to use AI effectively and ethically, ensuring tools enhance productivity without compromising integrity. Training programs should focus on technical proficiency and ethical principles like bias mitigation, transparency, and privacy. By automating routine tasks, AI frees employees to focus on strategic, creative, and interpersonal work. Clear policies and ongoing education are essential to address risks like over-reliance or misuse. This approach not only boosts efficiency but also fosters innovation, empowering teams to leverage AI as a collaborative partner while maintaining accountability and trust in decision-making processes. By training employees to properly use these tools, you ensure that both the organisation and your people are equipped to stay ahead in the new world of work.

5. Give your people the opportunity to put their skills into action

This could mean giving more responsibility to a junior staff member who is getting ready to move up a level; allowing an employee to work with another department on a certain project; changing someone's job description to more closely align with their new skills and interests – and, when the time is right, hiring from your internal talent for open roles. AI-powered talent marketplaces can help by advertising internal gigs, projects, and full-time roles, enabling employees to explore cross-functional opportunities without leaving the organisation

Sources:
5. Great Place To Work, Winning the AI Race



Wildfire, No.5 UK's Best Workplace for Development (Small)



Baringa, No. 3 UK's Best Workplace for Development (Super Large)

How Best Workplaces do it

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How the Best are training their workforce for AI and using AI technology to upskill employees

Building cross-functional teams to explore AI opportunities

At Trek Bicycle, the exploration of AI started with its "Advanced Technologies" team, but it launched a company-wide investigation to determine how AI could improve workflows and processes.

The team was convinced that everyone, no matter their position, deserved an equitable opportunity to harness the benefits of AI to make their jobs and lives more enjoyable. They spent several months interviewing every department about how AI might improve their work environment, and employees at all levels of the business were asked to contribute feedback.

From these interviews, the team presented Trek's senior managers with a list of nearly 40 concrete use cases for AI. Each project prioritises current Trek employees' wellbeing and is being developed with input from each department.

Boosting digital literacy

Getting employees ready for AI doesn't mean you should only focus on the specifics of the technology. Companies like Marriott International recognise general digital literacy as a crucial foundation for the future of work, and has made learning and development programs a key part of efforts to engage its frontline associates.

Tailored learning journeys and programs

At ServiceNow, employees can take advantage of a learning platform called "frED" — an homage to founder Fred Luddy. Built on the ServiceNow platform, employees can use frED to map their career paths, set goals, and identify skill gaps. AI can then recommend programs that meet employees' goals.

Internal talent marketplaces that connect employees with opportunities

An internal talent marketplace allows employees to find open opportunities within their organisation – part-time gigs or tasks that can build new skills or lead to new roles within the company.

DHL Express uses AI within its career marketplace to suggest career development and learning opportunities within the company. The platform suggests open positions aligned with career goals that employees share with the tool.

In this way, AI provides a competitive advantage for companies looking to increase equity of opportunity for employees. When facing inequality on issues like promotions and pay, the strongest contributing factor often comes down to how employees are chosen for projects and opportunities that serve as stepping stones to leadership roles.

AI tools like an internal talent marketplace may help to close the gap.

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Salesforce, No.31 UK's Best Workplace for Development (Super Large)

Matching employees with a career coach

Artificial intelligence can also be used to match employees with a mentor.

Hilton is investing in enterprise-wide programs like "MentorcliQ," an employee mentoring program that uses an algorithm to help pair employees with mentors inside the organisation. The hotel chain has also partnered with an external company to provide employees with virtual coaching, where machine learning and AI are leveraged to match team members with a certified coach and relevant additional content that is tailored to support their growth and wellbeing.

At Salesforce, "MentorFinder" uses Salesforce-powered technology to match mentors with mentees. Over 3,000 Salesforce team members have used the platform to connect and build connections with others in the company.

Next Steps for Using AI to Build Internal Mobility in Your Organisation

Step 1: Survey Your Employees

Find out what your people have to say about their experience of learning and development within your organisation so you can spot and address any trends or gaps. Our Trust Index survey asks questions that cover the essentials of L&D, and additional statements or pulse surveys can help you uncover exactly what your employees have to say about AI.

Step 2: Train Your Managers

Managers should feel equipped to have conversations around development and support lateral moves through AI-guided career conversations. Training that gives them the skills and confidence to do this is essential. At the same time, by empowering managers with AI technology to guide these conversations – such as AI-powered personalised learning paths or internal talent marketplaces – organisations can scale personalised career guidance while preserving the empathy and creativity of human advisors.

Step 3: Continue Building Trust and Monitoring Progress

To fully harness the potential of AI, employees have to be along for the ride. Ensure that your AI Strategy includes key touchpoints at which you're getting updates from your people regarding: what challenges they're facing that AI could help solve; what fears or worries they have around this new technology; what processes could be automated to give them time to focus on more important tasks. Ensure you're feeding back these insights to the leadership team and then wider organisation at regular intervals, so that employees know their views are being heard, thoughtfully considered, and actioned where possible. When your people trust that you are using the technology to support them, not replace them, they will be willing and excited to embrace change.

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