

Member Communication Experience

Career Paths – Why Your Company Needs Them

Written by: Dr. Nanette Miner, Leadership Development and Workplace-Learning Strategy Consultant, The Training Doctor

A mid-sized construction management firm invested a good deal of resources in preparing their up-and-coming Project Managers (PMs) to pass their exams and certifications. Eighteen individuals were in the “up-and-coming” group. A curriculum, monthly meetings, annual conferences, mentorships, and site visits were part of the three-year process invested in these individuals. At the end of the three years... more than half left the company.

What went wrong?

In exit interviews with those who left, it was learned that it was largely because there was no defined career path for these individuals.

While the individuals believed that investing the time and earning the certifications would guarantee them a career with the organization, in fact it did not, which led to disappointment and frustration. The company wasn't big enough to have 18 new PMs at one a time. While the company was preparing for its future – anticipating retirement and attrition over the course of the next few years - the individuals were preparing for career advancement now.

What should the company have done – and what should you do – to reap the rewards of developing your up-and-coming employees? The answer: Develop career paths.



Career paths can also be called career maps. They are a planned path (and pace) of advancement within an organization. A career path needs to encompass knowledge, skills, and experience. For instance, say a young college graduate enters your firm as an inspector trainee. If your organization has planned career paths, that trainee knows that within five or six years they may move into an inspector, estimator, or PM role depending on the education and experiences they wish to pursue (and what your company forecasts the biggest need for). Some individuals prefer a straight path, moving up in the ranks in one skill area; while others would like to learn about different aspects of the business, so you'll want to have multiple career paths that originate from one entry-level starting point.

What are career paths?


When do you present the career path?

The best time to present career paths is during the recruitment and interview process. Gen Z has expressed an eagerness to take on professional development so long as it results in career advancement of some sort (either monetary or promotion/title). More significantly, while this newest generation to the workforce wants to advance their careers, numerous HR studies in the past few years have identified that young people want a sense of security in their employment, and they don't want to have to do it by changing employers every few years. If you present the potential for advancement within your firm, by showing them the potential career paths available – literally presenting a graphic representation, not just telling them verbally – your organization will undoubtedly present the most attractive offer.

Career paths can change direction

Career paths don't have to be set in stone (pun intended). When presented at a recruiting event or interview, you simply want to present an idea of opportunity and advancement potential with your firm. But during annual performance reviews always check if this is still the career trajectory the individual would like to pursue. One of the great things about the field of construction

is that there are so many professional opportunities; and your ultimate goal is to keep the individual with your company, so be willing to assist them in changing direction if that's their desire. If they do stick with a singular career path, don't forget to augment it with additional knowledge such as finance or business development because the more they know about how the business runs – not just their particular specialty – the more they will contribute to the organization.

Career paths greatly benefit organizations in that they contribute to retention – because people are constantly pursuing their next career opportunity with you, and they continue the culture – because you have a steady group of individuals who practice the same values and commitments of the organization. It is not very difficult to develop career paths, it takes a few knowledgeable people locked in a room for half a day or so, and the value returned for this effort is exponential. 



About the Author

Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for *Chief Learning Office magazine*, *Forbes*, and *MBA World* and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as *Inc. Radio* and *America's Workforce Radio*.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is *Future-Proofing Your Organization*.

Any views and opinions expressed in this article may or may not reflect the views and opinions of the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA). By publishing this piece, CMAA is not expressing endorsement of the individual, the article, or their association, organization, or company.