

Critical Human Capital Retention Strategies

A research to practice summary of: [Croteau, J. D., & Wolk, H. G. \(2010\). Defining advancement career paths and succession plans: Critical human capital retention strategies for high-performing advancement divisions. *International Journal of Educational Advancement*, 10\(2\), 59-70.](#)

Summary: This article describes a variety of research-based human capital investment strategies that can be used by various organizations to retain their highest performers. The article explains that defining career paths for internal talent, cultivating both individual contributors and managers, and strategic development of succession plans are key components when trying to sustain high performance advancement divisions. The article provides specific examples of how to ensure human capital development and retention.

Who can benefit from this research: Advancement managers who wish to keep their highest performers by developing their human capital and building a pipeline of future leaders within their organizations, as well as those managers hoping to assist current talent in their transition to a leadership role.

What are the primary findings:

- High turnover rates in middle management positions as well as a generational shift in the workforce requires advancement managers to take a deeper look at developing internal talent and retaining these individuals. These changes also require advancement leaders to think strategically about how to support these internal candidates throughout a succession.
- Career advancement opportunities for internal talent and thorough succession planning are interconnected aspects of retaining human capital, and both must be considered.
- Relationships between managers and staff as well as professional development opportunities and career advancement are key factors when it comes to retainment.
- Developing a career path or internal leadership pipeline for talent will assist in retainment. The career paths do not need to be upward, but rather can branch responsibilities outward. Additional criteria to consider are title changes and adjusted compensation for the individuals branching outward from their current roles.
- Asking talent within an organization about their aspirations and learning goals is the best way to help plan accordingly for internal career opportunities and options for advancement or professional growth.
- Individual contributors are vital members of any organization and their needs to be considered when planning for staff professional development. They often feel trapped by salary or limited career opportunities. They need to be cultivated and offered opportunities to grow professionally outside of management. A set of reward criteria or a pathway for career advancement needs to be clearly established for those individual contributors who are the highest performers.
- Potential managers or mid-level management need professional development related to managerial skills. Certain skill sets should be previously observed in order to select the best candidates, including organization, coaching, and mentoring abilities. Once identified these individuals should be asked about their interest in management and given the opportunity to be trained and coached regarding the position. They should also be trained to identify other potential managerial candidates.

- It is important to be flexible and creative when it comes to developing talent, and encourage individuals to take opportunities to learn more about the goings-on within the organization that interest them.
- Creating a career path for high performers within an organization can assist with succession planning as there will be a myriad of candidates to choose from internally. These potential candidates will have a better idea of how they will be supported while adjusting to their new roles and how they may continue to grow once in that position.

What type of organization or mission might make the most use of this research:

- The article specifically mentions higher education institutions and the need for succession planning and professional development for both individual contributors, such as administrative assistants, within these institutions.
- The findings of this research may be useful to any nonprofit, particularly larger organizations seeking to cultivate internal talent.
- Smaller nonprofit organizations may also benefit from this research by using it to assist in employee retention.

When would this research be useful: The findings in this article would be useful to advancement managers and organizational leadership at any point, but particularly during times of transition or turnover.

How does this research inform practice:

- The various strategies described in the article detail a road-map for advancement managers on how to most effectively plan career paths and develop succession plans.
- The rationale and strategies explained within this article can provide practitioners with insight on how to ensure human capital development and retention within their organization.
- The specific examples described within this article can assist organizational leadership when identifying errors they have made related to human capital development and retention, as well as ways to fix or avoid these past mistakes moving forward.

Keywords: succession planning; human capital development; retention