

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a white collared shirt, is shown from the chest up. She is looking slightly to her left and has her hands raised in a gesturing motion, as if she is speaking or explaining something. The background is a blurred office setting. The image is framed by a white diagonal shape in the top-left corner.

LHH

How to Get Employees to Stay: Embedding Workforce Mobility

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Not long ago, employees could comfortably settle into a role and remain there for decades. That stability is gone. Now organisations must create a culture of mobility for employees to thrive amidst it.

What do we mean by mobility? It's the ability for employees to transition between roles, teams, and locations within a company as needs shift or as one looks to further develop their career internally.

Mobility powers continuity

For example, automation transforms an accounting job overnight. With strategic mobility programme, that employee can pivot into a newly critical analytics role. As old roles phase out and new talent needs emerge, a mobile workforce sustains companies through turbulent change.

Mobility uncovers talent potential

Rather than always seeking external hires,

companies can leverage internal talent dynamically through different experiences internally. Employees gain exposure to diverse experiences, projects, and training to continue developing new skills.

Mobility is a powerful retention tool

Our research shows that employees want to increase their skills at their current organisation.

The result is a workforce that can swiftly adapt and upskill as change inevitably happens. Like dancers gracefully pivoting to a new rhythm, mobile employees enable organisations to turn disruption into opportunity.

The message is clear: embedded workforce mobility is mission critical today. In this paper, we'll explore how leading companies are enabling internal mobility to power their organisations into the future.



Divided Responsibility

Employees and organisations are split on who owns career development

Who is responsible for an employee's career development? The answer depends on who you ask. According to recent LHH research, 50% of employees say that their employer is responsible for helping them understand the changing nature of a job, while 42% say they're responsible for making sure their skills are relevant for the future.

While both parties play a role, there is often ambiguity over the distribution of that responsibility.

Employees tend to believe their career growth is mainly their employer's duty

This manifests through expectations of training investments, promotions encouraged by managers, and guidance navigating the organisation. Workers look to their leaders to actively communicate the skills the business needs them to learn to pave their careers forward.

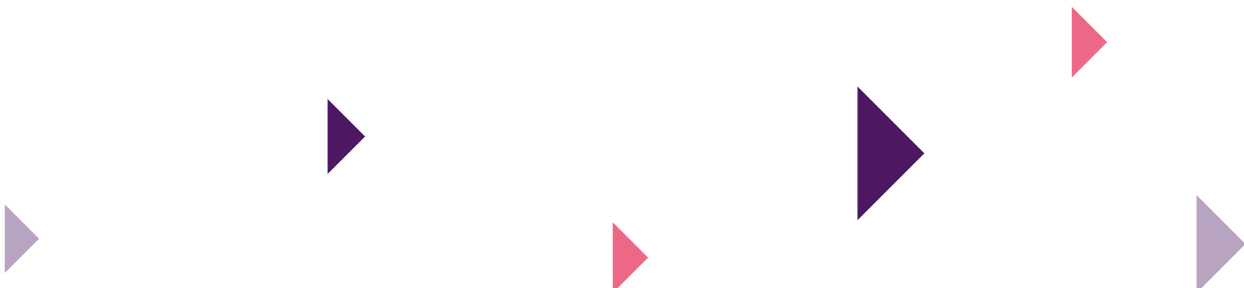
Conversely, many organisations feel employees should proactively drive their own career movement

Companies provide tools and opportunities, but expect staff to craft personalised

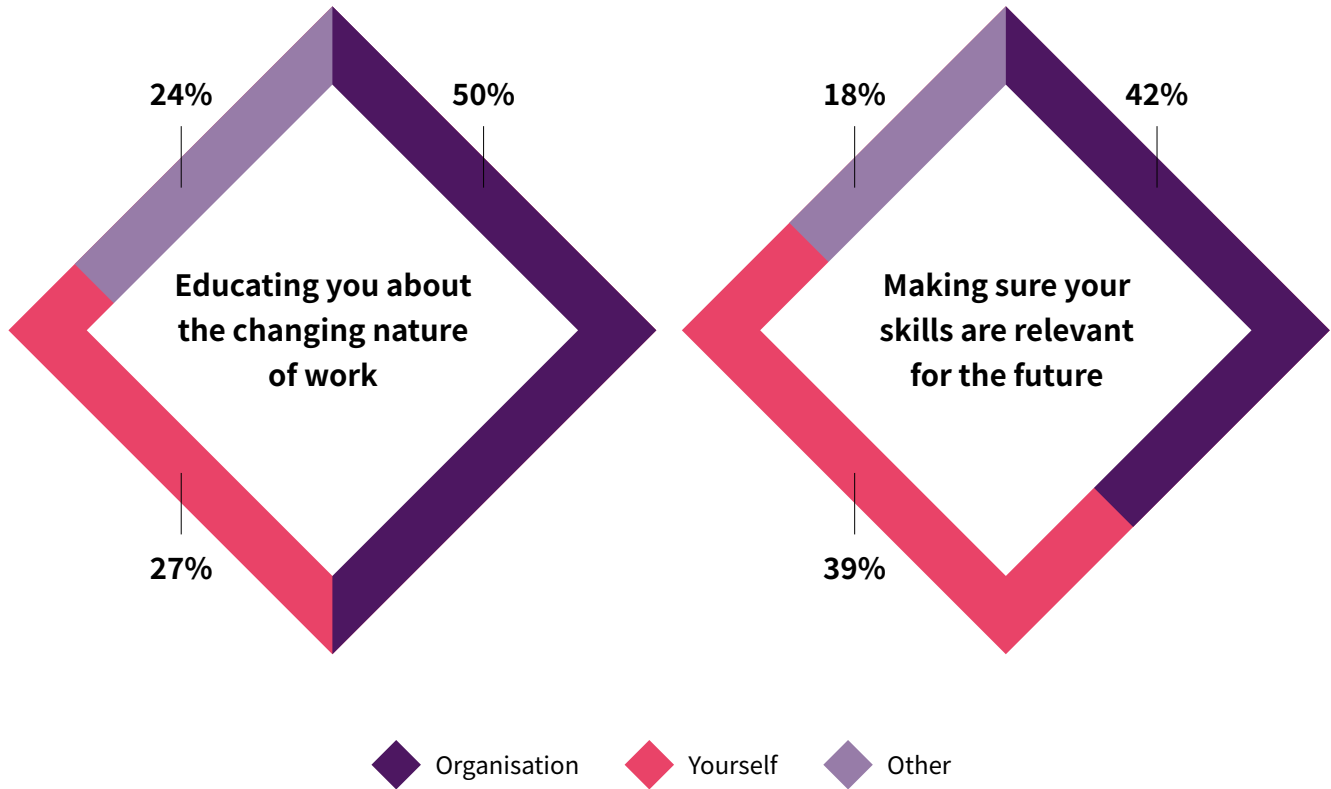
development plans, upskill independently, and pursue horizontal moves aligning to personal aspirations.

The reality is that career progression requires a partnership approach. Employers must actively increase visibility into alternate routes, offer coaching, and provide learning pathways to ready high-potential talent. Simultaneously, employees must cultivate adaptability, learn business acumen, identify mentors, and boldly raise their hands for stretch assignments.

Without clarity of expectations and shared accountability, disappointment festers on both sides. Employees grow frustrated by perceived lack of support, while companies bemoan entitled attitudes. Ongoing dialogue and transparency around development roles allows each stakeholder to uphold their side of the bargain in service of mutual growth. A career mobility culture only emerges when both employers and employees play an active, coordinated part.



Who is most responsible for the following?



Upwards, Sideways, and Latticing Through Careers

While workers often see mobility as promotion in an organisational hierarchy, meaningful mobility takes wider forms in today's dynamic job market.

Progress need not follow a linear climb but rather an empowering lattice where employees forge multi-dimensional careers by:

- ▶ Taking on stretch assignments and lateral rotations to expand skillsets
- ▶ Leading special initiatives or “gig” work outside core responsibilities
- ▶ Joining cross-functional teams to gain exposure
- ▶ Obtaining cutting-edge technical competencies via reskilling
- ▶ Exploring passions with protected time for personal projects
- ▶ Rotating across domestic or global office to gain experience and diversity of thought

In some talent mobility cases, an employee may opt to take on entry-level work to gain new skillsets. Imagine a seasoned sales representative with 20 years of experience who wishes to transition into a marketing role. Despite their sales mastery, they will need to start back at the basics to truly understand marketing fundamentals.

With flatter organisations and more fluid job functions, enabling employees to develop in these ways sustains agility while nurturing innovation, diversity, and engagement.



Real World Impact

While opinions differ regarding who owns career development, there is no debate around the impact on organisations when career management stalls. As today's talent grows increasingly mobile and purpose-driven, lack of growth opportunities propels turnover.

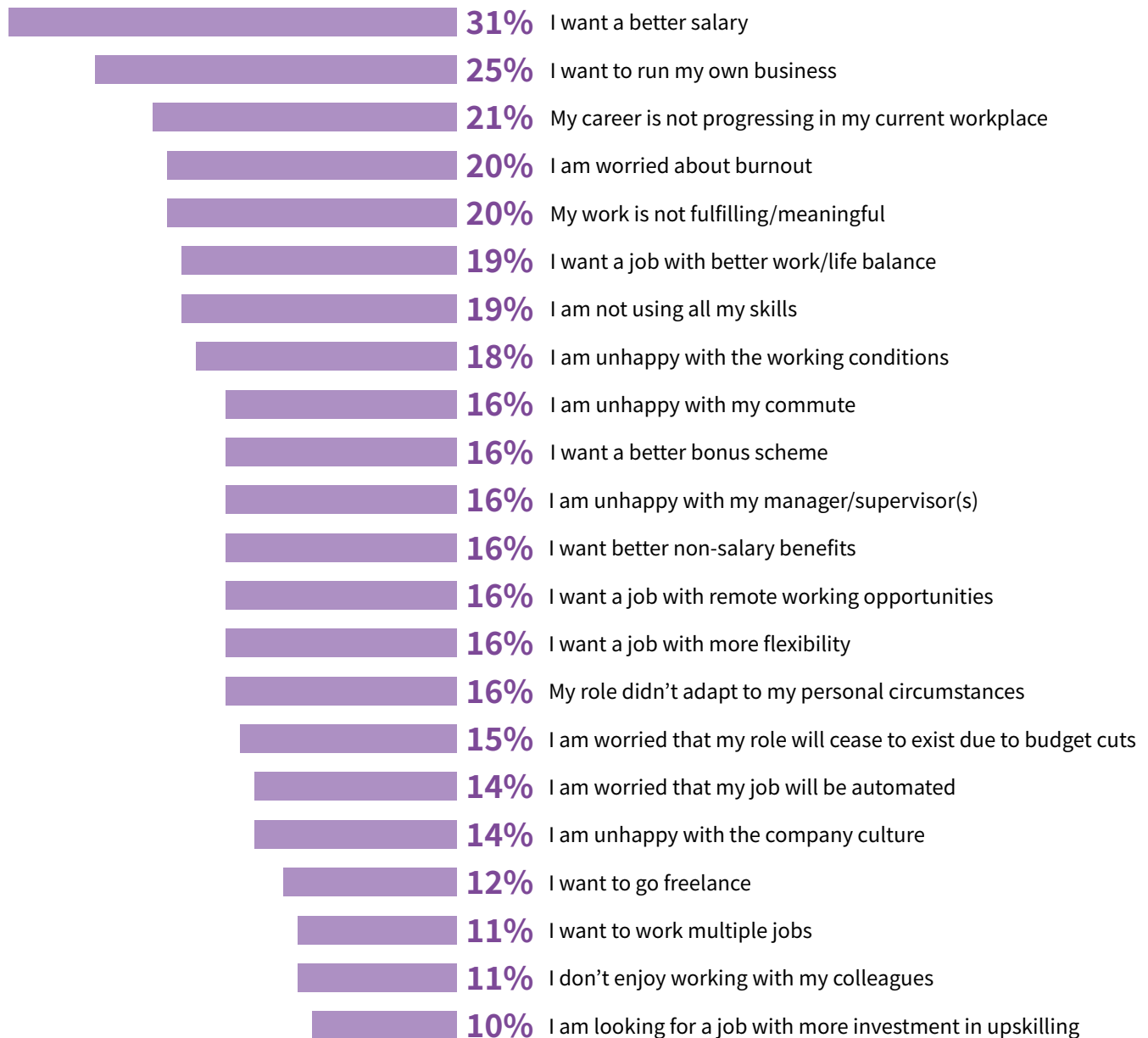
Of people looking to change jobs in the next 12 months, progression, wellbeing, purpose,

and “being your own boss” ranked in the top five reasons to quit. (Unsurprisingly, salary still ranks as the #1 reason people switch jobs.)

The message is clear - without urgent action to expand transparency into open roles, offer ‘gig’ work or rotational assignments, reskilling/upskilling, mentorship, and clearing career roadmaps, retention will drastically suffer.



Why do you want to leave your job in the next 12 months?



And what is the cost of attrition for these high-performing employees who leave the organisation? Gallup estimates the cost as \$1 trillion per year in the United States alone.

“A 100-person organisation that provides an average salary of \$50,000 could have turnover and replacement costs of approximately \$660,000 to \$2.6 million per year.”

How to Get Employees to Stay

Our research shows that workers are more likely to stay with their employer in 2024, but it comes with conditions: employees want upskilling and progression.

Are Managers Standing in The Way?

In the modern workplace, the dynamics of internal mobility and career growth are complex, particularly when it involves high performers.

The statistic that only 54% of workers believe their manager would support their move to another team within the company highlights a significant issue. High performers, with their exceptional skills and contributions, are often seen as invaluable assets to their specific teams.

As a result, managers might be reluctant to support their transition to different roles or departments, fearing a loss of talent that directly contributes to their team's success. This reluctance, while understandable from a team-centric perspective, can inadvertently create barriers to the broader professional development and satisfaction of these employees.

64% of employees agree that companies should upskill existing employees for different roles across the organisation before hiring external candidates.

Tips for Managers

Letting great employees flourish in other parts of the organisation needn't feel like a loss. Here are a few things managers can do to mitigate the loss.

- 1 Adopt an abundance mentality. View talent as enriching the whole organisation, not just your team.
- 2 Recognise mobility as validating your mentorship. Take pride in seeing protégés advance.
- 3 Build a talent pipeline. Identify and develop next generation team members to fill key roles.
- 4 Explore cross-training to expand skill sets before transitions. Expedite knowledge transfer.
- 5 Frame exits as continuums, not goodbyes. Celebrate contributions and maintain connections.

Creating A Culture of Mobility

Creating a culture of mobility takes time and commitment, but organisations and teams can begin in simple ways.

For example, in a recent survey of HR leaders and employees, 67% of HR leaders said that there were opportunities to find a new role within their organisation, whereas only 20% of employees felt the same. Communication about open roles and encouragement to apply could help close this gap.

If your organisation wants to create a culture of mobility, we recommend tackling it across these areas:

1. Cultivate Continuous Learning

- ▶ Communicate organisational support for talent mobility and continuous upskilling
- ▶ Establish quarterly career development weeks to advertise learning opportunities
- ▶ Equip managers to facilitate ongoing career conversations and planning

2. Spotlight Advancement Avenues

- ▶ Encourage employees to explore different lateral career options
- ▶ Ensure job descriptions emphasise transferable skills vs. static responsibilities
- ▶ Offer project-based 'gig' or stretch assignments for cross-functional skills exposure

3. Build Self-Service Support Systems

- ▶ Create one-stop resources for personalised career evaluation and planning
- ▶ Provide actionable guidance for employees to navigate their own development
- ▶ Curate tools and coaches to help people identify strengths, gaps, and next steps



Say there is an opportunity to find a new role within the organisation.



Next Steps

Transitioning talent internally is how leading companies adapt to change instead of getting left behind. In LHH's work with organisations, we've seen it firsthand – strategic mobility keeps skills, relationships, and knowledge flowing to where they're needed next. Yes, it takes vision and commitment, but the payoff in continuity and adaptability is immense.

Too often, mobility is written off as an HR challenge rather than a business priority. But it's the key to harnessing automation and adapting

to market shifts without jeopardising operations. And it unlocks so much latent potential across an organisation.

LHH's practical frameworks are tailored to companies at any stage – whether it's planting seeds for mobility or connecting disparate efforts. It starts with conversations to pinpoint challenges and possibilities. From there, LHH customises a programme focused squarely on empowering people and teams amidst uncertainty.

For more information on employee development in your business contact **020 3966 3524** or **UKSD@LHH.com**

