

Talent Development's
Internal Mobility
Playbook



Foreword: Advancing career-driven learning, one play at a time

As companies adapt to a new landscape driven by technological transformation, talent leaders face several tasks. They must keep and energize top talent, do more with less across their programs, and inspire employees to build the skills that will keep their company future-ready. While the challenge is significant, so is the opportunity. However, there isn't yet a playbook for unlocking that opportunity.

We believe **the key is career-driven learning**—where upskilling, coaching and internal mobility are all combined to help **align employees' personal career goals with organizational needs**. In fact,

In fact, LinkedIn data has shown that progress toward career goals is employees' number one motivation to learn. So, for companies to be their best, their employees need to be able to do their best.

Earlier this year, we made a commitment to amplify the insights we've gathered from thousands of interactions with talent leaders. Our goal is to equip these leaders with effective strategies and frameworks to guide them through this unprecedented moment of change. Internal mobility, the focus of this playbook, is a key component of that change. Let's begin.

#1

Progress toward career goals is employees' #1 motivation to learn



Internal mobility is achievable— and the key is collaboration

AI is accelerating the rate of skills change faster than ever before. However, most organizations aren't sure how to manage this disruption and make the best use of their existing talent. At the same time, employees are hungry to gain new skills and advance their careers.

Too often organizations focus exclusively on plugging gaps with **external talent** or **promoting from within**. But there is a **third way** that can help you manage rapidly changing workforce needs while boosting retention: internal mobility.

Internal mobility can help move skills to where they're needed in the organization while also satisfying employees' desire to develop.



Internal mobility is on the rise

↑ **6%** increase globally
year-over-year*

To put it another way, your greatest resource for navigating this disruption is already inside your organization—they just may be in a different function or division.

Talent Development leaders—in partnership with their Talent Management, Talent Acquisition, and General HR counterparts across the organization—have a key role to play in activating talent that’s ready and eager to move and grow.

However, Talent Development, Talent Management, Talent Acquisition, and General HR haven’t agreed on **who owns internal mobility** or **how it connects to broader learning and business goals**. Use this playbook to align internal mobility with business goals and work with partners on actionable steps to set up or improve your program.

Don’t wait for the perfect tools or the perfect moment and know you aren’t in this alone. **Use this playbook to get started.**



Let's begin by understanding where you are now:

Assessing the current state of internal mobility at your organization

The following assessment is designed to help you understand the strengths and opportunity areas in your current approach to internal mobility, so you can zero in on what will move the needle. After the assessment, move to the next section for guidance on what to do next.



Prioritization internal mobility assessment

Indicate if the following statements are true or not at your organization. Begin with the playbook content where you recorded the fewest “yes” answers.

Discussion questions	Scoring result	
Has your organization’s leadership discussed the state of internal mobility within the past 6 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there at least one employee whose role description includes monitoring and improving internal mobility practices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a budget allocated to improving internal mobility in the organization?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there multiple initiatives/resources to help build skills or create pathways for employees seeking an internal move?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are executives or managers measured on the success of internal mobility?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a tracking tool or dashboard measuring the amount of facilitated employee moves?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Process internal mobility assessment

Indicate if the following statements are true or not at your organization. Begin with the playbook content where you recorded the fewest “yes” answers.

Discussion questions	Scoring result	
Do all employees have access to internal mobility policies and processes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are these internal mobility policies and processes consistent across locations, entities, business units, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a formalized cadence for business leaders (including Talent Development) to meet and discuss internal mobility needs/opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have the internal mobility policies and processes been written to explicitly reduce bias in internal hiring processes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Tools internal mobility assessment

Indicate if the following statements are true or not at your organization. Begin with the playbook content where you recorded the fewest “yes” answers.

Discussion questions

Scoring result

Are there any tools or technology in place to support internal mobility?

Yes

No

Have the tools and/or technology that supports internal mobility been adopted by the organization, including employees, managers, HR?

Yes

No

Have the tools and/or technology that supports internal mobility been proven to be effective (as measured by utilization, number of internal roles transferred, etc.)?

Yes

No

Do those tools and/or technology integrate with the rest of your HR tech stack to ensure seamless interoperability?

Yes

No

General HR involvement internal mobility assessment

Indicate if the following statements are true or not at your organization. Begin with the playbook content where you recorded the fewest “yes” answers.

Discussion questions	Scoring result	
Is there a clear and proactive role your General HR team plays within internal mobility initiatives?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a member of General HR whose role description includes managing internal mobility?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your General HR team willingly collaborate with you on internal mobility initiatives?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do Talent Development leaders lean into their contribution toward internal mobility?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Organization involvement internal mobility assessment

Indicate if the following statements are true or not at your organization. Begin with the playbook content where you recorded the fewest “yes” answers.

Discussion questions	Scoring result	
Are employees aware of internal opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do employees know the right way to go about pursuing internal opportunities with their manager, the hiring manager, and General HR?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is internal mobility a formalized part of conversations between managers, team leaders and employees?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there an ongoing channel or forum for employees to learn about internal mobility opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are managers able and willing to support their direct reports in applying for internal opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are managers involved in conversations with Talent Development and General HR to volunteer employees who are candidates for internal opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

The dimensions of internal mobility

Drawing on top internal mobility programs and insights from the talent leaders who run them, LinkedIn has pinpointed **five critical success factors for every organization.**

Start with the dimension where you scored the lowest and then work your way through the rest of the steps.



1. Prioritization

The level of resourcing investment, cultural readiness and KPIs related to internal mobility.



2. Process

The consistency, clarity and fairness of your internal mobility policies and processes.



3. Tools

The technology to support internal mobility, plus monitoring its effectiveness and adoption.



4. General HR involvement

The level of collaboration and proactivity from HR around internal mobility, plus the clarity of ownership.



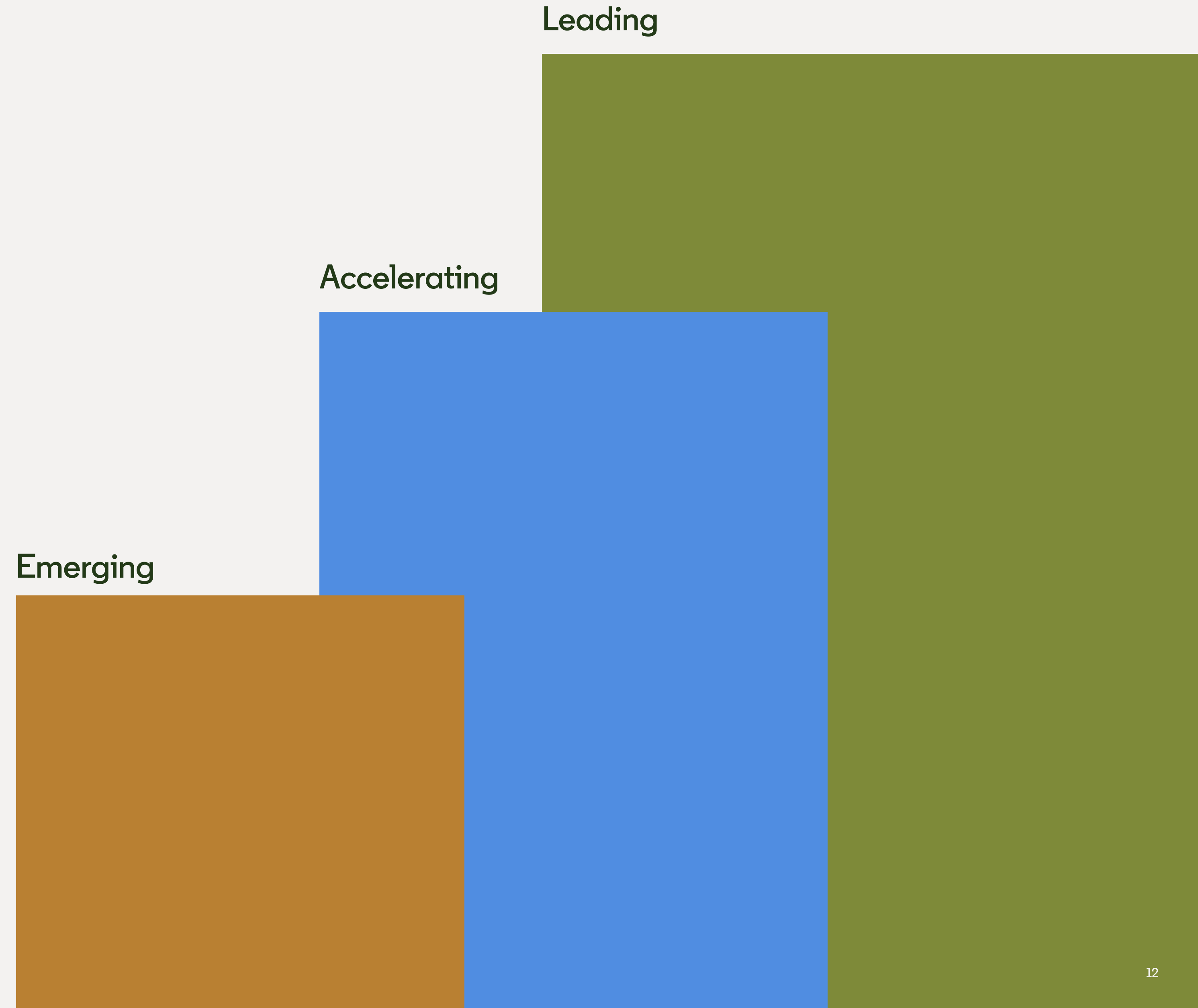
5. Organization involvement

The employee and manager awareness, perception and adherence to internal mobility policies and processes.

The Talent Maturity Model

The Talent Maturity Model was developed using LinkedIn insights and vetted with industry experts. Every organization will be at a different place on the curve with varying levels of maturity across various dimensions, from “Emerging” (early strategy) to “Leading” (mature strategy).

No matter where you’re starting, this playbook will help you improve your talent strategy so that you can move from Emerging to Accelerating or from Accelerating to Leading.



The Talent Maturity Model for internal mobility

Emerging organizations Limited internal mobility capabilities

Little to no investment within organization

Few ad hoc policies and processes in place

Basic tooling (email or excel, etc.)

Reactive HR team, unclear ownership

Employees are unaware of policies and processes

Managers do not actively or regularly support employee development and mobility

Accelerating organizations Growing internal mobility capabilities

Some investment in pockets within organization

Local policies and processes (office or team specific); process is largely employee led

Functionality available within existing tools (TA tools or Talent Development tools)

Clear ownership within HR, but little cross-functional involvement

Sporadic employee awareness of policies and processes

Managers support employee career development within their team

Leading organizations Advanced internal mobility capabilities

Significant investment across organization

Standardized, global policies and processes backed with internal sourcing strategy

Dedicated internal mobility platform

Proactive, collaborative involvement across HR team with clear ownership

Employees are fully aware of the policies and processes

Managers support employee mobility across their organization

Prioritization

Building the business case

Goals in this step:

- Understand your counterparts' objectives and priorities
- Make a clear business case for internal mobility
- Confidently initiate collaboration on internal mobility

Key collaborators include:

Talent Management

General HR

Talent Acquisition

Talent Development

Talent Development leaders say that **“aligning learning programs to business goals”** is their number one priority.*

Enabling internal mobility is too big a challenge for talent leaders to go at it alone. That's why a critical first step is to identify the key stakeholders across your organization and help them make internal mobility a business priority.

In this section, we'll cover actions you can take to connect with your key stakeholders and ensure internal mobility moves to the top of their agenda.

1. Establish and align internal mobility goals
2. Identify and prioritize key stakeholders
3. Conduct a listening tour



*Source: [2024 LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report](#)

1. Establish and align internal mobility goals

The first and most critical step is to understand what your goals for internal mobility are—and how those align with the current goals of the business. For example, you might know that your organization has strategic goals of:

- Reducing employee attrition
- Developing a strong leadership bench

Which might lead to honing in on internal mobility goals like:

- Getting more people promoted or moved through departments
- Establishing a reward system for managers who export talent
- Establishing an internal referral system



Set your goals

Define your business' key goals and reflect on how internal mobility could help you achieve them.

Business goals

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Internal mobility goals

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

2. Identify and prioritize key stakeholders

1/3

of organizations divide responsibility for internal mobility between two or more roles, often including the Head of HR*



Enabling internal mobility is a huge undertaking that Talent Development professionals can't (and shouldn't) do it alone. To make progress on internal mobility, identify and involve your key stakeholders within the HR organization.

Here are some common stakeholders and their involvement in internal mobility. Notice the overlap, which suggests many stakeholders are invested in the same outcome.

General HR

- Develop a culture that supports internal mobility
- Increase awareness of internal job openings

Talent Acquisition

- Develop a culture that supports internal mobility
- Increase awareness of internal job openings

Talent Management

- Develop a culture that supports internal mobility
- Provide tools for employees to explore career paths

Talent Development

- Develop a culture that supports internal mobility
- Understand workforce skills to redeploy and/or reskill talent
- Provide learning content recommendations based on desired career paths

Chief Human Resources Officer

- Ensure internal mobility efforts align strategically with overall business goals
- Understand and enable the appropriate level of investment
- Champion a culture of internal mobility and promote that value inside (and outside) the organization

*Source: [2024 LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report](#)

3. Conduct a listening tour

Now it's time to listen to the needs and priorities of your counterparts. For internal mobility to become a priority, you have to **meet your stakeholders where they are**. We recommend sitting down with each of them to understand their talent needs and goals, and how they relate to the overall business.

Questions could include:

What skills are most important to the organization right now based on business strategy?

How effective are our efforts to hire/develop those skills right now?

What is our current rate of attrition? How are we addressing it?

How would cross-functional teams (Talent Development, Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, and HR) best collaborate on this opportunity?

53% longer employee tenures in companies that lead on internal mobility*

79% more leadership promotions on a per-employee basis in companies with the highest rates of internal mobility*

*Source: [The Benefits of Building New Leaders Internally, According to LinkedIn Data](#)



Process

Clarifying policies and processes

Goals in this step:

- Define your “build versus buy” strategy and when each is relevant
- Identify gaps and potential solutions in your strategy

Key collaborators include:

Talent Management

General HR

Talent Acquisition

Talent Development

To improve internal mobility, align on current processes and policies (including what’s working and what can be improved). Clarify when you’re able to “build” skills internally versus when to “buy” them externally through hiring. Then, work with stakeholders to identify gaps and solutions.

Let’s compare the two strategies and how to choose which to pursue:

Build

Organizations seeking adaptability can leverage continuous upskilling to both meet internal skill needs and stay ahead of change. This is a “build” strategy, best used when you want to:

- Become **more agile** with existing talent
- Increase **retention and engagement**
- Build a **pipeline of leaders** with institutional knowledge

“LinkedIn data showing increasing internal mobility is encouraging and shows that companies are discovering how leveraging internal hiring can accelerate organizational agility, employee engagement and retention, and career development.”



Karin Kimbrough
Chief Economist at LinkedIn

Buy

When skill needs are urgent, niche, or too narrow to justify a net-new upskill program, hiring externally may be the way to go. This is a “buy” strategy, best pursued when:

- Your **business is growing** and you don’t have the existing headcount to meet new business needs
- The **need is too narrow** to build a learning infrastructure around
- You intentionally want to bring in **outside perspectives** to help advance your organization

“Businesses need new skills at a rate faster than I’ve ever seen before—which means they need to help their employees evolve via upskilling and internal mobility. In years past, companies might have relied more on talent acquisition to ‘buy’ the new skills they needed, but that strategy no longer works in isolation for today’s labor market and business environment.”



Jennifer Shappley
VP of Talent at LinkedIn

Most talent strategies fit a “build versus buy model,” and you need clear processes for both. For internal mobility, the focus is on building and developing talent from within your company. **Let's examine what your organization's current processes are, who owns them, and who supports them.**

Document your strategy

We learn what skills we need by:

We mobilize our workforce to develop key skills by:

We measure how well skills being developed match those needed by:

Employees learn about, qualify and apply for internal roles by:

Learn:

Apply:

Qualify

Managers learn about and promote internal roles by:

Learn:

Promote:

We determine when to hire externally by:

The above exercise may reveal a lack of clarity or open questions around who owns and supports your policies or processes. Go back to the relevant stakeholders from your listening tour and ask for their help to fill in the gaps. If there isn't yet a process or policy, ask for their recommendation on what the policy should be. **Check their responses against the needs of the business you discovered and document their suggested solutions below.**

Revisit key stakeholders (Talent Development, Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, and General HR) from listening tour

Gap #1 (as identified in listening tour):

Solution:

Gap #2 (as identified in listening tour):

Solution:

Gap #3: (as identified in listening tour):

Solution:

Amazon has made significant investments in upskilling and internal mobility—even creating a program called *Amazon Career Choice*, an education and skills training program that helps workers move into new career opportunities at Amazon or other companies. The program is prepaid, and it offers reimbursements for books and school fees. The business case for Amazon is clear.

60% longer tenure for employees when their employer is highly committed to internal hiring*

*Source: [2023 LinkedIn Future of Recruiting Report](#)

Process



Tools

Deploying quickly and seamlessly

Goals in this step:

- Understand key business use cases for internal mobility tools
- Gain insight into the tools you currently use and where you may have gaps

Key collaborators include:

Talent Management

General HR

Talent Development

Talent Acquisition

Internal mobility often seems daunting—requiring a massive investment of time, resources, and new tooling. But that isn't necessarily true.

Connecting with key stakeholders will reveal a high-level view of current business priorities, as well as current internal mobility processes and pitfalls. With **a few targeted questions and a structured approach** to your business use cases, you'll get a clearer picture of what tools work. You'll also get to outcomes more efficiently than building from scratch.

Focusing on the three key areas of **workforce planning, skill development, and skill movement** will go a long way toward stronger internal mobility.

Consider these common business use cases and how your current toolset addresses each:

Workforce planning

Help organizations with internal skills and talent insights to ensure they have the right talent to meet their goals

Career development

Help employees explore and navigate applicable career paths and develop the skills to reach their career goals

Internal hiring

Help recruiters discover and hire qualified internal talent while ensuring increased employee visibility of internal opportunities

To get started on internal mobility, use the evaluation below to assess your toolset and identify the top areas for strategic investment.

Questions to consider

Workforce planning

What tools are you currently using to manage your talent pipeline, employee retention, and overall “build versus buy” strategy?

What is currently working?

What could be improved?

What are potential next steps to make improvements?

Career development

What tools are you currently using to develop employee skills and careers, and align that development with organizational goals?

What are your current constraints?

What might you be able to take action on within those constraints?

Internal hiring

What tools are you currently using to showcase opportunities to employees and surface internal talent to recruiters?

What are your current constraints?

What might you be able to take action on within those constraints?

When addressing these key questions, you may discover your organization has a patchwork of standalone tools or internal tech for internal mobility—or that time and resource constraints have left you without good tech solutions. **The goal is to get a broad view of how your technology supports your internal mobility strategy.**

From there, you might simplify with fewer, more centralized tools or opt for a pre-built toolset you can customize to fit your organization's needs.



“We realized that if we waited for our internal structure to be perfect, we’d never get there. We’ve definitely learned things and made mistakes along the way. But we started it and just embraced progress, not perfection.”



Jean Pelletier

VP of Global Talent Acquisition
at Schneider Electric

General HR Involvement

Education and role alignment

Goals in this step:

- Understand the complementary roles HR and Talent teams play in internal mobility
- Align on a model for better promoting internal mobility, together

Key collaborators include:

Talent Management

General HR

Talent Development

Talent Acquisition

Walmart leads on internal mobility by focusing deeply on growing people within the company and aligning learning with roles that have been identified as an organizational need. Specifically, Walmart excels when it comes to developing frontline workers (known as “associates”) for future roles. In the past, they had a shortage of both HVAC technicians and fleet drivers, which were critical roles for Walmart. So they turned to the talent pools within their frontline associates, providing them the training to transition into these business-critical roles.

“Approximately **75% of Walmart’s salaried managers started in an hourly position.** Part of how we enable that mobility is by identifying the roles we really need, matching the associate to where they want to be, and exploring how we get them there.”



Josh Allen
Group Director, Enterprise Frontline
Learning at Walmart

Emulating the type of success in Walmart's story would likely take an intentional and sustained collaboration across HR. We've identified three areas of partnership for key stakeholders across HR.



Identifying what skills are needed across the organization:

Talent Management and General HR need to start by considering what skills are needed to achieve the overall business strategy. This workforce planning effort includes identifying what skill gaps exist and the best talent strategy to address those gaps.

Targeted learning to help employees upskill for key roles:

Talent Development now steps in to help build those critical skills across the organization. This includes providing high quality, personalized learning experiences that help build key skills and galvanizing employees to engage with these learning opportunities to unlock their potential.

Mobilizing skills and talent across the organization:

Now it's time to connect the dots. This is where Talent Acquisition steps in by ensuring that internal candidates are considered as part of their hiring process. Collaboration here even extends to the broader business, including ensuring employees have visibility into internal opportunities and hiring managers are supportive of this growth.

The question of who owns internal mobility is often challenging. There isn't one "right" model, but all successful ones will likely involve collaboration between functions. The key question: **which internal mobility aspects are important for your organization,** and who is responsible for them? Set time aside to review these suggestions with your counterparts and implement what you can. Remember, start small and build from there.

Consider

Talent Acquisition owns:

General HR owns:

Talent Management owns:

Talent Development owns:

Organization Involvement

Creating a culture of access and encouragement to advance

Goals in this step:

- Seed new cultural values and evaluation metrics
- Share concrete benefits of internal mobility to managers

Key collaborators include:

People Managers

General HR

Talent Development

Employees

Even with a clear internal mobility process, effective tools, and strong HR collaboration, internal mobility depends on a culture that supports internal movement. **Managers must become talent exporters rather than talent hoarders**—and employees need visibility into pathways forward as well as other career paths within the walls of your organization.

“Putting learning programs in place and creating career pathways doesn’t work unless there’s a culture of access and leaders to support it and give it permission”



Rebecca Romano
SVP, Head of Global Talent
Development, at NBCUniversal

Try these steps to get started on creating a culture of access and permission.

Consider:

- Creating a leadership performance metric for managers around development and movement of their talent
- Holding “office hours” to offer guidance to managers on supporting employee growth and encouraging internal mobility

Use the below framework as a guide to help explain the value of internal mobility across all your communications.

Depending on your culture, you can share these via an email to managers, a quick “hallway” chat, or at a formal meeting with key managers or team leads.

Start with these talking points

The organization benefits from strong internal mobility because:

You as a manager benefit from becoming known as a great “talent exporter” because:

Your direct reports benefit from strong internal mobility because:

We’ll be supporting you in living this value in your day-to-day work by:

A culture of development: inspiration from Walmart

“When you talk to a manager that's been in a role for a few years, there is a shift—they're evaluated by how many people they've exported. It's not uncommon to go to a store and meet a store manager who has led eight plus other store managers. We've actually done this a lot as a company; we have 90 former Walmart executives who are now CEOs of other companies. We're building our people, but even externally, we're creating the CEOs of many other companies. We want to be that place where people come to learn and grow their careers.”



Josh Allen
Group Director, Enterprise Frontline
Learning at Walmart

At this point in the playbook, you may have a new perspective on how to improve several dimensions of your internal mobility program. Or you may have gone deep in just one direction. In any case, you'll need to **sustain your work** by creating a space for **continuous dialogue and improvement**.

To do that, we recommend establishing an **internal mobility steering committee** or council in the following ways:

- Source internal mobility steering committee members from the key stakeholders in your listening sessions. They should represent all key stakeholders involved in internal mobility.
- Establish monthly or quarterly to **create alignment** between key business priorities and HR strategies.
- Ensure you capture feedback from key stakeholders (HR, managers, employees) on the effectiveness of your internal mobility efforts.

With these final steps and the preceding ones as a foundation, you'll be well on your way to an internal mobility program that positively impacts your business and creates a cycle of sustainable, career-driven learning.

“Internal mobility is about making sure that you’re building strong talent, building future leaders, and creating higher levels of engagement and energy so good talent stays within your organization.”



Teuila Hanson

Chief People Officer at LinkedIn

LinkedIn

LinkedIn can support your internal mobility objectives

A summary of LinkedIn's capabilities

With **LinkedIn's unique skills, data, and solutions**—you can help employees advance their career goals at your company and more easily hire qualified internal candidates for your hard-to-fill roles. All within existing LinkedIn products.



1. Career development

Empower employees to explore career paths and advance their careers at your company

2. Skill development

Equip employees with the skills they need to achieve their career goals and your organizational priorities

3. Internal hiring

Source and hire qualified internal candidates by connecting employees to internal job opportunities

To learn more, visit:

<https://learning.linkedin.com/product-overview>