



ROBERT WALTERS WHITEPAPER
USING CAREER PROGRESSION
TO RECRUIT THE BEST PROFESSIONALS

FOCUSASIA

ROBERT WALTERS

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present our inaugural whitepaper, entitled 'Using Career Progression To Recruit The Best Professionals' based on data compiled from extensive surveys conducted among professionals and hiring managers in Asia. This first edition marks the launch of the Robert Walters Focus Asia Whitepaper series.

In our daily interactions with candidates and employers, career progression has continuously emerged as a topic of constant discussion. The definition of career progression, its different components as well as its pivotal role in attracting and retaining talent is a recurring subject of conversation among hiring managers.

Our research shows that candidates place great importance on career progression opportunities while considering a job offer. In the workplace, this importance continues as employees look towards acquiring new skills and work experience in their career.

In a candidate-short environment, attracting and retaining top talent remains a key challenge for all employers. Knowing that career progression ranks high among candidates, makes it increasingly important to ensure that employers include such opportunities in job offers. An employer who clearly defines a career development path and strategically implements the right initiatives is more likely to both attract and retain a high-performing employee for a longer period.

Therefore, I am pleased to introduce this whitepaper which reveals compelling insight to what professionals seek in career progression as well as suggestions on how to best manage this in the talent attraction and retention process.



Toby Fowlston
CEO
Robert Walters & Walters People



INTRODUCTION

This Robert Walters Focus Asia Whitepaper has been created to help employers better understand the types of career progression professionals seek and recommends how you can implement and promote career progression in order to attract the best professionals.

Specifically this whitepaper explores:

- Career progression in the job search and interview stage
- Talent attraction and retention through career progression
- Types of career progression on offer
- Consequences of a lack of career progression
- Management of career progression

METHODOLOGY

This whitepaper is based on the findings of research conducted by Robert Walters Asia in August 2013. To compile this research, Robert Walters surveyed over 1300 job seekers and hiring managers across China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

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CAREER PROGRESSION IN THE JOB SEARCH AND INTERVIEW STAGE

How and when you communicate career progression will shape how attractive a role is to a potential candidate.

Survey results

When asked how important career progression was while considering new job opportunities, 74% of professionals said it was 'very important', 25% 'somewhat important' while only 1% selected 'not important'.

More than half of professionals surveyed, at 63%, actively sought job advertisements that clearly promoted career progression, 85% asked specifically about career progression during the interview process.

Organisations also rated career progression highly, 86% of hiring managers said they thought it was 'very important' to professionals and the remaining 14% responded it was 'somewhat important'. When asked if they believed career progression was a major drawcard in job advertisements for professionals, 96% said yes. That said, only 47% actively addressed career progression in their job advertisements.

When asked how they promoted career progression, 41% communicated it during the recruitment process, 28% utilised internal communications for existing staff, 16% in their job advertisements and 15% did so on the company website.

Key learning #1

Recognise career progression is a major motivator

Professionals attach high importance to career progression. Having something to aspire to and achieve is a major personal motivator for many. Presenting pathways to progression is just as important as any other aspect of a role.

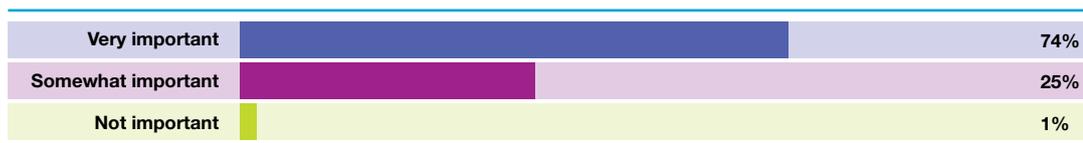
Key learning #2

Make the first impression count

Research consistently showed that top talent were eager to find out about the career progression available to them very early on in the recruitment process. This research demonstrated that both professionals and organisations understood that career progression is a strong motivator. The job seeking process was often the first contact with a brand, and the first impression was formed by the job advertisement. The advertisement should be a persuasive, accurate reflection of a role and what the organisation offers. Not taking the time to include some basic information on what progression opportunities are available is a wasted branding opportunity.

85% of professionals surveyed enquired specifically about career progression during the interview process

Chart 1.0 - How important is career progression to you when considering new job opportunities?





47%

of organisations actively
addressed career progression
in their job advertisements

TYPES OF CAREER PROGRESSION ON OFFER

There are many ways to offer career progression to a professional. Organisations should understand what professionals value to ensure they are investing in the right types of career progression.

Survey results

When asked what types of career progression initiatives they valued the most, 33% of professionals said 'expanded portfolio and work experience', 26% 'internal mobility' (locally and internationally), 23% said 'education and training', and 18% 'set pathway to promotion'.

Similarly, hiring managers most commonly offered expanded portfolio and work experience in their career progression initiatives, at 32%. Internal mobility was also offered by 29%, 26% offered education and training and 13% provided a set pathway to promotion.

Most professionals were willing to work overseas, with 78% willing to work internationally in the same organisation to further their career. 78% of the organisations that have global offices offered their employees international career progression.

Chart 2.0 - What type of career progression do you value most when you are considering a job opportunity?



- 33% Expanded portfolio and work experience
- 26% Internal mobility (locally or internationally)
- 23% Education and training
- 18% Set pathway to promotion

Key learning #3

Offer an expanded portfolio

Expanded portfolio and work experience was the most sought-after career progression initiative by professionals and the corresponding statistics showed that organisations recognised this. Ensure that the expanded portfolio and work experience offered:

- Allows professionals to be challenged and acquire a new skill set
- Gives professionals the opportunity to explore a different side of the business. With varied work experience, employees satisfy their career aspirations and therefore become a bigger asset to the company
- Is a good investment for the organisation. Ensure that the content of the training is relevant to your organisation, will enrich current activities within the team and is undertaken by those who have an interest in doing so

Key learning #4

It does not always have to mean a promotion

Professionals indicated that career progression does not necessarily have to mean a direct promotion. If there is a valued professional who has advanced as much as they can, consider moving them to an international office or to another department elsewhere in the business. They may be able to learn new skills that will benefit the organisation, engage on a more senior level or meet new employees that can influence their career.

32% of organisations offered an expanded portfolio and work experience



78%

of organisations offered career progression in the form of international mobility among their global offices

CONSEQUENCES OF A LACK OF PROGRESSION

A lack of career progression has a negative effect on an organisation's staff retention rate. If you have exhausted all avenues for career progression, there may be other ways to entice top talent to stay in the business.

Survey results

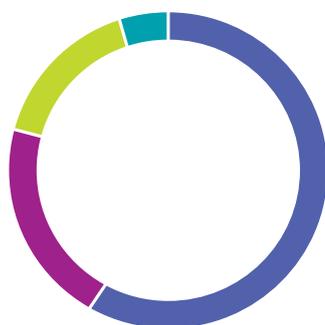
87% of professionals would leave an organisation if there was not enough progression available, with 80% previously leaving a role for that reason. Most organisations (84%) had professionals cite a lack of career progression as their reason for leaving.

When asked how long they would stay in a role if they felt there was no more progression available to them, 54% said '1-2 years', 30% '3-5 years', 12% 'less than a year' and 4% 'more than five years'. The expectations from organisations were similar, 57% believed professionals would stay for 1-2 years and 30% chose 3-5 years.

When asked what would entice them to stay if no further progression was available, 36% said increased pay, 25% for additional benefits, 20% cited international relocation while 19% indicated internal mobility to other departments would retain them.

Most organisations (39%) trying to retain professionals once career progression was exhausted offered internal mobility to other departments. Increased pay was offered by 32%, international relocation by 15% and 14% proposed additional benefits.

Chart 3.0 - How long would you stay in a role if you felt there was not any more career progression available?



- 12% Less than a year
- 54% 1 - 2 years
- 30% 3 - 5 years
- 4% 5+ years

Key learning #5

More money is only a short-term fix

Remuneration was not the main motivator for many professionals. Top talent is driven by a need to feel engaged and challenged. There is no point in increasing a salary if they are still feeling unmotivated, and the statistics showed it will only engage employees for another year. Of course, remuneration has to be in line with market standards and fairly compensate the professional but offering good career progression will result in better retention of staff than a pay increase.

Key learning #6

Accept that you will lose professionals

Sometimes you may have to face the unfortunate fact that some of your valued team members will leave your organisation. It is rare to have someone stay at one place for their entire career. Take it as an opportunity to nurture some new talent who will make their own mark on the business.

Key learning #7

Ask for honest feedback

Take the opportunity to ask your employee (you could formalise it via an exit interview) what they thought of the career progression and benefits offered at your organisation. This is vital information when considering your staff retention strategy.

84% of organisations had professionals cite a lack of career progression as their reason for leaving

80%

of professionals have
previously left a role due to
the lack of career progression



MANAGEMENT OF CAREER PROGRESSION

Career progression should be managed effectively to ensure it is worth the investment of time, money and effort.

Survey results

More than half of professionals surveyed (54%) said they believe organisations 'mostly' followed through with the career progression they advertised for the role, 10% 'always' and 36% did not believe organisations followed through at all.

When hiring managers were asked if they believed their organisations followed through with providing career progression, 71% said 'mostly', 10% 'always' and 19% did not believe their company followed through at all.

However, 51% of organisations believed the progression they offered was of a good standard and on par with other organisations, 36% believed they could improve and 13% believed it was very good and better than others in their industry.

In addition, 79% of professionals believed they are proactive and did all they could to manage their own career progression. Similarly, 75% of organisations believed their staff were proactive enough.

Key learning #8

Do not overpromise on career progression

Overpromising and not delivering could lead to staff disengagement and is likely to be damaging to your employer brand and reputation.

Being honest about what you can offer, what they can expect, as well as following through on progression opportunities will ensure you select the right professional and retain them for longer. Make sure expectations are aligned from the beginning of the recruitment process.

Key learning #9

Set standards, launch development programmes and be consistent

Decide what career progression you want to offer professionals that will benefit both the organisation and the team. Career progression could include one or more of the following:

- **Development planning**

Development planning enables professionals to formalise their career goals and learning objectives, in order to develop their capability for current and future roles.

- **Talent identification and succession**

For people who are committed to their career, perform well and demonstrate leadership, a talent identification and succession programme is an opportunity for an organisation to give greater support to their workplace development.

- **Performance feedback**

Regular reviews with management give the opportunity to develop and refine career objectives and determine progress towards the goals that have been developed.

- **Internal mobility**

Think about whether current employees are encouraged to discuss progression opportunities with their managers and given first access to internal positions. In addition, consider whether an expanded portfolio and transfers would be beneficial.

- **Expanded portfolio and work experience**

Giving professionals the opportunity to acquire new skill sets and learn on the job is highly valued. With a fresh set of abilities, employees have a renewed sense of motivation and are likely to contribute more effectively to their teams and subsequently to the company.

Only 10% of hiring managers believed that their organisation always followed through on career progression incentives



19%

of hiring managers
did not believe their
company followed
through with providing
career progression

MANAGEMENT OF CAREER PROGRESSION (CONT'D)

Key learning #10

Provide tools and encouragement to enable employees to manage their own career progression

Give your employees the opportunity to take control of their own careers. Provide them with the necessary tools and feedback to progress and support their goals. Performance reviews and development planning are vital to this process. Ensure the goals are measurable and the individual accountable.

Half of the hiring managers surveyed (51%) believed that the career progression offered within their organisation was good and on par with industry standard

Chart 4.0 - How would you rate the career progression you offer



CONCLUSION

It is important to understand that career progression is a major attraction for motivated professionals. Our results suggest that the best professionals are only drawn to join organisations which offer and deliver clear career progression.

To ensure your organisation attracts and retains the best professionals, it is imperative you communicate career progression throughout the recruitment process as well as deliver on promised career progression opportunities. From the moment a potential employee reads a job advertisement through to when they sign their employment contract and subsequently while being employed by the company, they should feel that their future career progression is a priority for your organisation.

The key to top talent retention is providing professionals development opportunities and movement within the business. By establishing a career framework and constantly communicating with employees on available career progression opportunities, organisations ensure top performers remain motivated and engaged so they do not feel their career has come to a standstill. Constructive feedback during the whole process is also essential in benchmarking and assessing professionals on their abilities and personal progress.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WALTERS FOCUS ASIA WHITEPAPER SERIES

This whitepaper is the inaugural edition in the Robert Walters Focus Asia Series. The Focus Asia series features a range of thought-leading whitepapers designed to help employers identify and address topical issues that could be affecting their recruitment process.



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To discuss this whitepaper or your recruitment needs in more detail, please contact your Robert Walters recruitment consultant or any of the country representatives listed below.

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