

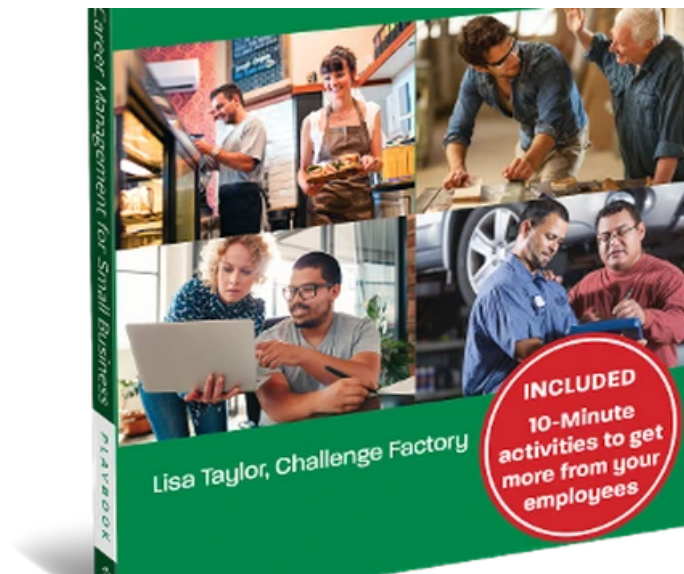
Career paths retain talent

torontosun.com/2017/03/16/career-paths-retain-talent/wcm/cc28b7ba-4b3b-4550-953e-edb2980ab918

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If you're a small- or medium-sized business owner or manager, ensuring every employee has a well-defined career path may seem like an insurmountable challenge given the many other hats you must wear.

But helping your employees manage their career paths can help you retain employees, saving you the “ferocious” cost associated with employee turnover, reminds Lisa Taylor, president of Challenge Factory, an organization that designs methodologies to supercharge talent within its clients’ workforces.

According to research, 78 per cent of employees would remain longer with their current employer if they had a clear career path. “Career management is a gem of a weapon that’s within everyone’s arsenal,” says Taylor, author of a new book entitled, *Retain and Gain: Career Management for Small Business*.

CAREER CONVERSATIONS

Career management differs from a career conversation, Taylor reminds. An annual performance review may offer feedback on an employee’s performance but likely doesn’t answer questions that employee may have about what further development they should

consider, what else they should be learning, what other experiences they should seek out and what opportunities might be on the horizon.

Employees are often hesitant to ask those kinds of questions because they're afraid the boss will tell them there's not much room for career progression in a small company. But even if an employee doesn't move a level or their title doesn't change, they can still be exposed to new challenges, learning, experiences or topics, says Taylor.

In recognition that business owners don't have the time to develop talent and may not have a human resources department, she structured her book like a travel-guide inspired playbook that includes a variety of activities that take from 10 minutes to one hour to implement. Consider the following examples:

10-MINUTE ACTIVITIES

Think about yourself. Identify a career defining moment from your past. Write it down and share it as part of an upcoming team event, call or communication. Why was it meaningful? What did you learn? Sharing that information can help develop a culture of collaborative learning that encourages employee development, says Taylor.

Search on [LinkedIn](#) and [Glassdoor](#) to see how employees are talking about your company and brand. If you read negative comments, determine what course of action is appropriate for the employee. Mild messages of discontent provide a learning opportunity for the employee (how could they have found a better outlet to express their needs) and for you (what doesn't your company know or do well that should get more attention).

ONE-HOUR ACTIVITY

Reflect upon career-related videos and podcasts. Select a TED Talk that encourages you and your employees to think about careers or career-related skills. Interested in exploring happiness and positivity in the workplace? The book recommends Shawn Achor's 'The Happy Secret to Better Work.'

"Use the TED Talk as a jumping-off point," says Taylor. "If your employees wrote a story from your own company, what would the script for that TED Talk look like? What lesson do we have to share about how careers work here that we would want to share with other companies?"

ADVICE FOR EMPLOYEES

More than ever, employees must be in charge of their own careers. "With the freelance economy, the gig economy and all of the different options we have in the way we work and the way we relate to employers, employees really are much more at the helm of their own careers and need to take charge," says Taylor.

“They certainly need to have a good grasp of what they want, where they’d like to go and the types of additional experiences they’d like to add to their portfolio so they continue to have an enriching career all the way through their entire working lives...which means every employee needs to focus on and find ways to have these kinds of conversations” with their employer.

