

The future of work

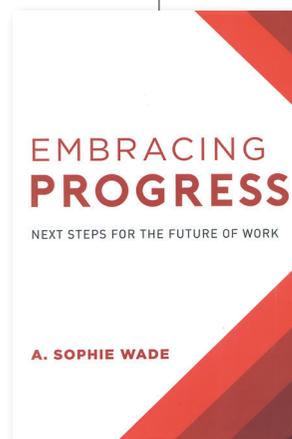
People's recognition of the new reality often depends on their current work situation. Once employees are attuned to new career scenarios, it is very likely to affect their relationship with the company they are working for and their engagement in their work, through no fault or ill-intent of the organization. The employees are just acknowledging the reality of the current employment equation and their "actual" bond with the organization they work for. Employers that are transparent about employment situations with their workers are able to develop trust-based relationships founded on realistic dialog. It is not about guaranteeing anything but being clear and authentic.

For example, Rob Newton feels unsettled. He is employed at a large corporation with a relatively high turnover here there was a round of layoffs recently. He has noticed increasing use of independent contractors. He has also become aware of the more transient and varied nature of new career profiles from chatting with former colleagues, as well as from discussions with consultants. He has developed a new understanding of the range of possibilities and probabilities for his own career. He is considering what his prospects

are at his current employer and is thinking hard about what else he might do elsewhere over the longer term. Newton is interested in staying at the company, but they haven't yet talked to him about his future prospects at all, and he doesn't want to be blindsided by any reorganization or layoffs. So, he is actively working on the next steps of his own career plan, looking at the realistic possibilities Where he is working now as well as what else he might want to do in the future and for whom. If Newton's current employer wants to keep him for the longer term or even the medium term, they would be wise to have an open and interactive discussion with him about the next steps of his career there.

For many corporate employees, the career fragmentation and onus on individuals to be more involved in a less straightforward career plan can feel like a radical change from previous circumstances.

I have had conversations with many employees of corporations who are concerned about perceived-or real-increased job instability. They are also anxious about how to start and how to drive ongoing proactive participation in their career planning and may be distracted from their work while they get accustomed to the new circumstances. Hundreds of people I have spoken with are already working out how to

**EMBRACING
PROGRESS****Author:**

A Sophie Wade

Publisher:

Advantage

ISBN:

978-1-59932-785-3

Pages:

270

evaluate their current and future situations, as well as how to plan as necessary to reduce risk and be assured of as steady revenue streams and employment situations as possible going forward.

At the same time, the demise of the traditional corporate career track has left quite a vacuum in its place. It is implicitly understood by executives, managers, and new recruits alike that compounding job progression and long-term, discipline-specific career trajectories are not to be expected. However, for the most part that has not been acknowledged explicitly, nor has much been done to create “Careers 2.0” scenarios. All too often, nothing new has been proposed, leading to employees’ bewilderment, disappointment, frustration, and, in the worst cases, departure. This has been a frequent catalyst of, or at least a significant contributor to, turnover for younger recruits.

In the past, fresh hires were able to “jump” onto a relevant career track at their new company, without any real guidance necessary. Human resources focused on the top ten percent—the “Hi-Pos,” or high potentials—and nurtured them, destined for future leadership roles. However, in current situations, where the strategic and tactical scope of HR’s responsibilities has not yet expanded, a new recruit can easily arrive, recognize the absence of any discernible pathways, and flounder when he or she receives little or no direction. As the nature and format of careers transition, a person can easily be lost in the confusion, feel disoriented and disconnected from the new employer, and leave.

The corporate-career realm is ripe for significant innovation with more participation anticipated from both the employer and the employee in a more relationship-driven world. In a tighter labor market, with a focus on the talent agenda, the emphasis for employers seems to be shifting to “career-experience management,” as coined for me by Nathan Knight, a strategic

thinker in talent and organizational development at a major media and entertainment company.

Knight’s forward-thinking concepts in development regarding careers and career-experience management include recording elements of prospective hires’ future career development in their employment contracts. In conversation with me, he explained, “For employees with contracts this is an explicit negotiation. For those who value development particularly in a world where time seems more precious than ever and the trade-off of limiting yourself versus job security is not what it once was this becomes a way to make the value of staying more tangible and the prospect of growth more real. For employees without contracts taking a similar approach to the job offer process, with development plans that have activities, costs and timelines spelled out and agreed upon by both sides, could be a differentiator when deciding between offers or staying where they are.”

Discussion between the employer and potential employee that takes place during the hiring process can positively influence prospective hires’ decision-making and later on-boarding experience as well as their understanding of how their career will be handled. Prospective employees then will have clarity about their potential and future roles at the company letting them know that some career projection has already been thought through and planned for. Most importantly, they can recognize at the outset the commitment that their new employer has to their future, and, as Knight describes, “they are involved in crafting that future and determining the value of the company’s support from their perspective.” ■

(Excerpted from *Embracing Progress Next Steps For The Future Of Work* by A. Sophie Wade. Reprinted with permission of the author.)