



CRF DIGITAL COMMUNITY EVENT, TALENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING: EARLY CAREERS

At a Zoom roundtable on 21st February 2023, CRF's Talent, Leadership and Learning Community came together to share challenges, experiences and learnings relating to early careers. Chaired by CRF Research Director Gillian Pillans, the discussion focused on attracting and developing early careers talent, as well as ways of integrating early careers strategy into broader workforce planning processes. Key considerations resulting from the discussion are shared below.

Early careers are an important part of strategic workforce planning. Be clear about what future capabilities your organisation needs, and how an early careers strategy can support this. How can early careers hires transform your business in the future, rather than just filling today's gaps?

- One member shared that they enlisted an emerging careers lead to conduct an organisational skills gap analysis. Their organisation then adopted a data-led approach to bridge the identified gaps, including creating apprenticeship schemes tailored to these skills.
- Another member shared that they identify graduates who they believe are talent and give them the opportunity to complete skills-based international rotations. This supports graduates to work at different levels of complexity and develop the skills required for future leaders.

There is a decreasing emphasis on graduate schemes.

Several members shared that they are moving away from an early careers strategy centred solely on graduate schemes, and are particularly looking to increase their apprenticeship offering.

- Examples of this could include building a development pipeline from the very early stages of the workplace in entry level roles, rather than only employing graduates in management schemes.
- One member shared that they have completely moved away from graduate schemes (where they experienced issues with retention and inclusivity) to focus solely on apprenticeships, tailored to the skills and capabilities they need as a company. These apprenticeships are available for both technical and leadership roles and are filled by both internal and external hires (with higher level apprenticeships usually filled internally).
- Another member shared that they run positive action programmes, where people work for six months at the organisation, with the view to find a permanent role at the end of the placement. This initiative aims to increase diversity of hires and shift the perception about who is welcome in their industry.

Flexibility in early careers offerings is beneficial (but not always possible). Members shared the benefits of being flexible and having open conversations about what they offer in early careers. In the words of one member, 'these are grown ups entering the workplace – they deserve to have a dialogue about the optimal path for them at our organisation.'

- Flexibility could also include involving existing early careers hires into discussions about shaping future programmes.
- However, some members shared that their business needs mean that flexibility is not always possible. For example, some organisations require structured rotation models. One member additionally highlighted that it is not possible to be flexible when every role has to be bid for, funded, and justified.

International placements still attract and develop talent.

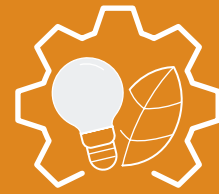
Several members shared that they offer international placements as part of their overall package to attract talent, provide invaluable exposure, and create a sense of community. International travel also helped early careers hires to expand their networks.

- However, international placements are not always possible due to business constraints. One member shared that it was difficult to justify the cost, particularly when they could send an experienced hire, or hire and develop a local employee who could remain in the role long-term.
- Possible alternatives include supporting early careers hires to build an international network without necessarily travelling internationally, and organising workshops once a year in HQ so that graduates can meet a broader range of people.

Support early careers hires through ownership, resilience and clarity of expectations.

Early careers hires should be equipped to take ownership over their own careers, and should be involved in conversations about how individual needs and organisational ambitions can align. Members highlighted the importance of clarity and managing expectations - careers do not always progress quickly or in a set path and structured graduate programmes may not necessarily reflect the reality of careers. Organisations should be clear about what they can offer and what a new entrant to the world of work can expect.

- One member launched an online portal to provide information on career prospects and different roles, with senior leadership sharing stories about how they navigated their own career paths.

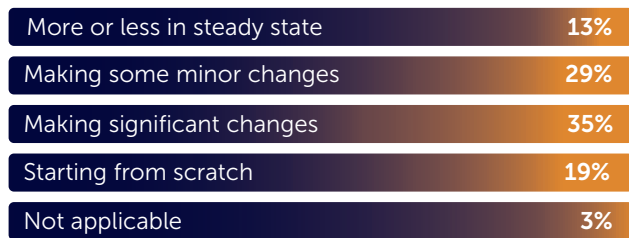


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- Employers should include ways of growing resilience in their early careers learning offering, as well as supporting psychological safety.
- Members emphasised how supporting early careers can be difficult in a hybrid or remote environment. Consider what actions might be needed to support onboarding processes and ways of fostering human connection.

POLL RESULTS

To what degree are you currently changing your approach to early careers? (31 respondents)



What are you most looking to improve about your approach to early careers at the moment? (67 respondents)




FURTHER READING

CRF. **Strategic Workforce Planning**. On-demand short course. <https://crflearning.co.uk/course/swp>

CRF. 2021. **Strategic Workforce Planning – Unlocking Future Capabilities**. Research Report. <https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/research-report-strategic-workforce-planning-unlocking-future-capabilities>

SAVE THE DATE

 Register now for our next TLL Community event: **Wednesday 22nd March, 12.00pm** focusing on *2023 Talent Trends from Mercer*.



Register your attendance [here](#). Also please get in **touch** with any topics that you would like to discuss and feature at the next session.

If you have any further questions or comments, please contact **Gillian Pillans**.

These community event summary notes were prepared by **Jo Nayler**, Senior Research Executive at CRF.