



Career Transitions

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Our philosophy

You can be confident that our recommendations will always be based upon the findings of published academic research, tailored to meet the needs of your organisation.

At Anima & Atman we are committed to delivering solutions for our clients that make meaningful and measurable differences in the areas of *Emotional Wellbeing, Productive Mindset* and *Self-Awareness*.

Our clients are typically professional services organisations, who are trusted for their expertise, commitment to ongoing professional development and high ethical standards. Our approach seeks to reflect this, meaning you can be confident that our recommendations will always be based upon the findings of published academic research, tailored to meet the needs of your organisation.

21st century careers

A career can be understood as an evolving sequence of work experiences. Traditionally these experiences have been linked to specific roles, situated within the social space of an organisation or occupation. In the contemporary world, careers are increasingly described as turbulent paths, unfolding across multiple organisational, occupational and cultural settings. Implicitly, the career literature advocates that these new types of career are 'the way to go', in order to secure career success, but is this actually borne out in reality?

Careers should always be seen as embedded in ever-evolving societal, political and economic contexts. Traditionally this context saw organisations that were more hierarchical and work processes that were more regimented. In exchange for loyalty to the organisation, career paths were designed to offer job security alongside steady progression in terms of income and status – the so-called 'job-for-life'. The 'new' career context is situated within a more globalised world of 'lean' organisations, with decentralised management and flatter hierarchies. These means employment relations are often more transactional, project-based, and consequently, more short-term in nature.

While it is argued that these new arrangements offer employee liberation and independence, many are more sceptical; pointing out that as risks shift from organisations to individuals, workers now face reduced job security and increased accountability for their own career management.

Instead of promising predictable career paths, organisations should instead focus on creating opportunities that offer the potential for personal growth.

Within this new paradigm, career transitions can be expected to occur more frequently, a phenomenon that is increasingly evident in employment data (Chudzikowski, 2012). Career transitions can be defined as moves across different types of boundaries – organisational, functional and hierarchical – with the magnitude of their impact depending on the nature of the boundaries crossed. Well-handled career transitions, therefore, have the potential to deliver individual career success and wider organisational benefits.

Much of the recent focus has been on careers that transcend organisational boundaries, with many young professionals now expecting to move employer every three to four years. Yet, empirical evidence shows that in most western countries, increases in such movement remains limited, with the majority of growth accounted for by an increase in the number of internal transitions (Verbruggen et al, 2015). This means organisations still play a vital role in forming and developing workers' careers but that this role has changed.

Instead of promising predictable career paths, organisations should instead focus on creating opportunities that offer the potential for personal growth, if they want to enhance employee motivation and commitment to the organisation. As a corollary to this, organisations also need to ensure that they are providing their employees with the necessary skills to take advantage of these opportunities and that they are themselves aware of the factors that influence the type, frequency and success of career transitions (Hess et al, 2012).

Our approach to career transitions

Wherever possible we try to focus on objective measures of career success i.e. those that are directly observable and verifiable. This is particularly important when working with emerging talent as research has indicated that objective achievements are considered particularly important by business graduates during the early years of their career (Warr, 2008). It is also important to be able to demonstrate whether making career transitions has an objectively positive or negative impact on career success.

Many organisations select their emerging talent through well-established and highly-structured talent pipelines, such as internships and assessment centres. Schools and universities are increasingly able to prepare their students for these types of assessments, meaning new hires often join organisations with relatively well-developed job search and interview skills. These abilities remain useful later in their career when looking for roles in other organisations but they are often poorly suited to securing further promotions and driving a successful career within an organisation. Our approach is to help ensure that your emerging talent possess the knowledge and skills necessary to have a successful long-term career in your organisation.

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To achieve this, it is important that the support on offer resonates with the intended audience. Recent research into Generation Y (those born in the 1980s/90s) highlights three important factors they look for in a career: *a sense of purpose, flexibility and opportunities for growth through training & development* (fortune.com, 2015). Employee surveys also indicate that many workers do not feel that they're treated as individuals by their employers; this can be particularly true for emerging talent recruited onto large structured schemes. When organisations do treat their employees as individuals, employees indicate that they feel more motivated and more engaged in their work.

Self-directed learning

Mandatory training can sometimes come across as a box-ticking exercise, rather than a genuine investment in workers. We recommend making transitions training voluntary and also suggest that participants are required to undertake some preparatory work prior to being formally offered the training. This self-directed approach to learning more accurately reflects the post-training scheme environment and means only those genuinely motivated to take part will attend. Participation levels amongst emerging talent populations are typically very high, with the individuals choosing not to participate often those who may already be considering leaving the organisation.

Flexible & bespoke

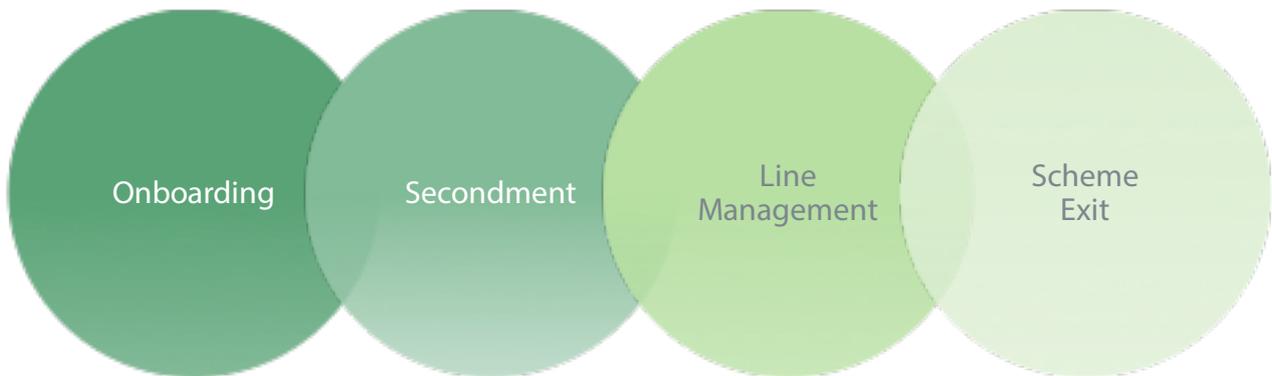
Different learners will have different needs and transition training needs to reflect this. To offer flexibility and maximise the impact for the learner we base our interventions around small, interactive group workshops and access to digital learning materials. Where necessary this can be complemented by one-to-one coaching, where participants can choose the focus of their learning.

Running smaller sessions offers greater flexibility around the timing of the training, meaning learners can participate at times when career transitions are pertinent to them, for example when considering a secondment to a new team or prior to being put forward for a promotion. Running sessions on a variety of dates and in different locations can also help minimise the likelihood of clashes with other work commitments and reduce travel costs, meaning improved attendance levels.

Long-term benefits

Our approach prioritises giving emerging talent useful tools that will help them throughout their careers, rather than just sharing knowledge that can quickly become dated. Helping participants identify their individual motivations and strengths (and through this a sense of purpose in their work) is a key theme. These tools can be put into immediate effect by individuals but can also be revisited in the future whenever a new career transition is looming.

Our service offering



The timing and frequency of key career transitions will vary across organisations and business areas but there are a number of common situations that can be identified in most large organisations. An overview of how transition support can assist at each of these important career moments is set out below.

Onboarding

Although many young people work alongside their studies, entering the workplace on a full-time permanent basis can bring many challenges. Most employers offer a structured induction to new starters joining their organisation. Given the complex nature of many organisations these can end up being very knowledge-intensive with a focus on policy and compliance rather than general careers advice.

While induction is not the best time to impart careers advice most employees indicate that it would be useful if they could access information and guidance about how to get their career off to a positive start. Onboarding recognises that the transition that takes place when you join an organisation begins before your first day and can last several months after your formal induction has finished.

We work with organisations to ensure that their new hires can access relevant knowledge and tools from the moment they accept the offer of employment, meaning that new hires are able to arrive on their first day confident that they know what will be expected of them.

Secondment

Most young professionals are attracted by opportunities to go on secondment early in their career, whether that is to a different business area, office or client site. It is, therefore, no surprise that such opportunities have become a key sales tool in recruitment literature.

Secondments offer the individual a great opportunity to develop new skills and develop their professional network of contacts, while at the same time offering the organisation an opportunity to break down barriers between different divisions and strengthen client relationships. Secondment can also bring a number of challenges, especially if there is a need to adapt to a new working environment with different cultural norms or there is a lack of agreement amongst stakeholders about the purpose of the secondment – this is why in many instances they often fail to deliver the expected benefits. Given the potential risks and opportunities linked to secondment, it is surprising just how few organisations properly invest in preparing their employees for such transitions.

We work with organisations to ensure that systems are in place to help individuals identify whether they are ready for secondment and what additional skills they may need to develop in order to ensure their experience is career-enhancing. We typically achieve this through offering access to digital learning tools to those employees considering secondment and more focused one-to-one coaching for those who have been selected for such assignments. We can also work with internal stakeholders who are keen to learn the coaching techniques that will allow them to have high-quality careers conversations with their team members.

Line Management

As organisations have become less hierarchical, workers have started to acquire responsibility for managing people and processes without receiving the formalised training that used to accompany promotion to a managerial position. Many are grateful for the development opportunity that this represents, but are left feeling unsure about exactly what is expected of them.

Taking a week away from the office to attend a management training course can be unrealistic, so it is important that alternative and more flexible resources can be made available to individuals going through this important transition.

Learning ‘in the moment’ is often a necessity in the modern workplace so our approach is to provide resources that are available to managers when they need them. Until a manager is required to undertake a performance review they are unlikely to be motivated to learn how it should be carried out, this is why we recommend delivering such content digitally using our searchable learning platform. More complex queries that cannot be easily resolved through

standardised processes, for example how to resolve a conflict between colleagues, need to be dealt with through alternative means. The use of mentoring for new line managers is one solution we have used successfully; one-to-one coaching conversations are another option.

Over time this approach allows line managers to develop their managerial skills in line with the requirements in a way that is meaningful to them. This approach has been shown to be both more popular and effective than traditional classroom-based management training.

‘The workshops were incredibly useful and encouraged me to consider approaches to progressing my career that had never been on my radar before. It was an invaluable opportunity to identify my key skills and selling points.’

Associate Solicitor, London

Scheme Exit

For new hires who join organisations on a fast-track development programme the end of the scheme usually marks a major career transition. Up to this point many aspects of their working life are likely to have been predictable, for example regular rotations amongst different teams and working towards a professional qualification, but this now changes. For many this transition represents a natural opportunity to take stock, reflect and sometimes consider opportunities outside their current organisation. Others may have thoroughly enjoyed their experience to date but find themselves competing with their peers (many of whom will also be friends) for a fixed number of permanent positions.

It can be tempting for both individuals and organisation to take a relatively passive attitude to such transitions, in the hope that the available roles will match up with the expectations of those exiting the scheme – actual retention rates suggest that this is rarely the case. In reality those organisations that consistently retain a high percentage of their emerging talent are highly strategic in how they match opportunities to the talent they have available.

When working with organisations we stress that this is a two-way process. It is important that

the matching process starts as early as possible, even if this is only at an informal level. This is why we recommend staggering such transition support over an extended period, rather than leaving it until a matter of months before the transition is due to take place. Starting early gives individuals plenty of time to reflect on what they have achieved and what really motivates them, something that can be difficult to make the time for in the deadline-driven world of modern business.

By the time available positions are confirmed the organisation should already be well aware of the expectations of their emerging talent. They in turn should have a realistic understanding of what the organisation can realistically offer them and what they need to do in order to secure their preferred position. Once the available positions have been allocated and accepted attention can then focus on putting in place plans to support individuals during the initial months of their new role.



To learn more about how we can help support your emerging talent through their key career transitions and ensure you retain your top performers, contact us using the details below.

T: 07866 967122

E: info@animaatman.com