

What is Career Progression?

Career Progression generally includes three things: promotions, pay rises and personal development. How career progression happens varies from one organisation to the next, depending on the size of the business and the opportunities available. Some organisations have a structured process that includes annual appraisals, training, employee development plan. However, for the most part, progression can occur naturally from the business growing.

Employees from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are more likely than their white British colleagues to say career progression is an essential factor in their working life. However, the lack of a clear and structured progression process leaves them vulnerable to unconscious biases, and discriminatory practices, which can see them overlooked for promotion and relegated to junior level positions despite their talent.

A definite step towards inclusive career progression is to be clear about how employees can progress in the business, which can in part be achieved through a career progression plan.

Career Progression Plan

In basic terms, a career progression plan outlines the following:

- Defines the possible roles across the business
- Outlines the roles each team member can progress to
- Gives clarity on what someone has to do to progress to each role
- Outlines when and how promotion reviews are done

Generally, an overview of the possible roles is defined by senior management in line with business, financial and resourcing plans. HR may underpin the career progression plan with a policy and process that supports employees and their direct manager to have constructive conversations around promotions.

The career progression plan can be reviewed annually in line with business performance.

Constructing a plan may seem onerous. However, once in place, benefits include:

- Increased accountability: there is a list of steps employees must follow to move up the ladder
- Increases transparency: leadership and the employee are aligned on what is required to climb the ladder
- Supports inclusion: the plan is available to all staff and their line managers

Inclusion in practice

Below are some ideas on how to support employees from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to progress in the workplace.

Inclusive leadership training: leaders have a habit of promoting staff because they are good at their job yet fail to support them with the skills to manage people. This management skills deficit coupled with unconscious (and conscious) biases and structural racism can be a significant barrier to the career progression of Black, Asian and Minority ethnic talent.

Equipping leaders with inclusive leadership training is a fundamental first step in creating an inclusive culture that allows all staff to bloom where they are planted.

Below are examples of a range of competencies, behaviours and beliefs research shows are needed for inclusive management.

Being sensitive to diversity issues; having integrity when relating to difference; interacting positively with difference; valuing difference; personal and structural awareness of bias; emotional intelligence; promoting team inclusion; and embedding inclusion into ways of working and thinking.

Ask them your employees: what do they need in order to do their job successfully? What would a promotion look like to them? Promotion looks different from one person to the next. Asking employees to outline what promotion looks like to them is a useful first step.

Personal Development Plan: consists of short, medium and long-term goals related to the employees job and future career aspirations. Developed between the employee and direct manager it outlines any training they will need, identifies stretch projects they can be involved in. It may also contain details of key opportunities they will have in the workplace to enable them to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitude to progress. The plan is reviewed regularly through the year, and can be developed alongside the organisations career progression plan.

Research shows, in order to keep or progress in their job, black workers must meet a higher bar. Any training and development must therefore be in line with that required of their white colleagues.

Leadership Development: the lack of leaders from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities across all industries is well documented. One of the reasons cited is the lack of leadership and management experience employees from these groups have in comparison to white colleagues. Employers must be deliberate about developing leadership skills. Switch up who leads team or client meetings, permit employees to observe senior management meetings allowing them to deputise where appropriate, as their skills and confidence grow. Explore ways in which employees can contribute to board meetings.

Mentoring: might form part of an employees personal development plan. Work with employees to determine the skills and experiences they are looking to develop and together identify a suitable mentor internally or external to the organisation.

Depending on the career level of the person 'next-level' mentors - those who are a step ahead on the career ladder - can be easier to relate to. They are more accessible and make great mentors for more junior team members.

Continuous feedback: is one of the best ways for employees to know if they are doing a good job. It supports growth in individuals, teams, and the organisation as a whole. It shows that employee voices are valued. To create a feedback culture, consider adopting a *Thank You Thursday* or *Feedback Friday*. As cheesy as they sound, they may help leaders and managers to get into the habit of providing feedback to their team members.

Your Trainer



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Arit holds an MA in Executive Leadership Development and Mentoring. As a Leadership and Career Development Coach and Trainer, she works with women who are looking to change careers or move into senior-level roles. She also delivers bespoke staff training programmes for employers supporting 'accidental' managers, diversity and inclusion and more. Her YouTube channel provides viewers worldwide with tips on how to build careers they love either through employment, entrepreneurship or a mixture of both.